EAGLIS NA H-ALBA

PRESBYTERY OF ARGYLL

PARISH PROFILE

OF

THE LINKED PARISHES OF

BARRA

AND

SOUTH UIST.

[Map showing locations mentioned in the text: Howmore, Daliburgh, Cuithir, South Uist, Uist, Eriskay, Barra, Vatersay]
The Islands

The Parishes of Barra and South Uist consist of a group of the four southernmost inhabited Islands of the Outer Hebrides Island chain. Travelling from South to North they are Vatersay, Barra, Eriskay, and South Uist. Vatersay is connected to Barra by causeway, as is Eriskay to Uist. A vehicular ferry links Barra to Eriskay on a daily basis - ferry time, approx. 40 minutes.

Measuring about 8 miles x 5 miles, Barra (with Vatersay) has about 1200 inhabitants, with Castlebay as the main centre for shopping, doctors’ surgery, and both primary and secondary schools. Cuithir, the location for the Church and Manse, is about 5 miles from Castlebay.

To the North lies South Uist (with Eriskay). It is over 25 miles long and up to 7 miles wide. The population is around 1800, and, as in Barra, the main activities are crofting, tourism, and fishing (including fish farming and shell fishing). The population is scattered, but with a slight concentration at Daliburgh towards the South end, where Daliburgh Church is located. The other place of worship is in Howmore about 10 miles farther North. Although the economy is largely agrarian, in Uist a number of Islanders are employed servicing the MOD Rocket Range, situated to the North of the Island. In summer tourism provides an important source of income and the industry gives seasonal work for many locals in both Parishes.
The Parishes – Mission Statements

Barra:

"Cuithir Church is part of the worldwide Christian Church. We seek to proclaim the Gospel of the Risen Christ to people of all ages inside and outside the Church: to provide opportunities for people to share, renew and develop their faith and gifts in an open and welcoming atmosphere. To promote Christian values and to care for others.

South Uist:

“We are committed, to increase our Faith through Worship, sharing Christ's teaching and His message of Love with each other, to offer, to all people of all ages in South Uist and beyond, God’s Love, Peace, Hope, and Joy, through prayer, friendship, and caring, through sharing our skills and gifts through Service for the whole community.”

“I to the hills will lift mine eyes.”

The Hills of South Uist from Howmore.
The Parishes – Data

Both Parishes are of the Model Constitution, each being served by separate Kirk Sessions and Boards.

Barra currently has 45 members and 14 adherents, Uist has 53 members and 51 adherents.

There are three churches, Cuithir, in Barra, and Daliburgh and Howmore in South Uist. Sunday Services in Barra are at 11.30am, and in Uist, Daliburgh, 10.30 am, and Howmore, 12 noon. (On the first Sunday of the month a joint, family service is held, alternately, at 11am). It will be impossible for one person to deliver services on both Islands each Sunday, but the Presbytery of Argyll has in place generous aid regarding supply.
Although in both Parishes the majority of inhabitants are Roman Catholic, the parishioners of both denominations are very ecumenically minded and much mutual support is both given and received. There are joint activities like World Day of Prayer, Christian Aid Week, Christmas Carol Services and the like. As the Barra congregation has a younger age profile than South Uist, there are many more children involved in Church activities, including “Livewires”, meeting on Sunday afternoons, (in addition to Sunday School) again, providing an excellent opportunity for outreach to the wider community. Because of the scattered pattern of its population in South Uist further development of youth and children’s ministry would give an interesting task to the incoming minister. Both Parishes also very usefully serve the wider community by running Thrift Shops in Castlebay, and Daliburgh, providing a useful resource, meeting place, and raising money for charities.

There are opportunities for pastoral, chaplaincy, and outreach work in both Parishes. There are care homes in both Castlebay and Daliburgh, where visits from the clergy are very welcome. Chaplaincy opportunities exist serving the various schools on both Islands, and most homes welcome a visit from the Minister. In Castlebay there is a remarkable Day Centre, catering for the frail and elderly, specialising in the care of Dementia sufferers and allowing their carers welcome respite. In the summer especially, further ministry opportunities exist with the influx of large numbers of tourists and returning exiles, many of whom attend worship.

Harvest Thanksgiving is a significant time in both Parishes. In Barra produce is distributed among the elderly and needy, in South Uist, the produce is auctioned off after the Service and the proceeds donated to Christian Aid to feed the hungry elsewhere.
Accommodation

As it is much more modern and more easily maintained the Parish Manse will be that at Cuithir, Barra. The Manse is a modern, energy efficient bungalow with integral garage situated next to the Church. It has 5 double bedrooms, one of which could be used as a study. The family bathroom has a separate bath and shower, there also being a further shower and toilet for visitors. There is a large open plan lounge with a dining area which is easily accessible to the kitchen. There is oil fired central heating throughout in addition to the open fire in the Lounge. There are garden areas front and rear, and the Manse enjoys open vistas all around.

The manse, Cuithir

Plans have been drawn up to transform the area of unused land between Church and Manse into a garden space suitable for quiet enjoyment by residents and visitors alike.

There are extensive Glebe areas in both Parishes, but currently both are sublet to local crofters.
Transport

The Oban – Castlebay- Lochboisdale vehicular ferry connects Barra with both Uist and the Mainland. A smaller vehicular ferry connects Barra with Eriskay and thence by causeway to South Uist, Benbecula, and North Uist where, at Lochmaddy, a shorter sea crossing connects with Skye and the Mainland.

By air, Barra connects with Glasgow, using the unique and spectacular sea beach landing strip – perhaps the cleanest runway in the world, washed twice a day by the tide! From the Uist side, Benbecula Airport connects with Glasgow, and Stornoway/Inverness.

There are internal and ferry connecting bus services in both Barra and Uist.

Facilities

Both Islands have provision of Primary and 6-year Secondary education, with access to swimming pools. Banking facilities are available in Castlebay and Lochboisdale, and up to date medical and dental facilities are also available, as are Post Offices, small supermarkets, and other stores,
Leisure & Culture

Both Islands boast golf courses. Both have miles of spectacular white sandy beaches, and beautiful hill walking, while South Uist in particular has some of the finest Trout fishing lochs in Europe. For the archaeologists there are many sites, some dating as far back as Neolithic times. For the naturalist there is a plethora of flora and fauna, with some very rare species to be found. In Winter there is badminton and indoor bowling at various locations as well as whist drives fundraising for a number of good causes.

There is a very rich tradition of Gaelic and Celtic culture, with a large number of world famous Bards, Pipers, Singers, and other musicians originating in Uist and Barra. At present the Folk movement is thriving, and enthusiasts from all over the world attend Feis events every Summer, and many of these swell the number of worshippers.

The Good Shepherd needs a helper!
THE LINKED PARISHES OF BARRA AND SOUTH UIST – THE CALL.

This charge is unrestricted. In addition to Stipend it is eligible for Islands allowance, plus removal expenses.

Further information and hard copy Profiles can be obtained from the Clerk to the Nominating Committee,

Mr Matthew Partridge, Tel. 01871 817873
6 Caolis,
Vatersay, Email: jenandmatt@tiscali.co.uk
Isle of Barra
HS9 5YL

OR

Interim Moderator
Rev. Aileen M Robson Tel. 01369 830276
7A Mathieson Lane,
Inellan, Email: am65robsen@ymail.com
Dunoon
PA23 7SH