

Church of Scotland Manse
24 Aird
Benbecula
HS7 5LT
September 2026

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, we are a few days away from the Autumn Equinox and today we are certainly experiencing the windy, wet weather often associated with the equinoxes.

We are also experiencing winds of change within the congregation. Rev. Sigrid Marten has been elected as the first Parish Minister of the united Charge of Uist and Barra. She was elected by a very decisive majority and her Call to the congregation has been sustained by the Presbytery of Cleir Eilean Ì. Sigrid has been a Parish Minister in a number of situations and most recently has served as the Associate Minister in St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh. She brings with her a wide range of experience in Ministry.

Sigrid's induction has been fixed for Saturday 14th November at 12 noon in Clachan Church. That time should (weather and Cal Mac willing) allow members of the congregation from Barra to attend. The venue will allow the service to be livestreamed. The service itself will be conducted by the Moderator of Cleir Eilean Ì and there will be refreshments served in the Church Hall afterwards.

I hope there will be a good turnout that day to welcome Sigrid as she begins her ministry here and I know that you will welcome and support her.

On Monday 14th September the Kirk Session discussed strategy in relation to our buildings. This followed a "*Strategy Day*" on Saturday 25th April at Grinish which had been advertised for any to attend to participate with the Kirk Session in considering strategy for our buildings, finance and personnel. It was recognised that day that the congregation has neither the financial resources nor the personnel to keep all our buildings. So, in the months since April the Kirk Session has carefully considered various options. Meanwhile the spending of money on our buildings has not slowed and the cost of materials and the necessary expertise to carry out works keeps rising.

At its meeting on 14th September the Kirk Session took the decision that the former manses at Cuidhir (Barra), Daliburgh and Clachan, which are now surplus to our requirements, should be sold. The decision was also taken that we could no longer keep all four of the church buildings in Uist. It was decided that 2 Church buildings should be kept – one in the North of the Parish and one in the South. After a long discussion, which drew on many of the points made at our earlier strategy day and at subsequent follow-up discussions, it was decided that Howmore and Clachan church buildings should be retained.

Let me assure you that the decisions were not taken lightly and there was an understanding of how painful those decisions will be to many people. However, what might be seen as the ideal of keeping all our buildings has to be set against the reality of the large sums of money which would require to be spent on repairing and upgrading the church buildings at Daliburgh and Griminish. The congregation does not have that kind of money. We are in the situation of having a deficit. This is small, but it is only small because a substantial sum of money has recently been taken out of capital held on our behalf in the Church of Scotland's central funds to cover our on-going costs.

In the discussion the Kirk Session talked about the desirability of maintaining worship in the Daliburgh area and in Benbecula and investigations to that end will be pursued. Nothing which was decided by the Kirk Session this week will happen in a hurry, but progress needs to be made so that the Church in this Parish can continue.

The members of the Kirk Session are the Charity Trustees of the congregation, and they would be failing in their duty as Trustees if they do not exercise good stewardship of our assets. Alongside their duty as Charity Trustees members of the Kirk Session also have a duty as elders. As things stand at the moment a disproportionate amount of time is spent at meetings talking about money and property. The inevitable result is that there is too little time to spend on outreach and growth.

I am very aware that many of you will find some of the content of this letter uncomfortable. I would ask you all to pray for your Kirk Session in the difficult tasks they undertake and the difficult decisions they make. Thank you.

I look forward to seeing you at the induction.

Blessings,

Ann

Rev Ann Inglis, Interim Moderator and Locum, Uist and Barra