

Parish Profile of St Columba's, Stanley – November 2017



St Columba's Church is located in the heart of Stanley, a village by the River Tay, six miles north of Perth and approximately ten miles south of Birnam. The village was established around 1785 to house the workers of Stanley Mills during its manufacturing heyday, and St Columba's was established in 1898, principally to provide Episcopal services for the English workers employed at the Mills. Although the Mills closed in 1989, they remain today as part tourist attraction run by Historic Environment Scotland and part as 49 privately owned residential properties. Although the village is a rural community, its population very much looks towards the city of Perth. Indeed, the population of Stanley, currently around 1800, is expected to grow in the next fifteen years since the Perth & Kinross Development Plan anticipates the building of up to 270 new houses at sites in the village (the first 35 homes are currently under construction and a few are already occupied). The potential for mission in the village is enormous.

Originally St Columba's had its own resident clergy. However, in 1916 it came under the supervision of St Ninian's Cathedral. For a few years in the early Seventies it was served by St Mary's Birnam, before reverting to the responsibility of the Cathedral, and culminating with the services of a non-stipendiary priest specifically assigned to the church, until it once again became a dependent congregation of St Mary's, Birnam in 2014 on the appointment of the Rev. Shona Boardman. St Columba's congregation is small, but committed. We are mainly a mature group, but with one or two younger families who come occasionally. With newcomers entering the village, this situation may change. Currently there is a Eucharist service each month on the 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays, the celebrant being organised through the Diocesan Office. We have a Lay Reader licensed to administer the Reserved Sacrament. Members of the congregation willingly, and frequently, contribute in leading the intercessions, music and readings. Due to the small numbers, it was the accepted tradition at St Columba's, going back further than the current membership, for all adult members to be appointed to the Vestry and an AGM was held and other meetings when necessary. Although we currently do not have a functioning Vestry, we do have a Lay Representative and PVG Co-ordinator, and appropriate information regarding this role is displayed in the church. Refreshments are served at the end of the service, allowing a time of fellowship and genuine concern for one another.

St Columba's values its good ecumenical relations with the Church of Scotland, with joint activities during Holy Week, Remembrance Sunday and at Christmas. Unfortunately the Parish Church had to be closed almost a year ago due to the building suffering significant structural decay, and so the Church of Scotland congregation now meets fortnightly in the Village Hall. Consequently St Columba's is the only functioning church building offering a Christian presence within the village. There have been some informal discussions regarding the possibility of "building sharing", which would be appreciated by many members of both congregations. However, at present St Columba's has neither kitchen nor toilet facilities. The community-based Stanley Development Trust (SDT) have met with Diocesan representatives, along with the former Bishop and Primus, with a view to purchase the land on which the semi-derelict St Columba's Church Hall stands, to be encompassed within their long-term project to create a Sports Hub for the village, the facilities of which would be available for use by those worshipping on Sundays. SDT are currently seeking external funding for this venture. Such an interactive vision between the community and the church congregations in the village represents a potential bridge between church and community for 21st Century mission within Stanley. Were there to be funding made available sooner than the building of the Sports Hub for toilets and a basic kitchen, then both church congregations could enjoy worshipping in a building with the required facilities in order to enhance our Christian witness to the village.