

THE DIOCESE OF ARGYLL AND THE ISLES

PILGRIM PEOPLE

A Vision and Strategy for the 21st Century



"Faithful to its roots, fearless in mission, and fit for the 21st century."

The Theology of the Path

From the earliest days, the Christian journey has been shaped by the footsteps of Jesus. He walked the roads of Galilee and the hill paths of Judea, entering villages, blessing homes, crossing lakes, and meeting people along the way. His ministry was a pilgrimage of presence – revealing the nearness of God not in temples alone, but in the everyday places where people lived, worked, and hoped. When Jesus called his disciples, he called them to walk with him. Their learning happened on the road: in conversations shared while travelling, in moments of encounter, in the quiet between destinations. To follow Jesus, then and now, is to enter a way of life that moves with him – trusting, listening, and allowing his company to shape us. Pilgrimage expresses this way of discipleship. It reminds us that faith is not static but lived in motion, and that Christ continues to meet his people on the paths they travel. As we seek to discern the soul of our diocese, we do so as followers of the One who still journeys with us, leading us deeper into the life of God.

Our Diocesan Soul

The Diocese of Argyll and The Isles is a place of sacred landscape and living faith – a network of mainland and island communities bound together by water, history, and the Spirit of God.

Across centuries, this land has shaped and been shaped by pilgrimage: by saints and seekers who set out in faith, crossing lochs and mountains to bring the light of Christ to the western coasts and islands of Scotland.

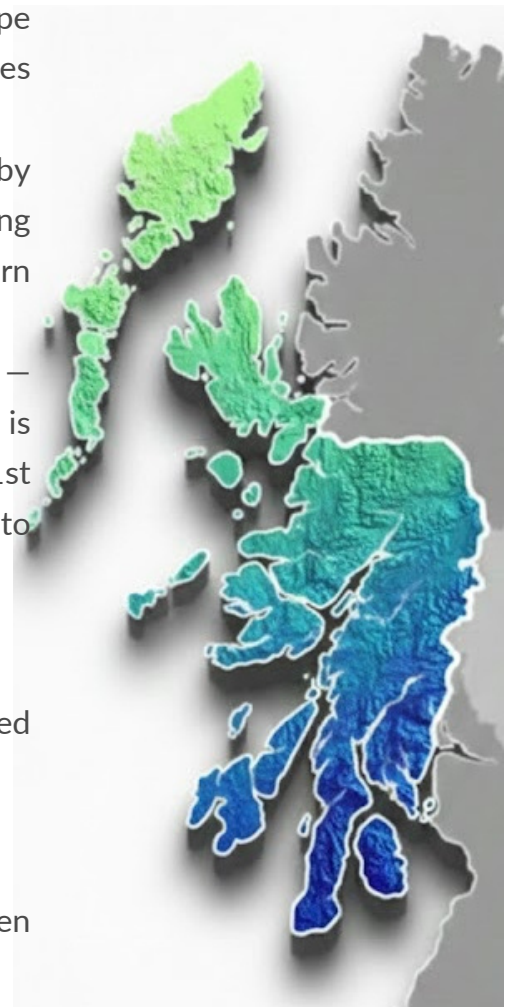
In their footsteps, we too are called to be a pilgrim people – faithful, hopeful, and ready to move where God leads. Our task is to discern and develop the soul of the diocese, fit for the 21st century: a soul rooted in our landscape and heritage, yet alive to the Spirit's call for today.

Bound by Water & Spirit:

We are a network of mainland and island communities connected by history and the Spirit of God.

A Legacy of Movement:

From saints crossing lochs to modern seekers, this land has been shaped by those willing to move where God leads.



OUR VISION

"To be a pilgrim people, walking together in faith, making Christ known across Argyll and The Isles—a diocese alive to the Spirit, confident in its calling, and creatively using its gifts of people and place for the flourishing of God's Kingdom."

Pilgrimage: Our Heritage and Our Way

Pilgrimage is both our story and our practice.

From the early Christian saints – Columba, Moluag, Brendan, and their companions – to those who today walk to Iona, Cumbrae, or other holy sites, pilgrimage has shaped the soul of this diocese. It has always been a movement of faith, discovery, renewal and transformation.

To be a pilgrim people means:

- **Journey:** Willing to move physically, spiritually, and institutionally toward God's future.
- **Encounter:** Meeting God and one another anew along the way.
- **Transformation:** Allowing the journey to change us and renew our mission.

The diocese will:

- Encourage pilgrimage as a spiritual discipline across all ages and contexts.
- Develop local and regional pilgrim routes linking churches, sacred sites, and communities.
- Foster partnerships with heritage, environmental, and ecumenical bodies to promote pilgrimage as both spiritual and cultural renewal.
- Embed the language and practice of pilgrimage within worship, discipleship, and diocesan gatherings.



"Pilgrimage is not a retreat from the world – it is a journey through it, seeking God in the midst of creation and community."

Core Values

Our journey as a pilgrim diocese is guided by five interwoven values:



Pilgrimage and Presence – embracing journey, encounter, and change, while remaining rooted in our distinctive places and communities.



Intentional Discipleship – nurturing confident, reflective, and growing faith for all.



Stewardship of People and Place – honouring what we have been given, and using it imaginatively for mission.



Creativity and Courage – being open to the Spirit's leading and ready to imagine new ways of being Church.



Community and Collaboration – walking together, sharing leadership, and supporting one another across distance.



Strategic Aims

To live out our vision and values, the Diocese of Argyll and The Isles will focus on four key aims.

A. Deepening Discipleship

- Promote the idea of discipleship as a lifelong pilgrimage.
- Develop formation pathways for clergy and lay people, blending study, pilgrimage, and spiritual practice.
- Encourage local prayer and learning communities to share faith stories and explore vocation.
- Offer diocesan pilgrimages (physical and online) as opportunities for renewal and learning.

B. Sustaining Ministry

- Reimagine patterns of ordained and lay ministry for sustainability across our geography.
- Support clergy and lay leaders through spiritual accompaniment, rest, and shared reflection.
- Create ministry teams and peer networks, embodying companionship on the road.
- Integrate the imagery of pilgrimage into ministry support and leadership development.

C. Stewarding Resources of People and Place

- Map diocesan assets, highlighting historic, spiritual, and pilgrimage-related sites.
- Encourage creative re-use of buildings as centres of spirituality, community, and creation care.
- Collaborate with local authorities, tourism, and ecumenical partners to sustain and promote sacred spaces.
- Celebrate the natural environment of Argyll and The Isles as an integral part of our Christian witness.

D. Growing Confidence and Connection

- Strengthen communication across the diocese through shared pilgrim stories, media, and celebration.
- Build a stronger diocesan identity grounded in shared pilgrimage – walking together, learning together, and rejoicing together.
- Engage with children, young people, and seekers through creative expressions of pilgrimage, story, and service.
- Use pilgrimage as a bridge between Church and community, faith and culture, past and future.

The Soul of the Diocese

Through prayer and conversation, we seek to discern the soul of Argyll and The Isles – the heart of who we are and who we are becoming.

This soul is marked by:



Hospitality – a generous welcome that reflects Christ's own.



Holiness – a rhythm of prayer and sacrament rooted in the beauty of creation.



Heritage – the living memory of faith carried by saints and pilgrims.



Hope – an openness to renewal, creativity, and transformation.

We are called to tend this soul – not to preserve a relic of the past, but to nurture a living tradition for the century ahead.



From Vision to Action

The journey of this strategy will unfold in three phases:

Phase 1: Discern (Year 1)



- Conduct diocesan-wide listening and mapping to discern our pilgrim identity and needs.
- Identify key pilgrimage routes, ministry patterns, and opportunities for collaboration.

Phase 2: Develop (Years 2–4)



- Form working groups around each strategic aim.
- Launch pilot projects in discipleship, digital ministry, pilgrimage routes, and shared ministry models.
- Host annual “Pilgrim Gatherings” to reflect, share stories, and renew our journey together.

Phase 3: Deliver and Renew (Years 5–6)



- Consolidate learning, embed successful practices, and review diocesan structures.
- Evaluate progress through both measurable outcomes and spiritual reflection.
- Prepare for the next cycle of vision and strategy – the next stage of the pilgrimage.



Oversight and Accountability

- A Bishop's Leadership Team will ensure strategic alignment and pastoral coherence.
- The Diocesan Standing Committee will oversee implementation, supported by lead coordinators for each aim.
- Reports will be presented annually to Diocesan Synod, ensuring shared ownership and transparency.



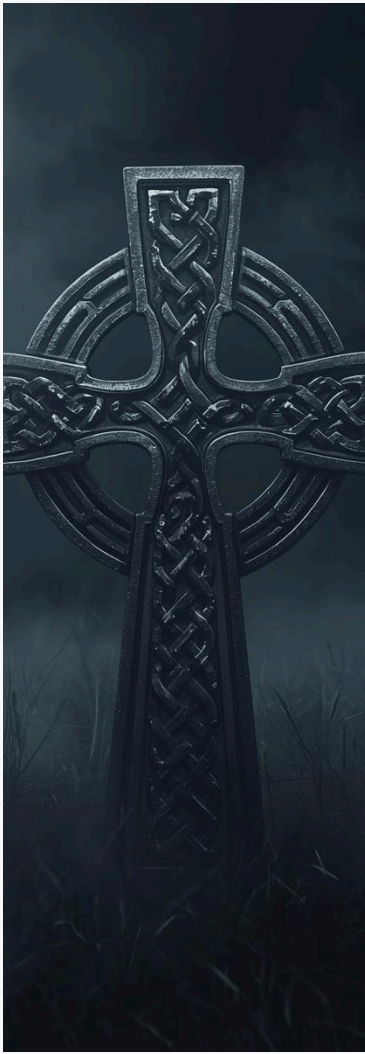
The Heart of our Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage calls us to movement – not restlessness, but holy restlessness: a willingness to follow Christ wherever he leads. It invites us to rediscover the holy places of our land and the sacred stories of our people.

Every congregation, every priest, every lay disciple is part of this journey. Whether walking an ancient route or serving faithfully in one place, we travel together towards the Kingdom of God.



A Prayer for Our Journey



God of the pilgrim path,

*You have walked with your people through the ages:
Across sea and mountain, through silence and song.*

*Bless the Diocese of Argyll and The Isles –
its islands and shores, its churches and people.*

Renew in us the spirit of pilgrimage:

Courage to set out, faith to keep walking,

And joy in the encounters along the way.

May our journey together reveal your Kingdom

And our life together reflect your love,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Conclusion

We set out as pilgrim people, not with every answer, but with hearts open to God's leading. In our travelling – across land and sea, through tradition and change – we trust that Christ walks beside us.

May this vision and strategy guide the Diocese of Argyll and The Isles as it continues its ancient yet ever-new journey:

“Faithful to its roots, fearless in mission, and fit for the 21st century.”