

## McTavish

St Michael's 2030



'I'm 54 and I'm a wheelchair user. My new electric scooter is so hi-tech, I like to kid on that I got it from a cyborg. My in-ear digital implants are great and anyway, everything you say scrolls up on my watch. I use my virtual reality headset to travel these days.

My good gossip is that the worship is relaxed and they've got something for everyone. There's live and online discussion groups after each service. It doesn't matter if you go physically or digitally, it still feels like a safe place, a place where it's OK not to be OK.

My wow is that it's all so accessible, especially since they removed the pews and organised that transport up the Brae.'

'OK, I'm 28 so I should have a place to live by now, but I don't. I get angry and drink too much. I've got what's in this rucksack plus my smartphone, and that's it. And before you ask – no, I can't remember when I last had my hair sorted. I hitched a lift and got chucked out in Linlithgow – yeah alright, I was arguing with the driver. Anyway, I saw a sign that says that St Michael's is kind to strangers or something, and I thought right, I'll definitely test that out.

Good gossip – the people were actually very welcoming. They gave me a cup of tea and spoke to me and seemed to be genuinely interested. That's the first bit of real kindness I've received for a while, which made me feel normal and accepted.

I like that in this lovely building, they seem to have space for counsellors, rehab and health services and support meetings. I might try some of them. My wow factor has to be the zip-line from the spire down to the High St.'

St Michael's 2030



## Alex

# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

by Alan D Miller, Session Clerk



If the past is a foreign country where they do things differently, the future is entirely uncharted. So how can we have any sensible conversation about what's to come – especially after a year when all our expectations have been turned upside down?

One answer lies in the ancient human habit of telling stories. We all tell stories about ourselves: to entertain, to share a little of ourselves with others, but also to make sense of how our lives have unfolded. Could stories give us some insight into our future?

That was the starting point of the '2030: Our Story' series of workshops we ran in the autumn of 2019, with over 150 St Michael's people taking part. We followed a process devised by Rev Russell McLarty, a minister and storyteller, to unleash our imaginations and free up our collective creativity!

In the workshops, people came together in small groups to create imaginary visitors to St Michael's in 2030. First, they gave their character a name and a bit of their story – as well as drawing them. Then they imagined the 'good gossip' the character was hearing about St Michael's in the year 2030, and what gave them the 'wow' factor.

That produced a cast of over 40 characters from all age groups and all parts of the world. But 40 is a lot of characters to work with so next, the workshop facilitators, Liam and I, spent a lovely evening combining these into 8 key characters who would represent everything the original characters had to say. Artist Jan Bee Brown brought the final 8 to glorious life.

We were ready to have a church conference to introduce the 8 characters, hear their stories and start to talk through what we could learn from them about what God was calling us to do over the next 10 years – but, of course, then Covid-19 struck and all plans were put on hold.

During lockdown, however, we took time to discuss what we were learning from the pandemic. That exercise produced some really interesting answers, many echoing themes already identified in the workshops. So we now have 9 characters to listen to, because how could we ignore Covid-19 and its impact on our world?

And here they are, in the order we looked at them during our online services in September and October. For all that the future remains uncharted, I have a powerful feeling that the Holy Spirit has inspired our imaginations to shed light on where we might go as a church. Our task now is to reflect, to pray, to plan, and to do!

## Shae

St Michael's 2030



'I'm gender neutral, around 30. I have long hair with a watch phone and Apple glasses. Of course, I'm carrying a reusable coffee cup.

My good gossip is that they've taken all the pews out to make the church a venue for lots of social activities as well as worship. The services can be snappy or contemplative. The worship band does live streaming across Scotland, and you can watch it whenever you like. But the best thing is the people – they have something about them and when they say 'God loves you', it's like they really mean it.

Wow factor – I've noticed that when people first enter the church, they often go 'wow'.'

## Covid19



'Yup, it's me. You hadn't even heard of me last year: now you can't stop talking about me. And by the way, don't bet against me still being around in 2030.

You've also been talking about what to do now I'm going about. Looks like you're planning to jump half-way to 2030 already! Blend online worship and groups with physical meetings; re-invent how you communicate with people; make your buildings more flexible spaces for everyone to use; work together to support the whole town; change how you do things. All sounds good, but will it happen? We viruses survive and thrive by changing constantly; that's our wow factor. We have our big idea, and we get on with it... all the time. Can you do that?'

'I'm 26 and I'm separated from the father of my two young children Noah and Nina. I've just been to the Food Bank and to Toddlers.

My good gossip is about the great help I get from the Food Bank and the Clothes Bank whenever I'm struggling. There are always people around to share your problems and to pray with you. Cross House is a great place for meeting other young mums. I like that the church is trying to be eco-friendly; maybe I could get involved and help them do more of that.

My wow factor is all the interactive information when you go into the church – they've even got on-screen story-bots that chat to the children and let the children shape the story.'

St Michael's 2030



## Anne

## Sammi

'I'm 37, and I'm here with my husband on holiday from South Sudan. I'm dressing down to fit in, that's why I'm wearing jeans and a T-shirt.

— I was interested in what I heard about St Michael's through social media before we came. The warm welcome and the friendly atmosphere are almost as impressive as the history. And your app is so interactive and easy to use! I can't believe how much is going on here: I always thought your churches over here were pretty dead. Your café and shop are lovely, and it's great how you keep the sound in with the glass screens and stuff – they don't disturb the sense of peace at all.'

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'I'm 34. I came here from Bulgaria a few years ago on a work visa. I started off in care homes but now I'm training to be a speech therapist. I love my technology, but I worry about these kids with their Google implants. Quite a few of my clients get great support from people at St Michael's.

For instance, one goes to the Memory Wheelchair Disco. I've started coming to things and I've noticed that the people seem very contented and friendly. I loved the Time of Stillness – well ok, also I liked the look of that guy who was there last week. We couldn't talk but we've FaceZoomed since...

My wow was coming to a concert in the church. I love that really old music, The Greatest Hits of Queen. The orchestra were brilliant, especially when the Freddie Mercury hologram came on. It was great being able to wander around in that wonderful space with nothing in the way.'

## Kristina

St Michael's 2030



## Ian

'I'm in my 70's but I'm still actively involved in St Michael's. Sometimes I help lead services.

Good gossip: St Michael's is steeped in history, and the church is welcoming. The town is growing. Our young minister is attracting more young people and the services are less formal. The services are streamed which is good, though I've noticed some people are getting out of the habit of coming together.

Wow factor: the Cross House drop-in centre is accessible to all, through the amazing glass-fronted extension. Church on Sundays remains in traditional form. That sponsored golf buggy up the Kirk Brae is just what I need these days.'

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## Harry

'Hey, I'm Harry and I'm 12. I'm wearing a hoodie and my favourite hover shoes, and I'm carrying a football. Oh yeah, did I say that my hoodie has built-in wi-fi that interacts with all the tech in the church? It's cool seeing my photos scrolling through their screens.

The church is a fun place to be with light shows, DJ Adam leading the worship, the church football club and IT group, and the solar panels. Sometimes I get fed up with my family and I go to see one of the thera-pets.

Wow factor: the prayer pods hanging in the church, plus the church extension has turned it into more of a community centre, with a gym and café.'

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