



The Parish Church of LINLITHGOW ST MICHAEL'S

Recognised as a Scottish Charity No. SCO16185



Parish Profile

Knowing Christ better

Serving Him together

Making Him known to others

www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk

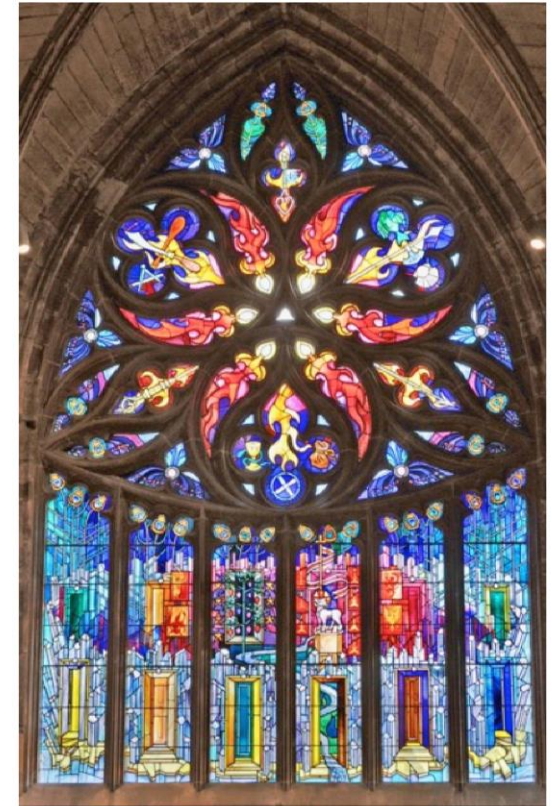
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Introducing ourselves

We are a forward-looking church family at the heart of the vibrant community of Linlithgow, privileged to worship God in an outstanding church building and to share it with others. Our purpose is summed up in our mission statement “Knowing Christ better; serving Him together; making Him known to others”, and is developed in several new initiatives through our 2020 Vision for the 5 year period from 2015.

A church has stood on this site, next to Linlithgow Palace, since at least 1242; the current building originated in the 15th-16th centuries. Yet this is a historic building fit for the future, with modern lighting and audio-visual technology, a stunning Pentecost window from 1992 and all topped by the dramatic ‘Crown of Thorns’ spire.



Most importantly, it is the home of a fellowship of forgiven people who seek to grow together in our Christian faith and witness. We have around 1,350 members and adherents, of whom over 400 are actively engaged in our worship and work.

Our parish covers Linlithgow town centre, and southern and eastern parts of the town and outlying areas. Both the church itself and the church hall / Cross House complex are very much in demand from schools and many other community groups.

The current vacancy arose from Rev Dr Stewart Gillan's translation to St John's Renfield Church in Glasgow. Led by the minister, the ministry team includes Trish Archibald, youth and family outreach worker, and Rev Thom Riddell, auxiliary minister. The post of associate minister has been vacant since autumn 2017. Our ministry is further supported by our active Kirk Session, our organist and music coordinator Matt Edwards, and our friendly church office.

This is an unrestricted charge. Kirk Session has voted to depart from the Church of Scotland's traditional position, and we welcome applications from all suitably qualified ministers, including those in civil partnerships or same sex marriages. We recognise a need for renewed purpose and direction, particularly in mission and outreach, and we look forward to working with a new minister who can help us move forward where God leads us in the next phase of our journey.





Knowing Christ better

*“Sing to the Lord, for He has done glorious things;
Let this be known to all the world.”*

We enjoy a great variety of ways to **worship** God together. Currently, on most Sundays we have 3 morning services:

- A family service at 9:30 (typical attendance about 150);
- a more traditional service at 11:00 (attendance roughly 80). Both these services take place in the church building, with many people sharing tea/coffee in between; and
- an informal family service in Springfield Primary School, mostly led by elders, is held at 09:45 and attracts about 40 people.

On special occasions, and during the summer, we all worship together in the church building. Quarterly communion services are held at 9:30 (family service) and 11:00, and at 3:00pm in the church hall.

Sunday evening services take place occasionally, involving interactive forms of worship. Our weekday worship life increasingly focuses on specific groups. Examples include: Seedlings on a mid-week morning for pre-school children and their carers; a Time of Stillness held weekly in the church building; an annual Service of Memory and Thanksgiving; and a Blue Christmas service for those who find the season difficult.





Christmas exemplifies St Michael's place at the heart of the community: alongside our own special times of worship, we host services for Linlithgow Academy and 2 primary schools, and a concert by the Linlithgow Reed Band. The Lessons and Carols, Christingle and Watchnight services are all very popular: around 700 attended the 2018 Christingle service.

Remembrance and civic services also attract considerable interest from the community (the town's War Memorial is located inside the church). Strong ecumenical relations are expressed in a shared programme of Holy Week services, culminating in a joint service on Cockleroy Hill at 9am on Easter Sunday.



Worship in the church, mostly using CH4, is supported by organ and piano and, at 11am, the choir. Services have been led by various instrumental groups, and Matt Edwards is keen to widen participation further. Our technology is also developing: a moveable screen (used at 9:30) will shortly be replaced by remote-controlled cameras and fixed display screens.





In theological terms, we are a broad church, informed by a wide variety of faith journeys. Our **Christian learning** together largely follows the lectionary; the Sunday Club follow related themes and share their learning with the grown-ups during the 9:30 service. A large Boys' Brigade company and active Girls' Brigade company complement the work of the Sunday Club, Bible Class and Youth Fellowship. Adult Christian learning also takes place in house groups and in occasional events addressing issues of life or work. We have in past years organised a number of Alpha courses.

Communication is vital in a large church. Our website and Facebook page are updated daily. 'Crosswind' magazine is produced by an editorial team and distributed to all church households with quarterly communion invitations; its high production quality is supported by advertising revenue. The clerk publishes a summary of key discussion points and decisions after each Kirk Session meeting, via the weekly bulletin.

We are increasingly encouraging shared and individual **prayer**. A monthly prayer diary highlights specific issues day by day. Shared prayer takes place every Wednesday in the church and at a monthly Saturday prayer breakfast. Members of the prayer team are available after every service in the church to pray with anyone who approaches them.

Our challenges include: addressing the gradual decline in numbers participating in worship, which is only partially offset by engagement in new forms of worship; seeking to deepen faith and fellowship, and drawing out and supporting gifts – while many people are active in the life and work of the church, we are not yet an all-member ministry.



Serving Him together

“Love your neighbour as you love yourself.”



The **Guild**, with 50 members, meets fortnightly and is very active.

The **Society of Friends of St Michael's**, founded in 1942 and with members drawn from the congregation, the parish and wider afield, has supported many improvements to the church building. The minister is an honorary member of the committee of the Society.

We have developed several means of meeting the needs of **older people**. These include:

- 'Thursday for Coffee' in Cross House;
- a monthly knitting group;
- The Sunshine Singers and Sunshine Helpers who interact with inpatients at the local St Michael's Hospital;
- Leading dementia-sensitive worship monthly at Linlithgow Care Home;
- The monthly Sunshine Sing-Along in the church hall attracts over 50 people living with memory loss and carers, for a light lunch and community singing for memory.



We encourage members to engage in **social justice** work. St Michael's people are very involved in the West Lothian Foodbank and in Bethany Christian Trust's Edinburgh winter shelter. We co-founded Linlithgow Young People's Project with St John's evangelical church in 1991, and continue to support the Project. We also seek to provide information about local and national services via the dedicated website www.helpcentre.org.uk. Community groups use our buildings for events ranging from civic events and professional concerts to AA group meetings.

Our connections with the **church worldwide** have been enriched by relationships with Holy Family Church in Reineh, Nazareth and Eunpha Church in South Korea. Members support a mission family in Japan who have direct family connections with our congregation. We engage in activities such as Souper Sunday and writing Christmas cards for prisoners of conscience. Several young people from the congregation have been supported in voluntary work overseas. St Michael's people lead local fundraising for Christian Aid.

Amid so much activity, one challenge lies in the on-going work of building deeper fellowship. We are in the process of re-establishing elders' support groups, aiming to increase relational skills. A wider challenge is to involve young people in service, whether as recipients or in delivery of care.



We don't need no sat nav, we won't go
astray,
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Making Him known to others

“You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.”

In our 2020 Vision, we identified **outreach** to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with children, young people and families as a priority. Trish Archibald joined us in July 2018 as our youth and family outreach worker, and brings a wealth of skills and experience to the [role](#).



Alongside Seedlings, we run Messy Church around 4 times a year, attracting at least 50 children and parents. We also offer a summer holiday club and an in-service day club. All this builds on excellent relationships with local schools: our ministry team are chaplains for the 2 primary schools in the parish, and share the chaplaincy for Linlithgow Academy with fellow clergy in the town.



In order to develop relationships from an early point, we seek to link couples who plan to marry in the church, and parents who wish to have a child baptised, with members of the church; afterwards, a dedicated elder undertakes follow-up work with baptism families. Over 100 children use our twice-weekly Parents and Toddlers group.





We have developed and run several large-scale **events** in the church to share aspects of our life and faith more widely. These include full-scale dramatic productions such as 'Joseph'; a nativity pantomime (2013); a passion play musical (2016); and 'Exiles' (March 2019). Festivals of Christmas trees in 2017 and 2018 were supported by many community organisations and each drew over 1,000 visitors, as did the 'Brides of St Michael's' display of wedding dresses earlier in 2017.

The church building itself offers tremendous opportunities to share the Good News. Our '**open church**' volunteers warmly welcome over 30,000 visitors annually, presenting the church as a worshipping community, not just a beautiful building.

Despite the emphasis on outreach in our 2020 Vision, this remains a major challenge for us. The gradual and on-going decline in active engagement has not been halted as we hoped it would. Our average age continues to increase. We are recognising the challenging lesson that outreach starts from who we are as much as from things we do. This is undoubtedly an area for further development in a new phase of ministry.



More about us

“Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.”

We have 1,278 **members** and 79 adherents as of December 2018. Of these, over 400 are actively engaged in the life and work of the church family. Over the past 5 years, 45 new members have joined (mostly by certificate of transference) and 141 have been taken off the roll, primarily through death. In 2018 we baptised 15 children and 1 adult, and held 15 weddings and 29 funerals.

We have a unitary constitution. All 98 **elders** are members of Kirk Session (trustees) and most also visit members and adherents in a geographical district. We are currently piloting a model where an elder and a designated visitor (non-elder) share responsibility for a larger, conjoined district. If approved, this will gradually reduce the number of elders and facilitate the appointment of new elders specifically for leadership roles.





Session meets at least 9 times a year. Much of its work, however, is carried out through teams: Stewardship and Finance, and Property, both reporting primarily through the Business team; Communications; Education; Fellowship; International; Mission and Outreach; Music and Worship; Open Church; Pastoral Care; and Social Justice. In addition, a Co-ordinating Team, comprising the team leaders and the ministry team, meets occasionally to promote the effective working of Session and its team structure. The minister is an ex officio member of the Co-ordinating, Business, and Music and Worship teams. We're keen to share the work round: for instance, each of the last 3 session clerks served for 5 years, as planned.

Our total **income** for 2018 was £333k, giving rise to a small surplus of £13k. Our ministry and mission allocation for 2019 is £165k. Our end-of-year figures and 2019 budget are [attached](#) and our annual report for 2018 will be available shortly.



Our friendly and efficient **church office** is headed by Val Wood, part-time secretary, supported by a team of volunteers.

Much of our day-by-day activity is based in **Cross House** and the church hall. Cross House stands on Linlithgow Cross and is, like the church itself, a Grade 'A' listed building. A new hall and kitchenette were added behind it roughly 30 years ago. While all these facilities are well used, the kitchen and toilets require upgrading to meet modern standards. Significant property issues have also been identified with Cross House. Kirk Session is currently reviewing the options.



The excellent schools and breadth of amenities make Linlithgow a highly desirable place to live, work and play. Further statistical information is attached.

Our **parish** is home to nearly 8,000 people. Of these:

- Almost 1 in 4 is aged between 25-44;
- 37% claim allegiance to the Church of Scotland;
- Close to half of all adults are educated to at least degree standard;
- 80% of homes are owner-occupied.

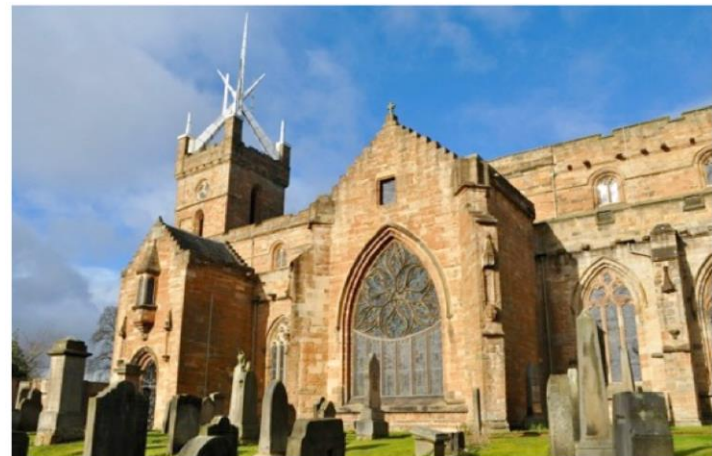
Where are we now?

In 2015 we adopted our [2020 Vision](#), aiming to undertake various actions with a view to becoming a 'WELL' church – Welcoming, Evangelising, Loving and Learning. A recent [review](#) of progress identified that most of the planned actions have been taken forward, though with mixed degrees of impact.

While Messy Church and Seedlings have been very successful, more needs to be done to achieve our overall aim of attracting more children, families and young people. Turnover in the ministry team also contributed to a sense of drift. To address this, Kirk Session worked with a facilitator during the autumn of 2018 and has re-committed itself to move forward together in renewed unity and purpose. One tangible fruit of this process is a [statement of values](#).

Through all this, we remain a large and active church family with many people enthusiastically committed to many forms of service in Christ's name. What we have gained from recent experience is a new desire to grow together in our faith and witness as we share in the work of God's kingdom in Linlithgow.

“To Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations.”





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What about you?

Every minister brings a unique combination of strengths and gifts. Naturally, we hope to find a minister who can inspire with clear preaching and thoughtful worship leadership, who has a heart for building supportive relationships and providing wise counsel, and who can self-manage effectively.

However, as a large and active church in search of renewed vision, deeper faith and persuasive outreach, we particularly hope to find a minister who can work with us to discern God's purposes for St Michael's and to engage us all in living out the Good News in word and deed in Linlithgow and beyond. Sensitive change management will help us find new ways to combine the historic and the innovative in worship and witness. Skills in leadership, delegation and organisation will be invaluable to enable the gifts and skills of the whole church community to flourish as we work towards knowing Christ better, serving Him together and making Him known to others.

A person specification is [attached](#).





Where you would live



St Michael's Manse, Kirkgate, Linlithgow EH49 7AL sits in close proximity to the church and to Cross House, yet retains the privacy that we recognise our minister deserves. Although situated in a conservation area, it is a detached house of modern construction built in 1975 and extended in 2004.

The accommodation consists of 2 public rooms, 4 bedrooms (2 with en-suite facilities), 1 bathroom with shower, 1 cloakroom with wc., 1 study, 1 kitchen with large dining area, and 1 utility room. The house also benefits from a detached garage, a garden to the front, sides and rear of the property, a children's play house, and full gas central heating. There is space to park two cars.

The property has been well maintained and decorated, with full gas central heating. Some renovation work is required to the kitchen units. The original building windows have secondary glazing fitted which is in the process of being changed to sealed unit double glazed units.