



**LINLITHGOW AND
AVON VALLEY**
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



Parish Profile – Vacancy for a Team Minister

Linlithgow and Avon Valley
Church of Scotland

2025/6



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Linlithgow & Avon Valley Parish Church

A New Church. A Shared Vision. An Exciting Opportunity.

Are you called to help shape something new?

Linlithgow & Avon Valley Parish Church is a recently united, forward-looking congregation, bringing together four historic worshipping communities into one vibrant parish. Rooted in tradition yet stepping boldly into the future, this is a place where faith, community, and mission are being reimagined together. (linavonchurch.org.uk)

Why This Charge?

This is not simply a vacancy - it's a unique opportunity to lead a growing, evolving church at a defining moment in its journey.

- A new union church, full of energy, possibility, and openness to change
- Multiple worshipping communities offering diversity in style and context
- A congregation eager to grow deeper in discipleship and wider in mission
- Strong foundations with space for innovation, creativity, and leadership

A Parish at the Heart of Its Community

Set across Linlithgow and the Avon Valley, the parish blends historic towns, rural villages, and expanding communities.

You'll find:

- Strong connections with local schools, care homes, and community groups
- A visible, active church presence across multiple locations
- A genuine desire to serve, support, and reach beyond church walls

This is a parish that understands church as more than Sunday worship - it is about presence, relationship, and transformation.

Worship & Church Life

Worship is regular, varied, and accessible, with services held across different venues each week. (linavonchurch.org.uk)

- A mix of traditional and contemporary expressions
- Opportunities for fresh expressions and new gatherings
- Established patterns alongside openness to new ideas and approaches

A Church for All Ages

There is a clear commitment to:

- Children, youth, and families, nurturing faith across generations
- Building an inclusive and welcoming church culture

The congregation is ready to support and grow ministries that engage the next generation.

A Strong Team Around You

You won't be alone.

- Dedicated elders, volunteers, and leaders
- A shared belief that ministry belongs to the whole church
- People ready to serve, support, and step forward in faith

Together, you will discern and lead what comes next.

Who Are We Looking For?

Someone who will:

- Lead with vision, humility, and faith
- Embrace change and help shape a united identity
- Encourage others to discover and use their gifts
- Engage warmly with both church and wider community

Above all, we seek a minister who will walk with us as we grow into the church God is calling us to be.

What We Offer

- A supportive, committed congregation
- The opportunity to lead a significant, developing parish
- Space to innovate, build, and inspire; a chance to make a lasting impact in a new chapter of church life

Could This Be Your Next Step?

If you are excited by the thought of building unity across communities, growing a church rooted in Christ and open to the Spirit and of leading through change with hope
We would love to hear from you.

Come and be part of a new story — one church, many communities, growing together.



Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to read our Parish Profile! We are looking for a new Minister to help us realise the potential in our congregation and parish, and to help share the Good News of Jesus Christ with everyone in our region.

There is much to celebrate and build upon. We are one of the few Church of Scotland parishes to witness numerical growth in recent years with around 1600 Members and a further 30-40 Adherents. We celebrate a variety of worship styles - ranging from traditional to contemporary and from contemplative to digital - and have dozens of missional, discipleship, and pastoral projects operating throughout the week. We have ambitious plans to renovate our buildings, and to transform Cross House in Linlithgow into a vibrant community hub.

Yet we also have challenges. Until our recent Union, a significant part of our parish had been without full time ministry for over a decade. While we have contact with hundreds of families, we are not seeing enough follow through into discipleship and worship. While we have experienced growth in recent years, our demographic is still older than is sustainable.

There are many positives to applying for this role. The post would offer you the opportunity to undertake your own ministry and mission within the parish, but with the help of an experienced and supportive team. While there are many missional opportunities not currently being met, there is nevertheless a significant number of resources to draw upon, and you will be well supported in your ministry. You will also be living in a newly refurbished Manse.

The possibilities are great, and we now need the right person to join us in making them happen and seeing God's Kingdom extend in our region.

We hope that the information in this profile is helpful, and we pray for God's guidance as you consider our parish and the future of your ministry.

Liam Fraser, Thom Riddell and the Kirk Session of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland.

THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION AND STATEMENT OF VALUES.

Our plans for the parish are founded on two key documents: the Five Marks of Ministry and our Statement of Values. The Five Marks of Mission originated within the Anglican Communion, and have now been adopted by the Church of Scotland.

The Five Marks of Mission are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
3. To respond to human need by loving service.
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The Marks cover all aspects of mission and are a clear indication that mission must be holistic, encompassing evangelism as well as concrete acts of service and social justice. You can see how we are seeking to fulfil the Five Marks of Mission in the Appendices. The Five Marks of Mission are only able to be met, however, because we are committed to a number of values. These values make us who we are and enable us to work with God's mission to Linlithgow and the Avon Valley. Following consideration by Elders in February 2025 and approval by the Kirk Session in March 2025, the following set of Values is intended to provide the framework for our behaviour and attitudes. These Values are intended not only for the Elders, but also for all Members and Adherents of the Parish:

1. **Faithful** – Jesus is at the centre of all we do, discuss and seek to achieve
2. **Listening** – by listening to others we can truly respond to their insights and needs
3. **Honesty** – we tell the truth however inconvenient
4. **Respect** – we will talk to each other, not about each other
5. **Encouragement** – we will acknowledge and support each person's contribution
6. **Mission** – we will focus on our primary mission and not be side-tracked by well-meaning yet trivial issues.

We have still to develop a detailed Vision for the parish and this is something to which you will be invited to contribute. Work on Strategic Planning is ongoing – see the link at Annex 5.

TEAM MINISTRY

The parish of Linlithgow and Avon Valley came into being on 1 November 2024 as a union of the former Avonbridge, Linlithgow St Michael's, Linlithgow St Ninian's Craigmalen and Torphichen congregations. Torphichen Kirk and Avonbridge Church has been a linked charge for several decades. The Presbytery Plan for Linlithgow and Avon Valley allows for two full-time Ministers of Word and Sacrament and two non-stipendiary Ministers. Two of these posts are currently occupied, with the Rev Dr Liam Fraser holding the first full-time ministry post and the Rev Thom Riddell filling the first non-stipendiary post.

Liam is Minister of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland, and Moderator of the Kirk Session. He was the first person to be ordained as a Pioneer Minister within the Church of Scotland, previously serving as Campus Minister at the University of Edinburgh. From 2019 to 2024 he was Minister of St Michael's Parish Church, Linlithgow and since 2024 has been Minister of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland. He has served in a variety of roles within the Church, including Convener of the Theological Forum. He has also published widely and is the author of *Mission in Contemporary Scotland*.

Thom is Auxiliary Minister at Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland. He was born in Airdrie and has lived in Linlithgow since 1980. Thom is a Chartered Chemical Engineer, taking early retirement in 2008 from working full-time as an Occupational Safety Specialist for Ineos (previously BP) in Grangemouth. Having served Christ in various ways such as BB officer, Sunday School teacher, elder and lay Reader, he was ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in 1993. He served at Livingston Old before coming to St. Michael's in 1994.

Thom has served as Clerk of the Presbytery of West Lothian and Convener of the General Assembly's Social Care Council, which supports and delivers social care services through CrossReach. He is currently Convener of the Faith Impact Committee of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian. He is also a Workplace Chaplain supporting the staff at the CrossReach Care Home in Polmont, and at the Church of Scotland offices in Edinburgh.

We meet weekly as a team with our locally employed Youth and Families Worker led by Liam and supported by our Church Secretary. It is our expectation that our new colleague will join us for these weekly planning meetings (which are usually quite fun!).

It is hoped that our new colleague will take a particular lead in the Western part of our parish, as well as progressing some of the opportunities identified in our recent mission audits. Nevertheless, we look forward to sharing ministry with you across the parish, including regular worship, funerals, weddings and baptisms.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

In line with the Five Marks of Mission, our Values Statement, and the Basis of Team Ministry, we are looking for someone with the following qualities:

Faith

We occupy a spiritual office and we are therefore looking for a colleague who places Christ at the centre of their life and is committed to personal prayer and Bible study.

Mission

You must be someone who - in the words of our ordination vows - longs for the salvation of all people, and cares deeply for the material, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of our parishioners. We have a long tradition in our parish of balancing evangelism with concrete acts of service and social justice and it is hoped that you will share the same commitment to holistic mission.

Character

We are a supportive and good-humoured team, and we hope that you will be a kind, thoughtful, and skilled colleague who works with us to achieve our shared objectives. You must be ambitious without being competitive and entrepreneurial while being an excellent team-player. You must also be comfortable with our statement of values, which applies to all office holders, volunteers and members.

Theology

Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland is a very broad church, ranging from conservative evangelical to progressive liberal, and from charismatic to traditional Reformed Presbyterian. We enjoy a high degree of unity and mutual understanding and wish to maintain this. As such, you must be comfortable relating to, and empathising with, a wide range of theological and liturgical views, while remaining true to orthodox Christianity as expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

Skills

You must be able to lead public worship and life events such as funerals and weddings to a high standard, with preaching that is clear, engaging, and winsome. It is preferable that you are able to lead both traditional and contemporary forms of worship, although this is not essential. You must be pastorally sensitive and be able to console, guide and relate to a wide spectrum of personalities. While we are fortunate to have wonderful administrative support from our Session Clerk and Church Secretary, it is also imperative that you are organised and are able to handle your own diary and commitments.

You may find the Basis of Team Ministry and the Basis of Union as well as the Basis of Reviewable Charge documents in Annex 2.

ELDERS

Following the creation of the new parish in November 2024, there is a total of 136 Elders of which 37 have been appointed as Trustee Elders. The Trustee Elders form the Kirk Session which meets monthly. The other Elders continue to be involved on the various Committees which have responsibility for the wide range of functions and activities across the parish as well as visiting members in their various Districts.

THE PARISH

Linlithgow and Avon Valley is well situated in the Central Belt and benefits from good transport links.

Linlithgow is the largest settlement within the parish. The 2022 Census indicated that the population of Linlithgow had declined to 12,517, a 7% decrease from the 2011 Census. In contrast, the population of West Lothian increased by 3.52% overall in that period. It appears to be that it is in the age group from 19 to 29 where the biggest difference occurs. There were only half as many 20-year-olds in Linlithgow in 2022 as there were in 2011. This may well be a reflection of the unaffordability of housing within the town.

Linlithgow is considered to be attractive - both to live in and to visit. Linlithgow Palace is a major visitor attraction and St Michael's Church is adjacent. The Palace has 85,000 visitors a year and perhaps 25,000 of them also visit the church, which is open every day thanks to a team of volunteers. As is the case with the church, Cross House is an A-listed building and provides a range of meeting spaces for use by the church and the wider community. We have aspirations to convert Cross House to work as something of a hub for introducing visitors to historic Linlithgow, as well as providing a "house for the town". In addition, Longcroft Hall next to St Ninian's Craigmalen is also widely used by church groups and the community.

Set in beautiful countryside with plenty of opportunities for walking or exploring historic and prehistoric sites, **Torphichen** is a quiet village of around 700 people four miles south of Linlithgow. The Kirk was built in the 18th century on the nave of the Preceptory of the Knights Hospitaller of St John, their Scottish headquarters where James IV used to come and play cards with the knights. The transept and tower of the Preceptory still stand and contain an exhibition about the Order.

The village has a primary school which incorporates a nursery school; a pub and a community centre and is used for a variety of activities. All the children can participate in the annual Children's Gala Day. Secondary school pupils attend Linlithgow Academy. There is an active Community Council which produces the oldest monthly community council newsletter. A regular bus service goes to Linlithgow, Bathgate and Livingston and Linlithgow and Bathgate stations serve both the Edinburgh to Glasgow routes.

Westfield is a small village of approximately 180 houses. Together with the adjacent hamlet of Bridgehouse it was part of the former Torphichen Parish. There is a Primary School which shares a headteacher with Torphichen Primary and a small Community Hall - the Bridgehouse Hall - which holds regular events.

Avonbridge is located approximately 6 miles south of Falkirk and 4 miles west of Armadale, surrounded by farmland and open countryside. The population is around 500 residents, with a mix of long-established families and newer arrivals seeking a quieter lifestyle. Historically, Avonbridge was shaped by agriculture and coal mining, with several pits operating in the area during the 19th and early 20th centuries. While mining has ceased, the village retains a strong sense of heritage and community identity.

Local amenities include a primary school (Avonbridge Primary), a small convenience shop and a community café that serves as a social hub. Public transport is available via bus routes



connecting Avonbridge to Falkirk, Bathgate, and surrounding villages, though services are limited in frequency. The village is also accessible by road, with nearby links to the M8 and M9 motorways. Secondary education for Avonbridge pupils is provided at Braes High School in Falkirk, which serves several villages across the Braes area. The school is approximately 5 miles from Avonbridge and is accessible by school transport. While not among the most deprived areas nationally, rural isolation and limited infrastructure present challenges for residents, particularly those with lower incomes, mobility issues, or caring responsibilities. These factors may influence patterns of need and opportunity for community support.

Avonbridge Church also serves the neighbouring village of Standburn, which lies approximately 2 miles to the east. Standburn is significantly smaller than Avonbridge and is predominantly a farming community, with a quiet residential character and limited local amenities. It does, however, have a small primary school, Standburn Primary, which shares a head teacher with Avonbridge Primary as part of a joint leadership arrangement. Despite its size, Standburn maintains strong community ties and shares many social and pastoral connections with Avonbridge.

In the last few years, we have conducted community audits in Linlithgow, Torphichen and Avonbridge. Links to the reports of the main findings from these audits are featured in Annex 4.

WORSHIP

Worship lies at the heart of all that we do. It takes place in all four churches in the parish each Sunday, as well as there being an outreach service in Springfield Primary School most Sundays. Around 300 people attend on Sunday mornings across the parish and most of these services are available online. Also there are, at different sites, a participatory Zoom evening service, a reflective midweek service, a monthly contemporary evening service and a monthly care home service. Communion is celebrated regularly in the four churches and there are special services throughout the church year. Family-friendly Communion services are offered within St Michael's. In addition Home Communion is available to those who are housebound and also in the local care home. Where possible, we provide refreshments after worship.

The style of worship ranges from traditional to contemporary with the participation of the congregation to different degrees through prayers, readings, music - instrumentalists and singers - song writing, drama, visual art and leading worship.

St Michael's has a very active choir of between 20-30 led by the Director of Music and St Ninian's Craigmalen also has a choir. St Michael's has a network of screens which provide a useful channel of communication for information in advance of the service and facilitate viewing of the actual service.

The Session's Worship Team remit includes promoting and developing members' participation in services, eliminating barriers to worship and informing the ministers and Session about new

developments in worship which might be incorporated in our worship. We fully anticipate that new patterns will emerge from the new united parish; we are open to change and look forward to developments in this area.

In the parish, there were 21 baptisms in 2024, including a number of adult baptisms. Following baptism of infants, contact is maintained with families to encourage them to come along to church services and activities through Elder visits to deliver baptism anniversary cards and birthday cards. Cards are delivered to those living within the parish boundaries and posted to those who live outside the parish.

PASTORAL CARE

We have a Pastoral Care team comprising of the Ministry team, a convenor and six members. This team also oversees a larger number of Pastoral Visitors. The Pastoral Care Team develops and delivers pastoral care policies with the agreement of the Kirk Session.

Major roles of the team include training and overseeing Pastoral Visitors who visit those in the congregations requiring such a visit. The team also oversees a wide-ranging bereavement service including post funeral visits, bereavement support groups and individual support.

Other aspects of the pastoral care work include various aspects of the church's prayer ministry, organisation of Home Communion, delivering flowers and posies and sending out cards on various anniversaries. The team also organises two special services - a Service of Memory and Thanksgiving (for bereaved people) and a Blue Christmas service.

Both of the churches in Linlithgow have Members' Districts with Elders and/or District Visitors allocated to each District to provide a personal channel of communication. Elders are encouraged to visit their Districts on at least a quarterly basis in advance of Communion.

Our aim is to help everyone affiliated with the church to know Christ better; to become more like Jesus; to encourage lifelong growth together in our Christian faith and to serve our community. Our Discipleship team has members from each of our five worshipping congregations to provide input from and output to these different churches.

DISCIPLESHIP

- The team have oversight of six house groups, meeting on various days of the week, about half online and half in person. There are approximately 60-70 people involved in these groups. Two of these were started in the past year.
- A new group "Faith, Friends and Fizz" was launched a year ago to provide an opportunity for women to meet and is already attracting between 20-30 on a regular basis.
- An online prayer group was started in May, open to the whole parish.



- We have offered physical and digital resources for use during Lent and encouraged participation in Thy Kingdom Come (Ascension to Pentecost).
- We hope to encourage folk to recognise their gifts and take up various volunteering opportunities.
- We aspire to organise some informal topic-focused conversations around our faith in response to our recent questionnaire results.
- We hope to work with the other missional teams to make the best use of skills available.

The Guild

We have the largest Church of Scotland Guild in the country with one hundred members. We begin our session with a Joint Dedication Service and then meetings are held weekly from September to May with members being able to choose to attend at St Michael's and/or St Ninian's Craigmalen on alternate weeks. Faith is at the centre of all we do. The Leadership Teams at both venues work closely together as we seek to live out the Guild's motto "Whose we are and whom we serve."

YOUTH AND FAMILIES

We have provision during our Sunday morning services for children at each of our worship locations.

- Avonbridge, Springfield and Torphichen provide craft-type activities for any children who attend their services. Normally, there will be just one or two children attending these locations.
- St Ninian's Craigmalen offer Jesus Factor for the 2 or 3 children who attend there regularly. Jesus Factor is for children age 3-12 years, learning about the bible in a fun way through music, crafts, stories, games and animated films.
- St Michael's runs a Crèche in the St Katherine's Aisle in the church for families with children under the age of 5. Toys, books, jigsaws and sermon related crafts keep the little ones busy, allowing their grown-ups to take part in worship. We currently have a pool of 20 children attending crèche with an average of 5 children plus their families on any particular Sunday.
- St Michael's Sunday Club (for children in P1 – P6) and Bible Class (for young people in P7 – S2) meet for the first part of the service at the Kirk, exiting together and heading to Cross House following the all-age talk for Bible Stories, crafts, games and challenges. Currently around 30 children are registered for these groups, although average weekly attendance is around 5-10 children / young people.



- St Michael's Bible Class meet at Cross House during the Sunday morning Service. In recent months, we've had just 2 regular attendees, and quite often they have joined with the children of the Sunday Club rather than having a separate session of their own.
- Youth Fellowship for young people in S3 – S6 meets from 7pm – 9pm on Sunday evenings in Cross House. In the last year we have had 8 young people registered for Youth Fellowship although average attendance is nearer 3 each week. Albeit the group meets in Linlithgow, we are encouraging young people from across the parish to attend.

Seedlings is our church for Tots and Toddlers, which meets on Thursday mornings from 10am to 11am in the Kirk Hall, Cross House. Parents, Grandparents and Carers are encouraged to come along with their babies and Toddlers, no matter how little or loud, to sing action songs, listen to a short story, say a prayer and make a craft. There is also time for a chat and cuppa with friends. Around 4 - 6 families currently attend each week.

Messy Church is run in conjunction with St John's Church and takes place on 6 dates throughout the year. More recently we've had attendances ranging from 16 – 30. This coming year we are trialling running Messy Church in 3 different locations in Linlithgow. Two dates at Longcroft Hall, St Ninian's Craigmalen Church, 2 dates at the Kirk Hall, Cross House, St Michael's and 2 dates at Low Port Centre, St John's Church.

Our youth organisations are as follows:

- **1st Linlithgow Girls' Brigade** (6 girls currently registered) which runs on Wednesdays during school term time in the Longcroft Halls, St Ninian's Craigmalen Church. The company comprises of Explorers (P1 – P3), Juniors (P4 – P7) and Brigaders (S1 upwards).
- **2nd Linlithgow Boys' Brigade** (30 boys) which runs on Thursdays during school term time in Cross House, St Michael's Church. The Company comprises of Anchors (P1 – P3), Juniors (P4 – P6) and Company and Senior Section (P7 – S6).

For young children we also provide:

- Our Toddler group which meets on Tuesday and Friday mornings during school term time, in the Kirk Hall, Cross House. It provides a warm welcome for local families with babies and pre-school children to play, make new friends and enjoy a cuppa and a biscuit. On average, 35 adults and 35 children attend each session.

- Our Jolly Babies group allows mums with babies aged 0-11 months to meet other mums, have a chat, a cuppa and make some connections. From 12 noon a cup of soup and some bread and cheese is available. They meet in the Kirk Hall, Cross House, Linlithgow. Numbers range from 20 – 30 mums plus babies each week.

Schools

We have chaplaincy responsibility for 9 schools within the parish (8 primary and 1 secondary):

- Within the town of Linlithgow, there are 5 primary schools, and we have chaplaincy responsibilities for 4 of them. (St Michael's RC fulfil chaplaincy for St Joseph's RC Primary.) We also have chaplaincy responsibility for the 2 Primary schools in Torphichen and Westfield.
- The above-mentioned primary schools are feeder primaries for Linlithgow Academy, for which we also have chaplaincy responsibility.
- The final 2 schools for which we have chaplaincy responsibility are in Avonbridge and Standburn, which are feeder primaries for Braes High School in Falkirk - we don't have any links with Braes High School at present.

Our Children and Young People Team has established links with all of the primary schools and this year is supporting them as follows:

- Meetings with the Headteachers / Senior Leadership Team to identify opportunities to go into the schools and work with the children, to discuss any other resources we could help provide to support the RME curriculum and to offer opportunities to visit our church buildings to enhance their RME teaching.
- Primary 1 children in all the schools will be offered a Christingle bag at Christmas containing a nativity story booklet from the Bible Society, along with instructions and the kit to make a Christingle.
- Primary 5 and Primary 6 children are offered the opportunity to attend our Christmas Unwrapped and Cracking Easter workshops.
- Primary 7 children have been offered a copy of the Scripture Union booklet, It's Your Move, as part of their transition to Secondary School.

Most of the primary schools attend their local church for Christmas, Easter and end-of-term services or assemblies.

Engagement with Linlithgow Academy is not as strong as we would like; however, we hope to meet with the Headteacher early in the 2025/26 academic year to explore ways we can increase this engagement. Liam currently attends occasionally for assemblies, but we hope to widen the scope of our engagement by, for example, offering volunteering opportunities for senior pupils who are working towards Duke of Edinburgh or Saltire Awards.

The Donaldson Trust also has its Sensational Learning Centre here in Linlithgow, supporting neurodivergent children and young people who face challenges in traditional mainstream education settings; however, at present, we do not have formal links with them.

ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland is a member of the Linlithgow Church Forum, informally known as Linlithgow Churches Together which grew from an ecumenical Lent discussion group. Four of the Christian churches in the town are represented on the Forum and work together to promote and organise ecumenical activities. There is a website and a Facebook page which give details of these activities and provide information about each church.

The Forum organises annual ecumenical services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the World Day of Prayer and for the start of Advent. The services are hosted in the various worship centres on a rotational basis, likewise with the preachers. More informally, on a December evening, an ecumenical group visits the hostels of Linlithgow to bring Christmas greetings and sing a short selection of carols. At Easter, a joint card from all the churches sending Easter Greetings and an invitation to the services for Holy Week is delivered to each household in the town. Some services are held jointly. The early morning joint service on Easter Day is atop Cockleroy Hill – whatever the weather!

Other ecumenical events include an annual barbecue held in August which is well-supported as a relaxed way to get to know folk from other churches. The Forum also organises Hustings for local and national elections in St Michael's Kirk Hall with a short service of Prayers for Good Governance beforehand led by a leader of one of the churches. Churches working together is seen as an important witness to the town.

WORLD CHURCH AND SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Local, National & International Social Justice concerns have led to many actions which are regularly reviewed. The resulting actions both as a Congregation and individual responsibility, involving spiritual & Practical living aspects are widespread and dynamic. These include overseas world Mission links including Magina PCEA, Kenya where long term support and exchanges have taken place; Chogoria Hospital, Kenya; Mulanje Hospital, Malawi; Israel/Palestine where St Michael's former minister, Dr Gillan works and where we have a connection with Holy Family church in Raineh; Japan, where a former St Michael's member is a missionary; Christian Aid support; Ethical purchasing and Fair Trade; promotion of sustainable travel as well as local food bank, clothing re purposing, support for Ukraine. We support the annual Amnesty International card-writing for prisoners of conscience. We provide advice and help for young people heading abroad for Christian work.

In many parts of the new Parish, care for the environment has informed interactions with local schools as well as wider mission & outreach to the communities; it is hoped that new initiatives, ideas & plans will be further developed with these core values in mind.

There are many opportunities for individuals to offer their time and skills in support of these initiatives. These include local food bank support; Christian Aid book sales as well as local ones; knitting stump socks; baking for outreach & fundraising; Fair Trade; Tear Fund; writing hymns & composing music; producing materials for worship & reflection as well as leadership, outreach & organisational skills. All of which are celebrated and encouraged to enable widespread participation in an active Christian faith.

STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE

The surplus/deficit in 2024 was as follows:

- Year End 31 December 2024 (10 months St Michael's Parish Church and 2 months for the united parish Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland) – surplus £211,071

The Ministries and Mission/Giving to Grow contribution was:

- 2024 - £158k
- 2025 - £212k

There is a significant volume of fundraising work required to deliver the major capital projects which are underway. A separate team has been appointed to focus on Stewardship.

Our Annual Accounts for 2024 have been fully audited (no findings) and approved by the Kirk Session. The pulling together of the accounts from the four legacy churches was a significant piece of work and has now been completed. All relevant legislation and regulations have been met, including those set out by OSCR (Charities Regulator). The use of XERO accounting software has assisted with the financial management and year end accounts. This involves a huge amount of work by the volunteers who work in the Finance team. The accounts represent a satisfactory position, but very large sums of money will be required to deal with identified property issues.

The St Michael's charity number was retained for the new entity and the value of Net Assets taken over upon the Union of Churches is in substance a gift in accordance with the Charities SORP FRS 102 as noted in the 2024 Financial Statements. The overall expenditure is expected to exceed £600k in 2025; we are predicting a deficit of approximately £20k in our general funds. Our contribution to giving to grow was £212k in 2025. We also have very significant fundraising under way for major expenditure on St Michael's Church and Cross House, and there are also property-related issues at Torphichen and Avonbridge.

ECO CONGREGATION

Linlithgow & Avon Valley Parish Church is a Gold Award Eco congregation, one of 13 across Scotland. Many members are strongly committed to the values and actions in relation to care for the environment and social justice issues offering their time and talents to promote these. Two of the constituent congregations have had the core values and actions embedded for many years and long been involved with ECS (Eco congregation Scotland). Developing this commitment further in the Union is a key ambition. We have developed an agreed Environmental Policy and updated our Environmental/ Care for Creation.



STAFFING

Our locally employed paid staff are as follows

- 4 permanent cleaning staff (all part-time).
Additional contract cleaners are hired as required.
- 1 Secretary/Church administrator (Part Time).
- 1 Youth Worker (Full Time).
- 1 Early Years Worker/ Toddler Coordinator (Part-time).
- 1 Director of Music (Part Time).
- 3 Church Organists (Part Time).
- 2 caretakers in Cross House (Part Time).

CHURCH, MANSES AND HALLS

Since 1 November 2024 we have been responsible for four church buildings (1 A-listed and 2 B-listed), three manses and three sets of halls. We have recently sold the third manse which has helped to provide funds for the work necessary to bring the Torphichen manse up to standard. A description of the manse is at Annex 1. Whoever fills this vacancy will occupy the Torphichen manse. The Cross House complex housing the St Michael's halls includes two residential flats (currently occupied).

We are addressing major issues with our property. There is damp in St Michael's Church where two phases of remedial work costing £0.5m and £0.25m are planned. We have structural issues and major upgrade proposals to transform Cross House into a community hub which will cost upwards of £4m. Fundraising for these projects is under way. At Avonbridge, there are plans to develop the church into a community facility as Falkirk Council have closed the community centre within the village. However there are electrical issues to deal with as well as some building issues and the cost could be around £300k. At Torphichen we have commissioned a condition survey as there are known to be issues with the Kirk roof.

The St Michael's halls (Cross House) and the St Ninian's Craigmalen halls (Longcroft Hall) are both used extensively during the week. Cross House bookings are via the church office. Community use of Avonbridge has grown. The Torphichen hall (St John's Hall) is near the manse and has recently been upgraded and community use is developing.

COMMUNICATIONS

With the creation of the new Parish, the importance of effective communications has been recognised. In this context, we produce a monthly newsletter which is emailed to those Members and Adherents who have provided an email address and printed copies are also available for distribution. Increasing the frequency of this newsletter is under active consideration. A quarterly magazine is also produced featuring articles of interest about the life and work of the parish. Links to a recent newsletter and edition of the magazine are provided in Annex 4.

Key points from the monthly Kirk Session meetings are communicated to the congregation attending each of the worship sites and also featured on the church website.

Our principal website is www.linavonchurch.org.uk. On this page there are links to each of the individual churches (Facebook and websites). However, it is recognised that improvements to our website are a priority over the next 12 months.

We also have several other associated groups within the churches which have their own links:

- Boys' Brigade: 2linlithgow@boys-brigade.org.uk
- Girls' Brigade: girls-brigade-scotland.org.uk/gbcompanies/1st-linlithgow
- Jolly Babies: Facebook 'St Michael's Jolly Babies Linlithgow'
- Toddlers: Facebook 'St Michael's Toddlers Linlithgow'
- Linlithgow Church Forum: www.linlithgowchurches.org.uk

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Annex 1 – Torphichen Manse

Recently extensively upgraded and redecorated 4/5 bedroom detached villa in the conservation village of Torphichen, set in mature, fully enclosed gardens with garage and off street parking for several cars. Torphichen is in the catchment area for Linlithgow Academy.

On the ground floor, entrance vestibule, hallway leading to all ground floor rooms and stairs to first floor, large lounge with triple aspect windows, family room/study/office with access to garden (may be suitable for use as additional bedroom for anyone with mobility issues), dining room, fitted kitchen and shower room. On the first floor there are four double bedrooms and a family bathroom with over bath shower. Gas central heating with newly upgraded radiators and double glazing.

The kitchen, bathroom and ground floor shower room have been replaced as part of the upgrade together with new flooring through the ground floor. Stair and first floor carpeting to be chosen by the new occupant.

Floorplan available [here](#)

Annex 2 – Basis of Union, Basis of Team Ministry and Basis of Reviewable Charge

[Basis of Union and Team Ministry](#)

[Basis of Reviewable Charge](#)

Annex 3 – Monthly Newsletter and Parish Magazine

[Parish Magazine](#)
[Newsletter](#)

Annex 4 – Community Audits
[Torphichen Community Survey](#)
[Avonbridge Community Survey](#)
[Linlithgow Community Survey](#)

Annex 5 – Strategic Planning
[Strategic Planning overview](#)