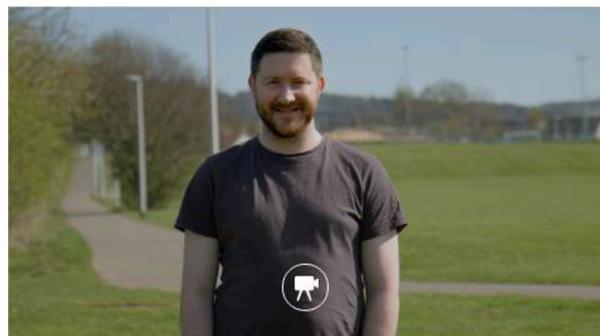


TOMORROW'S CALLING

How the Church of Scotland responded to its biggest recruitment challenge in 450 years.



Joint entry:

The Church of Scotland, Altarmotive films, Red Sky At Night Events and Sunstone Digital

Category: 4, Sector

Sub-category: 4.1, Cause related and charity

Word count: 1,498

SUMMARY:

In 2015, The Church of Scotland kick-started a decade-long strategic initiative to tackle the biggest recruitment challenge in its 450-year history; attracting a new generation of parish ministers.

The backdrop was a perfect storm of declining congregations, widely held misconceptions of who became parish ministers to what looked like systemic disengagement from religion by millennials, the very group from whom the Church has to recruit.

The Church needed a completely new narrative to engage with potential trainees. It had to position the role of minister as a truly exciting and fulfilling career and find compelling advocates for the unique life and work of parish minister.

Crucially, the Church had to leverage digital channels and reach beyond the 'kirk walls' to engage and inspire its best prospects, either directly or via peer-group networks or influencer referral.

Tomorrow's Calling, the new recruitment campaign launched May 2015, was planned from the outset to be 'social and digital first'; in just 10 months, the campaign has already excelled with:

- 508,000 video views on social channels across a suite of x40 videos
- record levels of video engagement at 85%, achieving YouTube's top 5 percentile of audience retention
- a new mobile responsive and content-rich website
- and, already, a turn-around in new applicant numbers for Vocations Conference, the first step in applying for ministry training.

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CONTEXT:

The gravity of the recruitment challenge was only too apparent; 220 unfilled vacancies for ministers, declining applications for ministry training the past 7 years and the daunting prospect of an exodus from front-line ministry in the next 10 years when nearly 40% of serving ministers (70% are aged 50+) hit retirement.

Macro-factors loomed large; declining church attendances, growing societal scepticism of religion and negative media stories about the Church. And a widely held perception of CofS ministers as elderly, white, conservative males out of touch with the world and younger generations.

Furthermore, the offspring of ministers, who traditionally entered ministry, were no longer applying for training in large numbers. And many young people who sensed a calling to God, were attracted to overseas voluntary work with charities and so career trajectories away from the Church.



The screenshot shows the Herald Scotland website interface. At the top, the logo reads 'heraldscotland' with 'The Herald' and 'sundayherald' below it. A navigation bar includes categories like NEWS, POLITICS, SPORT, BUSINESS, OPINION, ARTS & ENTS, LIFE & STYLE, HOMES, MOTORS, JOBS, and PUZZLES. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with links for News, Home News, Crime & Courts, Health, Education, Transport, Environment, and World News. The article header features a profile picture of Brian Donnelly, identified as a Senior News Reporter, with a 'Follow @BrianDonnellyHT' button and a follower count of 2,574. The main headline of the article is 'Kirk facing recruitment crisis amid lack of young ministers'.

INSIGHTS:

We pinpointed key insights to inform our campaign strategy and tactics:

- Modelling of custom facebook audiences identified significant cohorts of 16-34 yr olds in Scotland interested in God, Christianity and volunteering. These audiences were not otherwise engaging with the Church or its Youth programmes but could be reached via paid facebook ad placements and social sharing
- Facebook would propel the campaign. Not only could we precision target prospects via mobile, but we could also harness the burgeoning social-connectedness of the Church's older 'baby-boomer' and 'silent' generation congregants, who embraced facebook above all social channels
- We hand-picked a group of young, motivated and progressive ministers to front our campaign. We knew they had to speak for the Church to relate to our target audience and we also knew they were natural orators with amazing stories to tell
- We focused our campaign on video; irrefutably the most engaged content format on social platforms
- Surveys of recent Vocations Conference delegates revealed confusion about the steps taken to enter Ordained Ministry training; it's an 8-step process. We could also see that provision of advice on how to explore a calling to God needed improved. Our campaign had to surface this vital 'early-stage' information



OBJECTIVES:

We set out to achieve the following during the initial 12 months of the campaign:

- Demonstrable evidence of positive engagement (with our campaign) amongst millennials and church-connected individuals
- Showcase the diversity and integrity of the Church's younger ministers and allow them to tell different and compelling stories about ministry
- Halt and reverse the recent 7-year decline of entrants into Ordained Ministry training, by driving an increase in applicants for the Church's annual Vocations Conferences in 2016
- Deliver a strong marketing ROI on modest budgets



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CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AND DELIVERY:

Our campaign strategy focused on creating engaging and persuasive content that was optimal for digital delivery and social sharing. And on a very modest budget.

We built an evaluation framework with hard targets to measure early-stage engagement and, critically, downstream actions following visits to our website landing pages.

We created a Tomorrow's Calling brand style for our suite of videos and conveyed the following core messages and propositions:

- Gender diversity
- Range of ministry placements from urban to rural to remote
- The leadership and life skills you'll quickly develop in the role
- First-hand accounts of life and work fulfilment
- Our call to action... "visit our website to learn more about training for ministry and hear stories from our ministers"
- We created new video and interactive content to help prospects explore their calling and understand the different stages of training
- We weren't afraid to talk about God and faith
- And we pretty much stuck to our 'no dog collars' guideline!

Our campaign strapline was "Tomorrow's Calling. Will You Answer?"



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The cornerstones of our campaign delivery were:

Launch Phase (Spring 2015)

- A 6min launch video to introduce Tomorrow's Calling
- A launch event at the Heart & Soul gathering in Princes Square Gardens, attended by 5,000 church members
- An initial set of x6 short-form 'Tomorrow's Calling' videos (average duration was 75 secs – optimal for engagement and sharing) profiling our ministers
- Cut-down 30 second video shorts for facebook ad posts
- A facebook ad campaign, leading with paid video posts and supplemented with newsfeed ad formats re-targeting video views
- A media briefing and integrated PR activation
- An interim landing page for Tomorrow's Calling on the main CofS website
- Distribution of a briefing sheet and e-toolkit for parishes across Scotland



Stage 2 (Summer 2015)

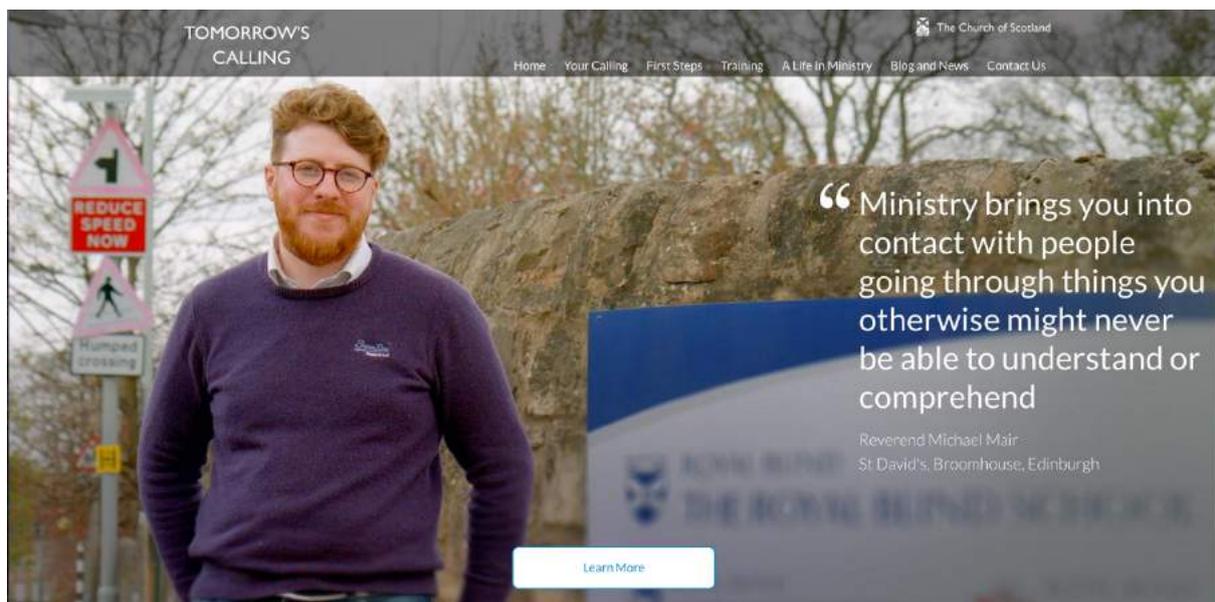
- A series of x3 longer format 'my ministry' videos; unique stories of ministers and chaplains working in communities
- A further x2 short Tomorrow's Calling videos
- An instructional video walking through the 8-steps of ministry training. This was released and promoted before the August 2015 Vocations Conference
- Creation of a Tomorrow's Calling YouTube playlist



Tomorrow's Calling - Church of Scotland
This video playlist was produced for the 'Tomorrow's

Stage 3 (Autumn 2015)

- Launch of a dedicated website, tomorrowscalling.org; a mobile-responsive and content-rich environment to inform, inspire and convert prospects
- A one-off video about how to start exploring a calling to do God's work
- A video profiling Volunteering Vocations, an optional interim step before entering ministry training
- A second facebook ad campaign to promote the website launch



Tomorrow's Calling - how will you answer?
Hear from our ministers to find out more about a life in ministry



Stage 4 (Winter 2015)

- An online advent calendar, with x24 videos for Advent 2015, each featuring a different CofS minister
- A facebook ad campaign to drive pre-registration for the Advent videos
- A take-over of the main Church of Scotland website, facebook, twitter and YouTube during our Advent activity
- Launch of monthly 'My Ministry' blogspot
- Launch of new CofS e-newsletter



TOMORROW'S CALLING The Church of Scotland

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"If you sense a call to ministry, explore it"
– Rev Jonathan C Fleming



November 26th, 2015

In the first of our My Ministry blog posts, we meet with Rev Jonathan Fleming from Erskine Parish Church to find out about his life, his calling and his work with the local community.

Full name
Reverend Jonathan C Fleming

Current Parish Church & location
Erskine Parish Church, Renfrewshire

Chaplaincy assignment & location
Chaplain to The Erskine Home.

Blog and News:

- My Ministry
- January 2016
- November 2015

Related



"See the world as God does, go for it!"
– Rev Sarah Ross



Local for us could mean: at least 50 people interested in ministry

RESULTS

The successful launch and positivity of Tomorrow's Calling has genuinely energised the Church and set the bar for future digital activity. It challenged misconceptions about ministry, started to engage younger audiences who were otherwise drifting away from the Church and has already demonstrated its worth through increased applicants for training.

Video engagement:

- A total of 508,000 video views across YouTube and facebook organic and paid posts
- An exceptional 87% audience retention (percentage viewed) of YouTube videos
- 20% of facebook video views were at least 30 secs, significantly outperforming facebook's global average video view duration of 18 secs

Ad performance: The facebook ad campaign:

- reached audiences exceeding 500,000 and generated just over 1M impressions
- exceeded industry averages with 2.74% CTR at £0.15 CPC
- 54% of video views were from 16-34yr olds
- generated 12,400 link clicks downstream to landing pages including tomorrowscalling.org

Social proof:

- Overwhelming evidence of positive social sentiment and sharing, with 18,000 post likes, comments and shares
- Record 20% growth in fan Likes of the CofS facebook during December 2015 (an additional 900 new Likes) attributable to the Advent initiative



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Integration:

- Extensive media pick-up of the Tomorrow's Calling launch by BBC, national and regional media
- Acquisition of 2,000 e-news subscribers in 24 days, signing-up to receive the Church's new monthly e-newsletter
- An outstanding 63% open-rate and 37% click-through from inaugural e-newsletter

Progress:

- At both its Nov 2015 and Feb 2016 Vocations Conferences, the CofS received 7-year high levels of applicants wanting to start the process of training for ordained ministry.
- Half the online applications for the February Vocations Conference were attributable to the application form on the tomorrowscalling.org site

Church of Scotland
Published by Ramsey Traquair · July 31, 2015

How transforming a derelict shed into a thriving community hub has enabled Rev Tommy MacNeil to deliver his vision of a 'seven day a week' serving church. Find out more about life as a Church of Scotland Minister by visiting our website at <http://bit.ly/1KDOSSY>

06:12

85,992 people reached Boosted

348 Likes · 22 Comments · 81 Shares

Like · Comment · Share

Mairi Macaulay, Marie Graham, Gillian Orr and 345 others like this.

81 shares

Write a comment...

Judith Campbell Very encouraging story. It's the way forward. Something to be learned from for other rural Scottish church communities
Unlike · Reply · Message · 2 · August 3, 2015 at 12:19pm

Elaine Smith Marshall Great work Stornoway.....and what an inspiration Tommy is. Wishing you all every blessing!
Unlike · Reply · Message · 3 · August 1, 2015 at 2:43pm

Jeanette Beattie Fantastic work tommy so good to hear what your doing. Xx
Unlike · Reply · Message · 2 · August 1, 2015 at 8:35am

Paul Hyles Great work for the community, it's the way forward involve the community, the youth the needy

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Recruits flock to become church ministers in Scotland

29 December 2015 Last updated at 10:17 GMT

The Church of Scotland has revealed that the number of people accepted to train as a minister is at a nine-year high.

More than 30 people have been welcomed by the Kirk this year - the largest intake since 2007.

Scotland Correspondent Kevin Keane has been to meet one new recruit in Edinburgh.

Campaign collateral: Follow these links to view a selection of campaign assets:

Web - <https://www.tomorrowcalling.org/>

Tomorrow's Calling launch video ad – <https://youtu.be/CLlqCz7p9eo?list=PLcEI-KuB42WLXQyW6vjEjweF3kja38XHf>

Online Advent 2015 - <http://churchofscotland.advent-calendar.net/>

Tomorrow's Calling YouTube playlist – <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcEI-KuB42WLXQyW6vjEjweF3kja38XHf>

Advent2015 YouTube playlist – https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcEI-KuB42WKvG_uumrhfYbFIKXHdXcdA

Advent facebook ad – https://youtu.be/XOkFfSssna0?list=PLcEI-KuB42WKvG_uumrhfYbFIKXHdXcdA

Advent 'wrap-up' video – https://youtu.be/_MIWrHDdYFQ

Rev Tommy MacNeil 'Big Shed' project video – <https://youtu.be/p34922RgJOO?list=PLcEI-KuB42WLXQyW6vjEjweF3kja38XHf>

Steps to becoming a minister – <https://youtu.be/8lfEq5IPCw?list=PLcEI-KuB42WLXQyW6vjEjweF3kja38XHf>

Volunteering Vocations – <https://youtu.be/jp22lbbqQpo?list=PLcEI-KuB42WLXQyW6vjEjweF3kja38XHf>

Church of Scotland e-newsletter –
<http://ministriescouncil.cmail20.com/t/ViewEmail/t/E4EC6AEF3F904EDE/811D03BFDD2F1C58F6A1C87C670A6B9F>

Rev Sheena Orr, chaplain at HMP Edinburgh – <https://youtu.be/xpfuOIRU54k?list=PLcEI-KuB42WLXQyW6vjEjweF3kja38XHf>

Rev David McNeish 'ministry on the edge of the world' -
<https://youtu.be/cniLK4Rm7uQ?list=PLcEI-KuB42WLXQyW6vjEjweF3kja38XHf>



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