



## **Vivid Vision – Film Transcript**

It's 2027 and as I look around I see vibrant Church of Scotland congregations being built all across Scotland with a distinctive focus on honouring Jesus and making Jesus known. The number of growing churches has increased since 2024, and over a quarter of churches are now growing not just in number, but in their impact on individual lives, communities, and beyond.

As I look around, I see a diversity of race, age, gender, and background that reflects society across the church and in ministries. It's clear that these churches have found new, meaningful ways of connecting with people, nurturing them into a living faith in Jesus, equipping them to be beacons of light and hope to the people who live near them. The church is serving local communities, recognising that this is where it all starts. People are seeing the way the church cares for the poor and marginalised, with many people integrating into communities of mutual belonging and care. In this, the church has not shrunk back from speaking out against injustice and is working towards a more fair and just society.

New partnerships with the World Church have emerged. People speak positively of the way that this has enriched everyone. We are part of a global church family, learning from and contributing to God's work in the world. Some growing churches are smaller and rural. Others are in towns or cities. Yet others are new expressions developing in radically different ways. They are clearly being shaped by their context. It doesn't look like a master plan by the national church has been rolled out. Instead it feels much more organic, often entrepreneurial or perhaps better put, birthed, guided, prompted by the life giving Holy Spirit who constantly surprises us.

New worshipping communities of different kinds are emerging all across Scotland, developing their work, witness and worship very differently. Whilst they feel embryonic, there is an excitement. Other congregations are looking and learning from what they see emerging in and through these churches, and the growing ones are actively looking at how they can support others. Local ecumenical partnerships are rich in potential. However, others have closed or are facing closure and the pain of this is evident. Online Church looks like it has become a focus both through national initiatives and local congregational connection.

More importantly, it's clear that a faith and trust in Christ is central to everything and as a result people are speaking more about Jesus than they are about the church. It's not that people don't care

about the church, they do, but honouring and serving Jesus is what is driving and informing everything. As I speak with people, I hear how a permissive 'can-do' culture is developed, enabling people to turn ideas into reality. This is true throughout the church structures at national, presbytery and local level. As a result, people with faith and Apostolic vision are being trusted to take things forward and provide leadership. The result is that people's faces and body language are different. Bitterness and cynicism have fallen away. Every furrowed brow has given way to a new likeness of countenance, a radiance of faces, a sparkle in everyone's eyes. It's no longer a remarkable one or two in the church. It's everyone.

The language has changed too, the way we speak to each other, the way we speak of God. There are still griefs, tears, fears and conflicts. It's not utopia, far less heaven. But what I notice is the hope. There is hope as a default, as a foundation in how everyone is speaking. Hope in each other, hope in God. All of which has led to a greater awareness of our dependency on God, which has resulted in deeper prayerfulness.

Alongside this, it is clear it has been difficult as people have had to let go of old certainties. Churches have closed, others are facing closure as numbers dwindle and the patterns of the past no longer seem to be working. The pain of this is tangible. Far from being swept under the carpet, it looks like the church has found new ways to lament using the Psalms and new songs, helping people express emotions about a past that is lost while looking forward to one that is to come.

Those in ministry roles within the church feel valued and supported. While ministry numbers have dropped over the last three years, the numbers in training for national ministries have increased dramatically. New patterns of local leadership have emerged which are serving churches well. Within this, younger people are being brought into a local church leadership and it's clear that churches have found ways of reshaping what they do to enable this. Presbyteries have become the prime place of support for congregations and those serving in different ministry roles. Presbyteries have recognised that new life emerges as we enable local churches to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, stay focused on Jesus and develop their own life and worship in ways that suit their context and calling.

National office staffing levels are nimble, crucial support is provided to congregations and the culture has become one of supporting churches as they work through change. The permissive 'can-do' culture is found in those serving in national office roles as much as anywhere else, and those serving here consistently ask, how can we help you? In this they work with people to facilitate the changes they are looking for. This is a church in which everyone matters and everyone plays a part. What does your part look like in your congregation?

How will we pray and contribute to this vision becoming a reality in our context?

This vision is a picture of what we hope will be nationally. What would this look like where you are?

Could you take time to imagine more deeply, paint more vibrantly, and express explicitly a vision for your local church and community?