



“  
**Let's Talk**,  
about  
**corstorphine**”

**EXPEDITION - BERING STRAIT**

**WHAT'S ON AT CORSTORPHINE LIBRARY**

**THE OPERA CAMERATA STORY**

A magazine produced by **St Ninian's Church**, Corstorphine

**ISSUE 35 SUMMER 2015**

# Welcome to Corstorphine Churches

**Carrick Knowe Parish Church**  
*Church of Scotland* Saughton Road North  
[www.ckchurch.org.uk](http://www.ckchurch.org.uk)  
Main Sunday Service: 11am  
July-August: 10.30am  
Evening Services as intimated  
Minister: Rev. Fiona Mathieson

**Corstorphine Old Parish Church**  
*Church of Scotland* Kirk Loan  
[www.corstorphineoldparish.org.uk](http://www.corstorphineoldparish.org.uk)  
Main Sunday Service: 10.30am  
Minister: Rev. Moira McDonald

**Corstorphine Craigsbank Parish Church**  
*Church of Scotland (One Church 2 centres)*  
[www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk](http://www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk)  
At East Craigs Church Centre  
(Bughtlin Market)  
Main Sunday Service: 9.45am  
Craigsbank Church  
(North of Glasgow Road)  
Main Sunday Service: 11.30am  
Minister: Rev. Stewart McPherson

**St Andrew's Church**  
*Church of Scotland*  
Clermiston View  
[www.edinburghstandrewsclermiston.org.uk](http://www.edinburghstandrewsclermiston.org.uk)  
Main Sunday Service: 10.30am  
Monthly Service at Drumbrae Care Home, Ardshiel  
Avenue is at 2.30pm on the first Sunday of each month.  
Minister: Rev. Alistair Keil

**St Anne's Church**  
*Church of Scotland*  
St John's Road  
[www.stannescorstorphine.org.uk](http://www.stannescorstorphine.org.uk)  
Main Sunday Service: 11am  
July-August 10.30am  
Minister: Rev. James Griggs

**St John the Baptist**  
*Roman Catholic*  
St Ninian's Road  
[www.stjohnthebaptist.rcstanded.org.uk](http://www.stjohnthebaptist.rcstanded.org.uk)  
Saturday Vigil Mass: 6pm  
Sunday Morning Mass: 11am  
Holy Days of Obligation:  
Vigil Mass at 7.30pm & 9.00am  
Parish Priest: Monsignor Patrick Burke

**St Ninian's Church**  
*Church of Scotland*  
St John's Road  
[www.corstorphinestninians.org.uk](http://www.corstorphinestninians.org.uk)  
Main Sunday Service: 10.30am  
Evening Services as intimated  
Minister: Rev. Alex T Stewart

**St Thomas' Church**  
*Scottish Episcopal*  
Glasgow Road  
[www.saintthomas.org.uk](http://www.saintthomas.org.uk)  
Main Sunday Service: 10.30am  
Rector: Rev. David McCarthy

**United Free Church of Scotland**  
Glebe Road  
[www.sacred.scotland.org.uk/church/corstorphineunited-free-church-edinburgh](http://www.sacred.scotland.org.uk/church/corstorphineunited-free-church-edinburgh)  
Sunday Service: 10.30am  
Pastor: Duncan Whitty

**St Kentigern's Roman Catholic**  
Parkgrove Avenue  
[www.stkentigernsedinburgh.co.uk](http://www.stkentigernsedinburgh.co.uk)  
Sunday Morning Mass: 10.15am  
Holy Days of Obligation:  
Vigil Mass at 7.30pm and 9.15am  
Mass Mon-Sat 10am.  
Parish Priest: Father James Tracey

## CORSTORPHINE CHURCHES SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND YOUTH GROUPS

**Carrick Knowe Church of Scotland**  
*Saughton Road North* During Term Time

Creche (Birth to 3 years) in crèche room every Sunday 11am to 12 noon.  
Sunday Club (ages 3-12) meets in Main Hall Sundays 11am to 12 noon.  
Dynamos (ages 12-16) meets in Fraser Lounge Sundays 11am to 12 noon.  
During August above start times are 10.30 am in line with summer service times.

**Corstorphine Old Parish Church of Scotland**  
*Kirk Loan* Will restart 30 August

"Coffee & Croissant Service" (for families with young children) meets in Corstorphine High Street Hall every Sunday, all year round from 9.40am to 10am  
Creche (ages 0-3) meets in Corstorphine High Street Hall every Sunday 10.30am to 11.30am  
Sunday Club meets in Church Hall every Sunday 10.30am to 11.30am

**Craigsbank Parish Church of Scotland: One Church-Two Centres**  
*East Craigs Church Centre*  
*Bughtlin Market* 9.45am to 10.45am

Stepping Stones: Worship & activities for children all year round.

**Craigsbank Church**  
*19 Craigs Bank* 11.30 am to 12.30pm

Stepping Stones: Worship & activities for children all year round.

**St. Andrew's Church of Scotland**  
*Clermiston View* Will restart 16 August

Sunday School (Nursery to Teenagers) meets in Large Hall every Sunday 10.15am to 11.30 am.

**St. Anne's Church of Scotland**  
*Kaimes Road* Will restart 16 August

Creche (ages 0-2½) meets every Sunday 11am to 12 noon.  
Beginners (ages 2½ -5) meets every Sunday 11am to 12 noon.  
Primary (ages 5-7) meets every Sunday 11am to 12 noon.  
Junior (ages 8-11) meets every Sunday 11am to 12 noon.  
Senior (ages 11 up) meets every Sunday 11am to 12 noon.

**St. John the Baptist and St. Kentigern's, Roman Catholic**  
Meets in St. John the Baptist, *St. Ninian's Road*

Junior Youth Group meets Wednesdays during Term Time 6.00 to 7.30pm.

**St. Ninian's Church of Scotland**  
*St. John's Road* Will restart 16 August

Creche (ages 0-3) meets every Sunday 10.25am to 11.30am.  
Beginners (ages 3-5) meets every Sunday 10.25am to 11.30am during Term Time.  
Primary (ages 5-8) meets every Sunday 10.25am to 11.30am during Term Time.  
Juniors (ages 8-12) meets every Sunday 10.25am to 11.30am during Term Time.

Alpha (age 12 up) meets every Sunday 10.25 to 11.30am during Term Time.  
Step Inside Youth Club (ages 10-15) meets fourth Saturday of the month during Term Time at 7pm, from 26 September.

**St. Thomas' Church, Scottish Episcopal**  
*Glasgow Road* Sunday groups run throughout the year

Creche (ages 0-3) meets every Sunday during the Morning Service at 10.30am  
Scramblers (ages 3-5) meets every Sunday during the Morning Service at 10.30am  
Climbers (ages 5-7) meets every Sunday during the Morning Service at 10.30am  
Junior Explorers (ages 7-10) meets every Sunday during the Morning Service at 10.30am  
Senior Explorers (ages 10-12) meets every Sunday during the Morning Service at 10.30am  
Pathfinders (ages 12-14) meets every Sunday during the Morning Service at 10.30am

Let's talk about

# Corstorphine

Welcome to the thirty-fifth issue of 'Let's Talk' - the magazine produced by the Enterprise Committee of St. Ninian's Church. The magazine is distributed to over 7,000 homes in the area.

The magazine contains stories of local interest and articles on clubs and organisations. Please regard it as your local magazine. Contributions and suggestions for articles are welcome. The next issue of this magazine will be published in November 2015 for which the copy date is 1 October.

You can do more than borrow books at Corstorphine Library. Read 'What's On at Corstorphine Library...'

From mid-April, for most of the summer, Opera Camerata rehearse in one of the Halls at St. Ninian's Church. This year they will be performing The Tales of Hoffmann at the Church Hill Theatre, 7-10 October 2015.

Michael Laird's latest expedition was to the Bering Strait. However, things did not go to plan...

St. Ninian's Church's popular Christmas Fair will be held on Saturday 28 November 2015 from 12 noon to 3pm. More information inside.

We are a small group of volunteers from St. Ninian's Church, and accept advertisements and feature material in good faith. The opinions expressed by contributors and advertisers may not be those of the Enterprise Committee of St. Ninian's Church.

Many thanks to our advertisers, to those who contribute articles and photographs and to the volunteers who produce and distribute the magazine.

Should you wish to enquire about advertising in 'Let's Talk', please contact the number below.

Best wishes.

Ian Kirkpatrick,  
The Convener,  
Enterprise Committee,  
St. Ninian's Church,  
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(Cover picture - Dangerously thin ice near Little Diomedede, western Alaska)

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# EXPEDITION - BERING STRAIT

Late in 2010 the seeds were sown for what was to become my hardest expedition and greatest challenge to date. After more than 20 years of expeditioning and having, amongst other challenges, walked 550 kilometres to the Magnetic North Pole, cycled 4,000 kilometres solo across the deserts of central Australia and having been a photographer with the troops in Afghanistan, I thought I had dealt with some tough challenges. Maybe I have, but nothing could have readied me for what I met when I decided to try and attempt a partial crossing of the Bering Sea in March. It's an ever shifting quagmire of icebergs, open water and deep, freezing slush that you can neither walk on nor swim through. Whilst more than 4,000 people have stood on top of Mount Everest, only 8 people in the world have managed to cross what we were going to attempt.

Back in 2010 I believed that I would be prepared to take it on by 2013 but as the months and years rolled by, 2015 was soon upon me and I was only just ready to go on a recce to test the theories and kit upon which the whole team would rely in 2016. When I left home I actually struggled to carry all of the kit that I was taking with me. My travelling companion James faced the same struggle. Perhaps this should have told us something! The full kit list was extensive and knowing about the kayak, paddle, drysuit, shotgun, skis and poles, sleds, medical kit, food, fuel, tent and sleeping bag would be enough to put most people off. The sleeping bag itself weighs as much as three normal cold weather sleeping bags and takes up as much space as an average family dog. Ultimately your life might just depend upon each and every piece of kit. You need to know what it does, how to use it and how to fix it if it breaks. In the environment we were in everything breaks - including humans!

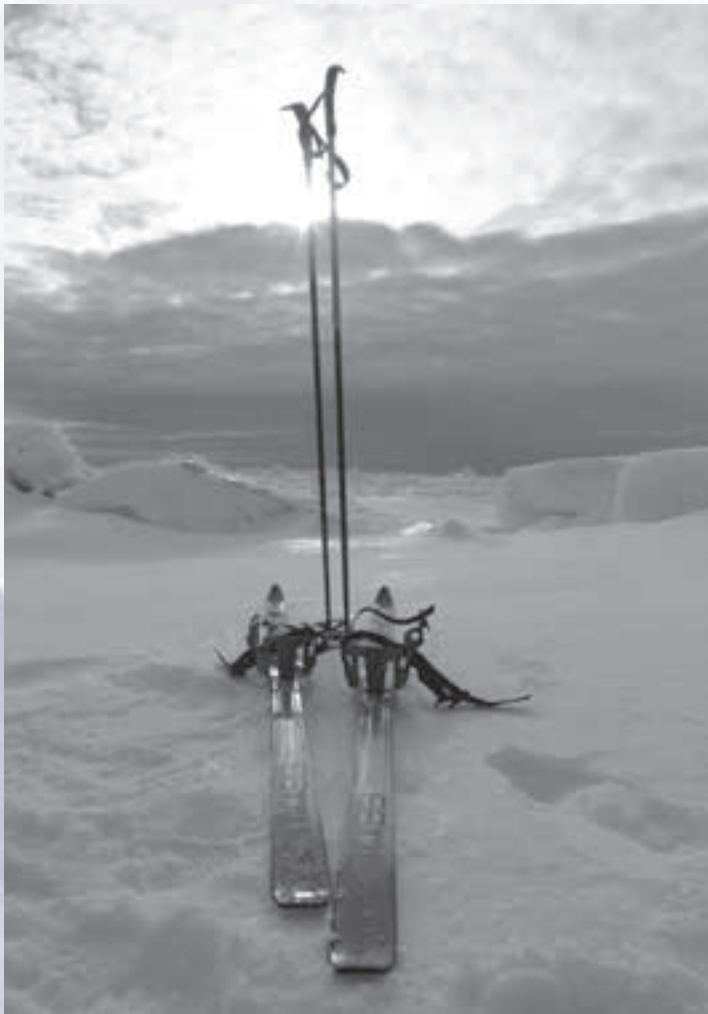
Our outward journey took us from London to Minneapolis and on to Anchorage, Nome, Wales and Little Diomed. Nome is a remote town in western Alaska that is home to ice divers, gold prospectors, drillers and native Americans. Big people, with big hearts and an insatiable love of wilderness, mountains, rivers and adventure. Anchorage itself strikes most people as being an unusual city. Both



James and I had been there before. Nome, though, is a town of just 3,500 people and boasts a disproportionate number of bars for this size population. It's a great place and the end point for the world-renowned Iditarod dog-mushing race. It is also where we did our final kit checks, familiarised ourselves with our new pump action shotgun and sank a few beers before heading out to Little Diomed and beyond. Our sortie out onto the sea ice from Nome was deceptively kind to us. Low winds, dazzling sunshine and nice flat snow. We never again saw such nice conditions during the remainder of our time in Alaska. If the weather and conditions had been like this all of the way across we could have done it in 10 hours. But they weren't and we didn't!

We set off on a cold dark morning, out from the west coast of Little Diomed, straight into a ferocious 60 km/h head wind. The stinging air was laden with ice crystals and I could hear them hitting the plastic of my tinted ski goggles. Our way was lit by our head torches and progress was slow as we





shuffled northwards on our skis. The sleds we dragged behind us were heavy, the fresh snow was deep and the head wind compounded matters to ensure that progress was slow but steady. By the time we reached the northern tip of the island the sun was up. Our progress so far had been shadowed by two dogs from the settlement and we were happy to have had them along as they would have sensed any polar bear well before we would have known it was even there.

Leaving the island and stepping out onto the sea ice was an odd feeling and it wasn't long before the ice under my feet gave way and I plummeted into the dark, freezing waters beneath. Initially it was frightening and I panicked in case I didn't surface back up through the ice. Somehow I always managed to. Getting back on top of the ice was always difficult and sometimes piece after piece would disintegrate in your hands leaving you with nothing to grasp. It was physically draining and on two occasions I have to confess I felt endangered to such a degree that I called upon James for his help. I could not have made it on my own here.

The terrain now was too difficult to ski on. Our progress had slowed to 400 metres per hour. We had kayaks with us but could not get them to open water and could neither paddle nor swim them through the deep slush. If we camped on the ice it could break up during the night or drift miles in any direction – with us on top of it! There was no sensible choice other than to return to the island and camp there and decide what to do in the morning.

We picked our way from ice cake to iceberg and avoided immersion in the water as best we could. Falling on and through ice takes its toll on knees, shins and wrists. It is most unforgiving. To get from the last ice cake onto land we had to straddle a narrow but ominously deep channel and leap at a wall of ice almost six feet tall. Once I was on top of this I was standing in waist deep snow and as I pulled up both of our eighty pound sleds their additional weight sank me further and further down into the snow. This simple task stole the last of my energy. We walked slowly on towards a suitable spot where we trampled the snow down and set up the tent.

After a re-hydrated meal we got into our sleeping bags and zipped them up so only each other's nose could be seen. Despite the intense cold sleep came easily. When we woke everything in the tent was covered in a thick frost. James showed me his hand and several of his finger-tips were pale grey and frost bitten. We had no choice now other than to get ourselves back to the settlement and get James' hand seen to. I packed all my kit and assisted James with his. It was sad to turn around so soon but as Shackleton said 'Better a live donkey than a dead lion'. We self-extracted rather than needing to be rescued. Not crossing to the mainland didn't matter on this occasion as this was always supposed to be a recon for the 2016 expedition and we learned a lot about the conditions and what we need to change about our kit.

I knew that morning that I also had a medical issue but it wasn't until I managed to get to a hospital 5 days later that



I learned how serious it was. Four x-rays confirmed what I had done and the requisite treatment was a cast covering my hand, wrist and lower arm. It's a brutal, brutal environment to take on and I look forward to returning there in 2016 when I shall be leading a Russo-British group aiming to cross the whole Bering Sea between Russia and America.

**Mike Laird**

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# What's On at Corstorphine Library...

Did you know there's been a library in Corstorphine since 1838? Originally founded by the Rev David Horne of the Parish Kirk it changed in 1854 to a subscription library and in 1892 took up residency in the newly built Corstorphine Public Hall, this building would later become the Corstorphine Youth and Community Centre.

Under the Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887 and after a poll of the rate payers of the Corstorphine Parish Council the library finally became a "free" public library in 1901. A grant from Andrew Carnegie enabled a public library annexe to be built onto the Public Hall. This opened in October 1904 with a lending library on the ground floor and a reading room upstairs.

It was in May 1936 that the library moved to its current home on Kirk Loan. Our current building was designed by City Architect Ebenezer James MacRae, the same architect who designed Edinburgh's iconic police boxes!

The library is now much more than just a place to borrow books, open Mon & Wed 1-8pm; Tue, Thu, Fri & Sat 10am – 5pm, there's a whole range of activities on offer for people of all ages!

Here's just a taste of what's on offer...

## Pre-School

The Library runs Bookbug and Rhyme Time on Tuesday and Saturday mornings at 10.30, for babies and toddlers, from birth to pre-school, where parents can bring their young ones to sing & clap along to popular nursery rhymes and songs. No need to book a place, just come along and join in the fun!

## P5 upwards

Chatterbooks is our popular book group for young people P5 to P7 who meet every Friday afternoon to read and talk about their favourite books. There are still places left on Chatterbooks, so please call the library or pop in and speak to one of our staff, who will book you a place.

During the school summer holidays the library will



be running the annual Tesco Bank Summer Reading Challenge Scotland. This year's theme will be Record Breakers, bringing together the worlds of fact and fiction, challenging young readers to explore some of the astonishing real-life achievements and world records featured in the Guinness World Records Books.

To take part children will need to read six books over the holidays, collecting stickers and other rewards as they go! There will be also be a series of special events in the library during the summer, all for free, so please get in touch for further details or check our Facebook page.

## P7+ and Teens

Our Teen Book Group, A Novel Idea meets every second Saturday at 2.30pm to read and talk about their favourite books, write reviews and recommend their top reads. The book group is available to young people aged 11+ and there are places left, so pop in and speak to one of our staff, if you'd like to join.

Ever fancied strutting your stuff on the stage, writing your own play or even making a short film? Our teen Theatre and Film Workshop, Dramarama meets every Monday night, 5.30-6.30 and is available to young people aged 11+. There are places left in the group so come along on Monday night and join in. We welcome new members.



## Adults

Corstorphine Library currently runs three Bookgroups who meet once a month on a Tuesday and on Wednesday evenings, to discuss popular new books. All the book groups welcome new members, so pop into the library or give us a call if you'd like to join a Bookgroup.

French Conversation Group meets every Monday night at 6.30pm, and welcomes people at all levels of French, from beginners up to advanced speakers. The group is run by a native French speaker; French cheeses and refreshments will be served!

Interested in needlework? Our knitting and sewing group, Cast offs, meets every Monday night at 6.45pm. Come along and make your own creations.

### **We can help you if you can't get to the library... Mobile Library Service**

The Royal Voluntary Service help us deliver books to readers who may find it difficult to get to the library. Friendly volunteers visit members in their homes and deliver books of their choice. Members can request their favourite authors or genre, as well as from our collection of audio and large print books. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in joining our mobile library round, please get in touch with us.

### **Library Link**

Corstorphine Library runs a Library Link service in conjunction with SEAG (South Edinburgh Action Group), for members who find it difficult to get to the library. There are two weekly Links, every second Tuesday and every second Friday. Members are collected from their homes



and brought to the library where they can meet and chat with other Linkers, have a bite to eat and choose their books. If you, or someone you know would benefit from this service, please contact the library and ask to be put on the waiting list.

You can keep up-to-date on what is happening at Corstorphine library on the library web page or on our facebook page [www.facebook.com/CorstorphineLibrary](http://www.facebook.com/CorstorphineLibrary)

For further information about some of our other services please contact us on 0131 529 5506 or pop in to see us!

**Barbara Brown and Stephen Shiels**

## **Corstorphine Scottish Seniors Computer Club**

A previous edition of 'Let's Talk' described how 'Third Age Computing Fun' (TACF) was helping the over 50s to master computing skills in Corstorphine.

Previously based at The Agenda, the club has since moved to a purpose built facility in the library at The Hub at Drumbrae.

No longer under the TACF umbrella, the club operates as an independent entity, part of a loose federation of 'Scottish Seniors Computer Clubs', spread across Edinburgh and West Lothian.

A bright, modern, dedicated room combined with access to the Library's Wi Fi facility, provides an ideal environment in which to develop your technology skills, while enjoying the company of other like-minded folk.

Led by an enthusiastic team of volunteers of all ages, you can get help with your laptop, tablet, smart phone or Kindle. Learn to surf the Internet, use social media, or run your own project. Recent projects have recently ranged from



photography through to local history of the First World War.

The club operates on a Monday afternoon, from 2pm to 4pm, with a break at 3pm for coffee, a social chat and the option of some tempting home baking.

Personal tuition rather than a classroom based approach means that you learn what you want at your own pace, only turning up and paying for the weeks which suit you.

All this for an annual subscription of £10 and then payment of £2 a session.

One lady recently spent the first hour using her IPAD to access the Internet to look up bus timetables to plan her journey from Edinburgh to North Berwick for a meeting. Encouraged by her success, she moved on to planning a trip to Bath for an upcoming wedding, which included booking flights from Edinburgh to Bristol and bus and train connections from Bristol to Bath. By the end of the second hour, she left for home excitedly looking forward to being able to use FaceTime for the first time to both see and speak to her grand-daughter in South Africa!

Interested? Come along on a Monday afternoon for a chat or free taster session, check out our page on the 'Streetlife' network ([www.streetlife.com/corstorphine-over-50s-computer-club](http://www.streetlife.com/corstorphine-over-50s-computer-club)), or contact Club Leader Gordon Scott either by email at [gordjscott@hotmail.com](mailto:gordjscott@hotmail.com) or by phone on 0131 334 8936.

**Derek MacGillivray**

# New to Corstorphine



I became pastor of Corstorphine United Free Church in June last year. Corstorphine UF is the church no one knows about, hidden away but right in the centre of Corstorphine - I'll let you discover where it is! The question I always get asked is how does a mechanical engineer end up as a church pastor? I trained as a

mechanical engineer at Heriot-Watt University in the late 90s, and then studied a masters degree in Engineering Design. I was looking at a career designing wind turbines but decided to do have an adventure first! A friend had told me about an organisation called Mercy Ships, which sends what are basically floating hospitals to some of the poorest parts of the developing world. At the age of 23 I signed up to volunteer on a Mercy Ship, the 'Anastasis,' working in the ship's engine room.

The Anastasis was a fully functioning hospital with 40 ward beds and three operating theatres on board. It sailed up and down the coast of West Africa providing free medical operations to people who otherwise would have no chance of getting them. Life changing operations which we take for granted- cleft lip and palate operations,

cataract removal, dental surgery- are just not available for many people. It was a life changing experience for me to see people in the Gambia and Sierra Leone who had spent much of their lives blind through cataracts, suddenly be able to see. I witnessed cataract operation – the nearest I've come to fainting I think - 20 minutes and its done and someone who was blind can suddenly see! In Africa gum infections could spread and result in tumours growing out of the side of people's faces. Peoples only chance of survival was to be operated on by one of the ship's plastic surgeons. These surgeons would fly out for two weeks- taking a holiday from their jobs in the UK or the US and provide these ops, free of charge.

I remember walking up and down the queues of people in the national stadium in Freetown, Sierra Leone with a bucket of water and cups as 5000 people lined up in the heat of the sun to be seen by the ship's doctors in the hope of receiving a life changing operation. Some got the operation, many didn't; the need was more than the ship could cater for.

My work was to help maintain the 60 year old ship's engine room. The Anastasis was built in 1952 as the 'Victoria' an ocean liner, before being bought by a Christian organisation called YWAM and being converted into a hospital ship. As it was built long before electronics were developed and time saving computers, the Anastasis needed a large engineering team to keep it going. Most were Africans, the chief engineer and his wife plus myself were the only other Scots on board the ship for a time. The Mercy Ship Anastasis had a volunteer crew of about 350 people; engineers, deck hands, nurses, doctors, dentists, cleaners etc. There was a shop and even a school onboard as some of the long term crew took their families to live onboard. It was a self contained village!

I came onboard the Mercy Ship an agnostic; like many people I had wondered if God was really there and if so which god, after all there are so many religions in the world. I had attended a traditional church as a youngster, but wasn't convinced, and eventually gave up on it. I had read some philosophy- Bertrand Russell- but felt there must be more. I was looking for purpose and a meaning for my life. For me living in a community where most people had a genuine Christian faith was eye opening. I felt that everyone showed a whole new level of kindness to one another and found that very powerful. I realised their faith was making a big difference in their lives. Also, one evening onboard the ship, I had what could only be described as a spiritual experience in which Jesus Christ seemed very real. It was a defining moment which has formed my life and career since.

My journey from there to becoming a pastor at Corstorphine has been a long and winding one. Working as a water engineering consultant in Cambridge, returning to East Lothian and working out of the local Church of Scotland, a divinity degree in New College in Edinburgh and finally

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coming to Corstorphine to be pastor at Corstorphine United Free Church.

I'm excited to be involved in the life of Corstorphine. It is a pleasant place, a good place to live, but also like everywhere, a needy place. The needs are different to West Africa, but still very real. Many people are under pressure. We have an ageing population here - so lots of folks have health problems to contend with. Lots of people are balancing busy work lives with looking after their families and their ageing parents. The car is king in Corstorphine. The A8 seems to be always busy and people drive everywhere. Family relationships and friendships are spread out across Edinburgh and beyond. The car culture breaks up the sense of community in and around Corstorphine, and isolation and loneliness is a problem. In all this I see there is a role for the church. I believe our church in Corstorphine needs to be a place of refuge and community as well as a place where people have an opportunity to explore their questions about meaning and purpose in life. I think people are spiritual; they believe there is more 'out there'- things that can't be explained by science. They don't always believe in God, but often believe in life after death and a higher purpose for our lives here on Earth. Like myself when I wandered aboard a Mercy Ship, there are many who are looking for spiritual reality and answers, and are willing to give Jesus Christ's teaching a hearing. It's my hope that they won't need to go to Africa to find what they are looking for!

**Rev. Duncan Whitty**

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# The Opera Camerata Story

Opera Camerata started life in 1994 as a small Opera Company dedicated to putting on productions of small scale operas in English at the Church Hill Theatre, Morningside.

In the beginning we staged one-act operas such as Puccini's Gianni Schicchi and Sister Angelica, however over the years as we have grown in confidence and experience we have ventured in the realms of Grand Opera and Operetta.

In recent years we have performed Cavalleria Rusticana and I Paglacci both one-act operas, but usually performed together. Other recent productions have included Der Freischutz, The Pearl Fishers and The Magic Flute. All of these are well known operas with beautiful music which has been a joy to sing.



At the moment, in Edinburgh, no other company is performing Operetta and we have successfully staged The Merry Widow and Die Fledermaus and also some which are not so well known such as La Vie Parisienne, La Belle Helene, and only last year, The Count of Luxembourg.

Our year starts in March with auditions. In the previous year, our musical director, Alison Rushworth, will have decided which show would be suitable and that decision will have been discussed and agreed by the committee. Alison has been Opera Camerata's musical director since the beginning and we are very fortunate to have her. By her side is Elspeth Williamson who, as our stage director, manages to get us moving about the stage while we are still singing. With Morley Whitehead at the rehearsal piano we couldn't be in better hands.

After the cast has been selected, we start rehearsals in mid April. For the last four years we have been using St Ninian's Church for auditions and rehearsals and have found it to be a great venue. The hall has just the right amount of space for our group and there are also excellent kitchen facilities. Monday nights are for chorus and Wednesday nights for principals.

While we are rehearsing twice weekly at St Ninian's, our team of set builders will have designed a set and started to build it at Blackhall Church. They are a group of retired gentlemen who meet every Monday to do this and by all accounts have as much fun building the set as we have performing on it.

Their job extends right to the theatre where they assemble the set on stage, as well as to large stage props such as the serpent for Magic Flute which was operated by six chorus members!



As well as set builders other members are working away throughout the rehearsal period. Kay Rich is our costume mistress and it's her job to see that we all get on stage with an appropriate costume that looks the part. In the past we have had shows where all the costumes are made by Kay and cast helpers, or where they have been hired. Mostly it's a bit of both and we have a costume store, which is put to good use, for example - men's tails or ladies peasant skirts.

Anne Seton is our props lady and also has to be working early in the schedule to obtain or make props on the list provided by Elspeth. In our production of The Count of Luxembourg she had to paint over 20 canvases by herself for the 'Artist Studio', which was the Act 1 set.

We have a summer break during July and most of August and start again with Sunday afternoons now added, which continue until show week.

Publicity and marketing prevail throughout the season – from advertising the auditions in February right up to last minute social media pushes in October, which, hopefully, will all come together to provide the necessary ticket sales, our principal source of revenue.

Alison will have put together an orchestra from the Edinburgh area. These are experienced musicians and Alison will only have one rehearsal with them before the band call on the Sunday afternoon prior to the opening. This is a complete music-only run through with the cast. At the same time the set will be moved into the theatre and put together. By now we will also have a lighting person and a stage manager to oversee operations. We are fortunate to have two full rehearsals on the Monday and Tuesday nights.

Performances are Wednesday to Saturday, evenings only. It is then that the real fun and enjoyment can begin. There is a great camaraderie backstage getting ready to perform each night. Naturally, audiences add the final ingredient to the successful production recipe. It's great to hear an audience laughing at all the jokes and applauding a good performance.

Of course after the performance is over there is little chance that you will be able to just go home and to bed, so we gather in the bar of the Church Hill for a glass of wine and a discussion on how the night went and to meet up with enthusiastic friends and relatives. On the last night this takes





the form of a well-deserved cast party with food we're kindly allowed to bring in to go with the wine - after the bar is closed to the public. However that won't happen until the set has been dismantled and loaded into the truck and the costumes have been packed and loaded - leaving the stage and the dressing rooms exactly how we found them a week earlier. Then it's time to party.

Once the auditions are announced during the following February, we're up and running once again.

Opera Camerata will be performing *The Tales of Hoffmann* at the Church Hill Theatre, 7-10 October 2015. Tickets £12 will be obtainable at the Usher Hall, or at 0131 226 2304.

**Liz Thomson, Chairman**

**Photos by Simon Bouthroyd and Graham Drew**



## CHRISTMAS FAIR AT ST. NINIAN'S CHURCH

There will be a Christmas Fair at St. Ninian's Church on Saturday 28 November from 12 noon to 3pm. Enter from St. John's Road or St. Ninian's Road.

Christmas Hampers - draws will be made at intervals throughout the Fair. Draw tickets will cost £1.

There will be stalls for Home Bakery and Jams, Crafts, Jewellery, Scarves and Toiletries, Flower Arrangements, Books and Water or Wine.

There will be activities for Children.

Music will be played in the Church. A donation may be made for a request.

Lunches will be served till 2pm followed by Afternoon Teas.

Admission will be £1 for adults and 50p for children.

**Half the proceeds will go towards Church Funds and half will be divided equally between some local charities.**

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