



**Music at
St Ninian's Episcopal Church
Comely Bank, Edinburgh
2009 - 2019**



*An update to the booklet by T. H. Edwards which covered
the years 1921 to 2009*

**Organists and Directors of Music
St Ninian's Episcopal Church,
Comely Bank, Edinburgh
*from 2009***

St Ninian's Episcopal Church, Comely Bank, dedicated in 1921

2007 - 2009	Tom Edwards
2009 - 2013	Wayne Weaver
2013 - 2014	Duncan Appleby
2014 -2016	Jonathan Yip
2016 -2019	Adam Wilson
2019 -	Jane Ruuskanen

For the period from 2007 to 2019 St Ninian's has had a succession of talented younger Organists and Directors of Music, all of whom have made a significant contribution to our worship. It is hoped that they have also benefited from their time at St Ninian's.

We are delighted that Jane Ruuskanen, who has wide-ranging experience as an instrumentalist and teacher has agreed to accept this post from 2019.

Pat Treherne May 2020

Pictures and formatting by David Treherne

The current choir at St Ninian's dates from October 2006. A few months later, in July 2007, **Tom Edwards** was appointed **Organist and Director of Music**.



Tom Edwards

Tom was an Honours Graduate of Edinburgh University and served in post until April 2009. During that time Tom was totally committed to the choir while also immersing himself in the life of our small church. He was especially interested in our musical history: this he wrote up as a booklet entitled: *Ninety Years of Music at St Ninian's Episcopal Church, Comely Bank, Edinburgh*.

It was produced as a limited print run, and is also available as a PDF on the *Choir and Music Page* of our website.

Ten years on, in 2019, four Organists and Directors of Music have come and gone: Wayne Weaver (2009-2013); Duncan Appleby (2013-2014); Jonathan Yip (2014-2016); Adam Wilson (2016-2018); with the appointment in February 2019 of our current Organist and Director of Music, Jane Ruuskanen.

Using archive material we aim now to record the continuing story of our choir covering the years 2009 -2019.

Tom refers to previous choirs at St Ninian's: in the 1930's; in the 1970's under Fr David Jowitt; and in the 1980's under Fr George Spencer. Our current choir came into being following the appointment, in 2006, of the Revd Andrew Bain as Priest-in-Charge.

Talking with the congregation Andrew found himself in conversation with George and Audrey Marshall. Both had sung in previous church choirs; was it possible St Ninian's could have a choir once again? Andrew put the idea to the congregation and several volunteers came forward: Libby Morton; Jeanette Stevenson; Pat Treherne; Sheila Donaldson; Sheila Blacklaws; Cleodie Mackinnon; and Barbara and Campbell Thomson

when they were visiting from Luxembourg; all happy to join with George and Audrey for Sunday morning choir practice.

Our regular organist Andrew Morley had retired some months earlier but we had continued singing with a number of visiting organists all of whom were wonderfully patient with our novice choir. For some months Andrew Bain helped to direct proceedings, and, on occasion, his daughter, Christina, would also join us. Before long we were able to sing an anthem on Sunday mornings in addition to leading the hymns. Our first anthem was *Lead me, Lord* : *Samuel Sebastian Wesley* introduced by organist *Denise Argiolas (from St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Edinburgh)*.

Andrew applied for affiliation to the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) *committed to making the best use of music in the service of God* - as recorded on a framed certificate in church dated 1st May 2007. We also applied for licences that would allow us to play a wider range of music at St Ninian's.

Tom Edwards was appointed full-time Organist and Director of Music in August 2007. He was quick to take our fledgling choir in hand. Six weeks on we were joined by choir members from Morningside Parish Church, where Tom, studying under Morley Whitehead, had previously been the organ scholar. Together, we sang *Evening Mass for the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin* with Andrew Bain officiating.

A decision was taken to offer Choral Scholarships at St Ninian's. These were funded using part of a very generous legacy received from the estate of Mollie Main, a much respected member of our congregation. This seemed a fitting tribute to her memory, especially as Mollie had spent most of her working life in retail serving young people.

By October (2007) the first choral scholars were appointed: *Catriona Hewitson (sop); Lissa Robertson (alto); Alan Rowland (bass)*. This was a very talented group of singers drawn from Broughton School nearby - officially designated *The City of Edinburgh Music School*. We sang our first Choral Evensong together for the *Feast of All Saints*.

There was a fine Choral Celebration for *Candlemas*, 2008. The music included Stanford *Evening Canticles in G*, with Catriona Hewitson, soprano solo, and Alan Rowland, bass solo.

On Good Friday an augmented choir performed *Stainer's Crucifixion.*; and on Easter Morning we sang Harold Darke's *Communion service in F* (also sung by the choir formed in the 1980's!) and repeated for the Feast of Ss Peter and Paul on the last Sunday of June.

Further Choral Scholar appointments followed: 1 April 2008 *Stuart Irvine (tenor)* from The Royal High School; and from 1 September 2008, *Jessica Conway (2nd soprano)* from Edinburgh University. *Arthur Bruce* sang with us from Autumn 2008-2009 as part of a committed and growing male-voice section.

Congregational members were as follows: Jeanette Stevenson, Audrey Marshall and Barbara Thomson (*sops*); Libby Morton, Pat Treherne (*altos*); George Marshall and Campbell Thomson (*bass*). Regular choir practices were held on Thursday evenings, 7 – 9pm, and at 9.30am on a Sunday before the 10.30 Eucharist.

Emma Rainey sang with the sopranos as studies permitted; also, for a while, Janette Myles and Sheila Payne from other churches.

The choir robed and gained new choir stalls in the cathedral style in August 2008 and continued to '*expand their repertoire with new and challenging pieces. In August alone the choir performed music by Joubert, Howells, Leighton, de Severac, Victoria and Tallis.*'

During the Edinburgh Festival we hosted a Saturday lunch-time organ recital featuring Tom, and colleague Rob Mackillop who played Tudor music on lute and baroque guitar. A further Tudor Evensong was sung on St Ninian's Patronal Festival. We also celebrated Michaelmas, All Saints, and Christ the King, the latter with Choral Evensong and Benediction.

In spring 2009 we celebrated Choral Evensong to mark The Annunciation: performing the **Magnificat** and **Nunc Dimittis** (*in B flat by C.V. Stanford*); with **two** anthems: *Totus tuus sum Maria: Mary! I am wholely thine (Gorecki)*; and *Ave Maria: Hail Mary full of Grace the Lord is with thee (Tomas Luis da Victoria)*.

In Holy Week the service for Maundy Thursday concluded with the choir singing *Tantum Ergo : Deodat de Severac*. On Good Friday evening the choir gave a devotional performance of *Stainer's Crucifixion*. Easter Sunday, with its fine music and heartfelt singing provided a fitting end to our time together as organist and choir. This was Tom's last Sunday (Easter, 12 April, 2009). Andrew Bain led the tributes, praising Tom for his work with the choir; for his commitment, his vision and 'sheer panache and love of music.'

The choir were grateful to Simon Walker (Organ scholar at St Mary's Cathedral) who led us through the next months as other duties permitted; grateful, too, for those who have played on occasional Sundays over the years: Denise Argiolas; Colin Tipple; John Riley; Les Shankland; Sheila Payne; Jane Ruuskanen. Special thanks also to Morley Whitehead for playing or conducting on some of the big occasions.



Following the choir summer break we welcomed our newly appointed **Organist and Director of Music, Wayne Weaver** organ scholar at St Giles' Cathedral (2007-2009); choral, and then organ scholar, at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, while still completing his studies at Edinburgh University. Our first

service with Wayne was on **Sunday 9 August, 2009**.

Wayne Weaver, like Tom, passed through the music school at Edinburgh University with flying colours, gaining his degree with honours. He was a very versatile musician who enjoyed piano and had a keen interest in the harpsichord and early music.

Wayne had lived and breathed music ever since he was a boy chorister at Bradford Cathedral and was determined our choir became the best it could be. Familiar with the music scene in Edinburgh he quickly added to our repertoire and was soon organising concerts and recitals.

The scheme for scholars was still in place though reduced in value from the early years. Despite this we recruited three new scholars: *Fiona Craib (sop), Jack McLuckie (tenor), and Rob Sims (bass)*. Alison Wyllie, a recent member of the congregation, formerly with the choir at Oban Cathedral, joined us now as an alto. Ten years on she is still singing with us.

Stuart was leaving; Catriona, and Lissa stayed on. Wayne introduced Colleen Nicoll who sang with us and subsequently stayed on to become the first paid tutor for the *Voice for Life* programme, which is run in conjunction with the Royal School of Church Music; of which more later.

The Choral Year was set to end at the time of our Patronal Festival, when there was both a Sunday Morning Eucharist and a Choral Evensong and Valedictory. Thus, on 18 September, 2009, we bade farewell to Jessica and Arthur, among others, and welcomed new scholars: Fiona, Jack and Rob.

Harvest Festival was soon to follow; then Choral Evensong for All Saints; an Advent Carol Service at the end of November and lovely Christmas music to learn. We were all looking forward to welcoming back scholars from previous years for Midnight Mass and Christmas Day Services.

As something a little different for the New Year (2010) Wayne generously agreed to a *Mothers' Union* request for an afternoon of *music and song*. Some 20 folk filled the pews to enjoy an entertaining and fun afternoon.

A particular highlight for the choir, with invited singers and instrumentalists, was the annual Devotional Performance during Holy Week. In 2010 and 2011 we performed Stainer's *Crucifixion*.

George Marshall had decided he would leave the choir at Easter because he felt his voice was not 'quite up to scratch.' Ten years later he was still singing the bass part lustily from within the congregation! [As circumstances changed for both George, and the choir, he would re-join the choir in November 2019!].

Early in 2010 Andrew Bain had signalled he would be retiring in the summer after four years of ministry with us. On 3 June Wayne played for a special performance of Choral Evensong to celebrate *The Feast of Corpus Christi*, with Andrew officiating.

Wayne also organised a special *Summer Concert and Garden Party* for the evening of Sunday, 27 June 2010, before our summer break. The choir had been practising hard for their contribution to the programme: music, with organ and chamber ensemble to include Haydn's *Missa Brevis, sacred and secular, solo and choral works*. Refreshments to follow included BBQ

rolls and salad; we catered for 50 people and 100 turned up! Still time to enjoy a drink in the late sunshine of a June day.



Choral Scholars and congregation relax at the BBQ

The choir were back on duty for Andrew's farewell service on 8 August. It was time, too, to pay tribute to

George, for his time with the choir, and to say good-bye to Rob. The choir

stalls were full, and the church packed as we welcomed Andrew's friends and family; folk from Holy Trinity, Haddington, and Emmaus House, and others from around the diocese. The singing was splendid and afterwards we enjoyed a light lunch outside in the sunshine. A fond farewell; and so began our period of 'interregnum' with the Revd Dean Fostekew, Rector of The Good Shepherd, Murrayfield.

Dean kept a benevolent eye on his additional flock though he could not always be with us in person. However, we were well served for Sunday and mid-week services by priests from across the diocese, as well as nearer home. Our routine carried on largely as before with Dean and Wayne liaising well together. We struggled with fluctuating numbers in the choir but still managed to have several Choral Evensongs a year together with Christmas Celebrations and Lent Devotions.

By February 2011 we had learned the name of our new Rector: The Revd Frances Burberry, Associate Priest at St Peter's, Lutton Place. Soon we would be planning for her Service of Installation.

Audrey withdrew from the choir at Easter. Wayne and the choir presented her with a boxed set of *Magnificat : Nunc Dimittis Settings* to mark a lifetime of singing; especially recalling her years with us in the choir at St Ninian's.

The Revd Frances Burberry was installed as our new **Rector** on the evening of Thursday 16 June 2011. The service, a Sung Eucharist, with full choir, was conducted by the Rt Revd Brian Smith, Bishop of Edinburgh. The service opened with the *Liturgy of Preparation* and the choir sang the Introit: *Locus Iste* by Anton Bruckner (1824 - 1896) : *This place has been made by God, a sacrament beyond price, it cannot be comprehended.*

The church was full to capacity as members of our congregation presented Frances with her Symbols of Ministry and the hymns rang out in joy and celebration.

It was not long before Frances expressed the hope that our smart red choir robes might be graced with the addition of surplices. As Frances put it

'The giving of the surplice, with a Litany shared by the Director of Music and the Rector, marks someone truly joining the choir.' Jeanette, our 'Mistress of the Robes' was soon adjusting hems and sewing on embroidered name tags. This little ceremony took place every time a new choral scholar was admitted to the choir. We soon felt at home in our new apparel. We appreciated the attention and care we were receiving; also the support of the congregation.



The choir with the Rector and Wayne Weaver (DoM) Advent 2012

As in the previous year Wayne put on a *Summer Concert and Garden Party*, this time on 31 July (2011) the start of Edinburgh Festival Season. Wayne invited guest soloists Colleen Nicoll and Catherine Hadshar for a recital of songs and arias. It was also an opportunity for Wayne to demonstrate his skills on the harpsichord as he played works by Purcell, Bach, and Handel, amongst others. It drew an audience of some 50 people and was followed by light refreshments.

The sad news came that Audrey Marshall had died on 6 February 2012. A Service of Thanksgiving for her life took place at St Ninian's. Frances, our Rector, was Officiant, Wayne, the Organist, while two other clergy

(previous pastors to Audrey) also participated : the Revd Andrew Bain (*Readings*) and Fr Peter Allen (*Appreciation*). A full choir sang for Audrey: *God is Working his purpose out* (Audrey's favourite hymn); *Jerusalem the Golden*; concluding with *How shall I sing that Majesty?* the final descant soaring to the heavens! The choir then sang, with all their heart, a much loved anthem: *God so loved the World: Stainer*; a special service for a very special lady.

Audrey was much missed. In her memory George donated new anthem books for the choir: *High Praise, Books 1 and 2 for Upper Voices, edited by Barry Rose*. A label, designed by Sarah Morton, was attached inside each book with the words: *In Loving Memory of Audrey Marshall, 1929 - 2012; she who sings, prays twice.*

Since our choir is composed of mainly 'upper voices' the books have been well used over the years.

Lent and Holy Week Devotions lay ahead:



Augmented choir at Holy Week performance of Fauré's Requiem

As Wayne wrote at the top of the programme: *this was following the tradition, commonly observed in Christian churches throughout the world, of offering the gift of music as an act of worship during Holy Week.*

On Holy Monday, choir and chamber ensemble performed *Requiem* by Gabriel Fauré, *Messe Basse* or ‘short mass’ along with *Stabat Mater* : Pergolesi (3 movements) : with Wayne conducting and Colin Tipple at the organ; the sombre mood of *Stabat Mater* contrasting well with the expressive and lyrical beauty of the Fauré.

On Sunday 18 November, there was an afternoon concert to celebrate the Feast of St Cecilia, the Patron Saint of Music. Wayne had put together a mix of music - ancient and modern. With an augmented choir we performed *Vivaldi’s Gloria*; followed by music from famous TV shows - *The Vicar of Dibley*; *Blackadder*; *Mr Bean*; and *Red Dwarf* - such fun ! - and a great success. The Ruuskanen family were now a welcome addition to the choir, singing with us when they could in the midst of very busy schedules.

In 2013 a very special event awaited - The Royal School of Church Music Celebration Day. This is held annually at a different cathedral each year. 2013 was the turn of our own St. Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral! We eagerly awaited the dawn of Saturday 25 May. Affiliated choirs from across the UK gathered together to sing a set programme of music as a tribute to the work of RSCM worldwide. We practised together in the morning under their conductor, Andrew Reid, and performed to a full cathedral audience later in the day. Opening with *The God of Abr’am Praise*, we moved to *Hymn to the Trinity* (Tchaikovsky) and *Magnificat in C* (Charles V. Stanford) finishing with *I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity*: a day to lift one’s spirit to a higher plane.

Wayne was always enthusiastic; eager for the next thing. With the weeks of his tenure ebbing away he organised *The Musical Magpie Recitals (2013)* for two Wednesday mornings in July. Following the Wednesday Eucharist meant there was an appreciative audience at hand and a warm and welcoming church in which to perform.

Beyond our choir, and our music, Wayne was involved in a variety of special-interest music groups across the city. He was also Musical Director of the Edinburgh Youth Choir (the Junior Chorus of the Edinburgh Royal Choral Union).

After our summer break Wayne's final Sunday with us was 18 August; a gathered choir and congregation marking his four years as our Organist and Director of Music. Wayne had raised our choir to new levels of performance and there was praise on all sides for his dedication, energy and vision. Of course it was sad to see him go but we wished him *God Speed* as he embarked on a Teacher Training Course, and what would blossom into a very successful and varied career.

From **September 2013** we welcomed **Duncan Appleby** as our **Organist and Director of Music**. **Duncan would be with us for one year only, until September 2014.** He had just completed his Bachelor of Music Degree at Birmingham Conservatoire and had applied for a place, in 2014, at the Royal College of Music, London, which offered a Masters Degree in Piano Accompaniment which he was eager to pursue as his ultimate goal.

We were delighted that Duncan was spending the intervening year at St Ninian's with our choir. His early years were spent at St Mary's Music School and later he was a Lay Clerk at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral where his family had worshipped for many years.



He was a fine pianist, and eager to hone his skills on the organ. Duncan also played cello, both in the orchestra and in smaller groups. He had a rich musical background having spent three years at an American High School where he was involved with theatrical productions; back to studies at Edinburgh Academy, where he sang with the Chamber Choir and played piano in the dance-band; finally a Gap Year with the Cathedral Choir in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Our choir was now learning to adapt to the loss of choral scholars; and we were therefore delighted to welcome the Ruuskanen Family on a more regular basis: headed by Jane, a professional musician, teacher and performer; with equally talented daughters Emily, Freya and Lucy. On many occasions over the years Jane had stood in as deputy organist. As a

family they organised a number of quality concerts as fundraisers for the church and other causes. Emily took over from Colleen in leading the *Voice for Life* programme.

We were largely a choir of female voices until Harry Wright joined us in February 2014. (Harry's family had returned from Australia where Harry's interest in music had been encouraged). He fitted in easily as a treble amongst the front row of sopranos, Jeanette and members of the Ruuskanen family; and, from time to time, Astrid Ritchie. Altos were Libby, Pat, Alison and Christa Gray (Christa was a German student studying at Edinburgh University). Despite the lack of male voices we still managed to sing anthems regularly week by week. And we tried to keep up the tradition of choir 'socials' with hospitality offered at different times by Jeanette, Libby, and Jane.

An interesting departure this summer, no doubt long in the planning on both sides, was a joint 'ecumenical' service arranged for Pentecost, on Sunday 8 June, at Dean Parish Church. Our choir, walked 'up the hill' for a joint choir practice. St Ninian's were well represented, and the service was led very graciously by their Interim Minister, the Revd Sara Embleton. Frances, our Rector, provided a thoughtful reflection for the day. The children had a special time together and came back with a colourful display of painted kites; a fine buffet lunch completed the day.

Regardless of how many attended each week Duncan led the choir with patience and good humour and quickly became a familiar face around the church. We shall long remember Duncan's rich tenor rendition of the psalms.

Duncan's final Sunday was 7 September 2014. It was a splendid family affair; mum and dad were there, and brother Michael joined us in the choir together with Jane and the girls. We sang an anthem as usual: *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring - J.S.Bach*. Duncan played us out with a rousing performance of *Bach's Toccata and Fugue* which was greeted with a well deserved ovation. There were accolades from all sides and a genuine warmth as Frances voiced our appreciation. Duncan came up to the lectern to express his own feelings of gratitude.

Of course we wished him well for those further studies in London which would open the door to his life's ambition.

Since then, Duncan has been seen on a number of occasions accompanying others, or playing solo, at the lunch-time recitals in St Mary's Cathedral, and also at other venues across Edinburgh and beyond. Nowadays Duncan performs on a much wider stage to great acclaim.

Emily Ruuskanen took on *Voice for Life* training for the choir after Colleen left at Easter 2013. Emily wrote for the AGM Report of 2014:



Our first Voice for Life awards were presented on 23 September 2012 to Freya, Lucy and Emily

"*Voice for Life* is a church music programme run by the Royal School of Church Music. In *Voice for Life* sessions we learn singing techniques, musical theory and many choral works.

There are several stages to the programme and each is given a colour of its own (white, light blue, dark blue, red and yellow). The current groups at St Ninian's are at the red and yellow level.

Just now the yellow group is singing 'Stabat Mater' by Pergolesi and later on will be looking at a gospel style piece called 'Wade in the Water'. By singing these pieces we improve our diction, breathing techniques, and dynamic range. Afterwards we perform them to the other groups. Once each stage has been completed each person is awarded a coloured ribbon for their level and a medal."

There are five levels in the *Voice for Life* scheme, for singers of any age from beginners through to advanced singers, starting with a preparatory level for brand new, inexperienced singers. The levels are



White (preparatory level)

LightBlue

DarkBlue

Red

Yellow:

With exam years looming Emily decided the time had come to bow out of *Voice for Life* training. It is to her great credit that Emily was able to take on this responsibility at such a young age and perform so well; we appreciated all she did.

September 2014. Duncan Appleby had left on 7 September. Caroline Craddock played for us on the 14th and John Riley on the 21st and the 28th. It was on this last Sunday of September that we were first 'introduced' to our new Director of Music. **Jonathan Yip** was sitting listening as we sang *Lead me Lord - Samuel Sebastian Wesley*, the first anthem we had sung as a choir. The following Sunday, Harvest, would be Jonathan's first. We sang the anthem *Make me a Light* from *High Praise*.

**Jonathan Yip: Organist and Director of Music at St. Ninian's,
September 2014 - 2016.**

Extracted from his own Biographical Notes.



Jonathan came from Hong Kong, a land of subtropical humidity and therefore also of a scarcity of pipe organs. He started formally learning the organ in the summer after he had sat the equivalent of our GCSE exams; living and practising for long hot hours in the factory where electric organs are assembled.

In the autumn of 2008 Jonathan moved to the UK to study for his A-Levels, becoming a boarder at *The King's School*, Canterbury, where he had organ lessons with John Robinson, then Assistant Organist at Canterbury Cathedral; and where he made the switch from Sciences and Programming, to History and English, which opened up a whole new world. In addition to a growing list of composers, Jonathan discovered the delights of Donne and the metaphysical poets and became immersed in both over the next years.

In 2009 Jonathan won the Open Class Prize in the Kent County Organ Festival. He was subsequently awarded an Organ Scholarship at Cambridge, first spending a gap year working as Sub-Organist at St John's Cathedral, Hong Kong.

At Cambridge, Jonathan read English at Robinson College and directed the chapel choir. Jonathan also started learning harpsichord and frequently performed in the weekly Music Society Concerts at the College as continuo player or accompanist. Jonathan accompanied the Chapel Choir on end-of-year tours of Europe extending still further his repertoire across a range of musical traditions. The final tour to Italy concluded with a concert in the Catholic University of Milan and, sadly, coincided with the death of Jonathan's father. After attending Graduation at Cambridge Jonathan returned to Hong Kong to conduct his father's funeral.

Uncertain, then, what path to take Jonathan happened upon the vacancy for an Organ Scholar at St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, combined with duties at St Ninian's. He applied and was accepted for the post.

Below, we print Jonathan's article giving his own impressions of working with our choir.

Choir 2014 - 2016 with Organist and Director of Music, Jonathan Yip.

The liturgical years 2014-16 saw a continuation of an 'upper voices only' composition in our church choir. The soaring sopranos included Jane, Emily, Freya, and Lucy, of the Ruuskanen family, Harry and his sister, Caitlin Wright, our new regular, and Jeanette Stevenson, who continues to be our 'Mistress of the Robes.' The ever dependable alto section included Alison Wyllie, Christa Gray, Libby Morton, and Pat Treherne. The choir was also joined briefly in September and October 2015 by Ilme Annelie Stahnke, an exchange mezzo from Germany. This year also saw my arrival, [Jonathan Yip], introduced as the new Director of Music, who, to the choir's chagrin, introduced new anthems from the Anglican/Episcopal repertoire almost every other service after his first month or so. The expanded choral repertoire, together with an ongoing focus on the fundamentals of good singing - breath control, phrasing, and posture - has, I hope, launched the choir to new musical and artistic heights.

On top of a regular schedule of Thursday rehearsals and Sunday morning Eucharists, the choir also sung in several Sunday Evensongs throughout

the liturgical year to mark special occasions such as the celebration of St Ninian's Day, All Souls and Pentecost.



Choir, Clergy and Jonathan Yip *Advent 2014*

The Advent season of 2014 saw the introduction of 'Carols round the Piano' in the Hall [An event for congregation and friends; a mix of poems, recited by different people, and carols sung by all, with a break half-way to enjoy light refreshments and fun with 'pass the parcel'. Jonathan played a big part in its success; memorable, was our combined rendition of *The twelve days of Christmas*. As Jonathan had hoped the evening became a popular annual event.]

The Advent season also saw the Luxembourg-based Thomson family visiting Edinburgh and gracing us with an extra soprano and an extra bass. This, together with Jonathan's visiting university friend, Sam Cahill (tenor), meant the choir managed to pull off some exciting SATB moments of full choir vocalising.

During Holy Week 2015 our church choir was joined by lay clerks and choral scholars from St Mary's Cathedral in a Requiem service on Holy

Wednesday. The 1583 *Missa Pro defunctis* by *Tomas Luis de Victoria* proved a challenging Renaissance work to tackle, and evoked an era and style of music that is not frequently heard at St Ninian's. As the sombre liturgical drama faded into the night, so did the music to its conclusion.

Jonathan's hope for the choir in the years ahead was "more of the same: the same improvement, the same dedication, and the same enjoyment. Thanks be to God".

Following the Summer Break, Jonathan's final Sunday with us was in late August. It seemed to come far too soon. During the time he had been our Organist and Director of Music Jonathan had earned the respect and admiration of our little choir and of the whole congregation; for his commitment, for his expertise and flair at the keyboard, and for his winning smile.

After discarding the idea of a move to the USA Jonathan returned to Hong Kong out of loyalty to his home country and anxious for its future. Once more he could play the organ in St. John's Cathedral. Life turned full circle as he also found a job teaching senior students about his love of the metaphysical poets.

From September 2016 we welcomed Adam Wilson as our Organist and Director of Music; 2016 - 2018.

Adam studied Music at the University of Glasgow, where he was the Lanfine Organ Scholar. Previously he was a chorister and then organ scholar at Dunblane Cathedral. As with Jonathan before him Adam had also been appointed Organ Scholar at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral under the same arrangement that meant he would be available for duties at St Ninian's on most Sundays.



During Adam's first year, from early September 2016 through to July, 2017 we kept to the pattern set by Jonathan, and others before him, of well-chosen weekly anthems. We then had a long summer break resuming

in September. Ahead lay a time of preparation and practice for a significant event.

The Revd Jane Green, our Curate at the time, was to be priested. The Ordination Service, presided over by the Bishop of Edinburgh, the Rt Revd Dr John Armes, took place at St Ninian's, on Holy Cross Day, 14 September, at 7pm. Our little choir had swelled to 20 and filled the choir stalls to capacity. The church itself was also packed with friends and family and clergy and lay from across the diocese. Adam had his place among the credits: *Adam Wilson, Director of Music and the Choir at St Ninian's* along with *Michael Green, Kat Whigham and the choir of Christ Church Morningside* who had sponsored Jane. The music was glorious; the sound amazing. The service itself was dignified, moving, and joyous. The choir sang the anthem *A Gaelic Blessing by John Rutter*. and Adam played us out with the classic organ voluntary *Toccata from Suite Gothique - Léon Boëllmann*.

We came down to earth to realise that our little choir ('regulars': Jeanette, Libby, Alison, Pat and Harry) was beginning to struggle as one by one the Ruuskanens were moving on. Emily was already studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, in Glasgow, with Freya to join her soon; a great achievement for them both. We managed anthems for 'Remembrance Sunday' and for 'Christ the King'. We held our Advent Carol Service, with additional singers; and on 11 December we enjoyed 'Carols round the Piano' as usual. As Adam was not available that evening we were pleased to welcome Emily back to play the piano for us in the Hall. Our Christmas music was as splendid as ever, as friends and former Scholars joined us for services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

All the while Harry was graduating from a place beside Jeanette in 'sopranos' to a seat beside Campbell in the 'basses'. Harry is to be commended for his many years of service and excellence as a treble and for the enthusiasm with which he embraced his new role. For periods of the year, of course, we had Barbara with us as an extra soprano, and Campbell as a companion bass for Harry.

With the New Year, 2018, upon us, we tried our best to attract new members to our choir. We ran ‘taster sessions’ first on Friday evenings and then on Saturday mornings. These helped to re-kindle some interest. Katie McGlew and family, Adam, and children Helen and Ruth, joined us when they could in varying combinations; little Evie Slack and Anne Denniss would come and go, and Astrid Ritchie from the congregation was able to be with us most Sundays.

We carried on into 2018 leading the hymn singing week in and week out with practice as usual each Thursday evening. We became proficient in singing pointed psalms and gospel responses, and put more emphasis on breath control and voice production, pace and dynamics; elements of ‘voice for life’ coming to the fore once again.

On 1 July, choir end of session, there were suddenly 15 of us. Barbara and Campbell were back with us, also Jane, Emily and Freya, as well as Katie, Adam, and children Helen and Ruth. We sang the anthem: *Lift up your heads - John Marsh*, from *Hymns Old and New*.

Adam’s final Sunday, after the break, was on 12 August. We sang *O Taste and See - Vaughan Williams*. Adam was a fine keyboard player and during his time with us achieved the status of *Associate of the Royal College of Organists*.

We thanked Adam for his time with the choir and wished him every success for the future in his new position as organ scholar in Peterborough Cathedral.

It would be several months before we were able to recruit a new Director of Music. In the meantime we were indebted to those organists who stepped in to play for us: our own Jane and Emily Ruuskanen; John Riley; Douglas Kerr; Tom Wrench; and Richard Neville-Towle.

To the delight of the choir, **Jane Ruuskanen** was appointed **Organist and Director of Music** at St Ninian’s **from February 2019**.