

Weekly Newsletter: 2nd July 2024

Reflection: Life on a Floating Hospital

Catherine Brown flies out to Madagascar on 10th August to work as a theatre nurse on Mercy Ships. Here she shares with us a bit about how she got involved and what she'll be doing. She will be speaking at our prayer meeting on Wednesday 24th July. Save the date!

How did you first hear about Mercy Ships?

I'm a nurse, and I normally work in the operating theatres here in Edinburgh. Mercy Ships is a Christian charity which owns and runs hospital ships with operating theatres on board. At a Christian conference called Spring Harvest many years ago, I spotted a Mercy Ships poster advertising for theatre nurses. I was intrigued that I could use exactly the skills that I already had within an organisation like this. And so the seed was sewn. However, it took years for me to have the courage to apply.

Eventually, in 2008, I was on my way to Liberia to work on the ship. I loved the experience and returned to volunteer year after year in my holidays. I've now been ten times, visiting Benin, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Togo, Cameroon and Senegal; some of these countries twice. My most recent trip was in 2022 when I flew out to join them in Senegal, West Africa, at the port of Dakar. My role was to be a team leader, looking after general surgical and gynaecology patients. I'm especially interested in helping women who've had childbirth injuries. This isn't something we normally see in the UK.



Do you actually live on the ship?

Yes, the Africa Mercy has accommodation for 400 crew and hospital beds for 76 patients. One of the challenges is sharing a cabin with strangers and climbing up and down from a top bunk in the dark! Most of the original cabins take 6 people. About half of the crew work in the hospital in various roles, and the other half keep the ship running by working as engineers, plumbers, cooks, housekeepers, chaplains and teachers. There's even a school on board called the Mercy Ships Academy, so families can bring their children. It's like having an entire village living together in one ship. You hear all the familiar sounds of children having piano lessons, coffee being made in the cafe, washing machines spinning. Meanwhile, down on deck 3, there's a state-of-the-art hospital, complete with CT scanner and five operating theatres.

What kind of surgeries does Mercy Ships do?

Mercy Ships is best known for its maxillofacial surgeries, thanks to Dr Gary Parker who has lived and worked on the ship for over 35 years. But we also do orthopaedics, plastic reconstructive surgery for patients with burns injuries, cataracts, dental surgery and so on. The scheduling is designed so that patients who will take longer to heal can have physiotherapy while the ship is still docked. Patients with cleft palates need speech therapy after their surgery. Often people imagine that the ship is constantly on the move, but we normally stay in one port for about 10 months of the year. This is important for following up patients, training our translators and building relationships.

Is there anything you find hard about being on the ship?

The lack of privacy can be a challenge, and saying goodbye to new friends every weekend is also difficult. But the hardest thing is knowing that there are still so many patients which Mercy Ships has to turn away each year. The need is so huge. However, we simply concentrate on trying to change lives, one patient at a time.

Why do you keep going back?

I love the team work on the ship. It really is a privilege to be part of such an international community. At any one time there will be volunteers from around 40 different countries. In a department such as the operating theatres, which has a very quick turnover of staff, it looks on paper as if it shouldn't be possible, but the Lord makes it happen. I've seen that when you need help, God will bring just the right person to work alongside you. Last year, I found Joshua 1:9 to be true, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go". We have great freedom on the ship to pray with patients and the staff really care for each other. I think it's good that everyone is a volunteer. It means that people are only on board because they've chosen to be there. I think it's as near to heaven as I'm going to find on earth.

What advice would you give to anyone thinking of finding out more?

We say, "Once a Mercy Shipper, always a Mercy Shipper." Those who've volunteered previously tend to look back and say that, for all the challenges, it was one of the best times in their life. Almost everyone has something to offer, from carpenters to bakers to hairdressers! If you can't volunteer yourself, please pray for our patients and consider spreading the word about Mercy Ships. See www.mercyships.org. The gangway is open!

Summer Appeal 2024



Summer Appeal 2024

Hannu & Hazel Sorsamo
Finland

Lorna Ferguson
Japan

James Stewart
Singapore

To contribute please use the bank details on holyroodevangelical.org (use reference 'Summer Appeal'), send a cheque to our treasurer, Nick Archer, or speak to your elder.

The **current total is £9743.75**. Thank you to everyone for their generosity and the appeal is still open if you would like to give.

Our summer appeal goes towards the support of our three overseas missionaries – the Sorsamo family in Finland, Lorna in Japan and James in Singapore.

The church bank details can be found [here](#)

and please use the reference 'Summer Appeal'.

Cheques (made payable to Holyrood Evangelical Church) and cash in an envelope marked 'Summer Appeal' can also be placed in the offering box or given to Nick Archer.

Prayer Meetings

The prayer meetings will continue in person and online at 7pm over the summer months. Please note there will be no refreshments for July and August. This week we'll be meeting in the hall downstairs because the church is being set up to be used as a polling station on Thursday.

Over the summer we're looking forward to hearing from –

- James Stewart (OMF Singapore) on 17th July
- Catherine Brown (Mercy Ships) on 24th July

Come along and support James and Catherine and hear about the work God has given them to do in different parts of the world.

General Election Prayer Rally – Jesus, Hope for Our Nation

Niel Deepnarain and Christian Concern are gathering Christians from across our nation to pray on the eve of the General Election. We're invited to join them to pray for Scotland and here are the details –



Date: Wednesday 3rd July 2024

Time: 5:30-7:00pm

Location: By the fountains opposite Holyroodhouse - Holyrood Edinburgh (near parliament)

Join SASRA in Edinburgh - Saturday 27th July

On Saturday 27th July at 6.30pm for 7pm, Scripture Readers together with HQ staff, will be sharing about their work 'behind the wire'. There will also be an opportunity to meet some new Scripture Readers, as well as to hear about their evangelistic outreach to performers of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

Location: Ferniehill Evangelical Church, Edinburgh, EH17 7AA

Edinburgh Fringe – Duncan Street Baptist Church

Duncan Street Baptist Church are welcoming students from the Millar College of the Bible Drama Team (Canada) for two shows at the Edinburgh Fringe in August. These are to be hosted at Charlotte Chapel, 58 Shandwick Place, EH2 4RT.

George Muller: 6th to 10th August – 7:30pm <https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/george-muller>

Finding Grace: 13th to 17th August – 7:30pm <https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/finding-grace>

Summer Holidays and Pulpit Supply

Joe is on holiday for the next couple of weeks and is speaking at the Moray Convention in August. Here's a note of who will be taking our services while he's away-

Date	Morning	Evening
7 th July	John Tellis (Word of Life UK)	Caleb Shocklie (Church Planter in Meadowbank)
14 th July	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)	Jon Gemmell (Cornhill Scotland)
4 th August	Communion Service - Bob Akroyd (Free Church of Scotland/ ETS)	Steven Randall (Free Church of Scotland/ ETS)

There will be no communion in July and Bob Akroyd will take our communion service at the beginning of August.

For any pastoral matters when Joe is away, please contact one of the elders (Aaron Allen, Nick Archer, Alex MacDonald, Murdo Macleod, Mark Malaczynski, Robert Nelson, Alasdair Roberts, Andy Scott, Ernie Shippin, John Stewart or Roy Tatton)

Liz will be on holiday from Monday 8th July until Monday 22nd July. There will be no newsletter or prayer bulletin for these two weeks.

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer meeting in person at 7pm (and on Zoom)
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and livestreamed). John Tellis preaching.
 - Evening Service at 6pm (and livestreamed). Caleb Shocklie preaching.



www.holyroodevangelical.org

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