

TORCH NEWS

CHRISTIANITY AND SIGHT LOSS

SPRING 2020



A daily lifeline

'Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.' Psalm 119:105

Christians across the world enjoy exploring the Bible every day with the help of daily reading notes – many use them to begin their day, others finish their days with them, curled up in bed! Whichever way you use Bible reading notes, they're a wonderful resource to have. And that's why we at Torch have, for many years now, provided accessible versions of some of the most popular Bible reading notes in various formats.

One of our supporters recently told us 'Your Bible reading notes have helped me come back to the Lord when I was not in

I absolutely love the SU Daily Bread, the notes are just perfect. Thank you very much, Torch!

a good place. Thank you for helping me to reconnect with him again.' Every day 250 people are diagnosed with sight loss; together we want to reach more people with sight loss and give them access to this daily lifeline.

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We spoke to one of the Torch clients who feels that the notes are a real lifeline: Dorothy Callan from Northern Ireland. Dorothy has been part of Torch since 1971 and receives Every Day with Jesus on USB from Torch, along with Premier Christianity and books from the Torch library.

Many thanks for continuing to supply me with your very inspiring readings. I have listened every day since 2006. It has helped me greatly on my Christian journey and transformed my life.



When asked why these resources were so important to her, Dorothy told us that she loved hearing different interpretations of the Bible: 'I like to hear all the different points of view of different things.'

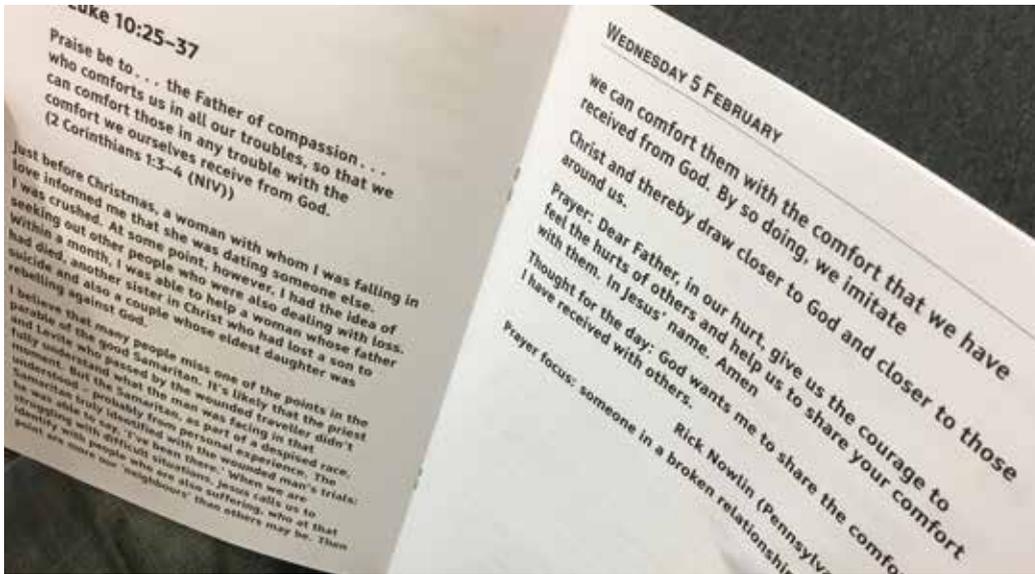
Dorothy continued to say that the notes and resources helped her to feel more connected with her faith, and were a source of comfort: 'They definitely help me! Sometimes you're feeling a wee bit down, or something, and you just happen to listen to it and somebody else has been through the same thing. They tell you how they coped, you know, and it does help that way.'

I have a lot of magazines and Bible reading notes from Torch. They make such a difference to my life and are a real blessing!

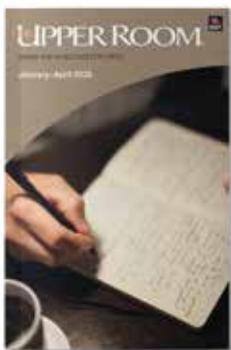
Reading materials from Torch enable Dorothy to participate more actively in her local church, one of her main sources of social connection: 'I use them at church and we have a social club for blind people. I don't go to day centres or any of those things, so church is very important to me.'

Of course, none of these accessible resources would be available for Dorothy, or anyone else, to receive without the help of our fantastic supporters. Our supporters enable us to reach people like Dorothy, to connect them with their local community, by helping church become more accessible, and to feel the loving presence of a wider community of people who have been in their shoes. Our supporters enable Torch to join the dots between the people we seek to serve, the communities around them, and the love of God. When asked what she would like to say to our supporters, Dorothy was so grateful and said: 'I would really just like to encourage people to continue supporting!'

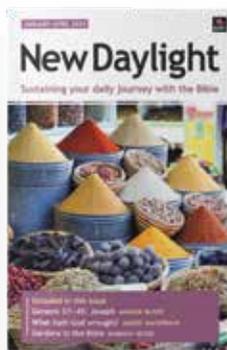
Your donations are transformed into a true lifeline that reaches out to people who want to engage with the Bible.



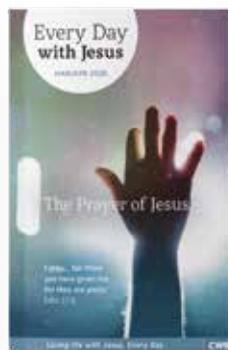
DAILY READING NOTES



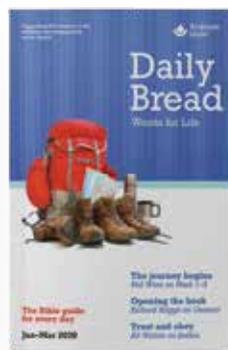
The Upper Room
The Bible Reading Fellowship



New Daylight
The Bible Reading Fellowship



Every Day with Jesus
CWR



Daily Bread
Scripture Union

If you know someone with sight loss who would might like to receive daily Bible Reading Notes from Torch please encourage them to call us on **01858 438 260**

PRAYER POINTS



- Thank God for the partnerships we have with publishers that enable us to make these daily Bible Reading Notes available.
- Thank God for all of the staff and volunteers working to produce these notes so they are available to people at the right time.
- Pray that individuals would feel God's presence with them through these Bible Reading Notes and be inspired, encouraged and empowered in their journey of faith.

The power of prayer

In Matthew 7:7 we read, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” Of course this isn’t to say we’ll instantly be given everything we ask for, but when we do ask for things that are in God’s will, they will be granted.

We know from the Bible that Jesus prayed often and fervently; by following in his footsteps we can more clearly understand our own way forward and God’s plan for us, as people and as an organisation.

At Torch, we know the power of prayer, beginning each day at Torch House together in prayer. We ask God for guidance in all that we do at Torch and we give him thanks for the marvellous things he has already given us.

We were so inspired recently when Clive Leaky, leader of the Daventry Torch Fellowship Group, shared his powerful story. ‘Last year we prayed for God to bring five new people to our group. And he did! So this year we’ve asked for ten!’

So in this issue of Torch News, we’ve included prayer points to encourage and inspire you in your prayer support for Torch.

We hope you like our new and updated version of the Torch Prayer Diary. We hope this enables you to pray alongside us for everything to do with Torch. We

are so humbled when people tell us that the Torch Prayer Diary is a daily focus for their prayers. Thank you for keeping the work of Torch in your hearts. If you would like to receive more copies of the diary to share with others in your life or community then please do get in touch. The Prayer Diary is available in standard print, large print, braille, audio (CD, DAISY, USB), email and on our website.

Prayer is the power that keeps the Torch flame burning, thank you.



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Last year we prayed for God to bring five new people to our group. And he did! So this year we’ve asked for ten!

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks that God has given us the gift of prayer, this wonderful way of connecting with him.
- Pray that God would guide the Trustees and executive team as they lead Torch.
- Pray that God would extend our scope so we can reach more people with sight loss.

CEO Julia Hyde shares what's ahead for Torch...

It's great to be writing to you in this first Torch News of the decade! Torch is at a very exciting phase in its life. As we have been celebrating our 60th year it has been particularly wonderful to hear from different people across the UK who have been part of Torch's history: sharing their celebrations and stories.



For Torch 2020 and beyond, we've got some key priorities that we're focusing on. Our first is the way that we are changing people's lives. We know that many people with sight loss initially approach Torch because they want to be able to read their Bible, to access the Christian stories or study books that they've always been able to use, especially at a time when they can feel quite vulnerable or isolated. That's where we come in, by being able to serve them. We're so pleased that at Torch we offer a personal service: when you ring Torch as a person with sight loss, or friend of somebody with sight loss, we will guide you in what Torch can offer, and also what might be available around you, from our partnerships with other organisations.

One of our clients recently got in touch to thank us for finding them a Torch Fellowship Group and a Sight Loss Friendly Church near them. It's great to know that we can be there to connect people and ensure they have fellowship locally.

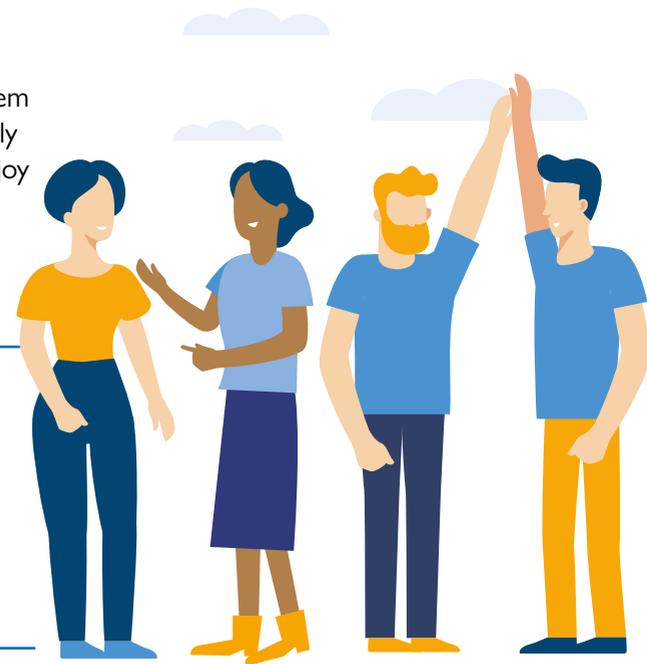
Our second priority is to do with the way we're changing communities. Last year we launched the Sight Loss Friendly Church (SLFC).

SLFC is our way of reaching out to churches across the UK, encouraging them and enabling them to be sight loss friendly so that everybody with sight loss can enjoy their Christian community and develop their relationship with God. Over 180 churches have now signed up!

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Churches don't have to be perfect, it's about being welcoming and friendly, and making churches a better place for people with sight loss.

Matthew Horspool

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I'd like to say a big thank you to you, our wonderful supporters, and to give thanks to God for leading you to supporting Torch. We could not deliver the services that we do to people with sight loss, or churches, without you.

As Matthew Horspool, one of our SLFC reps said, 'churches don't have to be perfect, it's about being welcoming and friendly, and making churches a better place for people with sight loss.' Matthew is registered blind himself and so he knows first-hand the difference it can make when people are guided to a seat and shown where to go for coffee after the service and so on. Together we can ensure that churches across the UK welcome and include people with sight loss.

As part of this work, we have created some Torch Together events that are happening across the UK. In particular we are inviting people with sight loss, and their friends, to come together with God, with us, sharing a time of worship and fellowship and exploring what Torch can do for them. We'll be able to reach out to churches in these locations, and sight loss organisations, working in partnership with them. A key part of our purpose at Torch is to work together: with people with sight loss, with sight loss organisations, and with churches and local Torch Fellowship Groups. As bookings have been coming in for these events, it's been exciting to see that because we are moving around the country new people are able to come who weren't

able to access Torch Holidays in the past. I want to invite each of you to consider whether you can come join us for the day or the week!

I'd like to say a big thank you to you, our wonderful supporters, and to give thanks to God for leading you to supporting Torch. We could not deliver the services that we do to people with sight loss, or churches, without you.

I want to end by sharing the words of one of our dear clients to show you the difference that together we are making in people's lives.

'I'm so thankful to Torch; due to the deterioration of my eyesight I was unable to read the Bible but you managed to get the Bible for me in audio. This has been a true blessing in my life and I will be eternally grateful to Torch'.

PRAYER POINTS



- Please pray that we will be able to reach more people with sight loss and enable them to continue to grow their faith with access to the Bible and other Christian books.
- Please pray for our Sight Loss Friendly Church team as they reach new churches offering training, resources and advice.
- Please pray for our preparations for our Torch Together events in Scarborough, Dorset, Staffordshire, Northern Ireland and Launde Abbey.



Some of the Torch Malawi Fellowship Group members

A long-standing partnership: Torch Malawi

One of our closest and most long-standing partnerships is the one with our friends at Torch Malawi.

We at Torch Trust pray regularly for their work, particularly during our morning chapel times. We know too that our clients and supporters also keep our Malawian brothers and sisters in their prayers – and on their behalf we would like to thank you for that! Torch UK annually gives £25,000 to support the work of Torch Malawi, along with regular communication. We look forward to a visit later in the year where we can share together, in person, the wonderful work God has given us to do.

We know too that our clients and supporters also keep our Malawian brothers and sisters in their prayer.

Torch Together...

Mon 27th Apr – Fri 1st May 2020
Scarborough

Mon 22nd Jun – Fri 26th Jun 2020
Dorset

Mon 7th Sept – Fri 11th Sept 2020
Staffordshire

Fri 18th Sept – Sun 20th Sept 2020
Northern Ireland

Friday 11th – Monday 14th Dec 2020
Launde Abbey, Leicestershire

JOIN US

If you are interested in joining a Torch Together event please ring Client Services for more details.



The best is yet to come!

COME AND VOLUNTEER AT TORCH!



For many people as they approach retirement they are contemplating longer holidays, perhaps taking up a new hobby, playing a little more golf; but in the Torch family many of our volunteers are retired and have chosen to give their time and talents to support our ministry.

We had a chat with Ian Elmes, one of our volunteers, to see how he felt about the experience and its benefits. When Ian and his wife Sheila retired seven years ago they decided to join the Torch team. Ian comes in to Torch House to help with the maintenance of the building while Sheila supports the transcription team. 'I've learnt about electrics and a bit about plumbing...it's been a two way street really! Sometimes I'm only in there for a couple of hours, but I always find something to do!'

He went on to say that, 'being retired, volunteering gives a little bit of structure to your week because it's every Thursday that both Sheila and I volunteer. It also just gives you a bit of interest at the end of the day. Sheila says I always seem to be walking around with a smile on my face when I'm at Torch – I hope this doesn't mean I'm miserable the rest of the time! It does help though, it gives me a great amount of pleasure actually to be there and do something because you do feel that you're giving back.'

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Being retired, volunteering gives a little bit of structure to your week because it's every Thursday that both Sheila and I volunteer.
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JOIN US

We have lots of volunteering opportunities at Torch. To find out more please visit our website or for further information email: supporter@torchtrust.org



PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for all the Torch volunteers, past and present!
- Pray for more volunteers to get involved with Torch.
- Please pray for more blind and partially sighted volunteers to join the Torch team.

Mark your calendar now for Sight Loss Friendly Sunday!

If you're a regular reader of Torch News, you'll certainly have heard all about our exciting nationwide initiative Sight Loss Friendly Church. This is the movement that asks you, our really lovely and dedicated supporters, along with our clients and church teams, to commit to making all aspects of church life more accessible to people with sight loss!



Since its inception, SLFC has spread across the UK, growing and reaching more local churches all the time. This year, to celebrate what you and Torch have achieved so far, we're launching Sight Loss Friendly Sunday! Taking place on Sunday 7th June, this is a day for all churches – not just those already involved in SLFC – to deliver a sight loss friendly service with the help of our handy web materials! We want every church in the UK to get involved with this and there are so many ways to do so.

Visit sightlossfriendlychurch.org to find resources, tips, ideas and inspiration to help you get underway. Talk to your church leadership team about ways they might get involved – and why not offer to help! With your assistance, we can make a huge difference to the church-lives of people with sight loss across the country – and hopefully help more people than ever feel that church is truly a place for them too.

The day takes place just after Torch's week of prayer and definitely will be something we'll be asking you to pray alongside us about! Your prayers will make a world of

difference here, so be sure to check out the prayer points at the end of this article and start planning now!

In the meantime, keep a lookout for more information to come on this special event and please do show this to your church leadership team and ask that they get involved. Together we can make this truly a day to remember!



GET INVOLVED

If you would like more information and to download our great resources visit sightlossfriendlychurch.org



PRAYER POINTS



- Pray for all churches who are planning a Sight Loss Friendly Sunday service, that they may be guided in their approach.
- Pray for people with sight loss who would love to be more involved with church but don't yet find it accessible.
- Pray for all church leadership teams to be open to the possibilities of becoming more sight loss friendly, and pray that they find the right way for their church to do so.
- Give thanks for all of the churches that have joined SLFC so far.

Please consider supporting us through prayer or giving

Torch relies on the generosity of our faithful supporters. Your financial gifts to Torch are vital for our ministry, your support enables those with sight loss to grow in faith and thrive in Christian community.

How your gift is changing lives:

£45

enables Torch to provide Premier Christianity in an accessible version to someone with sight loss for a year.



£60

enables Torch to provide Every Day with Jesus in an accessible version to a client for a year.



£90

is the cost to Torch for each client to have full access to our lending library of accessible Christian literature.



£600

per week enables Torch to run a bespoke personal service for our clients, offering advice, signposting and pastoral support.



Ways you can give to help Torch sustain its mission:



Direct from your bank

You can set up a regular monthly payment or a single donation. This is the most cost-effective option as everything comes directly to Torch Trust.

Torch's bank details are:

Torch Trust for the Blind
Sort Code: 40-52-40
Account Number: 00017072,
Cafbank Ltd, 25 Kings Hill Ave,
West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

Alternatively set up a Direct Debit or make a single donation via Charities Aid Foundation at: cafdonate.cafonline.org/1187



Donate by phone

Call Client Services on 01858 438260 between 10.00am and 4.00pm Monday to Thursday.



Send a cheque

Post cheques to us made payable to: Torch Trust for the Blind.



Boost your gifts with Gift Aid

If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase the value of your donations by 25% by making a Gift Aid declaration, at no extra cost to yourself. When you make a donation, please ask for a form to be sent out to you to complete and return.



Leave a legacy and transform lives

Torch Trust has been able to help thousands of people with sight loss in their journey of faith, due to those who write Torch into their wills. After providing for your family and friends, leaving a bequest to Torch can transform other people's lives.

A warm welcome to... What our clients are saying:

Suzie James joins Torch Trust as Executive Assistant. Suzie is married with three children. She has experience in project management, youth work and overseas development work. She is part of the worship and preaching teams at her local church. She joins us to support the Executive team in their work.



“I'm so thankful to Torch, due to the deterioration of my eyesight I was unable to read the Bible but you managed to get the Bible for me in audio. This has been a true blessing and a lifeline in my life and I will be eternally grateful to Torch.”

“Your Bible reading notes have helped me come back to the Lord when I was not in a good place. Thank you for helping me to reconnect with him again.”

TORCH

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Chair: Marilyn Baker **Chief Executive:** Julia Hyde

Council of Reference members:

Revd Dr Steve Brady; Revd Dr David Coffey OBE; Revd Malcolm Duncan;
Jonathan Lamb; Revd Roy Searle; Dr Elaine Storkey; Revd Dr Derek Tidball.

The Torch Trust for the Blind. A company limited by Guarantee
Registered in England number: 4616526 Registered Charity number: 1095904

USEFUL INFORMATION



Client Services
01858 438260



Prayer Line
01858 438277

Sight Loss Friendly Church
sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk

Reflections

for responses to our radio broadcasts: call 0333 123 1255
For more information or to hear the show visit:
torchtrust.org/reflections

Torch News

is also available in audio CD, braille, email and large print (17-, 20-, 25- and 30-point) and can be viewed online at:
torchtrust.org/downloads