



The heart of inclusion



'A lot of people with disabilities have been through some pretty tough stuff and they've come out the other end and they're showing what God has done through their lives.'

Nicki Cockburn is a vocal advocate for the improved inclusion of people with disabilities in church life. She recently achieved the distinction of writing a feature article about this issue for Premier Christianity, one of the UK's most widely-read Christian magazines. Nicki has also been a Torch client for

many years, and was inspired to contact Premier after reading about the Sight Loss Friendly Church initiative.

Nicki had been struggling to find work and decided to turn to the skills she had gained on a broadcast journalism course at Cardiff University: 'I was toying with the idea of pitching an article to a magazine.' She found inspiration in a familiar place: 'I read, in the Torch magazine that I get in braille, about Torch's Sight Loss Friendly Church initiative. I thought that was a very good idea because I've had mixed experiences in churches – mostly good but a few sticky moments!'

Continued on page 2

“ I think people should pray for guidance to know what to do, pray for opportunities as well. Chat to the people you meet, ask them what they think of the church and you might be able to pray on how you can include them. ”





...Continued from page 1

With an idea blossoming, Nicki wrote to Premier Christianity saying she would like to write an article about blind people's experiences in church. The magazine were keen but told Nicki that they would like to interview her. Nicki was pleased but: 'I sort of thought "that's not really what I wanted, I wanted to write the article." So I was very cheeky and I wrote back and said, "Thank you ever so much for the offer but I'm trying to set out as a freelancer and I would like to write the article." I didn't hear back for five months and I thought, "Oh my goodness, I've blotted my copybook, that's obviously not how one approaches doing a pitch!"'



“
A lot of people with disabilities have been through some pretty tough stuff, and they've come out the other end and they're showing what God has done through their lives, and what God can and still will do as well.”

Nicki's fears proved unfounded, as one day she awoke to a reply from the editors of the magazine: 'They emailed me and said "We would really like you to write the article but we want you to focus on other disabilities and not just blindness." So that's what we did!'

To Nicki, it was very important to get across the true meaning of inclusion: 'I think the heart of inclusion is finding a place where you feel that you belong as a person, and not just as the token blind person, or the token person with mental health problems, or the token person in the wheelchair. A lot of people with disabilities have been through some pretty tough stuff, and they've come out the other end and they're showing what God has done through their lives, and what God can and still will do as well.'

Nicki believes churches should start with one simple action: 'I think the first thing they need to do is not be afraid of asking



people how they want support. They just need to say: "We really want to include you, we want you to stay, we want you to be able to participate in church life as much as you can: how can we help?"'

Nicki also stressed the importance of prayer: 'I think people should pray for guidance to know what to do, pray for opportunities as well. Chat to the people you meet, ask them what they think of the church and you might be able to pray on how you can include them.'

GET INVOLVED



If you would like more information about how your church can think about being more sight loss friendly please visiting our website www.sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk or email slfc@torchtrust.org calling us on **01858 438 260**. That's also the number to call if you would like to receive Torch magazines in braille (or large print and audio) as Nicki does.

Premier Christianity accessible versions from Torch



Torch produces, on USB memory stick and DAISY CD, a complete audio version of the articles from each issue. Torch also produces Premier Christianity Lite in large print and braille which contains the most essential articles and content from each issue.

We don't make a charge for these but suggest a voluntary annual donation of **£38.80**.

Emergency in Malawi:

How recent flooding has devastated the nation

This March, Malawi was devastated by wide-spread flooding, after days of extremely heavy rainfall. In a count by Floodlist.com on March 29th, 56 people had died and over a million were affected. Some of the worst-hit areas included the Lower Shire, Chikwawa and Nsanje districts, where many of the blind and partially sighted people served by Torch Malawi live.



Stanley Moyo, Torch Malawi's Administrator, reported at the time of the flooding that many roads had been left unpassable, with entire areas cut-off from help. He said in a report from March: 'The situation as of now is so dangerous that those affected are running for their lives. We are therefore looking for immediate prayers to the problems as many blind people are affected and many other people are in danger as they have lost their crops, houses, and even animals that they rear.'

Over 80% of Malawians rely on small-scale agriculture for survival. With their livelihoods dependent on one single rainy season per year, this leaves them particularly vulnerable to the effects of flooding. The flooding was so severe that bridges and roads were destroyed, houses were submerged in water, and food and crops were completely ruined.

People with sight loss or any disability can be even more vulnerable than most in situations like this. They may be less able to run to safety, and more reliant on their community to support them if they are unable to work. When the whole community is suffering, it is even harder to spare anything for others in need.

Torch UK and Malawi ask for your urgent prayers in this terrible situation. We are gratefully accepting donations for Torch Malawi's emergency fund and would be delighted to send your financial gifts to Torch House Malawi.

In Stanley's own words: 'Torch Trust Malawi is humbled with your concern. Relief efforts are ongoing but face many problems including the following:

- The blind community who are in flood camps are highly affected in terms of food rationing as they are less considered and sometimes the supply becomes insufficient.
- Some blind people are in open camps under the trees with the able people only having bedding and mosquito nets tied to the trees. When it is rainy, windy or too sunny they have nowhere to protect themselves.
- Sanitary situation is highly pathetic as a camp of 300 people men and women share just two toilets and most of them have no shoes. Some soil the toilet areas and the blind who do not see what is on the floor often step on the soiled places and can easily become ill.
- People sleeping in such open and crowded camps are failing to resume their normal lives because of lack of materials for house construction. We have 400 completely demolished houses for the blind people and we are looking for ways and means to help them erect homes.
- Some of the things urgently required by the flood victims are food, seed for planting winter crops, plastic sheet for roofing, clothes and bedding.

“

I thank God for the provision of the canes and do hope more canes shall be coming for the blind people as the need here is great.

”

Your prayers for the provisions of the emergency basic needs shall be highly appreciated. May our Lord Jesus Christ speak to you as you read this report. God be with us all.'

We have been able to send a first response gift of funds, following the receipt of so many generous donations. This will be used to purchase bags of maize and distribute them to people with sight loss, by individuals who know them by name, in the heart of their communities, through the work of Torch Trust Malawi.

DONATIONS



If you would like to offer financial support, please contact Client Services on **01858 438260 (Mon - Thurs 10am - 4pm)** or visit torchtrust.org. Please refer to 'Malawi appeal' when making your donation.

Celebrating our Diamond Anniversary!



This June, Torch is delighted to be celebrating 60 years of ministry, reaching and enabling people with sight loss to have fulfilling Christian lives.

As always, Torch Trust believes people with sight loss have an equal and valuable part to play in church and communities. By working together we reach and enable people with sight loss to have fulfilling Christian lives. Torch changes lives by providing accessible Christian resources and services encouraging people to have confidence in God and themselves. We change communities by providing expert advice and guidance, enabling churches and Christian communities to be inclusive of people with sight loss. We change the world by inspiring sight loss organisations locally and globally to consider the spiritual need of their clients.

Our mission has not changed in any fundamental way over the years: the

heart of Torch is, as it always has been, to see those with sight loss growing in faith and thriving in Christian life and community. However, every ministry must grow and develop over the course of its life, responding to current needs and situations. Our current aims can best be summed up as:

We want to enable all churches to be fully inclusive, prepared and confident to meet the needs of those with sight loss.

We want to equip all churches to give opportunity for the gifts and talents of each individual to be celebrated and valued.

We want each individual with sight loss to be valued in Christian community and in the great commission that we all as Christians are called to.



We are committed to sharing God's love, and to seeing lives and communities transformed.

We look forward to June 22nd and the year that follows, to recognise and celebrate the legacy of the ministry entrusted to us by God and to fix our vision on the future.

“
We are inviting everyone to be involved, wherever you live, to celebrate the 60th year! We invite you to be creative and open in your celebrations, creating opportunity for more people to learn of the work of Torch Trust and partner with us.
”



60

To that end, we are inviting everyone to be involved, wherever you live, to celebrate the 60th year! We invite you to be creative and open in your celebrations, creating the opportunity for more people to learn of the work of Torch Trust and partner with us. We want to reach more people with sight loss and offer our resources and services.

What will you do where you are? Coffee morning, church event, open garden, sponsored event? The possibilities are limited only by your imagination.

Torch headquarters in Market Harborough will be holding a coffee morning, HRC down in Brighton will be serving afternoon tea to their local community with a musical extravaganza. We will also be launching our Sight Loss Friendly Church initiative, ambitiously seeking to support every church across the UK.

We want to see you shine the light of Torch in your area, wherever you may be: your Torch, your way.

We would love to encourage others by hearing your stories of where Torch has been involved, however significant. We would love to hear from you about whatever you do on the day as well so please do get in touch.

“
Our mission has not changed in any fundamental way over the years: the heart of Torch is, as it always has been, to see those with sight loss growing in faith and thriving in Christian life and community.
”

SUPPORT TORCH

If you would like to know more about how you could support the work of Torch through prayer or financially in our 60th anniversary year do refer to our website, call **01858 438260** or email info@torchtrust.org



A word from our CEO, Julia Hyde...

As I reflect on 60 years of Torch's ministry, I see a common thread stretching back through our history and on to our future, that thread is love. Love for God and from God. Love for the people we serve, and love from those who have chosen to join us on our journey.

Without each of those people, sent our way by our loving Father, Torch would be nothing. It is through him and you that we have reached this marvellous anniversary, and that we have a future before us.

We give thanks for all of the support we receive, whether that's in the form of prayers, time given, or finances, and ask you to pray for the continued generous financial support for Torch as we launch our Sight Loss Friendly Church initiative.

And finally, I would like to offer our deepest thanks to all of our supporters and clients, for however long you have been on the journey with us, in whatever way. We praise God for his wonderful provision in terms of the amazing people he has led to us. As ever, we remain:

**Christ Centred,
People-focussed,
Open and Creative**

Praise be to God!



What can technology do for people with sight loss?



Assistive technology is a fast-developing area of support for people with sight loss. However, a lot of people may feel rather in the dark as to what is actually out there, and how to get started – whether that's for themselves or to support friends and family. That's why we've decided to give you a rundown of some of the most popular tech that we and our clients use.



First on our list is the MegaVoice. This popular pocket device is smaller than most mobile phones and contains the entire NIV audio Bible, read by actor David Suchet. With easy to navigate buttons, intuitive design, and solar or mains charging, it's no wonder these gadgets have proved a huge help to so many people. Even better, whenever someone buys a MegaVoice from Torch in the UK, it funds the sending of one for free to a blind person in need elsewhere in the world. The MegaVoice costs £40, with optional mains charging pack with USB lead for an additional £10.

ORDER YOUR DEVICE

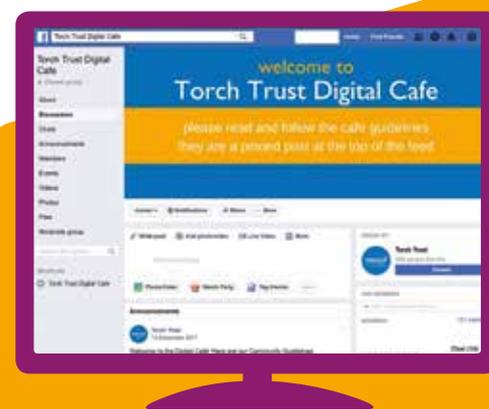
For more information or to place an order, please call **01858 438260** and speak to a member of our Client Services team.

Second on our top tech rundown, is the recently released: In Your Pocket: a mobile device designed specially for people with sight loss. Created by RNIB, Real Thing and O2, In Your Pocket aims to make accessing talking books and newspapers easy, and the good news is that Torch's audio library is now available on it! In Your Pocket (which costs £22/month) functions as a speech-enabled smart phone and can make phone calls and manage your contacts, as well as enabling users to access over 60,000 talking books, 200 newspapers

and magazines, and 50,000 podcasts. The device comes set up and ready to use, along with a protective case, headset and guidance on how to use the device.

ORDER YOUR DEVICE

To order call the dedicated helpline **0333 772 7708**, or order online at inyourpocket.net



And finally, for something a bit different, we have our Digital Cafe. This Cafe takes place whenever and wherever its users are – via Facebook! The group is aimed at people with sight loss who want to engage in fellowship, friendship and sharing with people who understand. The group often features friendly discussions and prayer topics, as well as casual conversation. All it takes to join is a free Facebook account. Then, just type 'Torch Trust Digital Cafe' into the search bar and request to join the group.

Join us for some beautiful spiritual food...

What makes the perfect retreat? Is it spiritual food? Luscious surroundings? Perhaps the people who run it?

There are probably as many answers to that question as there are people on retreats! Here at Torch, we think that along with all of the answers above, feeding your senses in creative ways is key to spiritual refreshment.



Sometimes we hear from our clients that they aren't sure a retreat is for them – often because past experiences have been very visually-focused. At Torch HRC our holidays are tailor-made for people with sight loss so you can be certain that won't be a problem!

Of course we can't all be on retreat constantly, as nice as that may sound. So we've come up with some ideas you could try, to begin getting relaxed (or continue that peaceful feeling) before or after your holiday with us! These ideas focus on the senses aside from sight:

Scent: What's your favourite scent? Take some time to really remember which things you love to smell, the memories they bring you and the feelings they arouse. Perhaps it's a particular perfume, herb or fruit – see if you can track down something that has that scent which you could smell when you want to relax. Lavender-stuffed sachets or reed diffusers can be great for keeping these smells with you.

Sound: Play a relaxing piece of music – you could play it yourself if you're musical! Try playing the same piece, perhaps a favourite hymn, multiple times and meditate on its meaning, what it says to you, and how it makes you feel.

Touch: Try making a box full of satisfying things to touch. You may want to ask someone to help you gather clean pebbles, sand or even water gel beads for floral arrangements. Put them in a container

and enjoy running your hands through them. Try to clear your mind and focus on the sensations that you feel.



Taste: Give yourself a treat – and we don't mean gorge on excess food – just find something, however small, that feels special. Allow yourself to savour it, be present in the moment that you eat, and give thanks to God for his bounty.



And if all that has piqued your interest, or you know anyone who might enjoy a Torch holiday, here is Kasia, Holiday Leader to tell you a little more about the Torch Retreat experience:

'For those of you who feel the need for spiritual refreshment, I would recommend one of our retreats. It is an opportunity for you to relax and spend time in the presence of God. During your stay you

can get to know new people, enjoy the lovely space, and savour the delicious food served by our wonderful team. If you have not experienced a retreat before, our team will guide you as you worship and seek God's face; using sound, touch and hearing. Jesus set the example to remove ourselves from our daily lives and enter his presence. Elijah went up a mountain and sought God, finding him in the quiet whisper. If you are spiritually hungry then these retreats are for you.'

JOIN US!



To book a holiday at the Torch Holiday and Retreat Centre, or find out more about what's on offer, just visit our website torchtrust.org/holidays or give us a call on 01858 438260, Monday to Thursday between 10am and 4pm.





Book Aid Alert

We have recently had the honour of being able to support Book Aid – the charity which was set up in in the 1980s in order to make large shipments of new and secondhand Christian books and Bibles to needy areas. In particular Book Aid supports Christian bookshops, mainly in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

The South Leicestershire coordinator, James Chitakunye, recently collected several hundred books from Torch House which were no longer needed. These books will be destined for areas abroad where Christian literature is difficult to access or afford. If you would like to learn more or support Book Aid yourself, please visit book-aid.org

Is your church a Sight Loss Friendly Church?

Sight Loss Friendly Church is an exciting initiative from Torch that supports churches to become more welcoming and accessible to people with sight loss. This can take many different shapes and forms – just as every person with sight loss is unique, so is every church and congregation. The desire to be welcoming is all you need to start with.

Once your church has joined Sight Loss Friendly Church, by visiting our website sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk and signing up, you'll gain access to heaps of support and resources from Torch! We have a great booklet available completely free with lots of advice and guidance inside, as well as great bookable workshops to help churches get started, easy to use downloads, guidance on our transcription service and much more. Your church will also be listed on our Church finder map.



60th Anniversary Celebrations

Don't forget that Torch is celebrating 60 years of ministry this year. On June 22nd, we'll be holding a coffee morning at Torch House in Market Harborough, and the HRC team will be holding afternoon tea at our Holiday and Retreat Centre in Hurstpierpoint. We also welcome you all to celebrate where you are over the coming months – and do let us know when and what you're doing! We'd love to hear any and all stories of your own journey with Torch Trust so get in touch! To order a celebration pack to help you plan your event, please call **01858 438260** or email info@torchtrust.org



New staff



Kevin and Melissa Armstrong have joined us at Torch since January (but didn't manage to squeeze into the last edition). Kevin is a Project Officer and at this time working directly with HRC. Melissa is our Communications Manager – they are no relation to our Radio Producer Sheila but are married to each other!



Torch Trust Torch House, Torch Way,
Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9HL

☎ 01858 438260 📘 facebook.com/torchtrust
✉ info@torchtrust.org 🐦 @torchtrust
📍 torchtrust.org

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

Reflections

for responses to our radio broadcasts: call **0333 123 1255**



Library
01858 438266

For more information or to hear the show visit:
torchtrust.org/reflections



Holidays
01858 438260

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



Prayer Line
01858 438277