Reaching out – to our local communities

As part of Torch’s Sight Loss Friendly Church campaign we encourage churches to think about reaching out to people with sight loss in their local community. Meet three volunteers in Bristol who are committed to making this happen.

As part of the third ‘A’ we meet three volunteers in Bristol: Margaret Cowley, Anne Jones and Wendy Ware who were commissioned during a wonderful service held at Salem Chapel, Bedminster on Sunday 15th July.

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“With this scheme I will be able to go into people’s homes and be a listening ear – which I didn’t have – be a comfort to them, and give them gentle encouragement to empower them.”

Liz Gould, the Torch Regional Coordinator will be assisting the three volunteers to make contact with people with sight loss. Liz is in touch with local sight loss professionals through her work in supporting the Bristol Torch Fellowship Groups over the years. Now people with sight loss in the BS3 postcode area will be offered befriending as well as the fellowship groups.

Janet Eardley, the Torch Area Development Officer for the south west said, “It has been an absolute pleasure to get to know these three volunteers and to enable them to go ahead with reaching out to people in their local community who are experiencing sight loss. I know they will make a huge difference to the individuals they meet.”

Here to help you
Client Services 01858 438260
Library 01858 49266
Holidays 01858 438260
Prayer Line 01858 438277

Reflections for responses to our radio broadcasts: 0333 123 1255.
Go to www.torchtrust.org/reflections for details of how to listen to Reflections.

TORCH NEWS
is also available in audio CD, braille, email and large print (17-, 20-, 25- and 30-point) braille, email and large print is also available in audio CD, is also available in audio CD, is also available in audio CD.

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Servant-hearted leadership in Torch Malawi

Stanley Moyo, Administrator for Torch Malawi, and Grace Davis, Communications Manager, report on the recent training held at Torch House Malawi for Fellowship Group Leaders…

Torch Fellowship Groups in Malawi are made up of a dedicated and vibrant collection of people from many backgrounds and situations, all of whom come together with the common aim of sharing fellowship with people with sight loss. At the end of June this year training was held at Torch House Malawi to help enable group leaders to better serve their people.

As Chair of Trustees, Rose Chaponda noted in her welcome remarks, this training came about in order for all who attended ‘to learn from each other’s experience, as this meeting was the very first of its kind at Torch Trust Malawi!’

The training opened with a prayer from a blind group member, followed by a devotional from Trustee Pastor Collin M’Bawa, who read from the book of John 13:1-17, the washing of disciples’ feet by Jesus. The pastor remarked that ‘Jesus did that as a sign of humbleness to his disciples, and as leaders we need to humble ourselves, have a feeling of assisting others and also set examples of good servant-ship. You can as well, brothers and sisters, see that we need each other as a team so that we can strengthen each other.’

The day was divided into sessions, all themed around different aspects of matters that come up for fellowship groups. Pastor M’Bawa began with a session on leadership, exploring the need for and responsibilities of leaders with the help of a brainstorm from attendees. He used John 13 to illustrate the idea of ‘servant leadership’, a leadership revolving around dignity and humbleness, one that listens to people’s views while still guiding the group together.

This was followed by Tom Mizinga’s report on the background of Torch – and who could be better positioned to do this than Tom, the first Chairperson of Torch Malawi? Tom expressed his delight at coming to Torch again and said ‘this type of training has never happened in the history of Torch and [he] thanked God for new leadership.’

Tom explored the history of Torch, explaining that after the UK side of the charity was set up, Stella Heath visited many churches just to have a feeling of Malawian Christianity. In 1992 Torch Trust Malawi was registered, with Tom Mizinga as the first Chairman. Since Torch Trust Malawi’s establishment, leaders were encouraged ‘to formulate as many fellowship groups as they wanted and that was done – as evidenced here today. The first group to be started was at Bangwe in June, 1993.’

Following this up was an interactive session on churches and sight loss, run by Lemmy Chisi. Lemmy, who lost his sight as a teenager, talked about how churches are focal points: ‘We visit the churches for prayers, intercessions, meetings of women’s guilds, youth groups, and even the whole board of the church.’

People visit the church frequently… but those that are blind often require somebody to guide them and that alone becomes a barrier for blind people to attend church activities at their own will. Most of our churches are not disability friendly as when doing construction, they forget to design for the movement of people with disabilities. When a blind person enters the church and service starts, (church members may not realise) that they have a blind person who requires regular information pertaining to what is happening.’

He talked about the importance of churches having accessible Bibles and hymn books available that blind people can use. He also suggested that people with sight loss should ‘be assigned with some activities like prayer, reading of the Bible, and preaching. That could motivate them and help them become part of the church.’

The training was closed with a prayer. At night there were overnight prayers guided by Mac Donald Tembo and Glyphs Machaka, until the morning of 29th June.

The work undertaken by Torch Malawi is wide-reaching and requires a great deal of support – both in prayer and finance. We would like to thank anyone who has supported this work so far, and acknowledge that there is much still to be done! If you feel that you would like to support Torch in Malawi then please do pray, follow our prayer guide for specific things to pray for or sign up to receive International News for Praise and Prayer, our special magazine for all things international. Donations for Torch Malawi can be made via Torch UK, by phone or cheque, or you can visit torchtrust.org for more information on paying online or by bank transfer. Please mark such donations as ‘Torch Malawi’.

Can you help?

Do you have any white canes, hand frames or styluses that are no longer needed? There is a great need for these items in Malawi and any you could send would be greatly appreciated. Please send such items to Torch House, UK and we will forward them on to our team in Malawi.

www.torchtrust.org
For each blessing we say: thank you!

**Rev Michael Heaney, Chief Operating Officer, gives thanks for your support...**

Each year we hold a Thanksgiving Day: an annual open event within Torch, this year on 19th September at Torch House, when we take time as staff, volunteers, clients, supporters, and friends to come together to say thank you to God for another year in the life and ministry of Torch. It’s not just time for looking back, though, it is also an occasion to look ahead and to recognise how God is leading us into the future. Expressing thanks in Torch is an everyday experience, characterised daily in our daily prayer time at Torch House, constantly mindful of how good God is to us. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; and his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34

Being thankful is really important, something we instill in our children from their earliest years, something to learn and become a good habit. On behalf of Torch it is important that I express a massive thank you to everyone who has supported Torch financially over this past year. We routinely, unless asked not to do so, will send a receipt and thank you letter to donations received at Torch House, for all those thank you!

Due to the increase in online banking we now receive many one off donations direct to our bank account – so for each one of these thank you!

Gifts from Torch Fellowship Groups and churches are signs of Torch’s ministry impacting people’s lives in their communities – so for all these thank you!

We benefit enormously from regular monthly donations via the bank and other routes including Stewardship, Charity Choice and CAF Donate – for each one thank you!

Gifts given via card donations over the telephone to our Client Services team are such an encouragement – thank you!

Gifts in memory and legacies are so special as each one tells a story of how Torch has clearly been close to the heart of that person.

Most of all it is our privilege through these pages to give thanks to God, and to invite your prayers along with ours, for he is good, and his love endures forever.

It's the most wonderful time... to prepare!

Although it may seem terribly early to be thinking about Christmas, it’s never too soon to be prepared! Torch has plenty of accessible resources to help you celebrate, reflect on and share in a marvellous, faith-filled Christmas season.

This year for the first time, Torch has created a free resource sheet packed with ideas for making your Christmas services more sight friendly. The sheet contains tips and ideas for enabling blind and partially sighted people to more fully experience the Christmas services and all that comes with them. For example – if you are holding a candle-lit service, consider making small easy-to-use torches available so that anyone with sight loss is still able to read their hymn sheets. Simple changes can make a world of difference. The resource sheet will be available from Client Services or online in October.

We also have plenty of Christmas and Advent books and resources for you to own or borrow in accessible media such as large print, audio and braille.

Among our many books to purchase we have titles such as:

- **Christmas: The Greatest Gift** by Paul Williams. In this short and readable book, Paul Williams ‘peels off the sello tape’ and ‘rips open the paper’ from the Christmas message. You’ll discover the greatest gift at the heart of Christmas and how it can transform how you celebrate Christmas this year. £2.99, braille and large print.

- **Longing, Waiting, Believing: Reflections for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany** by Rodney Holder. As well as considering the well-known events of the nativity story, Rodney looks back to those who prepared the way as well as exploring the traditional Advent focus on ‘four last things’, death, judgment, heaven and hell. £7.99, braille, large print and DAISY.

- **Real God in the Real World: Advent and Christmas Readings on the Coming of Christ** by Trystan Owain Hughes. This book offers a lively, engaging and accessible look at the theme of the Incarnation, the mysterious event at the heart of Christmas, using personal stories, illustrations from popular culture and the arts, as well as daily Bible readings. £7.99, braille and DAISY.

And here is a small sample from our free postal library for people with sight loss:

- **Celebrating Christmas with Jesus** by Mas Lucada. A 30 day devotional for Advent centring on each great moment of the life of Christ. Braille, DAISY and USB.

- **Christmas by Candlelight** by David Yamas. Daily readings and reflections from Advent to Epiphany. Braille, DAISY and USB, large print.

- **Advent Hope (Cover To Cover)** by Joel Edwards. We consider Isaiah’s prophecies about the Messiah, the transformed lives of Bible characters such as David, Mary, Elizabeth and Simeon, and the fulfilment of God’s promises in the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. The Bible overflows with hope. Braille, DAISY and USB, large print.

Each week Torch puts on our website a download of around four minutes, offering spiritual reflection with a light touch. Journey is often topical or rooted in everyday life, sometimes humorous or thought-provoking, always warm and lively. Produced with talking newspapers in mind, it’s free to use by audio magazines, blind clubs and associations – the only proviso being that the pieces must be used in full and not edited in any way. If you use or work for a talking newspaper, please do pass this information on to them as we would love to hear of more newspapers taking it up.

We are putting out a call for more contributors for Journey, so if you have a flair for writing and would like to send in a reflective piece of around 400 words then please do get in touch. You can listen to past example pieces on the downloads section of our website or contact Sheila via Client Services for more information. We can’t wait to hear from you.

Journey: our audio thought for the week

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34

For each blessing we say: thank you!
Once again this year we shall benefit from the sale of Christmas cards and the other cards and gifts available from Gospel Cards, etc. 20% of their Christmas card sales and 5% of the sale of other items will be given to 29 Christian missions including Torch Trust (to date, we and other societies have received over £300,000 in this way).

Produced to a very high standard, the calendars, books, etc. make excellent gifts for children and adults; while the cards are perfect for sending to Christian and non-Christian family and friends.

Full details of the cards and gifts are on their website GospelCardsEtc.com or you can ask them for a catalogue by calling 01656 647551 (10:00am to 1:00pm), or write to Gospel Cards, etc., 15 Brackla Street Centre, Bridgend, CF31 1DD.

Hello and welcome!

This month we have a few new faces joining us in our busy Client Services team. Client Services are the frontline of our organisation; taking calls, responding to emails and letters, booking in holiday guests, helping Torch group users and much, much more. It’s an extremely busy area of Torch’s work so we are very pleased to be able to welcome to the team:

Tina Noble: ‘Hi! I used to work at Rock UK – Frontier Centre before coming to Torch Trust. In my spare time I love following Ipswich Town FC and go down to Ipswich to watch them as much as I can. I thought it would be very strange starting somewhere new but everyone at Torch has been so lovely and welcoming.’

Laura Jones: ‘Hello! I am excited to become part of the Torch family. I feel very welcomed by everyone. I live locally and in my spare time, I enjoy arts and crafts, spending time with my family and friends and stage managing at the local theatre.’

Paul Bickley: ‘Hello, I have a background in working with care homes. In my spare time I enjoy playing guitar (although not particularly well!) and painting. I’m really happy to be joining the Torch team as I have had a desire to work for a Christian organisation for some time.’

Torch calendar 2019

We are once again selling our popular large print and braille scripture calendar. Available for just £3, the calendars are printed in A4 size with hook for easy hanging. Every day features a different piece of scripture. The calendars are great for inspiring daily prayers or Bible readings and discussions and would be a lovely Christmas gift. To buy yours just contact Client Services.