



The heart of Torch



In this special 60th anniversary edition, we're celebrating the stories of just three of the people whose lives Torch has touched over the years, beginning with Eeva-Maija...

“I am a blind lady from Finland and accepted Jesus as my Saviour and Lord, thanks to Torch. In 1999 I went to Torch's Adventure Holiday where we did various activities like climbing on the rocks and paddling. We had delicious food and lots of fun but that wasn't all.

We also had a Christian meeting every morning and evening and a possibility to read Christian literature in braille. I was very anxious and talked a lot about spiritual things with the organisers and other participants in the camp. One night I saw no other possibility than to ask the Lord Jesus to come into my heart and be my Saviour. When other people were already sleeping, I cried under the cover in my bed and prayed and surrendered my life totally to Jesus and asked him to be my Saviour and my Lord. I felt how Jesus answered my prayer and came into my heart. It was a kind of a peace and freedom that I had never experienced before.

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The unconditional love of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross changed my life for ever. I believe that Torch is a great blessing also to many other visually impaired people who feel hopeless and are reaching for God.

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That moment transformed my life permanently. I cannot thank Torch enough for that. For me it was a matter of survival to be saved.

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It is very important that visually impaired people through Torch can have Christian fellowship and access to Christian literature, first of all the Bible, in many formats. The unconditional love of Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross changed my life for ever. I believe that Torch is a great blessing also to many other visually impaired people who feel hopeless and are reaching for God. There is no other thing which is so important as to have a personal relationship to a blessing and loving God. Thank you so much Torch! May God bless your life-transforming precious work generously in the future. ”

Gemma's story

Gemma is living with sight loss and encountered Torch in its early years. Her involvement with Torch spans 50 years, encompassing the evolving of the ministry from its roots in the south of England when its headquarters were at the current Holiday and Retreat Centre.

“It was back in February 1970 that I first heard about Torch. I had recently been discharged from a secure unit in a psychiatric hospital where I had spent the last two-and-a-half years. I was 17 years old and very emotionally disturbed. I had been told that the people at Torch were very religious but sincere, so I decided to contact them.

In August 1970 I arrived at Torch House, Hurstpierpoint, for a fortnight's working holiday, little knowing that it was going to bring about a whole new life for me. During my stay I was overwhelmed by the love of the people there, and I wanted to know what it was that they had got that

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I want to say a big thank you to the Lord for providing a safe place for me to receive nurture and love, and for him to begin his healing work in me.

”

I hadn't. They lost no time in telling me about the Lord Jesus and the difference he had made in their lives, and I could see that what they were saying was true, and so it was that I, too, gave my life to Jesus and asked him to come in and sort out all the mess inside me.

I spent the following Christmas holidays with Torch, before returning to the college for visually impaired students, where I was training in office work.

In 1974 I joined the Torch staff, working in the office and then in the editorial department. I want to say a big thank you to the Lord for providing a safe place for me to receive nurture and love, and for him to begin his healing work in me. I was very damaged, and a very difficult person to live with! I felt very insecure and found it hard to trust anyone. Somehow, the Lord gave Stella and Ron Heath the assurance that he would heal me, and they, and many others, stood by me and loved me through my struggles.

In 2000 I met a lovely man called Dean, and we have just celebrated our 16th wedding anniversary. If it wasn't for Torch, I don't know what would have become of me. I was a write-off as far as this world was concerned, but the Lord had different ideas, and he is the one who gathers the outcasts and draws them into His Kingdom. All glory to Jesus! ”

Meryl's moment

“As you celebrate the 60th anniversary of the work of Torch, I would like to join in with my personal thanksgiving and praise to God for all that Torch has meant to me for almost all of those 60 years. My first contact with Torch was when my friend Jean and I were told that we would be able to borrow Christian braille books which were being transcribed by Torch Trust as well as receiving The Torch magazine. Ever since that time I have been in constant touch with Torch and the provision of braille and audio literature I have bought and borrowed from Torch has been a lifeline down through the years by encouraging me and building up my spiritual life, keeping me focused on the Lord through difficult and stressful times. Like many other readers, I have often been sent just the right book to help in my circumstances at that time.

For many years I had the privilege of being a member of the Aberdeen Torch Fellowship Group committee and thoroughly enjoyed meeting up with so many lovely folk who were a big encouragement to me, more than I was able to be to them. Also I very much doubt if my tape and CD ministry of music and meditations would ever have come together if I hadn't had the amazing resource of Torch literature to share with my listeners.

A huge thank you to everybody, past and present, who serves the Lord in the work of Torch, for your faithful commitment to the original principles set out at the commencement of the work and for your love and dedication in reaching out to visually impaired people who need your encouragement and the good news that Jesus loves them. ”



Gemma in her early days at Torch



Meryl's guide dog, Quest

Our CEO Julia Hyde reports on 60 years of sharing God's love through our ministry

Torch Trust was born 60 years ago, a God-given ministry entrusted to a Christian family with a heart for people with sight loss and a desire to share the Christian faith.



From these humble beginnings a community grew; extending God's love, providing support and employment for many blind and partially sighted people and the individuals called to serve them.

I am delighted to share with you our renewed and God-inspired vision to ensure that everyone with sight loss has the opportunity to grow in faith and thrive in Christian community. We seek to change lives, change communities and build God's kingdom globally.

Every day in the UK 250 people receive life-altering news about their sight. The impact of sight loss on people's everyday living is tremendous, presenting us with a challenge that deserves a kingdom response. Torch wants to ensure that every Christian community is equipped to include people with sight loss, so the isolation and loneliness that is so often the reality for blind and partially sighted people is eradicated.

We are also proud to share with you the news of our Sight Loss Friendly Church (SLFC) initiative, which you can read all about further on in this publication. In short, we want to ensure that Christian communities are places where each person is fully included and able to play their part.

So how will you play your part? There are so many ways for you to be involved with Torch.

Firstly – through your church. Encourage your church leadership to sign up to SLFC. Visit sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk You would be amazed how many calls we get each day from people experiencing loneliness and isolation, even from within their own church! This crucial ministry will make such a difference to them.

We encourage you to support Torch through talking about us to your friends, your family and anyone who will listen. The more people that talk about sight loss and encourage churches and individuals to talk to us at Torch the better.

Essentially of course, Torch could not do the work we do without the generosity of our faithful supporters. We thank God for each and every person who donates to Torch. We are particularly grateful for those who choose to donate regularly as this helps us so much to plan for our work and ensure we can deliver our resources and services to people with sight loss.

This year we are gratefully accepting special 'Diamond' anniversary gifts in support of this next stage in our ministry. If you would like to show your support through a financial donation or gift, please do get in touch with Client Services or visit torchtrust.org

The best gift we could ask from you is the gift of your thoughts and prayers.

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We seek to change lives, change communities and build God's kingdom globally.”

Please join us in asking God to bless Torch with the resources, wisdom, support and direction we need. We thank you in advance for your prayers and your continued support for our ministry.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

God has great plans for Torch Trust. We pray for the continuation of our established ministry into a new and dynamic season. For God to be alongside us in reaching every church in the UK to partner with Torch so every person with sight loss can grow in faith and thrive in Christian community.

With every blessing and with humble thanks, as we enter the next season for Torch. Let's be part of this together.

GET INVOLVED

To get you started on your Torch journey, we've put together two fantastic information packs. See back cover for details.



Sight Loss Friendly Church launch: Rocketing to success



As part of our 60th year, we are absolutely delighted to announce the full launch of our Sight Loss Friendly Church campaign! If you're a regular reader of Torch News, you may already know a bit about this brave and exciting new initiative but we have lots more to share after the official launch at our 60th celebration in June.



THINK



ASK



ACT

The campaign is now up and running with over one hundred churches already signed up and committed to improving their inclusion of people with sight loss. This is a great start. We have committed to the ambitious goal of connecting with 50,000 churches across the UK: equipping them with resources and free expert advice, helping to ensure that every person living with sight loss is provided with the opportunity to grow in faith, with access

to Christian literature in accessible formats, and thrive in Christian community; where each person is fully included and able to play their part, in the way that suits them best.

To help us reach this exciting goal, we are asking each and every one of our supporters to spread the news of SLFC – maybe your church will be the next to join! Visit sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk to find out more and encourage your church leadership to sign up.

Being a Sight Loss Friendly Church doesn't mean following a set of prescriptive or tricky to instigate set of rules. It simply means adjusting your thinking. Every person with sight loss is unique, just as every church and congregation is! SLFC is about finding what works for the people who attend, or would like to attend, your church.

And remember, signing up comes with a host of great information and resources at no cost whatsoever! We are able to provide training and workshops to bring sight loss friendliness to life, enabling your church community to **think, ask, and act** their way to being fully inclusive. These half-day or evening sessions can take place at your church or alongside another local church. We also offer telephone consultations with our trained SLFC advisors who are ready and able to offer guidance to enable churches to fully include people with sight loss in every aspect of church life.



You will also receive a window sticker and poster to proudly announce your sight loss friendly status, as well as appearing on our searchable map of UK SLFCs which will also promote your church as being sight loss friendly. You will be able to access our specialist shop, full of accessible Christian resources such as small group study guides, accessible Bibles and a wide range of Christian literature.

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Reporting from Malawi

Information from our partner Torch Trust Malawi, supporting people with sight loss in local communities.



THE FACTS AND FIGURES:

ALMOST HALF of blind and partially sighted people feel 'moderately' or 'completely' cut off from people and things around them.



EVERY 6 MINUTES someone in the UK is told they are going blind.



250 people start to lose their sight every day.

NEARLY 4 MILLION PEOPLE in the UK could be living with sight loss by 2050.



1 IN 5 WILL LIVE with sight loss in their lifetime.



Many people with sight loss go unnoticed in church, some will even feel they cannot attend at all. Becoming a Sight Loss Friendly Church can truly make a world of difference to someone living with the uncertainties of sight loss. We ask you to help us reach out to them and make that difference.

GET INVOLVED

Call 01858 438260 or visit sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk and start your journey today.



A huge thank you to our supporters who generously donated over £20,000 in our emergency Malawi appeal following the recent devastation caused by hurricane Idai. Further engagement is taking place to ensure all monies given to date will be spent to support those affected.

The emergency fund has now closed and we wish to thank you in anticipation of your ongoing prayers and support, with all gifts for Malawi going forward being directed to our Malawi General Funds. We are proud to partner with our friends in Malawi and invite support as Torch Malawi Staff and trustees continue their important ministry.

Our ongoing support for the work in Malawi continues including their production of local language Christian literature, spiritual and pastoral support of the blind and visually impaired, and providing sight loss aids and equipment.

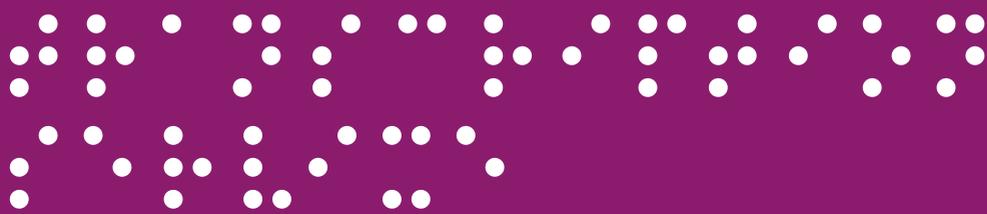
A Malawian celebration

Torch Malawi administrator Stanley Moyo is pleased to report that in July they were able to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Torch in typically Malawian fashion, with fellowship and joyous singing. Stanley shared from 1 Samuel 17:41-51 'David and Goliath' at the celebration, speaking of how the power of God is more than earthly weapons, and that our dependency must be on God not on our strength, earthly materials or anything that we think could make us more powerful, a message both timely and touching.

Stanley and the other staff and volunteers continue in their dedication to supporting the blind and partially sighted people of Malawi in the challenges they face, both physically and spiritually, and we know that your prayers will be with them.



Breaking barriers through Torch's Transcription Service



At Torch we want to help remove barriers to inclusion for people with sight loss, and something we hear a lot is that people feel they simply can't join in because they are unable to read standard print. In response to this important issue, we are pleased to offer a transcription service as a key component in enabling people with sight loss to have fulfilling Christian lives. Read on to find out more about this important aspect of our work...

What is transcription?

Transcription is the service of reproducing standard printed material into accessible formats such as braille, large print and audio.



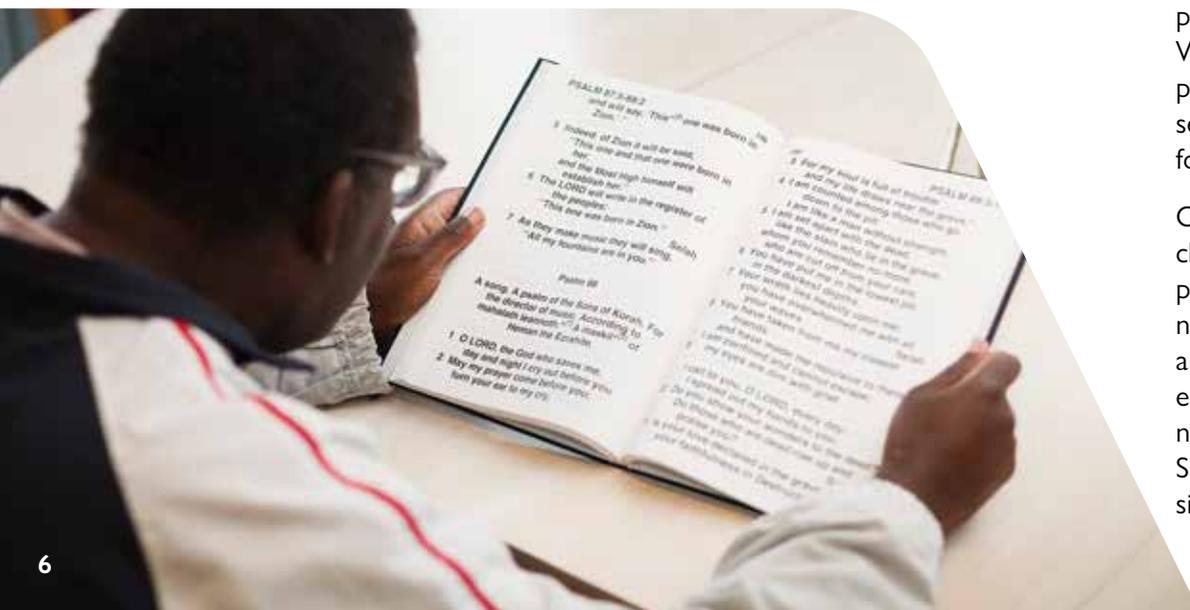
We have an extensive catalogue of Christian resources which is being added to all the time. This includes Bibles, study guides, and Christian literature, all available to purchase at the standard published prices. To search our catalogue just visit our website torchtrust.org and click on the Literature and Radio tab, or give us a call on **01858 438260**.

If the book or resource you're looking for is not currently available from us

then please do get in touch. We have relationships with a number of Christian publishers and we may be able to source the item for you. We can't guarantee that this will be possible with all materials but it's always worth asking! Unfortunately, we are not available to provide transcription for self-published or out-of-print items, or for regular publications such as weekly newsletters or orders of service.

Our service is also available for special occasion items such as funerals, weddings, baptisms or membership services for people with sight loss or their close family. We can also produce items for blind or partially sighted people leading special services. Usually we would only do this for items up to 1000 words long.

Our service is for Torch registered clients with sight loss, churches who are part of the Sight Loss Friendly Church network, Torch Fellowship Groups and other particular partners we have established a relationship with. If you are not yet a registered client, or part of our SLFC network, then get in touch today to sign up!



It's an important part of our ethos to keep costs low for our clients. We believe that it is vital for people with sight loss to be able to purchase resources at the same price a sighted person would pay. Therefore all books and Christian resources will be sold at the standard print published price. For special occasion items we ask for a donation of at least £25 towards the cost. Larger projects or events will be priced on a case-by-case basis to ensure we are providing a good value service for all.

If we're unable to complete your request for any reason we will always let you know as soon as possible. Accessible versions are available in large print sizes 17, 20, 25 and 30 point, as well as audio and braille.



Our service is also available for special occasion items such as funerals, weddings, baptisms or membership services for people with sight loss or their close family. We can also produce items for blind or partially sighted people leading special services.



Andy's transcription tale

Andy Wilson reached out to Torch with a special request for a Christian Resource item. He spoke to us about his experience with the Torch Transcription Service...

“I would definitely recommend Torch's Transcription Service. They operate with a good openness, they're easy to chat with, and they provide great formatting of material. Having this material has enabled me to do the job I am meant to do. Trust is a big thing, so knowing that Torch produces amazing material is so reassuring. I am so glad that through their service I can extend and surpass what I originally thought I would be able to do. Bless you all and thanks!”

Enquiries about our service can be made to info@torchtrust.org or telephone 01858 438260.



God is walking beside me – Hazel's story

We are very pleased to introduce Hazel Groves as the newest member of our board of Trustees. Read on to learn more about her personal journey...

“I first found Torch Trust as a new Christian. I am blessed to be a member of a supportive church but one thing they could not provide was accessible literature, so I searched online and found the Torch Trust website.

I have always had sight loss, I had childhood cataracts, which were removed as a baby, together with nystagmus. This is hereditary in my family, so I grew up in a household where sight loss was kind of normal. My mum encouraged both my sister and I to live our lives to the full and take every opportunity. There are things I can't do, I have never driven a car, but I have learned to focus on the things I can do.

As a teenager I had a rough time and to be honest thought God was so remote and just not interested in me because I was not good enough. My son began attending a Church of England school and it was so welcoming! I thought it would be good to take him to Sunday School so I gave it a try. It was not like the church I had experienced as a child. It's a lively Pentecostal Church with many families. I remember the first time the worship leader sang Matt Redman's You Never Let Go. It was wonderful and I thought that's the God I want to get to know. Just over a year later I was baptised. I love the fact that my Church encourages us to question and is supportive even when we have doubts. I now see the God who is not sitting back watching me struggle but the God who is walking beside me, guiding and encouraging.

It can be difficult to find the right support for

sight loss. If you are part of a church community I encourage you to get involved; by getting involved you get to know people and they get to know you as more than the blind lady in the congregation! It can be hard and does take courage but the Lord has given each of us gifts to use for him so there is always something you can do. I would definitely encourage churches to join Sight Loss Friendly Church. I also recommend giving Torch's Client Services a call; they can tell you about the services Torch provides. I have really been encouraged by the other members of the Torch Book Group I attend as we have all experienced our faith and sight loss in different ways but that does not stop us exploring Christian literature and growing in our faith together.”



I would definitely encourage churches to join Sight Loss Friendly Church. I also recommend giving Torch's Client Services a call; they can tell you about the services Torch provides.

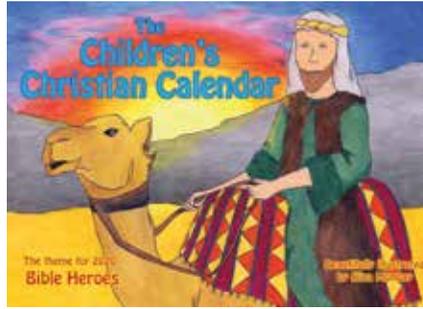


Christmas cards and Christian gifts that assist our ministry

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 27 Christian missions including Torch Trust. 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 Christians and non-Christian family and friends alike.

Full details of the cards, etc. are on their website **GospelCardsEtc.com** or you can ask them for a catalogue by phoning **01656 647551** (10am to 1pm), or write to Freepost GOSPELCARDS (NB: GOSPELCARDS one word in CAPITALS, no stamp required, no address required).



A big welcome to:

Matthew Horspool

Matthew joins us as a Torch Representative for SLFC. Matthew has served on UKAAF's braille coding group for several years, as well as working part time in transcription for Exhall Grange School. Outside of work he loves singing and is part of Coventry Cathedral's choral society. Matthew covers the West Midlands.



Becky Davies

Becky also joins us as a Torch Representative for SLFC. Becky shares "Since becoming a Christian at the age of 12 I have seen God at work in my life in ways I would never have imagined. I have lived in lots of different places and been involved in lots of different churches. I'm married to an exuberant Welsh man called Gareth and together we are very involved at St John the Baptist Church in Hillmorton". Becky covers the East Midlands.



Niall Geddes

Niall joins Torch as our Operations Assistant. Niall is a highly skilled goalball player, having competed in the Paralympics, representing Great Britain. He has also had the honour of being an Olympic Torch-bearer in his home town for the 2012 games.



Holidays

Summer may be over but it's not too late for a holiday! We still have a few spaces left on a couple of our 2019 holidays, including the fabulously festive Crafts for Christmas break, running from Monday 18th – Saturday 23rd November. This will be a week of creativity and friendship as we come together over the craft table. Alternatively, you may enjoy our Winter Quiet Retreat, Monday 2nd – Thursday 5th December, a time of spiritual rest, rejuvenation and seeking the Lord.



Start your journey with our Torch Packs

To celebrate our 60th anniversary, we've produced two different packs to help you get involved with Torch – and the even better news is they're completely free and available for the rest of the year! **Our Celebration Pack** contains all the information you need to organise an event to celebrate the 60th year; **Our Supporters Pack** helps to give the many ways you can support Torch Trust's ministry. Both packs include a beautiful Torch Trust tote bag! To get your hands on them, you just need to give us a call on **01858 438260** and we'll post out however many you would like of each type.



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 info@torchtrust.org @torchtrust
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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.

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USEFUL INFORMATION

-  **Client Services**
01858 438260
-  **Reflections**
for responses to our radio broadcasts: call **0333 123 1255**
-  **Library**
01858 438266
-  **Holidays**
01858 438260
-  **Prayer Line**
01858 438277
- 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