

Your Spring Newsletter

2nd Edition



with TORCH TRUST

Welcome to our emergency Covid-19 newsletter!

In the middle of the current crisis, it is a privilege to be able to continue supporting people with sight loss.

We're still open!

There have been lots of changes to the way we work as a Christian charity, with some staff being furloughed, others working from home and some taking on new responsibilities. Upcoming events have been postponed or cancelled as necessary. However, the good news is that Torch House is still open to provide accessible Christian resources (including Bible Reading Notes and the library service), whilst utilising a minimum number of staff. These resources are a blessing to many people with sight loss during what can be a difficult time of loneliness and isolation. If you know of someone in your church who could benefit from our resources, please encourage them to get in touch and they will receive one-to-one help with their needs.



Sight Loss Friendly Church Sunday

SLFC Sunday had been planned for the 6th June this year. This special day was meant to highlight the issue of sight loss within our churches to bring greater understanding and enable everyone to be involved. However, after much deliberation it was thought best to postpone until next year. In spite of this, we would love to hear from you and if you have any questions please feel free to get in touch and we will help where we can. One way that you can help us is by sharing with other churches about SLFC. It would also be great to hear of any encouraging stories from your SLFC journey.



Virtual fellowship

The profound changes in our world has also had an enormous impact on the way in which church is done. All churches have been forced to pause and think about how they can connect with those in their congregations in new ways. Within Torch, we have also been reflecting on the best ways that we can provide support and encouragement for people with sight loss through virtual fellowship.

Think



If your church is considering using a virtual platform, think about whether it is suitable for people with sight loss.

Ask



Talk to the people with sight loss within your church to see how you can support them as they may be finding it difficult to access your virtual events/content.

Act



If they are not able to access your content, consider offering them some regular personal prayer or connecting them with others in the congregation.

Meeting the team

Leonard Campbell is based in Northern Ireland and works for Torch as an Area Development Officer. He writes:

“After spending 4 years as a missionary working with blind and partially sighted people in Lebanon, I returned to N. Ireland at the end of 2007. When a Pastor asked me what I wanted to do? I replied that my perfect job would be to work for Torch Trust. It wasn't long before a job opened up and 12 years later I am still working for Torch, having worked in many different roles. During the current lockdown, I am the only member of staff providing support for SLFCs and also for our groups across the UK. When things return to normal, I am very much looking forward to our local events resuming and joining together in person once again with those from our local Torch community. In particular, I enjoy building relationships with blind and partially sighted people and I am blessed to work with some wonderful volunteers who share my passion to see the lives of people with sight loss changed by Jesus.”



Virtual Sight Loss Friendly Church?

If you're one of the many churches which have started offering services and home groups over the internet, read on!



We've been doing lots of testing in this area and some of our Torch Fellowship Groups have already started meeting virtually, mostly using the Zoom platform. This is great because it's fully accessible for those people with sight loss who have good computer skills, and for those who don't, there's a telephone dial-in option. Just remember that people who need the telephone dial-in details will probably need you to call them and dictate them over the phone. It's therefore a good idea to keep them the same week on week if you can.

If you're using Facebook Live or Youtube, you might find that people with sight loss find it more difficult to access your content. It's always a good idea to phone them and see how they're getting on - they

might feel too embarrassed to call you! And in these uncertain times, a friendly phone call is nearly always appreciated.

If they're not able to access your content, consider offering them some regular personal prayer or connecting them with others in the congregation. It's really important to maintain a sense of community in these times, and hearing a familiar voice is great for this. You could also take this opportunity to make sure they have enough supplies and they're still healthy.

We're always pleased to hear from SLFCs who have specific questions, and questions about virtual church are no exception. Please do write to us at sffc@torchtrust.org and we'll gladly help you out.

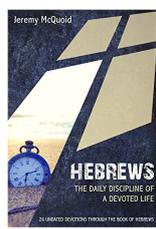
Covid-19 Top Tip

Some people with sight loss really struggle to use computers and might not be able to engage with your virtual worship. Make a point of phoning them so you can discuss a system that works for them. You could also take this opportunity to make sure they have everything they need.



New resource

Torch is continually transcribing new Christian material into accessible formats. One new daily devotional now available is Hebrews: The Daily Discipline of a Devoted Life. The author Jeremy McQuoid presents 26 undated devotions which will warm your heart with great truths about Jesus from the book of Hebrews. You'll be reminded that Jesus is our true saving hero, our rock in the sinking sand and sufficient for all our needs. During these times of uncertainty, we can be encouraged by looking afresh at Jesus as the author and perfecter of our faith.



Support us

Please pray for the ongoing mission of Torch and should you have anyone in your congregation who would like to become a SFLC volunteer please do encourage them to get in touch with us. The ministry of Torch is totally dependant on donations. We welcome the opportunity to share how we are enabling people with sight loss to have fulfilling Christian lives. Please consider supporting Torch's ministry as part of your giving to mission. This could be as a regular, occasional, or one-off gift from your church. For example, **£45 enables Torch to provide Premier Christianity in an accessible version to someone with sight loss for a year.**

Contact us

This newsletter as a pdf is accessible, however if you do need it in braille, large print or audio CD, please ask. Our friendly team are here to help you with all your queries. You can call us on **01858 438260** from Monday to Thursday inclusive, 10am until 4pm or email us at: info@torchtrust.org.

www.sightlossfriendlychurch.org.uk

