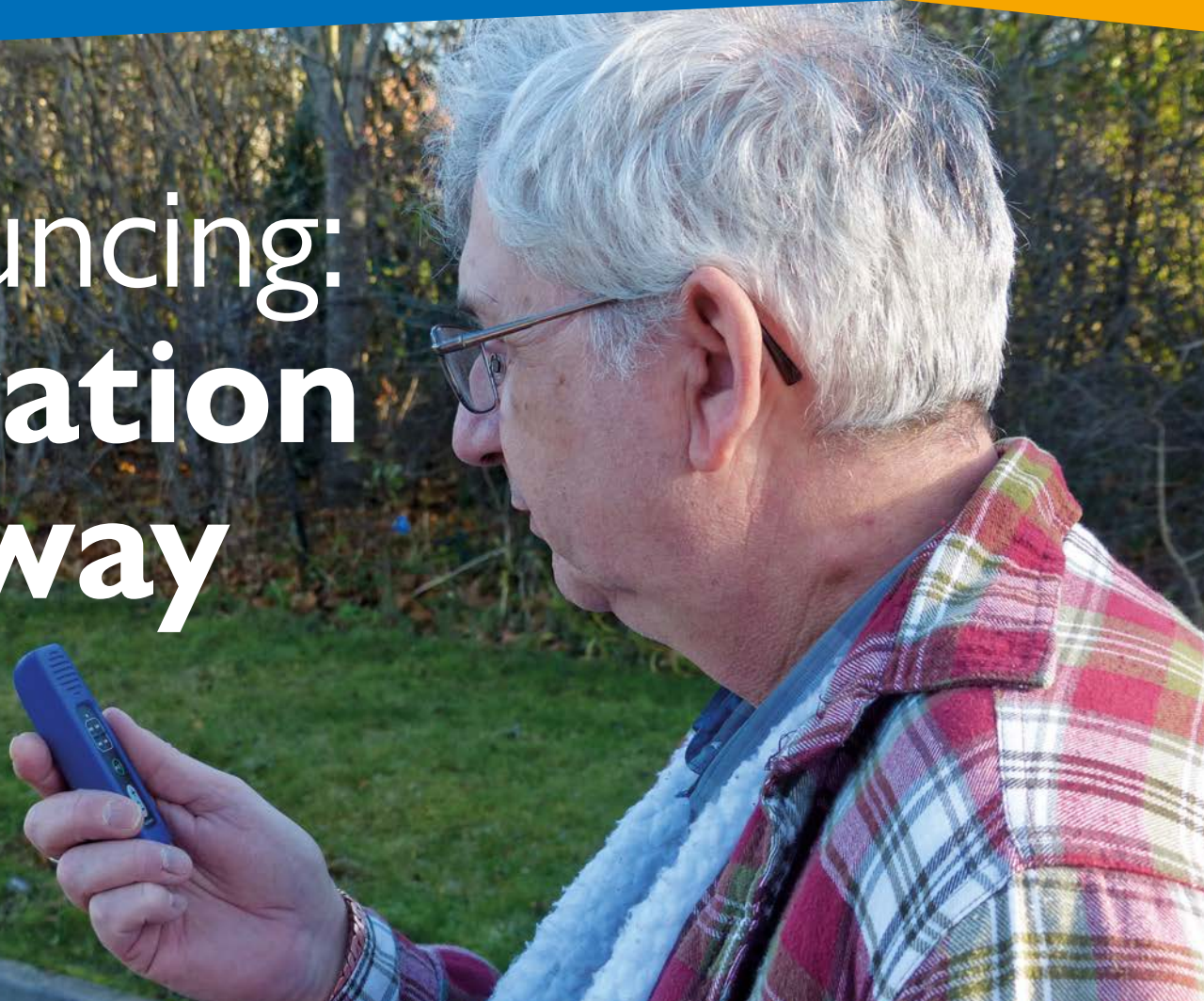




Announcing: Operation Pathway



At Torch we are always eager to find new ways to share God's love with blind and partially sighted people, and to come alongside them with his wonderful comfort and support.

The Bible is a fantastic resource for this but it's not always accessible to everyone. We know that a lot of people are unable to use braille, which takes quite a lot of learning, or large print, which relies on a degree of sight remaining.

How to reach out to those people is a question we've asked many times. The

Bible is, of course, available on DAISY CD, but again not everyone has access to a DAISY player. That is where Operation Pathway comes in.

Operation Pathway is a unique initiative which we are launching. The idea at its core is simple: we are giving out Pathway MegaVoice players, entirely free, to one thousand people with sight loss. The players contain the NIV New Testament and Psalms, as read by David Suchet, along with an introduction and several beautiful songs by Marilyn Baker. There is no obligation with these players – recipients don't even need to be Torch clients. They are a gift, offered to anyone who is losing their sight and lives in the UK.

“

Why the Bible? And why now? Well, Torch knows that the Bible can provide an amazing source of comfort and inspiration to anyone – sighted or not, Christian or not.

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We know that for many people, losing their sight is a very traumatic experience, yet only 17% of people are offered any kind of emotional support in this situation. At this moment of crisis, what better gift can we offer than the comforting, life-transforming word of God?

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The player itself is small and easy to use, as Paul Rhodes, our Production Team Leader, explains: 'The Pathway is about the size of an Amazon Firestick or a packet of Polo Mints. It has large, easy to find buttons allowing you to play, pause, skip forwards and backwards and control the volume. The device contains batteries which are chargeable and it comes with a charging cable. You'll also get a lanyard and in-ear headphones with it! You can listen without headphones as well, with its built-in speaker.'


But why the Bible? And why now? Well, Torch knows that the Bible can provide an amazing source of comfort and inspiration to anyone – sighted or not, Christian or not. Whether recipients are regular Bible readers or they're picking it up for the very first time, being able to experience the word of God out loud is a wonderful gift. Nigel, who tested the

player for Torch, says: 'I'm not religious, I don't go to church, but I could listen to this all day!'

The timing of this project is simply a matter of listening to God and being led by him. Generous support has allowed us to make this financial commitment and we hope, if we are able, to repeat this initiative in the future.

The initial idea for Operation Pathway came about from Torch's CEO Tim Jeffery, who says: 'From our years of experience, we know the challenges that come as sight deteriorates and the many adjustments needed to live with sight loss. We have found time and time again that the Bible provides a wonderful source of comfort and encouragement in the struggles of life. Do you know someone in the UK who is losing their sight and would like one of these players? Please do tell them about this offer. We want to be there for people with sight loss, to help them explore what it means to live with Jesus at your side.'

We ask you, our supporters, to pray for this initiative, help us to find people who might benefit from receiving a player, and please do mention it to local sight loss agencies near you – together, we can share the Word!

 To find out more, you can watch or listen to our Pathway videos on YouTube. Just search for Torch Trust on Video.



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GET INVOLVED

If you, or someone you know, could benefit from a Pathway player, then please complete the form at torchtrust.org/pathway, give us a call on **01858 438260** or email us using info@torchtrust.org



PRAYER POINTS



- Pray for the uptake of Operation Pathway, that people with sight loss in the UK will find out about this and contact us.
- Pray for this initiative to continue and reach more and more people with sight loss in the UK.
- Pray for the people who receive a Pathway player, that they will find it useful and enriching.
- Give thanks for everyone involved in Operation Pathway, in whatever capacity!

Torch Tech Update!

It's been an exciting few months for Torch on the technology side of things, starting with the launch of our lovely new website! You can still find us at our usual address, torchtrust.org, but the site itself has had a massive and long awaited revamp.



Designed with both accessibility and ease of use at the forefront, our new site is allowing us to really ramp up our offerings, including a fantastic new e-shop where you'll be able to find all of our accessible literature and resources for purchase or to borrow.

The new site aims to be more user-friendly, more modern, and more suited to our needs. We give thanks to God for the provision for this work and for all the effort that has been put into it by our staff and the developers.

The site has dedicated areas for those living with sight loss, or supporting someone who does, to find help at their fingertips, detailing all the ways Torch can come alongside them in Christian love. You'll also find our Sight Loss Friendly Church resources on there, along with information about our Fellowship Groups, and our international work.

Soon the site will also be playing host to our audio output, including our two brand new podcasts. First up, we're launching Insights from Sight Loss Friendly Church, an occasional short audio piece featuring questions, tips and discussions about what makes a great

sight loss friendly church. Second is Torch Tales, a new regular series telling the stories of the people who bring Torch to life, sharing in the passion and faith which makes what we do possible. You'll also be able to find our existing Reflections Podcast, a shortened version of our weekly radio show, on there too. Reflections focuses on faith and disability in today's world and shares inspiring stories of people and organisations alike.

It's also all-change for our telephone system. Our Head of Technical Services, Paul Wood, has been working hard to implement a wonderful new system which allows for far greater flexibility with working from home and allowing staff to take calls when on the move.

Technological progression is so important for any charity to maintain modern standards and to be sure that it is offering useful services which reflect the world in which its clients exist. All of this comes with a price, of course, and we give great thanks to God in his generous provision for us and to our supporters whose prayer and generosity means so much to us and helps us to help blind and partially sighted people across the UK and beyond.

“
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”

PRAYER POINTS



- Please pray for continued support to keep our tech up to date and working well.
- Give thanks for all who contributed prayer and gifts to enable us to access this wonderful technology.
- Pray that these vital systems will continue to run smoothly.

Sight Loss Friendly Church: Introducing Linn!

We are so pleased to announce that Linn Davies has joined us as a Sight Loss Friendly Church Advisor. We wanted to let everyone get to know Linn so we sat down for a chat with her.



Linn Davies



I first heard about Torch when a lady at my church asked me along to a Fellowship Group. She had to ask a few times but eventually I decided to give it a try – and people just kind of gave me reasons to keep going back!

kind of gave me reasons to keep going back! I'm a musician so I was asked to perform and I also ended up joining the committee.' When Linn heard that we were looking for another Advisor to join our SLFC team she leapt at the chance: 'I just thought it would be so cool because it was similar to what I'd already started doing for my TFG!'

Linn's faith is a huge part of her life: 'Although I grew up going to church, in my teens I rebelled against everything to do with Christianity. In Scotland, someone introduced me to an evangelical church and I liked the music – that was my way back in!' Linn struggled with faith again when her parents became ill but once again found her way back:

Linn, who was born blind, is originally from Norway and came to Scotland for university. After spending some time back in Norway she moved to the south of England: 'I first heard about Torch when a lady at my church asked me along to a Fellowship Group. She had to ask a few times but eventually I decided to give it a try – and people just



I'm really excited about the direction that Torch is going in, and that things are being digitised. I want to look at how I can reach out towards to a younger blind audience as well.

'I ended up in a dangerous situation in Africa. I got out, thankfully, and the way that all came about made me realise that God is actually still in my life, and God has always been there. When I came back to England, it was really important for me to find a church and reconnect with my faith. Faith is so individual but I'm here to stay now because the type of faith I have is very different from what it used to be.'

Linn is eager to get stuck in to her new role: 'I'm really excited about the direction that Torch is going in, and that things are being digitised. I want to look at how I can reach out towards to a younger blind audience as well. I know there are quite a lot of contentious issues about blindness and faith, because I have been there myself and I am familiar with what some of these issues are. So it's about connection, talking to churches, teaching them about what it means to be blind, or have sight loss and actually be a Christian at the same time. The intersectionality there is very exciting. I think I joined Torch at a very, very exciting time!'

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for God leading Linn to us and for all her experience and expertise.
- Pray for more churches to sign up as SLFCs and prepare to offer a warm welcome to people with sight loss.
- Pray for all the churches already signed up as they dive in to training and becoming truly sight loss friendly.

Bearing the Torch

In our previous edition we were so happy to share details of our new initiative, Torch Bearers, with you. Well, the scheme has been running for several months now and we are so encouraged by the fantastic supporters who have already signed up to be Torch Bearers.

This will help us so much in our mission to enable blind and partially sighted people to have the same access to Christian literature and encouragement that those with sight enjoy.

Every year, Torch responds to over 16,000 requests for books and other materials to be made accessible and we strive to meet that need. It can cost hundreds of pounds to transform a book into braille, large print and audio formats and it is only through God's incredible provision and the dedication of our passionate supporters that this work is made possible.

If you feel called to become a Torch Bearer, all we ask is for a gift of £15 per month which will enable us to make more and more books available to support and encourage those living with sight loss to grow in their Christian faith. Torch Bearers will receive quarterly updates on how their gift is making a difference in people's lives.



GET INVOLVED



To become a Torch Bearer, or to find out more, please email info@torchtrust.org or call us on 01858 438260.

PRAYER POINTS



- Pray for Torch to reach more and more people with accessible books.
- Pray for people to hear the call to become Torch Bearers.

Meeting face to face in Northern Ireland



Torch's CEO Tim Jeffery shares about his recent trip with Mike Townsend to our Torch Fellowship Groups in Northern Ireland.

In December 2021 I was able to undertake a trip that had several firsts for me; first time to Northern Ireland, first time on a plane with a blind person and their guide dog, first time to meet Leonard Campbell (the only member of Torch staff based outside of England) in person, first time to meet Torch Fellowship Group leaders in person.

Mike Townsend, the Chair of Torch, and I had the privilege of spending a few days in Northern Ireland meeting several committed Torch folk over there.



We went to listen – to hear how things had been there over the last few years and some of the concerns and plans for the future. We went to share where Torch is now and our hopes and desires for the future of Torch's ministry.

One of the hardest things for me over the last 18 months that I've been working with Torch, has been the restrictions on meeting people. As a very relational person, I love to get out and about, to hear people's stories, hopes and concerns. That has been very limited of late and so it was wonderful to be in and around Belfast meeting some wonderful and committed folk who have been engaged with Torch over many years. And what a difference it makes to meet face to face, to be in the same room together, to share a meal!

Mike and I met with leaders from Windsor Baptist Church which supports Leonard. We met with the trustees of a new sight loss charity that wants to work in partnership with Torch. We met with Fellowship Group leaders from across Northern Ireland and with some of the befriending team who support visually impaired people across the UK.

What struck me from all of this was the wonderful passion and commitment that these folk have to be part of a ministry with people who are blind and partially sighted. Many of them have been faithfully involved with Torch groups for decades

– such an example to us all. We heard stories of how groups have been able to keep supporting their members through Covid and their plans to begin gathering once again in the New Year. What touched me most deeply was hearing from a blind man who has been involved with Torch for many years, benefitting from groups, holidays and friendships through Torch, and who is now deeply committed to helping other visually impaired people benefit as he has done.

Torch Fellowship Groups offer such an important lifeline to so many people living with sight loss. I look forward to visiting more groups and hopefully in 2022 being part of gathering together regionally to connect with friends old and new.

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for our Northern Ireland groups and the committed people who run them.
- Pray for all of the TFGs and their faithful members.
- Pray for more people to hear of TFGs and the benefits they can bring their members.

Report from Torch Malawi

Stanley Moyo, Administrator of Torch Malawi, reports on his recent work and visits to Fellowship Groups in Malawi.



In November 2021, I visited Mulanje district Fellowship Groups where I met with blind, disabled and sighted people. Compared to Chikwawa and Nsanje, this district has more people with disabilities other than blindness. These people form part of the fellowship so as to have equal benefit through the word of God.

For our meetings, Torch Trust provided 40 Chichewa MegaVoices. These were sent by a supporter called Stephanie and will help blind people hear the word of God. We gave out one per group. After the services, fellowship members were blessed with soap and were very happy as this can help with washing their clothes and also as bathing soap.

All members present appreciated the provisions of soap and MegaVoice, saying that now even if those who read print Bibles are not present, they will still meet and share the word through the MegaVoice.

During November, I attended stakeholder meetings with different organisations. I was invited to participate in reviewing the Mining Policy which seems not to benefit the public as it favours the investors which disadvantages the owners of the land. I also attended an event to address Gender Based Violence where several sectors of the Government and Civil

Societies were present. Finally, I also attended a briefing on challenges faced by students in schools, as reported by students themselves, with responses from the Ministry of Gender, Education, Health and Civil Society.

We are sorry to report that Malawi is sadly suffering from recent flash flooding, especially in the southern region where many Torch groups are. We especially ask for your prayers at this time of great difficulty as people suffer from injury and loss of housing and provisions. Please pray that the situation will improve greatly and swiftly.

In happier news, blind people regularly visit the Torch Trust for the Blind (Malawi) office where they collect different types of braille literature and they receive other support. We recently welcomed Gracious Katunga who started reading braille literature at a tender age, which has helped him excel in life as he is now a Primary School Teacher. He is always proud of Torch Trust for the Blind as it helped him believe and trust in God. He collected some braille Bibles from the office and we were also happy to be able to provide him with a white cane. Torch Trust for the Blind also provided braille Bibles to a girl who is at Chiladzulu Teachers College but is now doing practical study at Njema Primary School.

Her name is Catherine Malola and she was very happy upon receiving the braille Bibles. We give thanks that we can help people like Gracious and Catherine!



PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for all who work to improve life for the people of Malawi.
- Please pray for safety and assistance for people affected by the flash flooding.
- Pray for more disabled people throughout Malawi to hear, and draw comfort from, God's Word.

Will you volunteer for Torch Together?

After over a year of pandemic-caused delay, our first series of Torch Together holidays in person will be taking place. We're urgently on the lookout for volunteers to support our Dorset Torch Together holiday in June, so if you live near Poole in Dorset or are happy to travel then please get in touch! All training will be provided and you will receive a subsidised place on the holiday.

One of our clients, Mary, has enjoyed many holidays with Torch over the years and said 'It was through a Torch holiday that I was shown more deeply that I needed to speak to the Lord and to come alongside him, as he is right beside me. I have a relationship with Jesus Christ and I see my faith in a different light. I can't wait to book onto another one – I know I have to, but I can't wait!'

Throughout 2022 we'll be holding several more Torch Together events and we need volunteers for each one. Perhaps there's one local to you! Our events are:

4-8 April – Cober Hill, Scarborough, North Yorkshire

13-17 June – The Greenhouse Christian Centre, Poole, Dorset

16-18 September – Corrymeela, Ballycastle, N Ireland

26-30 September – Shallowford House, Stone, Staffordshire



Torch Together at Lent

You are warmly invited to join us for this year's seven week virtual Lent course, starting on Thursday 3rd March at 2pm. We will be using Sally Welch's book, Sharing the Easter Story, for the course. This book is available to buy or you could borrow the book through our library if you are a client. To book your place on the course, please telephone or email our client services team.



Are you looking to leave a lasting impact?

Writing your will and including a gift to charity is a chance to protect your loved ones and the causes you care most about. Including a gift in your will to Torch Trust is a way of helping ensure we can continue our valuable ministry to those with sight loss.

And now it's easier than ever. We've partnered with online will writers, Guardian Angel, to offer you the ability to write your will for free. They walk you through every step of the way, with their on-hand legal support.

Find out more on our website
torchtrust.org/support-us/donate



TORCH

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Torch Trust on Video

Chair: Dr Mike Townsend

CEO: Tim Jeffery

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

Prayer Line
01858 438277

Donations

Please send donations through to our bank account
The Torch Trust for the Blind, SORT CODE: 40-52-40,
Account Number: 00017072

Sight Loss Friendly Church

torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church

Reflections

for responses to our radio broadcasts: call 0333 123 1255

For more information or to hear the show visit:

torchtrust.org/living-with-sight-loss/radio

Torch News

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