



The happiness of holidays

Rosalie Dias first heard about Torch from someone at her church: “I don’t know how Graham knew about it but he told me that it might be nice for me to get in touch with Torch because they’ve got talking books and Bibles and other things that I could access. So now I get your newsletters and all the activities that are happening with Torch.”

One of those activities just so happened to be our Torch Together holiday in Poole which Rosalie loved: “That was one of my best holidays because I’d never been on a Christian holiday before. I really enjoyed it. I loved the morning prayers and the devotions with Tim.” Rosalie also really enjoyed spending time with other blind and partially sighted people, she explained: “I just love fellowshiping with other Christians, getting to know them and learning how they cope with their visual impairments. All the staff and volunteers were

on hand to help us with anything we needed. I was so comfortable. It was easier for me because the other guests were visually impaired, I learnt from them and we helped each other. I felt very happy.”

Rosalie has Stargardt disease and grew up visually impaired, along with her sister who also has the disease. “I’ve learned how to cope over the years, I use my talking gadgets and live independently in my own flat. I used to attend a lot of groups but that stopped when the pandemic happened so it’s been more difficult.

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"I'm coping alright though, I have a carer who comes twice a week to help me now, she helps with cleaning and cooking and things I want to read. I feel happier in myself now, I used to struggle a lot, but slowly things are picking up. I'm trying to get into my normal routine with my exercises and dancing and things like that!"

Faith is also a hugely important part of Rosalie's life, as she shared: "I grew up in Tanzania and became a Christian while I was still there. I had gone to church before but I wasn't saved. I heard about salvation from a group from a Pentecostal church who used to visit us at home. They told us about Jesus and read from the Bible. They invited us to their church and from then on, one by one, my whole family got saved. I went to that church and I just felt so blessed. I felt the presence of God, the power of the Holy Spirit. I started really having faith in God in my life in general. I used to listen to Bible tapes they gave to us which is how I developed in my faith and love for God. I got baptised over there and I grew in Christ. Now, here in England, I attend the local One Church, which is part of a group of churches in Leicestershire."

Rosalie has also been a worship leader, both back in Tanzania and in her previous church in England: "My last church in England closed because there weren't many of us going, but I would love to be a worship leader

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again. I just joined my new church in February so I'm still trying to find my place right now – in future, I want to get back into worship so at the moment I'm praying about it. I'm also trying to learn the new songs we sing at my church!"

Rosalie is also a talented poet and we're thrilled to share one of her encouraging poems in this edition of Torch News.

COULD YOU HELP A BLIND PERSON HAVE A HOLIDAY?



We want to enable more people like Rosalie to benefit from the joys and community of a Christian holiday designed with blind and partially sighted people in mind. However, we know that cost can be a real barrier. That's why we've started the Torch Holiday Bursary Fund which allows people to apply for a subsidised place on a Torch holiday. If you feel able to support this fund, and help someone with sight loss enjoy a fulfilling Christian holiday, please include the reference 'Bursary' in your donation.

God Always Cares by Rosalie Dias

When the presence of God comes,
every blessing will flow.
He wants you to know:
There's no place for fear,
because He's near.
There's no place to think of disease,
because He keeps you at ease.
There's no place to feel hurt,
because He comforts.
There's no place for a troubled heart,
because He plays His part.
There's no place to feel not at ease,
because He releases His peace.
There's no place for turmoil,
because He anoints with soothing oil.
There's no place to complain,
because He eases your pain.
There's no place for hopelessness,
because He fills you with joyfulness.
Let's be aware,
that God's always there.
As we seek God's face,
we'll receive His loving grace.

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for the Torch holidays we've run so far and for the wonderful staff and volunteers who have made them possible.
- Pray for God's guidance as we plan the Torch Together holidays coming up in 2024.

Hello from our new CEO: Sarah Dawkins

We are pleased and excited to announce that Torch's new Chief Executive Officer will be Sarah Dawkins – and we'd like you all to meet her now!

"I am a Northerner at heart but have been exiled in the South for the last 15 years. I became a Christian in my late teens, and themes of evangelism and discipleship have been strong in my life since then. I currently work for Friends International, a Christian Charity seeking to welcome and share the good news of Jesus with international students in the UK. Working for Torch will be a step away from the student world, but a continuation of the themes of love, welcome and sharing Jesus.

I am excited to be joining the mission with Torch in January. Visiting Torch House has been a highlight for me. Seeing the machinery, resources and skilled people working practically to give access to Christian resources, and the gospel, to those who need braille, audio or large print was incredible. I'm excited to work with the team at Torch, giving people access to more resources and, for those who don't know him, pointing them to Jesus as the one true and certain hope in their sight loss."

We'll be sharing more from Sarah in the Spring edition of Torch News but for now, all that remains is for us to wish Sarah a heartfelt Torch welcome!

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks to God for bringing Sarah to join us.
- Please pray for Sarah as she gets ready to take up the role of CEO.



Reaching out world-wide with braille Bibles



After a good deal of planning and preparation, this autumn saw the merging of Torch Trust and Compass Braille. Paul Rhodes, our Production Team Leader, reports on how it all went...

Compass Braille was moved into Torch House on the 2nd of October and it has been full steam ahead since then. Micky Mills is using the Compass embossers to produce Bibles in three different Ugandan languages and we have already shipped off some children's Bibles in English, as well as five copies of the

Acholi Bible, one of the Ugandan languages. Back in 2021, Compass Braille transcribed the Bible into braille in the Acholi language for the first time ever so it has been really great to be involved in re-running this fantastic project. Overall, it has been a steep learning curve for everyone involved but we are excited about the work!

Colin, Glennis, Nicola and Ross have been a great help throughout the move and the set up. We are very much looking forward to carrying on what they have passed on to us! Jake Kyle has stayed on to continue the transcription work and liaison with The United Bible Society and is working remotely from Devon, Jake says: "The week after the move I travelled up to Torch House from

Devon to see how everything was progressing and to offer any support if it was needed. I felt immediately welcomed into the Torch team. I was also thrilled to see that Paul and his team had the braille embossers up and running and Micky was well on the way to mastering the skills needed to operate them and the cutting machine. By the time I left for home the next day, the first boxes of Acholi braille Bible volumes were waiting to be picked up by the postman.

I am very much looking forward to continuing the mission of producing the Bible in braille with Compass Braille in its new home in Torch House."

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks that the merger of Compass Braille and Torch has happened smoothly and successfully.
- Give thanks for the amazing technology that allows this work to happen, and for Jake working remotely.

A spiritual retreat at Torch House

As many readers will know, 2023 has been the second year of our new-style programme of Torch Together holidays and this time we were able to hold a new type of event. Development Team Coordinator Becky Davies reports on a very special retreat which recently took place...



Torch House in Leicestershire

On the 9th and 10th of October this year, Torch held its first Retreat at Torch House. Author and speaker Michael Mitton led us through his reflections on Encountering Jesus, including encountering Jesus the teacher, healer and social reformer. His quiet wisdom and gentle manner helped us all to re-encounter Jesus again in a real and personal way.

Michael was engaging and easy to listen to. I got the impression that everyone felt comfortable with what he said and the way he said it.



Michael Mitton

As one guest told us: "Michael Mitton was a very unhurried speaker and leader. He covered some tricky subjects with calm, common sense and humour."

Another said that "Michael was engaging and easy to listen to. I got the impression that everyone felt comfortable with what he said and the way he said it."

Although we were small in number it was a very special time together. We enjoyed good food and wonderful company. One of our guests summed up this wonderful time excellently, saying: "It was a blessing being with some beautiful people. An encouraging and enriching experience."

If you'd like to share Michael's words of wisdom with someone in your life who has sight loss, why not explore our selection of his books in the Torch eShop? Available to purchase in media including braille, large print and audio, Michael Mitton's work ranges from daily Advent readings to gripping mystery fiction. Not all books are available in all formats, please contact Client Services or visit our website to learn more.



PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for the success of this event.
- Pray that we will continue to be able to run events like this, helping blind and partially sighted people to come together and encounter Jesus Christ, our Saviour.



Jake Kyle (left) with members of the production team

Celebrating our new online groups



We're delighted to have a growing number of Zoom gatherings to offer for blind and partially sighted people who would like to join online for a time of fellowship.



This autumn two new monthly groups were launched; an Audio Book Group and Podcast Group. The Audio Book Group meets each month on the 4th Thursday. Book groups are so popular and it's wonderful to be able to host one for people with sight loss, focusing on Christian audio books. There are still spaces so if you know someone with sight loss who loves reading and would like to gather with others to share their interest and discover new titles from the Torch library, do let them know about the group. Slightly more unusual is our Podcast Group – it works very much like a book group but enables people with sight loss to explore and access the wonderful array of Christian podcasts available today. That one runs on the second Thursday of each month, so again if you know someone with sight loss who might enjoy it, please do spread the word!

Please pray for these groups, as well as our other offerings which include: A Mid-Week Gathering: offering a warm welcome and a relaxed space where people can get to know others, and

share experiences and ideas in an informal setting, and Our Community Prayer Time which offers an opportunity to come together to share fellowship and pray for the work of Torch. This group is open to all and runs on the first Thursday of each month at 2 pm, so please do join us if you would like to pray for our work.

Finally, we have one more group open to all! On Thursday 7th December 2-4 pm we are hosting a Torch Together Christmas Zoom event. You are warmly invited to an afternoon of informal sharing, with fun and fellowship as we approach Christmas.

If you would like to know more about any of the groups please contact Client Services.



“It works very much like a book group but enables people with sight loss to explore and access the wonderful array of Christian podcasts available today.”

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks that we have been able to set up these groups and have received great feedback so far.
- Pray that more blind and partially sighted people would learn about and join our online groups.

A goat's tale

Regular readers of Torch News may remember our report on the goat project led by Torch House Malawi a few years ago. We're pleased to be able to report that a new, updated goat project is underway – and Blessings Namate is here to report on it...

The goat project aims to distribute goats to blind and partially sighted people in Malawi, supplying them with a livelihood. We've learnt a lot since the first project a few years ago, and we recently met with Torch Group leaders from Rivirivi Section 1, 2 and 3 to get this new project going.

The leaders were very happy with the project development so far and are especially pleased with the plan for training which they felt would empower them with knowledge to better support all the goat owners. It was thought that goat houses may need to be constructed however due to problems with thievery, we've learnt that current goat owners in the area prefer to keep them in their own homes.

We invited a vet, Mr Joseph Chafulumira, to the meeting who will help us ensure the health and well-being of the animals. Mr Chafulumira

“The leaders were very happy with the project development so far and are especially pleased with the plan for training.”

will be training the goat owners and has supplied us with much-needed medicines, as well as information on how to obtain more in future.

We also took time chatting with group members about the goats they had received previously. While they were enthusiastic about the project, many felt that last time a lack of medical know-how was a real issue. Thankfully, with the guidance and training of our vet we have addressed these issues for the future of the project. We also intend to improve the pass-on scheme – the purpose of this being to ensure that more blind and partially sighted people are able to receive goats when the original animals have given birth. We agreed that the first-born kid of any goat will become part of this scheme, with the original owner able to sell on any

future offspring. Together we were able to draw up rules for the scheme which the groups were happy with. We are looking forward to receiving the goats and reporting back!

PRAYER POINTS



- Please pray for the health and well-being of all the goats.
- Please pray for the continued success of the scheme.



Christmas Carol Service

Christmas is just round the corner and we would love you to join us for our annual carol service. The service will take place at Torch House on Thursday 14th December at 2pm. The service is open to all and will also be livestreamed on Zoom and YouTube. Please contact Client Services for the Zoom information if you don't have it. To access via YouTube go onto our 'Torch Trust on Video' channel.



Torch Calendars for sale

We are once again producing our popular large print and braille Scripture calendars for 2024. Available for just £5, the calendars are printed in A4 size. 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.



Sight Loss Sunday

We would like to say a massive thank you to all the churches that participated in this year's Sight Loss Sunday which happened on the 15th October. It was wonderful to hear that churches across the UK were embracing the idea of exploring how they could be more welcoming to people with sight loss of any kind. The day is also a time to celebrate the gifts and talents that blind and partially sighted people can bring to their church communities. From doing a reading using braille, to leading an interactive activity, to playing a musical instrument, we were thrilled to hear how people were supported to get involved. If you attend a church which hasn't held a Sight Loss Sunday service yet, it's never too late! Just signpost your church leadership to our website where they can find a wealth of resources and ideas for holding a Sight Loss Sunday on any Sunday of the year: torchtrust.org/sight-loss-sunday



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Sight Loss Friendly Church

torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church

Reflections

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

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