



The joy of reading

We feel so honoured when we hear from our service users about how much they enjoy Torch's resources: some people get in touch to say how much they've loved our holidays, others say what a difference Sight Loss Friendly Church has made to them. One lady, we recently discovered, has found our lending library to be a real lifeline, having borrowed almost 1000 books from us. We wanted to hear about the person behind all this reading so we spoke with Patricia Collison to learn more...

Patricia first heard of Torch when she was at college: "Some of the girls were involved with Torch but I wasn't a Christian then and didn't really take much notice! It wasn't until years later in 1973 when I was 22, life had been a bit rough and the Lord had gotten me out of it. I'd started going to Bethshan Church in Newcastle and one day I went up to the front and gave my heart to Jesus. A lady called Audrey came over that day and asked if I would like to go to a Torch meeting on Saturday and that was the start of my journey!"

Since 1973 Patricia has been involved with Torch in various ways; attending Fellowship Group meetings, going on holidays and, of course, reading! "I have books in braille and on DAISY and it makes a huge difference to me, it's the lion part of my life, I love listening to them. It's like Christmas

when you open a gift and you think 'oh, what's the book going to be?' I've got my talking book machine and I sit with it and I listen to it."



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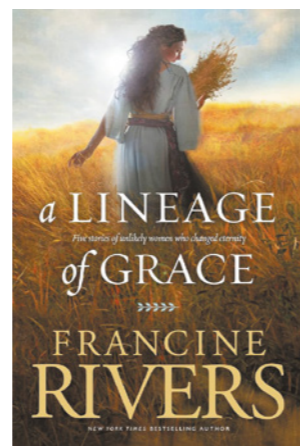
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Faith is a very important part of Patricia's life: "It's the breath I breathe, it's everything. Jesus Christ is everything to me. I love going along the sea front and one day it was really stormy and the sea was so wild – it looked like washing-up liquid because it was so white and foamed up, ferociously banging against the sea wall. And I just thought, Lord, you're powerful, you can limit even the sea and make it go no further. It reminded me of Jesus stilling the raging storm."

Patricia says she would definitely recommend Torch to anyone else with sight loss: "Well, I've already recommended Torch to a couple of people at church in particular and told them about it. I gave a MegaVoice Bible to a lady who

wasn't a Christian and the Pathway ones as well I think are fantastic, especially for people that would struggle learning braille, plus the fact you could carry it around with you. I mean, I've got the braille Bible you know and it's amazing because I used to read the Bible stories to my son Peter in the dark! It is a real blessing having God's word to sit and read or listen to."

Of course a person with such a voracious appetite for books must have some good recommendations so we asked Patricia what hers were: "I would say 'A Lineage of Grace'



by Francine Rivers. It's wonderful, it's about five women in the Bible and kind of fills in the gaps about their stories, it brings them to life. I would say to anyone thinking of giving Christian books a go: do it! You've got a choice of braille, DAISY CD, memory stick or large print and the personal service from Torch is great."

We look forward to keeping Patricia supplied with books for many years to come – and if you know anyone who could benefit from our accessible library, please do tell them all about it because we have plenty of books ready and waiting to be read!

“
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”



PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for clients such as Patricia who have a thirst for knowledge, for reading and for God's word.
- Pray that more blind and partially sighted people will hear about our wide range of Christian books and resources.
- Give thanks for all of the supporters who, through their gifts of time, funds and prayer, enable us to keep running our library.

Braille around the world

How two machines from Torch made a big difference



Last year we were able to send two Perkins braille machines over to Egypt to be used by a church club for blind and partially sighted children. We're very happy to say that the brailers are being well used and much appreciated by the children.

The machines were sent to St Saviour's Church in Suez for the SWA Club. Friend of Torch Hugo Ansen, from the Grassroots charity, recently visited the club to see their progress: "They are doing a great job. 12 months ago just two children with sight loss were enrolled in the club but now they have 40 children involved, with sessions supporting their wider families, volunteers and some professional tutoring staff."

Activities led by the club include life skills, subject tutoring, community activities and braille lessons – which



is where the Perkins machines have come in extremely handy! Hugo says: "The vicar is Rev Adel Tomas. His wife, Rania, is the main instigator of this programme and continues to say that their long term goal is to run a state-of-the-art school for blind children. Their two teenage daughters are both blind and have greatly benefited from being part of the growing community, and having so many friends around so often."

The club has brought together children and adults with sight loss, helping them find a community which they all benefit from belonging to. "The most experienced teacher of reading braille is Donia," says Hugo, "She is a law graduate but has found it hard to practise as a lawyer because of her disability. She loves being part of the staff team (and having a paid job!) and being part of a happy community. She told me about how much she enjoyed investing in the young people's lives."

“
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”

PRAYER POINTS



- The club would love more training in the use of Perkins machines, pray that a way forward for this will be found.
- Give thanks for all the dedicated volunteers and staff who are working to improve the lives of young people with sight loss in the Suez region and further afield.

An update from Compass Braille



Four years ago, Compass Braille transcribed the Bible in the Ugandan languages Runyankore/Rukiga. In 2023 they were asked to transcribe a new version which uses more modern language and includes deuterocanonical books. This means it can be distributed within schools and institutions. We're very happy to report that the project was successfully completed and launched last November.

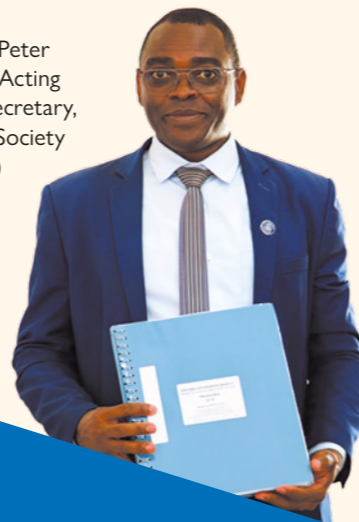
At the launch, Serumaga Peter Lumbuya (Acting General Secretary of The Bible Society of Uganda) said: "We are excited that this Bible will communicate to the people who cannot read with the eyes the rest use, those who feel the Word of God using their hands... It helps them also in education. It will be used for literacy, those who teach using braille and it also helps the people to feel that they are part of the community and, instead of pushing them aside because they cannot see, they will also feel included. And this will increase their spiritual life and their scripture reading so they will be part of the community as they are informed

and reading the message God wants them to receive."

A teacher of visually impaired children said: "We teachers have been struggling to bring for the children the Word of God, sometimes even omitting some words. But now these braille Bibles will help them because they just read them directly, no mistakes. Any time they want to read, they will read it. And they love the Word of God."

We praise God that this project was such a success and look forward to future projects bringing the Bible directly into people's hands around the world!

Serumaga Peter Lumbuya (Acting General Secretary, The Bible Society of Uganda)



PRAYER POINTS



- Thank God that more blind people will be able to receive God's word in their own language.
- Give thanks for everyone who supports Compass Braille's important work.

Updating the braille Bible

“
Would you be surprised if I told you it is almost impossible for a braille reader in the UK to buy a modern braille Bible? I'd really love to own one.

Sheila Armstrong, Torch trustee

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Surprising information, isn't it? The reason that it's so difficult for braille users to get hold of a modern Bible goes back to the 2011 update to English braille. While this was a much-needed update and the new format (known as UEB) has made braille easier for new learners and resolved issues around sharing and copyright, one unfortunate result is that the existing braille New International Version of the Bible is now out of date.

We at Torch know how vital and empowering it is to have access to God's word in a format that is suitable for you. That's why we want to transcribe the latest translation of the NIV Bible, making it available in the new standard of English Braille.

Thanks to the generosity of our partners at the United Bible Society, and the wider Torch family, we have met the target we have been praying for – in fact smashed through it. At the time of going to print nearly **£40,000** has been given towards the project. What a generous God we serve! This means that we will be able to significantly subsidise 100 copies of the Bible. Please join us in praying that this would be a blessing to those like Shelia who previously have not had access to their own copy.

Projects like this can only happen because of your generosity. If you'd like to give on a regular basis toward the work of Torch so that more of these projects can go ahead, please

contact us in one of the following ways and let us know that you would like to begin or increase regular giving:

Phone: 01858 438260

Email: info@torchtrust.org

Post: Torch Trust, Torch House, Torch Way, Market Harborough LE16 9HL

Let us know your full name and contact details, as well as how much you would like to give and how often. If you provide your banking details, we can set up or amend the Direct Debit from our end. Alternatively, you can set up regular donations, from your end, to our bank account:

The Torch Trust for the Blind
Sort code: 40-52-40
Account: 00017072

PRAYER POINTS



- Praise God for his faithfulness in providing the funds.
- Pray for the smooth running of this project.
- Pray that many more blind people will be able to experience God's word for themselves.



Groups meet up online

In April it was wonderful to meet online with 20 of our Torch Fellowship groups as they had the opportunity to meet Sarah Dawkins for the first time. Sarah shared a little of her story and how God has led her to Torch.

Sarah reflected on how she can see that her experience in other Christian charities has been a preparation for this new challenge ahead. Tony Brown, Chair of Trustees, also spoke and encouraged our groups in the work they are doing. Tony's first experience of Torch was through meeting Clive Leakey who encouraged him to volunteer at the Daventry Torch Fellowship Group. He has been involved with Torch ever since.

After hearing from Sarah and Tony we then had the opportunity to hear good news stories from the groups that were represented. It was so encouraging to hear so many stories of God's faithfulness and his answer

to prayers. Many shared how after the pandemic it was hard to bounce back yet many are now seeing new members attend. Clive shared that he prays for new members each year and God always brings new people to the group. He challenged us all to do the same and trust God to bring blind and partially sighted people so that they can encounter Jesus and grow in their faith. Everyone appreciated spending this time together and found hearing from others an encouragement. It also helped us to know how we can be praying for all our groups in this vital ministry. There were calls to repeat this event so that we can hear updates from each other. We hope to be able to offer this opportunity later in the year.



PRAYER POINTS



- Pray for the Torch Groups around the country, giving thanks for the fellowship they offer.
- Give thanks that groups are growing once again after the effects of the pandemic.

Podcast news: Walking by Faith

A new podcast exploring how sight loss impacts faith will be coming to Torch in the summer.

Walking by Faith, produced and presented by Linn Davies, will ask interviewees, all of whom have lost their sight, the same set of questions which explore everything from what God's love means to them, to practical things such as what has supported them in their faith journey.

"I'm excited about bringing this podcast to life," says Linn. "Being blind from birth, I can't imagine what losing your sight is like and how that may bring up some big existential questions. And this resource may be of help to clients currently going through sight loss."

We'll be announcing the launch date soon!



Pause for a coffee with us

As you may know, Torch holds regular coffee mornings once a month at Torch House. They're a chance for people to come together and share fellowship, as well as keeping informed about the goings-on at Torch and the current prayer needs.

As popular as these are, we know that not everyone who supports Torch is able to attend in person which is why we're launching a monthly Zoom Coffee Morning which will be held on the fourth Thursday of every month at 10.45am. The first session will be on Thursday 23rd May. We will begin with some time to chat and enjoy fellowship together (do bring a coffee or beverage of your choice with you if you'd like to). This will then be followed at 11am with an update on what's happening at Torch, and an opportunity to pray together for the work and ministry. Your prayer support is hugely valuable and

we hope that many of you will be able to join us. This will replace the Community Prayer Time which will now no longer meet.

If you would like to attend our coffee mornings in person, these meetings will still take place at Torch House on the third Thursday of the month starting from 10.30am for coffee and a time to chat, with worship and prayer from 11.30am – 12.30pm.

Please contact Client Services to register your interest, and to receive the new Zoom Coffee Morning link which you'll be able to use each month.

Partners in Prayer

Have you heard about Torch Partners in Prayer? This initiative aims to enable supporters to get more involved and stay more informed about everything Torch is up to!

Thank you so much to everyone who has become a partner already. Knowing that you're praying for our work means so much, and helps us to go forward in the Lord's work.

If you'd like more regular updates from Torch including prayer points and insights into the latest developments, please consider becoming a Partner. We are so excited about the things God is calling us to and cannot wait to share that work with you. To become a Partner in Prayer, please email us on info@torchtrust.org or call **01858 438260**.



Save the date

We've got two wonderful events coming up later this year so make sure to pop these in your diary now!



Thanksgiving

Tuesday 3rd September 2024

This year's annual Thanksgiving Day will be taking place on Tuesday 3rd September and we will once again be opening Torch House up and welcoming you all to come and say hello! If you're unable to attend in person, we would love you to join in live online for our service of thanksgiving which will take place at 2pm. You will be able to join via Facebook, Zoom or YouTube and details will be made available nearer the time.



Sight Loss Sunday

Sunday 13th October 2024

This year our annual event Sight Loss Sunday will be taking place on the 13th October. We hope that churches around the UK will join us in celebrating the gifts of people who are blind or partially sighted, and recognising that they have vital roles to play in communities and congregations. With your support, we can reach more churches than ever before with our resources, supporting churches to become more sight loss friendly. To access our resources, just visit torchtrust.org/sight-loss-sunday



Day of prayer – thank you!

A huge thank you to everyone who participated in our day of prayer recently, whether near or far.

It is truly wonderful to know that our organisation is receiving your prayers from all over, and that we're united in our goals to enable people with sight loss to live fulfilling Christian lives with access to fellowship, resources and more. Thank you again to all those who prayed for us on the day, and who continue to keep us in their prayers.



TORCH



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Torch Trust on Video

Chair of Trustees: Tony Brown

CEO: Sarah Dawkins

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



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

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