

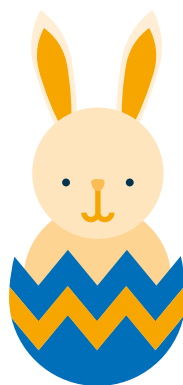


Go therefore and make disciples...

– accessible ways to share the joy of Easter

Here at Torch, we want to support blind and partially sighted people to grow in their faith, encountering Jesus Christ and thriving in Christian communities.

With Easter fast approaching, we're sharing ideas which you can share with your own churches and Christian groups to ensure visually impaired people can truly be part of this special time. Vicki Bryson explains all...



At Easter we celebrate the love of God and the significance of the cross for all of God's people. In churches across the world a variety of services and events take place, often slightly different to a regular weekly service. This article explores a few areas to think about to make these services more accessible for those who are blind and partially sighted.

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Lighting

Over Easter, services can take place at different times or in different lighting conditions e.g. sunrise services on Easter morning or Easter Vigils where darkness suddenly becomes light. It can be helpful to talk to those attending who are blind or partially sighted about any assistance they may need for these services, both in terms of guiding and also the size of text which is accessible, as this can vary in different lighting conditions.

Parades

For Palm Sunday parades or Good Friday walks of witness, it can be helpful to have additional volunteers available who are confident in guiding – particularly if the walk will follow an unfamiliar route.

Easter Egg Hunts

Churches may offer egg hunts over the Easter period and it is helpful when planning to think about accessibility for children who are blind or partially sighted. One way to support inclusion could be to create a tactile box or basket for an egg to be placed in before it is hidden, offering a child with sight loss a more accessible way to search. To make this even more inclusive, tactile covers could be used for all of the eggs giving all those involved a different way of searching.

Stations of the Cross

Some churches will use stations of the cross positioned around a church as part of their Holy Week worship. It can be helpful for those who are partially sighted to have a folder of enlarged photos of each station which they can use as they process around church. If the stations are tactile and in safe reach, it could be helpful to create an opportunity for someone with sight loss to spend time exploring each station before the devotional aspect begins. Another great option could be to have audio descriptions of each station provided by the leader as each one is introduced, or by a volunteer accompanying someone around.

Responses

As part of Easter services, there may be a different type of response that people are asked to make e.g. footwashing, placing a nail by a large cross, lighting a candle etc. It is helpful to think through how someone who is blind or partially sighted can get to the location of these activities and to talk to them about any assistance they may require.

Seekers courses

There are many fantastic seekers courses available for those who are exploring faith or who are new to faith and wanting to learn more. There are some easy ways that churches can make these accessible for those with sight loss.

Many seekers courses, including Alpha and Christianity Explored, will use videos as part of each session. If there is someone who is blind or partially sighted in your group, do talk to them about how they would like these to be made accessible e.g. having a copy of the video they can watch in advance, a member of the team 'audio describing' anything shown on a screen, having an electronic tablet which can replicate the screen display in a more accessible format etc.

When considering the printed materials that other participants receive, Torch currently have resources for the following courses in various sizes of large print and braille:

Alpha

Why am I here? (participant guide)
What do you think?

Christianity Explored

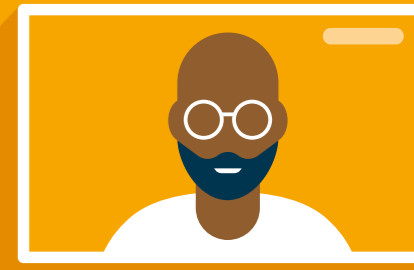
Christianity Explored Handbook

Pilgrim

All books available

Check out our study courses here eshop.torchtrust.org.uk/product-category/courses/ If you are running a course not listed here and would like printed materials enlarged, do get in touch and see if our transcription team can help.

An online lifeline for Christian fellowship



Easter is on the way and that means our Lent Group has now begun! This is an online group which meets every Wednesday from 2-3pm in the run up to Easter. A client emailed last year to say, "Regarding the Lent course, thank you and the other Torch staff for hosting it, as I can assure you that God is using it powerfully!" We had an average of 20 people join us weekly last year and we hope for even more to join us this year.

We also run other monthly online Zoom groups – a book group, a chat group and a Zoom coffee morning prayer group. These groups are a lifeline for some of those who attend and are a valuable time to meet with others when they may feel quite isolated. We often see friendships forming and clients asking to share contact details with each other.

At Torch we try to be inclusive and encourage a sense of belonging for our Torch family across the UK. Having groups that meet online allow for people who don't live locally to one another or to Torch House to make real connections. Creating a wider sense of community across the country helps our clients to see they aren't going on their sight loss journey alone and allows them to meet new people when they may struggle to go out by themselves to in-person events.



Over its seven weeks, our Lent Group will be exploring together some of the daily readings from the book 'In Quietness and Trust - Lent Devotions from the Beatitudes' written by Matt Searles. During each weekly session, we will be listening to an excerpt from the book, worshipping with a song suggested by the author and we will have time to discuss and pray together. Clients can borrow the book to read through themselves too, but this isn't a requirement, and neither is attending every single week. We can't wait to hear the positive stories from those who attend this year.

If you or anyone you know would be interested in joining our Lent Group

or any of our other groups, get in contact with Client Services who can give you more information.



PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for everyone who considers accessibility when planning church services or events.
- Pray that churches across the UK will find this information useful and put it into practice.

PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for all our wonderful supporters who make these groups possible.
- Pray that more people will find out about and join our groups.

Running with endurance: a challenge for Becky and Lydia!

Two of our truly fantastic supporters, Becky Leithall and Lydia West, will be undertaking the Bath Half Marathon to support Torch Trust this spring. It's an incredible challenge and a brilliant act of support so we sat down with Lydia to find about her own faith and what had inspired her to get running for Torch...



Torch: What made you want to take on this challenge?

Lydia: I've done the odd bit of running over the years but hadn't stepped my feet back into the race shoes for a while. When Sarah [Dawkins] mentioned that Torch were looking for runners to support

them I couldn't say anything but yes! I have heard about some of the brilliant work that Torch do bringing the gospel to those who would otherwise face challenges accessing it, and so the idea that I could support this with my own small challenge was really encouraging.

And frankly, if nothing else, seeing how awesome Torch's Bible lamb is, and the crazy idea of running a half marathon with one on my back playing scripture was motivation enough!

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There is so much love being poured out by Torch and I'm sure that knowing about that would help encourage many to support their work.
”

Torch: How have you been preparing for it?

Lydia: I must admit getting myself back into running started as a challenge! I now remember why it took me so long to start running in the first place, it's like my legs had forgotten how to do it. Thankfully with a new mantra of 'run for joy not time' things have become easier. I seem to have got into a nice swing of easy pace and long runs to keep me busy through the week. Podcasts have been an utter lifesaver to pass the time!

Torch: What makes you want to support Torch?

Lydia: Now I've only been a Christian for coming on two years now, so my knowledge of the Bible feels tiny. Nevertheless, I know that both my knowledge and my relationship with the Lord is developing with each word I read, even if it's slow progress. I'm not sure how well I'd fare if even accessing the Word was itself a challenge due to sight loss, so to think that Torch are able to help remove those barriers and support so many people in their journey to better knowing and loving Christ is wonderful.

Torch: What is your advice for anyone thinking of supporting Torch in a similar way?

Lydia: My best advice would be to start by learning more of the work they do. There is so much love being poured out by Torch

and I'm sure that knowing about that would help encourage many to support their work. Whether it be big or small, any action to help them continue their work and spread the good news is such a privilege.

Torch: Can you tell us a bit about your own Christian journey?

Lydia: I think journey is the key word there, and it's a journey I feel so early on. I know that I can count so many times where I have seen Jesus at work in my life, through the brothers and sisters he has surrounded me with to the changes of heart that sneak up on me day to day. I also know of many times that have brought challenge and lower points. Being able to return to the written truth or, likewise, friends being able to bring me encouragement through scripture, has been a lifeline.

If you would like to give to either Becky or Lydia, you can find their fundraising pages by searching for

Torch Trust on JustGiving, or you are welcome to donate via your normal method, just say it is in response to their half-marathon.

PRAYER POINTS



- Please pray for Lydia and Becky as they continue to train for their half marathon.
- Pray that this challenge will also raise awareness of Torch and our mission to enable blind and partially sighted people to grow in their Christian faith.
- Give thanks for all of our wonderful supporters who use their different talents and abilities to aid us in our mission.

Becky Leithall



Could you be a Torch Ambassador?

Alpa Kaneria, our Volunteer and Relationship Coordinator, is here to share an exciting way that you can support Torch...

The Ambassador Programme is an initiative to mobilise volunteers to speak about Torch at exhibitions and events. Volunteers will help promote and make Torch Trust and its services for those with sight loss known to churches, small groups, sight loss charities and organisations. They'll also represent Torch Trust at exhibitions. This is a flexible volunteering role, dependent on the volunteer's availability and Torch's needs.

So, why this initiative? As CEO Sarah Dawkins noted when she came on board, what Torch does is amazing and more people need to know about it! All of us at Torch would

love to reach many new clients with sight loss and inform them about all the services we offer to make a difference in their lives. We receive many requests for speakers and occasionally we have not been able to meet the demand. This should never be! That is why we are asking for volunteers to act in the capacity of Torch Ambassador.

In each volunteer, we're looking for a person who shares Torch's faith values and is a committed Christian and active church member. This gives credibility to the role as they work in accordance with the Torch Trust mission and Basis of Faith.

Do you have the following skills required for the role?

- Being a good listener and able to empathise.
- Good verbal communication and presentation skills.
- Good organisational skills.
- Being non-judgmental; treating people from all faiths or none with respect.
- Willingness to learn about all that Torch currently offers and to promote these things and network/signpost as appropriate.



How can people get involved?

If you are interested in volunteering, you can find out more about the Ambassador Programme on the Torch Trust website: torchtrust.org/support-us/volunteer/

You can also get in touch with us at volunteers@torchtrust.org or by calling us on 01858 438260. We would love to hear from you!

Sharing fellowship in Malawi

This spring, our CEO Sarah Dawkins, along with Torch Chair Tony Brown and our Head of Technical Services Paul Wood, will once again be making the journey to Africa, to visit our brothers and sisters at Torch Malawi.

The trip will take place from the 7th to the 14th of April. Sarah, Tony and Paul will be based in Blantyre but will be making visits to Torch Fellowship Groups across Malawi. This will be a wonderful opportunity for them to experience how these fantastic

groups make a difference to the lives of blind and partially sighted people.

PRAYER POINTS



- Please pray for safe travels for our team.
- Please pray for a fruitful time of Christian fellowship with the people of Torch Malawi.



Sarah, Paul and Tony with Torch Malawi staff and trustees on their previous visit.

Sight Loss Sunday

We're very excited about this year's Sight Loss Sunday – although of course any Sunday can be a Sight Loss Friendly Sunday! All of the resources from our previous SLS events can still be found on our website and used to help make your church a friendlier place for blind and partially sighted people. Just go to torchtrust.org/sight-loss-sunday and browse our collection of tips, ideas and helpful hints. On the website, you can find some great frameworks for services, Bible passages in large font sizes and suggested hymns and worship songs to support your church to celebrate the gifts of people with sight loss.

We'd like to spread our sight loss friendly message as far and wide

as we can – and we can't do that without your help. Please do share our super resources with your friends at other churches and let's see if we can make 2026 a year of true welcome and inclusion!

PRAYER POINTS



- Please pray for the use of our Sight Loss Friendly resources to spread throughout UK churches.
- Give thanks for all church communities who have taken part in Sight Loss Sunday already.



Christmas Carol Service a

**BIG
THANK
YOU!**

It was wonderful to be able to welcome so many people to our Christmas Carol Service in December 2025, we had a great time with friends of Torch old and new. Thank you to all who came and shared in this time of Christian warmth and fellowship, including those who were able to join online.



Dates for your diary

We've got lots coming up over the next few months – so here are a few dates to make a note of! We would very much appreciate your prayers for all of these events, your support means so much to us and we could not do what we do without your prayers.

Sarah, Paul and Tony's Malawi Trip

7th-14th April

Torch House Coffee Mornings

16th April

21st May

18th June

Zoom Coffee Mornings

23rd April

28th May

25th June

Torch Together Holidays

8th-12th June

20th-24th July

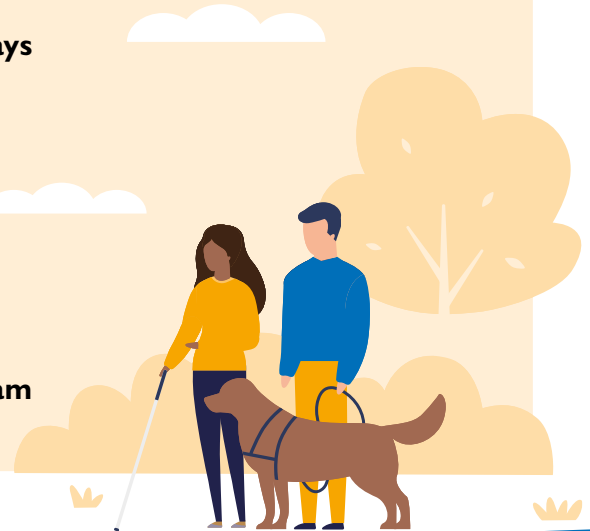
7th-11th September

Torch exhibiting at Sight Village Exeter

14th April

Torch exhibiting at Vision Zone Nottingham

21st April



TORCH

Torch Trust Torch House, Torch Way,
Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 9HL

Office hours: 9.30 am – 4 pm Monday to Thursday

 01858 438260

 facebook.com/torchtrust

 info@torchtrust.org

 @torchtrust

 torchtrust.org

 Torch Trust on Video

Chair: 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



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 more information or to hear the show visit:

torchtrust.org/radio

Torch News

is also available in audio CD, USB, braille, email and large print (17pt, 20pt, 25pt and 30pt). You can subscribe to receive Torch News by email via our website torchtrust.org