

# TORCH NEWS



TORCH TRUST – THE CHRISTIAN SIGHT LOSS CHARITY

SUMMER 2026

## Running for good!



### Inside:

- Open the door to a Torch Holiday
- The people who make it possible: a trip to Torch Malawi

**Editorial from Sarah Dawkins, CEO** Page 3

**Behind the scenes of Reflections** Page 4

**Running for good** Page 7

**Open the door to a Torch Holiday** Page 9

**The people who make it possible: a trip to Torch Malawi** Page 11

**Pressing on toward the goal – improvements to our Christian literature eShop** Page 14

**Dates for your diary!** Page 16

## A MOMENT FOR PRAYER



In each issue of Torch News, we'll be sharing a short prayer request. This time, we invite prayer for all of our staff and volunteers who will hopefully be taking some much-deserved breaks over the summer to rest, relax and enjoy God's creation. God bless all!



- 01858 438260
- info@torchtrust.org
- torchtrust.org
- facebook.com/torchtrust
- @torchtrust
- 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.

### GET IN TOUCH

**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](http://torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church)

**Reflections** For more information or to hear the show visit: [torchtrust.org/radio](http://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](http://torchtrust.org)

**“We are many, yet we are one body in Christ,  
and individually members one of another.”**

(Romans 12:5)

As I read these words, I am struck again by the gift it is to belong to the body of Christ, united not by geography or circumstance, but by Jesus himself. That truth sits at the heart of all we do at Torch.

It is with that in mind that I am especially glad to share this refreshed edition of Torch News with you. It is one small way of celebrating the life we share together in Christ and giving you a glimpse of how God is at work through so many different hands and hearts.

In this issue, we reflect on our recent trip to Malawi, step behind the scenes in the eShop, hear stories from holidays, and celebrate the faithful, often unseen, service of our volunteers. You will also find the regular dates for your diary, along with a glimpse into the work of *Reflections*.

More than anything, our hope in refreshing Torch News is that it helps draw us closer together. What God is doing through Torch is not the work of a few, but the

fruit of a shared partnership – staff, volunteers, supporters, churches, and

friends all playing their part. We are deeply thankful for you, and for the way God continues to weave our lives together in this ministry.

We would love this to continue to be shaped together. If there is anything you would value seeing in future editions, please do get in touch by emailing [info@torchtrust.org](mailto:info@torchtrust.org).

I hope as you read, you might find a quiet moment with a cuppa, perhaps in the sunshine, to pause and reflect on God’s goodness to us (it is the summer edition after all!)

Thank you for your partnership. I often find myself echoing Paul’s words: “I thank my God every time I remember you...” (Philippians 1:3). It is a gift to share in this work with you.

**Sarah Dawkins** CEO



Sarah Dawkins





Each week *Reflections* reaches listeners across the UK and beyond with a simple aim: to explore faith and disability in a way that is thoughtful, accessible, and real. Broadcast on RNIB Connect Radio, Radio Maria England, and partner stations in New Zealand, the programme has become a quiet companion for many – including those who may never set foot in a church, but who are open to hearing about hope.

Linn Davies

# Behind the scenes of *Reflections*

Linn Davies, Torch's Content Creator, shares a look at how our popular radio show gets made...



At its heart, *Reflections* is about making space for people to be heard – and reminding listeners that they are not alone.

But what does it take to create a programme like *Reflections*?

The process often begins with people. When planning each episode, I look for voices that will resonate with our audience. Sometimes that comes through personal connections or recommendations from colleagues; other times it's shaped by what's happening in the wider media or within Torch itself. Guests might be authors, ministers, campaigners, or simply individuals with a story to tell. What matters most is that their experiences resonate with our listeners, whether that is through the experience itself, disability, or faith.

Once an interview is arranged, preparation can vary. I always offer to share questions in advance, as I want

contributors to feel comfortable, but my background in journalism also means I often take a more conversational approach. Some of the most powerful moments happen when people are given space to reflect

naturally, rather than following a strict script.

Not every programme centres on an interview. At times, *Reflections* follows the rhythm of the Christian calendar. For example, for St John the Baptist's Day, I created a programme

based on Scripture readings alongside imaginative reflections written from the perspective of John and his mother, Elizabeth. Other programmes might include sermons or reflections written by ordained colleagues or external contributors, particularly around key moments such as Ascension or Pentecost. This variety helps keep the programme fresh while remaining rooted in faith.

“  
...the programme  
has become  
a quiet companion  
for many

”

Once the content is gathered, the editing process begins. Interviews are carefully shaped to fit the programme, while still preserving the integrity of each person's story. Additional reflections are recorded or edited as needed, depending on how they have been submitted. From there, the different elements begin to come together – music is selected, scriptures are woven in, and the overall structure is carefully timed to fit the broadcast slot.

The next stage is scriptwriting. I prepare the presenter's script and send it to Marilyn Baker, whose warm and familiar voice is central to the programme. Wherever possible, I also share the audio and music with her in advance so she can listen and respond naturally as she records. This helps the programme feel connected and cohesive, rather than pieced together.

Finally, everything is assembled. Using audio editing software, I bring together the voice links, interviews, music, and reflections into a seamless whole. This involves careful attention to detail – trimming pauses, balancing sound levels, and ensuring the programme runs exactly to time. The finished episode is then exported and prepared for broadcast and podcast distribution.

While there are many technical

steps involved, at its heart *Reflections* is about connection. Each programme is shaped not only by those who contribute their stories, but also

by those who listen. Many of our audience members are living with sight loss and may feel isolated from church or community. For some, *Reflections* is a weekly reminder that they are not alone – that their experiences matter, and that faith can still speak meaningfully into their lives.

Your support makes this possible. From the production of each episode to its distribution across multiple platforms, *Reflections* continues to reach people who might otherwise feel unseen or unheard. It is a small programme with a wide impact – offering encouragement, companionship, and hope, one story at a time.



“  
It is a small  
programme with  
a wide impact.”



## PRAYER POINTS

- Give thanks for all the guests who are willing to share their stories on *Reflections*.
- Give thanks for the hard work of Marilyn and Linn as they create our show every week.

# Running for good!

Last issue, we reported on the amazing physical feat being undertaken by two Torch supporters: to run the Bath Half Marathon! Well, we'd like to say a huge congratulations to Becky Leithall and Lydia West for completing the race and an enormous thank you to the pair for raising funds for Torch.



Becky Leithall  
and Lydia West

We asked Becky how she felt, looking back at the experience: “Over a month on, I am still buzzing from crossing the finish line of the Bath Half Marathon. The journey in the lead-up to the event was fantastic – challenging myself to keep adding miles to my long runs, and learning to rest when old sports injuries crept back. It was an honour to run for Torch with the logo on my vest, and a massive thank you to everyone who supported us – through prayers, sharing information about the fantastic work Torch does, and of course for sponsoring us. It truly means a lot.”

Becky also shared one of her favourite parts of the event: “One of the most special moments was standing in the starting pen chatting with another runner about the work of our chosen charities, and sharing that the CEO of my charity was there supporting me too.”

As Becky says, our CEO Sarah Dawkins was there cheering the pair on and we asked her what that was like: “It was such a delight to have not one but two friends sign up to run and support Torch. Both of them first came into contact with Torch through me, so it was incredibly encouraging to see friends from my own circle willing to get behind the work in this way. They both ran brilliantly, and it was a joy to watch them take part so well. It

was also wonderful to see their friends and family rally around them and raise just over £2,000 for Torch.”

All of the support we receive, whether from those new to Torch or long-time supporters, means so much to us and helps us keep sharing

God’s love with blind and partially sighted people UK-wide. As Sarah says: “Friends, taking part in a great event, supporting a great cause that serves a great God. What a Sunday. Thank you to all who gave to support them. I know they were both greatly encouraged by it.”

“  
**Friends, taking part  
in a great event,  
supporting a great  
cause that serves  
a great God.**  
”



## PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for all who support Torch’s work in whatever way they are able.
- Pray for more people to discover our work and feel called to get involved.

# Open the door to a **Torch Holiday**

For many blind and partially sighted people, a Torch Together holiday is far more than a break away. It is a chance to rest, build friendships, grow in faith and enjoy time in a welcoming Christian community. For some guests, it is the only holiday they are able to take all year.

That is why the Torch Bursary Fund is so important.

Launched in 2023, the fund has already supported 11 people to attend a Torch Together holiday who otherwise would not have been able to come, and we hope to support another 5 people this year. Guests applying for a bursary pay a small deposit and can then apply for support towards the remaining holiday cost. They may also apply for help with travel expenses, removing another barrier that can make holidays inaccessible.

Torch Together holidays are rooted in Christian fellowship, encouragement and care. Again and again, guests tell us how much these breaks mean to them.

One guest shared: "For me all the Torch holidays are a wonderful opportunity to recharge my spiritual batteries, relax, and be with like-minded Christian people. I was very impressed





with the volunteers; as soon as we walked into the dining room for a meal someone would jump up, leave their food and help us... very selfless and inspiring behaviour.”

Another guest said: “It was another wonderful holiday! We enjoyed time with clients, staff and volunteers. Everyone went out of their way to care for each other.”

And another simply described it as: “It was such a lovely happy relaxed atmosphere. Everyone was friendly.”

The Bursary Fund also supports the volunteers who make these holidays possible. Volunteers are usually asked to pay half the holiday cost themselves, but not everyone can afford that. With help from the fund, dedicated volunteers can continue serving guests with compassion and practical support.

Every gift to the Bursary Fund helps more blind and partially sighted people experience friendship, faith, rest and renewal on a Torch holiday. It also ensures volunteers can keep giving their time and care.

## PRAYER POINTS



- Pray for the Bursary Fund to continue and grow so that more people can benefit.
- Give thanks for all the volunteers and staff who make Torch Together holidays possible.

# The people who make it possible: a trip to Torch Malawi



Our partnership with Torch Malawi is one of our longest-standing and most valued relationships, reaching back over the years with a shared desire to support the blind and partially sighted people of Malawi. That's why, this year, three of our leaders travelled there to spend time with the people of Torch Malawi. **CEO Sarah Dawkins is here to share all about this important trip...**



Sarah Dawkins  
and Rose Chaponda,  
Torch Malawi Trustee

Back in April, Torch Chair of Trustees Tony Brown, Paul Wood (Head of Technical Services) and I travelled to Torch Malawi in Blantyre. The main aim of the trip was to work with the staff and trustees and consolidate progress made on our previous trip two years ago. We were delighted to see the houses on the compound, with tenants bringing in regular rent to help support the work of Torch Malawi.

We spent time with the trustees working through governance together, and also began to think through some very practical ideas around livelihoods for blind and partially sighted people, such as bee keeping, maize farming and basket-making. At one point Tony and I had a go at taking maize off the cob, which I can confirm is harder than it looks!

We also visited a joint fellowship group meeting and were warmly welcomed with a song as we entered.



Tony and Sarah stripping Maize

It was great to meet some of the people who have benefitted from the work of Torch Malawi and hear their stories. Most memorable was the ask they made of us: for each person to have their own braille Bible. The desire and need for God's Word was a powerful reminder of why we do what we do.

Similarly, we had a great opportunity to meet with the Bible Society of Malawi. We talked together about how



Torch Staff and Trustees At Malawi Bible Society

Scripture can be made accessible to everyone, including blind and partially sighted people. It was also good to hear about their work making Bible stories available in sign language. It's a painstaking process, but is helping all people access God's word!

The theme of the centrality and importance of God's Word continued in the church we visited on the Sunday. Tony was able to share about the work of Torch Malawi and encourage the church to be involved in the mission. We also had the great joy of seeing children, some as young as three, stand up and confidently recite Bible verses they'd learned that week. It made me reflect on how much of God's word I have actually 'stored up' in my own heart like we're told that Mary did when she was first told of who Jesus was!

What has stayed with me is that at Torch, we're not really about projects.



Lazarus, Blessings and Simon

“  
**The desire and need for God's Word was a powerful reminder of why we do what we do.**  
 ”

We're about people: people accessing Scripture, people being included, people being able to receive and engage with God's Word in ways that work for them.

I've come back from Malawi reminded again of that, and grateful for the people who make that possible, both here and there, together.

Torch Malawi trustee meeting



## PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks that this time of connection was possible, and that it was fruitful for all involved.
- Pray that the blind and partially sighted people of Malawi may experience God's love, and receive all they need, both materially and spiritually, to thrive.

# Pressing on toward

## Improvements to our Christian literature eShop

We're very pleased to say that Janette Sturgis, our Resource Curator, has been hard at work making some wonderful improvements to our online eShop. Janette shares all below:

Client Services received a phone call the other day saying that: "the Christian Living section on the eShop has far too many books to wade through, we can't find what we are wanting."

You may be surprised to know that phone call cheered my heart!

Why? Because it confirmed my own feelings about the eShop and validated my beavering away in the background to address it. As with all systems, unless you keep on top of them, the eShop has suffered from a lack of coordinated attention. Christian Living became the default place to put most things!

Not any more.

With this section and the others, I am working to provide subcategories that will narrow down the search. So, for example, Daily Readings, Reflections and Poetry are now divided

into: 365 readings; Daily Readings (other specified periods such as 40 days); Reflections and Poetry.

The other helpful change is that when you select the main heading from the left-hand menu and go to the page, these subheadings appear at the top of the page so you don't have to navigate back to the main menu.

In addition to this, new main category headings have also been produced such as Advent & Christmas; Lent & Easter, which have made our Spirituality & Devotional section more manageable. And who knew we had children's books? They have now been pulled out of obscurity and given their own category heading.

This is still a work in progress! The number of books in Christian Living has gone down from 310 titles to 192 with the books being found homes in

“  
**You may be surprised  
 to know that phone  
 call cheered  
 my heart!**  
 ”

# the goal

more appropriate sections. The subcategories I am still pondering. One will be Discipleship, please pray I have the inspiration for the rest, and do keep returning to the eShop to see how it has progressed.

So, was it a negative comment from a client? No, constructive criticism that spurs us on to improve.



If you, or someone you know, would benefit from easy online access to a host of Christian literature and resources in formats such as braille, large print and audio, please do explore our eShop at [eshop.torchtrust.org.uk](http://eshop.torchtrust.org.uk) or contact Client Services if you are a new user and would like to set up an account.

## PRAYER POINTS



- Give thanks for Janette's hard work, ensuring our clients can access an eShop that truly works for them.
- Pray for more people to discover our eShop and be able to make use of the wealth of accessible Christian resources available.
- Pray for Janette's continued efforts to make sure we have a useable, effective catalogue of our eShop resources.

SCAN HERE



## Dates for your diary!

We have lots of exciting things happening throughout the rest of the year and we would really appreciate your prayer support for the below events:

### **Torch House Coffee Mornings**

16th July, 20th August, 17th September

If you would like to attend a coffee morning at Torch House, please contact Client Services for further details.

### **Zoom Coffee Mornings**

23rd July, 27th August, 24th September

If you'd like join in with one of our Zoom coffee mornings, please contact Client Services for the link.

### **Torch Together Holidays**

20th-24th July, 7th-11th September

### **Torch Exhibiting:**

#### **Keswick Conference**

1st-7th July

#### **Sight Village Central**

7th-8th July

#### **Big Church Festival**

27th-30th August

### **Prayer and Thanksgiving Service**

30th September

This will be a wonderful day of worship, praise and fellowship and we would love to meet you there! We'll be sharing the full details for this event nearer the time.

