



SCOTTISH CHURCHES DISABILITY GROUP NEWSLETTER

March 2019



In March signs of spring are all around us. We have emerged from winter and ahead of us lie the delights of longer daylight and the warmth of the sun on our brows.

Our journey through Lent reminds us how storm clouds gathered over Jesus' head, but we know that after the agony of the Cross came the joy of Easter Resurrection. Let us take courage from the Gospel story when our journey through life is tough. We follow a risen Saviour, who has promised us the brightest future with Him.

A message from our Chairman, Rev. Dan Harper

At this point last year we were covered in snow, but this year we have lived through a strangely warm period for the depths of winter - a winter which saw one of our meetings cancelled at the last minute, which is frustrating, and much discussion following that about how we can move forward. Moving forward involves asking important questions.

- Are we fulfilling our goals and desires?
- How best can the needs of those with disabilities be met by churches locally and nationally?

These questions have been asked as long as the SCDG has been around and longer. They are always important to ask, as we all want better accessibility and full inclusion for those with any additional needs into the life and work of the Church.

In the near future, we will have made progress on re-scheduling our cancelled meeting. But whilst we wait for that, and consider the unusual weather we have had for the season, we must remember that this weather is not normal.

Predicting the weather, the day-to-day sunshine and showers, is a challenging task that trained meteorologists work very hard at and still occasionally get spectacularly wrong. They have good days and bad days - sunny days and rainy days.



Dan Harper

We all have good days and bad days, rainy days and sunny days - days when we want to sing from the heights and days when we want to hide in the depths. We have these days as individuals, but we also have them as groups working together and as the church as a whole. This is what life is like, the good and the bad mixing together, we know this from lived experience. I am reassured to know that God knows this too.

As we read the Psalms, but also the rest of the Bible, we find examples of delight and frustration. The moments of celebration where God joins in the party, like the wedding at Cana in John 2, and the moments of despair where God joins us in the mire, as told in the 23rd Psalm.

A life of faith is a life of knowing that God is with us in the ups and downs, and that is a wonderful thing. However, we all know that at some point for us, or for someone we know and love, the ups and downs of life might have more down than up. When this happens, it can become clear that this trajectory is beyond what we might expect and there is something more going on, and that may require support from medical professionals. A life of faith does not preclude us from mental health problems, but as with any other health issue, we are reminded that God is with us as we suffer and is present in the care and medical support we can get.

If you, or anyone you know, is struggling with mental health, I encourage you to seek the help that is needed. And if you are getting help, then know that you have done a great thing in seeking help and that God loves you and is with you in your situation.

Please remember that it is OK to be not OK.

If you need help, please contact your GP or Breathing Space, a NHS Scotland confidential phone line for anyone feeling low, anxious or depressed on 0800 83 85 87.

God bless,
Dan

News from around Scotland

Edinburgh & Lothians Roofbreakers Network



Claire Wilson reports on the Enabling Church Course, at Life Church, West Richmond Street, Edinburgh EH8 9EB, from 7 to 9 p.m. on Thursdays, 21 and 28 March and 4 and 11 April. To join the course, contact enablingchurch2@gmail.com.

“A planning group from several Edinburgh churches organised the Enabling Church Course. We adapted the course to involve local speakers and create opportunities to show what we mean about making church more inclusive. We started with six people with various disabilities and were gradually joined by another nine people, from the host church or elsewhere. With the planning group and a few others we were 19 in all, as well receiving five apologies for week 1.

It felt like a good atmosphere. Frenchie gave a wonderful speil in the role of a police person, and Lorraine described how a friend in Square Wholes / Prospects had responded to her call for company at a recent trip to Accident and Emergency – from 10p.m. - 2 a.m! That showed the difference it can make when someone with a disability belongs to a faith community.

We are grateful for the support of Community Church and Life Church in hosting the course and to those wonderful people who know about the technical aspects of audio-visuals and sound. We'll be able to write more about the course for the next newsletter and report on it at our next Roofbreaker Network meeting on Tuesday 11 June 1 - 4p.m. at St John's Church, Princes St, Edinburgh. Meanwhile, thank you for your prayers as the course unfolds through Lent.”

Dementia conference

The Presbytery of Stirling and the Church and Society Council presents “**Being Together and Learning Together**” on **Friday 22nd March** at Allan Park Church South, Stirling FK8 SLQ. Explore opportunities for dementia friendly developments in your area through speakers, workshops and discussion. The event is free, but bring a packed lunch.

To book a place contact B McDowell. Tel. 07704-601983
bmcdowell@churchofscotland.org.uk

Prospects Across Scotland

Prospects Across Scotland is the new name of a well loved charity which supports people with learning disabilities. Its new web-site is now up and running at www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk.



There are plans to run Makaton taster sessions to help more people to have a basic understanding of Makaton and be better able to communicate with people with learning disabilities who use this communication method. If you are interested in attending a taster session, please contact Ivy Blair, whose details are given below.

Ivy can also tell you about other events:

- **Skills Development Day on Saturday 6th April** 10.30 – 2.30 at a venue to be decided. This is an informal training day for those running groups for people with learning disabilities in their church as well as those just starting to think about it.
- **Prospects Holiday Weekend 10 – 12th May** at Tulliallan Police College, Kincardine. The theme this year is **God loves you just the way you are.**



- **Learning Disability Week 13-19th May.** In this week there is a focus on learning disability in the media and an opportunity to highlight the gifts of people with learning disabilities. The week is co-ordinated by the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability. This year's theme is **Community**. For more information see www.sclld.org.uk/learning-disability-week-201.

Perhaps you or your church could hold a Communi -Tea party or another special event during that week. Ivy can give you ideas for using in Sunday services during that week.

Contact Ivy at tel. 07827 939 520 or ivy.blair@prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk .

Heart & Soul

Heart and Soul is the Church of Scotland's annual celebration of all that is happening in churches around Scotland. This year's event will take place in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh on the afternoon of Sunday, 19 May. SCDG hopes to be able to share a stand with Prospects Across Scotland. Come and visit us!

SCDG members at Heart & Soul 2018



Useful resources

Church of Scotland Learning Disabilities Online Content

The Church of Scotland website has resources on support for people with learning disabilities, including a discussion starter and a video to promote ways of including people of all abilities in worship and church life. You can see these at https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/connect/learning_disabilities .

The events page has handouts from conferences, with leaders' notes from Next Steps. You can subscribe to quarterly newsletters by contacting learn@churchofscotland.org.uk .

Online ministry

For many people, opportunities to join in traditional worship are restricted by age, location or infirmity. SCDG aims to make worship accessible to all, partly by using technology such as the internet. The work of a sub-group of SCDG has helped address challenges to joining in worship and make it accessible to all. Helpful papers, articles and links can be found on the SCDG website.

Some congregations use the internet to allow all to join in worship online. Often this is a live option on a Sunday morning. For many who cannot join a live service, can catch up later, at a time that suits, on You Tube. Online specialists such as **Sanctus First** offer scope for sharing in a purely online congregation.

Through their online services, some congregations, such as Dalziel St Andrew's Parish Church (DStA) in Motherwell and Claremont Parish Church in East Kilbride, have been making worship available to all, including the deaf community through BSL Signers and Electronic Notetakers. These services are for anyone attending these churches and are widely available via the internet.

Recent analysis of statistics for Dalziel St Andrew's Parish Church show that, of the 250/300 weekly average online "viewers", around 40 come from the deaf community, with this figure continuing to grow.

Workshops for those interested in Signing for the Deaf in worship (online or in a traditional service) are held twice yearly at DStA with a representative from Claremont Parish Church assisting.

Susan Sinclair, Deaf Development Worker for the Church of Scotland, is now facilitating these workshops, which are free of charge on Saturdays at DStA in Motherwell. Rev Richard Durno, Minister for the Deaf in the West of Scotland, is a great supporter and regular contributor at the workshops.



If you are interested in attending these workshops, please contact **Alex Baird**, who will ensure that you receive an invitation to the autumn event.

Tel. 01698 262915 or 07903051970. E-mail a.baird00912@btinternet.com.
www.dalzielstandrews.org.uk for online services.

Support for dyslexia

A guide to supporting people with dementia in the local church

- Offers practical advice on everything from the moment you suspect a church friend may have dementia, through a confirmed diagnosis and caring for the person and those caring for them during their illness.
- Produced by the Dementia Services Development Trust.
- Free to download at <https://dementiatrust.org.uk/programmes/faith-and-dementia>

A book about people with dementia and the local church

- 'In a Strange Land' by Malcolm Goldsmith.
- A guide and encouragement for ministry
- Published by 4M Publications.
- ISBN 0 9530494 6 9.



Have you seen our website - <http://scdg.org.uk/>? We welcome feedback so that we can improve it. Please encourage your friends to visit the website, which is being developed not only for people with disabilities, but also for churches which want to be more inclusive.

How to contact us

If you want to bring something to the Committee's attention, please contact the Secretary, Scott Gillies, at secretary@scdg.org.uk.
Tel.0131-669-3301 or 07584-139587.

If you want to advertise events or invite people to join you for a chat, please send your news to the Newsletter Editor, Barbara Graham: newslettereditor@scdg.org.uk or 42, Annanhill Avenue, Kilmarnock, KA1 2LQ. Tel. 01563-522108

Making Church Accessible to All

Including disabled people
in church life



Scottish Churches Disability Group
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