



**SCOTTISH CHURCHES
DISABILITY GROUP
NEWSLETTER
June 2020**



Message from David Nicholson DCS, SCDG Chairman

To all my friends in the Scottish Churches Disability Group.

I am writing to you on Pentecost Sunday – the Church’s birthday. I wonder how it feels to be 2020 years old or thereabout and having to do things very differently and think outside the traditional box. Today, during our online worship, we celebrated a virtual Communion with each of us providing our own bread and water or whatever we could find. For most of the congregation this was the first time taking part in such an event, but I had had this experience in the 1980s as part of a BBC World Service broadcast. For me today was a very moving experience.

Thursday 21 May dawned Ascension Day. Those of us in the Kirk don’t take this on board as much as some other denominations. I listened to the radio 4 broadcast that evening, led by the Rev Dr Sam Wells from St Martin in the Fields. Many people shared in the service, not least two friends of mine, David and Yvonne Lyon, Christian musicians and song writers who operate from their Greenock home. If you have a computer and can access BBC Sounds, I recommend a listen. I think it will be available until about 20 June.

During the service the second chapter of the Second Book of Kings was read. It was very appropriate during Lockdown. Many of us have lost much, as indeed had Elisha. Reading the story, clearly there was a very close and beautiful relationship between Elijah and Elisha. Clearly, God has much for Elisha to do, as in Pentecost he had for his disciples all these years later. So, let me ask you and myself, even in lockdown does He have much for each of us to do? From my own congregation’s point of view we have lost two members to Covid-19. Both of them were much loved members who will be missed by their families and friends and by all of us.

However, it is not all doom and gloom. I have made contact with a number of friends who I always planned to phone, but never quite got round to it.

So far as I am concerned, I am still waiting for an out-patient appointment at the clinic at Wishaw General. Unfortunately, the fractured femur is not healing, so I am anxious to know what forward plans my consultant has.

I close with my best wishes and prayers to you all. Together and yet miles apart, let’s keep one another in our prayers. Blessings to you all from David.

Disability Safety Hub

Disability Equality Scotland's [Disability Safety Hub](#) gives information on how to stay calm and safe during the Covid-19 pandemic. An illustrated [Easy Read version of the guide](#) is available on their website. Here is a summary of this advice.

1. Seek accurate information from legitimate sources:

Read information from official sources like the World Health Organisation (WHO), the European Commission or reliable national sources (for example, the BBC). Credible sources of information avoid the fear caused by misinformation.

2. Set limits around reading news:

Constantly checking news updates and social media about COVID-19 increases worry. Take a break! Use facts to take practical steps to protect yourself and family.

3. Look after yourself:

Focus on actions over which you have control, such as good hygiene, instead of those you cannot control. Where possible, continue your daily routine and normal activities: eating healthy meals, getting enough sleep, doing things that you enjoy. Activities, like taking a walk, meditating or exercising, can help you to relax and have a positive impact on your thoughts and feelings. The Mental Health Foundation recommends seeing it as an opportunity with benefits, like catching up on sleep.

4. Think positive:

Focus on positive things in your life. Be encouraged by positive stories and images of local people who have had coronavirus and have recovered or who have supported a loved one through recovery and are willing to share their experience.

5. Ask for community or professional support:

Follow protection and prevention advice by qualified health professionals. If necessary, seek support from a professional counsellor. Peer support is usually organised on a local or national basis. Start your search with those in your local area so that you can talk with someone who knows what is available. Using terms such as 'peer support for mental ill health' or 'mental health service organisations' and your area in your internet search engine (e.g. Google) may help.

SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) has launched a [Community Assistance Directory](#) for people in Scotland to find and offer help in their local area. Select the type of support required and search by postcode for relevant services.

There are also free phone lines to call for advice, or just to have a chat:

- **Breathing Space** at <https://breathingspace.scot/> or call **0800 83 85 87**.
A confidential helpline for people to call when they are feeling down or distressed.
- **Samaritans** Call **116 123** or email jo@samaritans.org.
Talk things over in confidence with an experienced listener or send an email.

- **Age Scotland** at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/> or call **0800 12 44 222**.
A free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families.
Their team provide information, friendship and advice.

Mental health charity Mind's web page (<https://www.mind.org.uk/>) has help for staying indoors and promoting mental wellbeing. This advises on healthy behaviour when reading news, keeping the mind stimulated and staying connected with people.

Positive mental health in the great outdoors

During Mental Health Awareness Week, Rt Rev. Martin Fair, Moderator of the Church of Scotland, broadcast a short video, offering hope for people who feel overwhelmed by damaged mental health. This can be seen on the [Church of Scotland's website](#).



Coping with the lock down

The pandemic lock down is particularly hard for people with learning disabilities, brain injury or other mental health conditions which make it difficult for them to understand why their normal routine is suspended. This is even harder if they are in residential care and cannot have the usual visits from their families.

Kate Sainsbury and her son, Louis, are in that situation. Kate explains how she has helped Louis to be less anxious until they can be reunited.

“We were able to supply Louis with an iPad, mobile wifi unit and broadband connection, so we can FaceTime every day. We warm up by chatting about the food he is looking forward to before moving on to the serious thing on Louis' mind – when is Mum going to come and see him? So I feed back to him, ‘You're feeling a bit fed up, Louis’ – and he smiles because I have understood what he is saying.

“We've been using a simple guide by a disability group, but Louis is still straining to understand why he is not allowed to go out. He needs to feel that an actual person, like Mum or Dad, is telling him he can't do something. As he hears the news on the TV, I told him, ‘Boris Johnson says you can't go out'. He repeated the name. So now we know that it is Boris Johnson who says he can't go home.”

Kate is full of praise for the staff at Carseview Learning Disability Unit in Dundee, but she thinks that mental health and learning disability nurses are often overlooked. To show her appreciation of their efforts to console as well as care for their residents, Kate organised a team of people in Crieff to make washbags for the Carseview staff. This is just one example of the goodwill for medical and care staff around the country.



Louis and Kate Sainsbury

Kate says, “I feel sure that out of this lock down there will be silver linings – lots of future laughter and ways of integrating sons and daughters with complex disabilities, like Louis, into our caring communities.”

[Thanks to the Strathearn Herald for extracts from this article, published on 21.5.2020.]

Everyone has a story

[Digital Stories](#) is a collection of short videos made by people who want to share their life experiences. In one of these, Florence’s Story, a lady from Bowness speaks about what her church has meant to her since moving to a new area. You can see this at <https://vimeo.com/358796864>.

If you would like to make a video about your experience of a church which is good at including people with disabilities, you can find out more about this project at <http://digital-stories.scot/about/> .

Sign Supported English

Isobel Bracewell from Aberdeen explains how Sign Supported English aids people who are hard of hearing, but who do not know British Sign Language (BSL).

“Few people who become deaf in mid-life or later life learn British Sign Language. Sign Supported English (SSE) is mostly used by deafened or deaf people who rely on lip-reading, the English language, signs, facial expressions and body language to aid communication. Sadly, this is rarely taught in Scotland to-day.

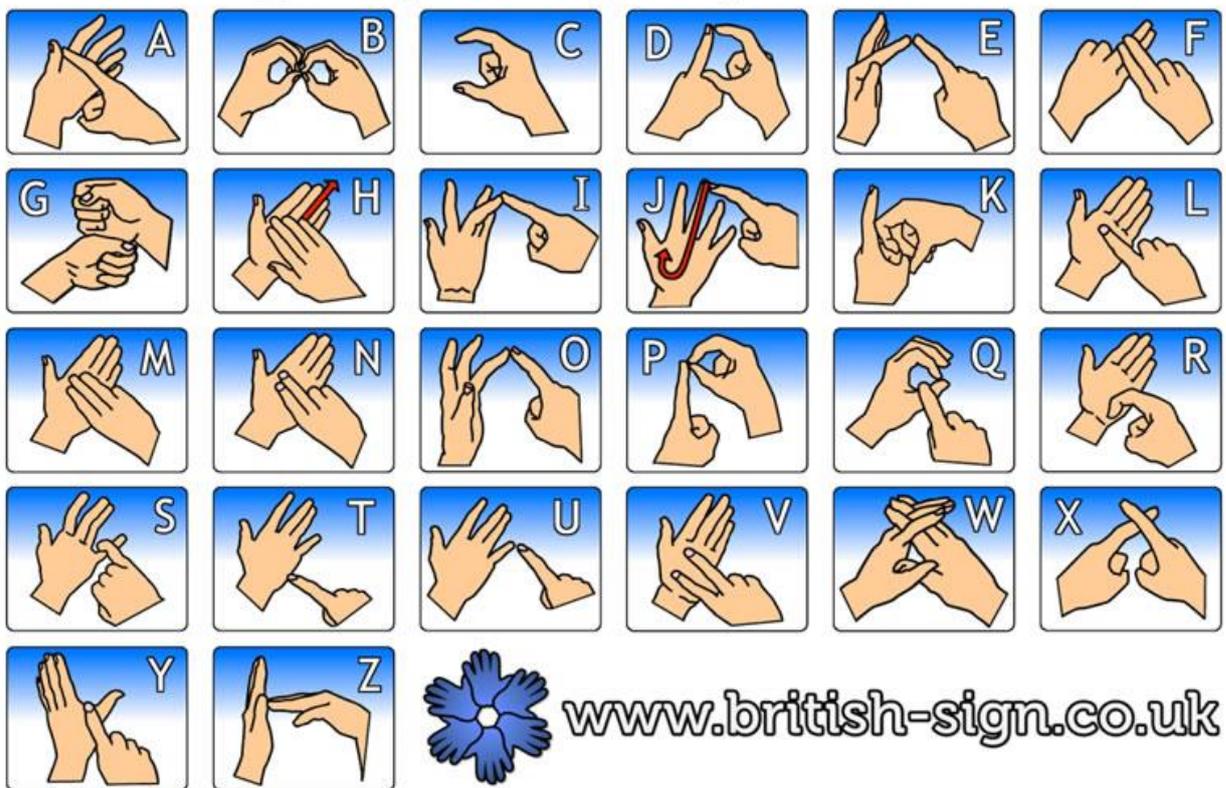
“**SSE and BSL** are not the same thing! BSL has its own grammar, structure, its own idiom and phrases that are unique to BSL and are quite different from the English language. BSL doesn’t follow English grammar, but uses BSL grammar and ‘signing space’ to convey time, tense, direction and many other linguistic features. Learning BSL

is equivalent to learning another language, whereas SSE follows normal English language. As the grammar is so different, a SSE user and a BSL user may be unable to understand each other, even though both use the same signs.

“Finger spelling Remember, not all deaf people sign. One sure way to communicate with deaf people is by finger spelling of each letter. It would help if everybody knew this alphabet which is useful and important. Queen Victoria and Queen Alexandra were accomplished finger-spellers. Queen Alexandra often attended the first deaf church in the UK, St Saviour’s in London, which was built in 1873. She enjoyed the company of other deaf people and was able to follow the services.

“BSL was only recognised by the Government as an official language in 2003. Sadly, SSE, a vital communication for many, is now being forgotten about, with few teachers able to help a large number of our population who struggle to communicate.”

BSL Fingerspelling Alphabet



A Makaton blessing



Makaton is a language programme that uses signs and symbols to help people who cannot communicate through speech. Makaton signs are similar to British Sign Language signs (BSL), but Makaton is always used together with speech.

Makaton was developed in the 1970s by Margaret Walker MBE, Kathy Johnston and Tony Cornforth, speech and language therapists at the Royal Association for Deaf People. The term "Makaton" combines the first syllables of their names. This sign language has been adapted for use in over 40 countries, including Poland, Australia, Greece and Japan.

Over 100,000 children and adults in the UK use Makaton symbols. Most people start using Makaton as children, then stop using the signs and symbols as they no longer need them, but some people need to use Makaton for their whole lives.

Makaton signer, Becky George, has a YouTube channel on which there is a beautiful Makaton blessing, which can be used in inclusive church services or other settings. This can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=va048-XxFTI>.

Disability groups find ways to connect

With no face to face gatherings for a while, organisations for people with disabilities are finding other ways to keep in touch with their members.

Through the Roof events for Roofbreakers



Through the Roof launched a national online worship event via Zoom technology at the end of May. Three more remote meetings for Roofbreakers will be held on 20 June, 4 July and 12 September. At the June event Fiona Gosden, national Roofbreakers Co-ordinator, will speak about Disabled People's Insights.

Only registered Roofbreakers can attend. To join the next meeting, send an e-mail to Janet Eardley at janet@throughtheroof.org to receive a Zoom link to the event.

Poetry Corner

A poem by a SCDG member reminds us that, even in anxious times, we can stay calm when we remember that Jesus is always at our side.

Jesus at the bus stop

Is it early or late?
I stand and wait
Without a clue
In the growing queue.

I miss it by seconds:
A long walk beckons.
Its rear disappears,
I fight back the tears.

Once *it* broke down,
I shivered in town,
Trying to stay calm
Humming a psalm.

But You are always with me,
Always by my side
A constant gentle presence,
A listener and a guide.

You never pull away,
Never delay,
Always keep me steady,
Your love always ready.

You died to save us,
Totally forgave us
And now you're here with me,
Waiting for the 3.

Book Shelf

Hilary Rae highly recommends **The Inner Voice of Love** by Roman Catholic priest, Henri Nouwen. This book originated as Henri's secret journal at a time in his life when *"he suddenly lost his self-esteem, his energy to live and work, his sense of being loved, even his hope in God"*. The following quotations from this book show how insights which he gained during this difficult time can inspire people who struggle with similar feelings in their own lives.

"When suddenly you seem to lose all you thought you had gained, do not despair. You must expect setbacks and regressions. Don't say to yourself 'All is lost. I have to start all over again.' This is not true. What you have gained you have gained....When you return to the road, you return to the place where you left it, not to where you started."

"There is within you a lamb and a lion. Spiritual maturity is the ability to let lamb and lion lie down together."

"Stay home and trust that your life will be fruitful even when hidden."

"Remember, you are held safe. You are loved. You are protected. You are in communion with God and with those whom God has sent you. What is of God will last. It belongs to the eternal life. Choose it, and it will be yours."

“Your true identity is as a child of God. This is the identity you have to accept. Once you have claimed it and settled in it, you can live in a world that gives you much joy as well as pain. You can receive the praise as well as the blame that comes to you as an opportunity for strengthening your basic identity, because the identity that makes you free is anchored beyond all human praise and blame. You belong to God, and it is as a child of God that you are sent into the world.”

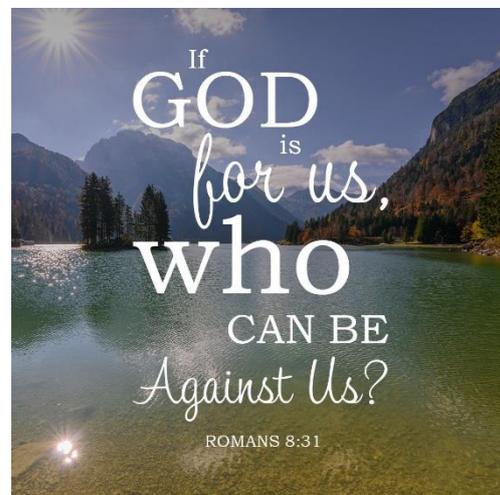
Hymns for the time we are living in

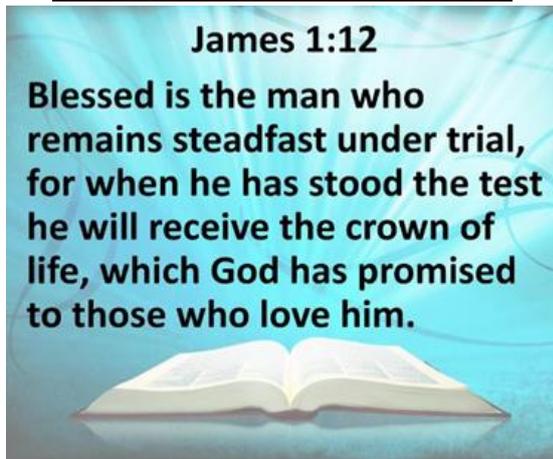
Sandra McCallum from Troon has been matching up life under lock down with some apt lines from hymns:

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|----------------------------------|--|
| Face coverings | Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes. |
| Self - isolating | In Christ alone my hope is found. |
| Statutory daily walk | One more step along the world I go. |
| Avoiding public transport | When you walk with the Lord. |
| Alternative to social distancing | Nearer, my God, to Thee. |
| Shopping less often | When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father’s full giving is only begun. |

What can you add to this list? It could make a good quiz!

Bible verses – a treasure for all times

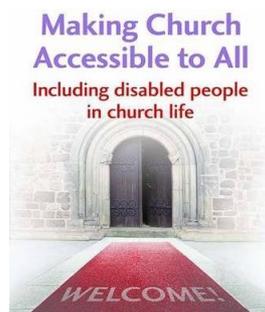




How to contact SCDG

If you want to bring something to the Committee's attention, please contact the Secretary, Scott Gillies, at secretary@scdg.org.uk.
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