

SCOTTISH CHURCHES DISABILITY GROUP NEWSLETTER

November 2020



Message from Paul Goode, SCDG Vice-Chairman

How are you all and how have you coped with restrictions over the last 7 months? In these unprecedented times church buildings have been closed and we have not been able to worship together in the way we have enjoyed in the past. So many vulnerable people have found themselves not able to go out, not able to see their family and friends. Many feel very lonely and isolated. All very depressing to read.

However, in many parts of Scotland communities and families have worked tirelessly to ensure that their family, friends and people in their communities are looked after. It may be by people phoning to ask, "How are you?", and taking time to listen, or to do some shopping. I believe there is a lot of "Love" about. As days become shorter and nights draw in, let's all be kind to each other and help where we can. SCDG is all about trying to include everyone in worship and value each and every one of us.

When in early March my wife and I realised that our 24-year-old severely disabled son would be vulnerable to COVID, we stopped all outside activities and self-isolated him weeks before the Scottish Government imposed restrictions. We realised that our son would lose the enjoyment and fulfilment of being in Church to worship God.

We decided to do a service around our piano at home at the same time as our church, 10.15 am, on Sundays. We have two hymns and as we are in our home we can sing, a reading from the lectionary, prayers written and delivered by my wife and a reflection by myself. The service runs for 30 minutes. We initially produced it for ourselves, but quickly decided to share it with our friends over the internet via Facebook. We have now broadcast every Sunday for 32 weeks and in Holy Week I broadcast an evening reflection each night and one on Ascension Day. We have a regular following of around 150 people from all over the country and some from further afield like New Zealand and India.

My son is now a full member of the Church of Scotland and often helps with the prayers pressing his switch to hear a line in the prayers.



If you would like to see the service, you can go to my Facebook page, Paul Goode, and view the service any time. If you send me a friend request, you will be sent a message to say we are live. If you are not on Facebook, just email me and I will send you the service. pgoode@btinternet.com

We plan to keep going, even if our church re-opens meantime, as we don't feel it is safe yet for our son to be in groups of people. Who knows when it will be?

Some say "*the Lord moves in strange ways, his wonders to perform*". Well, we do think that's true. When I was refused training as an ordained Minister by the Church of Scotland, it was a gigantic, hurtful blow. My wife has always said, "*Just wait and see. I am sure God has another plan for you.*" Before lockdown I trained to lead worship within our Presbytery. I took the service at our local Earlston Church many times, and now we are leading worship at home, with a new "virtual" congregation.

My wish for SCDG is that we can bring more people who have disabilities to God and to be fully accepted into the Church. The "Virtual Church" is one way to reach out to all, but SCDG will be doing more to include everyone in worshipping God and walking closer to Jesus Christ.

I send my love and prayers in these challenging days and the Celtic blessing:





Edinburgh and Lothians Roofbreakers: Opening up Church to Disabled People

Join us online on Thursday 12 November 2020 4 – 5.15 pm

- Worship songs with Graeme McDonald
- Kate Sainsbury talking about her experiences when seeking residential provision for her son, Louis
- Discussion: 'How are we all staying connected with others in our faith communities in this time of distancing?'

Please contact Elaine Rumney, elaine_rumney@blueyonder.co.uk to find out more, or to receive a Zoom link for the meeting.

Feeding others; feeding ourselves by Kate Sainsbury

This time of Coronavirus shows me how painful it feels when we cannot feed those whom we love. Where food is, there is also spirituality in the giving and receiving. When we find ourselves unable to nourish or be fed with food, we need to lament, then we need to find other ways to nurture.

Under NHS rules I am forbidden to take food to my son in the hospital unit where he is detained under the Mental Health Act. Louis is a man with complex and profound learning disabilities who has had no care available in community since his previous care home shut two years ago. Life on a locked ward is institutional. For months, treats have been a pleasure for us both, bringing me the joy of his pleasure, expressed in a huge smile, and have given him the excitement of a homemade cupcake, a handful of cherry tomatoes, a thermos of squash.

We have also lost our freedom to walk. All last year, we explored near the hospital. We found a wildlife reserve, and local cafes. We came to know staff by name and they ours; we sat outside if it was sunny, or in a reserved corner indoors if wet, securely taking part in everyday society, from which Louis is temporarily excluded.



Sometimes I packed a picnic and we roamed across fields. We had our favourite stopping places: by the river, on a bench overlooking the estuary. With those wide-open surroundings, with each other's precious company, I was able to support Louis in his confinement, to remind him of his own story, his years at home, when walking and picnicking was normal.

Now this is no longer allowed. Louis is restricted to hospital meals. His pleasure in anticipating what I might bring, his excitement at opening the day's offering, his glee in a particular taste, evoking memories of home, friends in our monthly Special Needs communion service, are all shut down. And for me, helplessly prohibited from cooking his special dairy-free banana cake, there is denial of the lifelong mothering that nourishes me, gives me my identity.

Now NHS rules state: 'Do not bring food, flowers, helium balloons or similar items.' I am reminded of the time Louis was in an incubator in the neonatal intensive care unit, 34 years ago, separated from me by glass, my breasts aching to feed him. They had taken him out of my arms, claimed him as their own, bound him in wires and tubes, pushed me aside. This ban is an update of that experience.

Then I had been alone, a new mother, in a nightdress, surrounded by uniformed medical staff. Now I see myself part of a wider community in this rejection. There are those relatives of elderly patients in care homes, longing to hold a hand, to comfort the dying, who are kept out. There are elderly members in our congregation, hoping for a visit with home communion, which is forbidden them. There is my friend, a retired priest, forced to shield, who for 60 years poured out his life for others, who now with no flock to care for, feels his very being denied.

In this we are none of us are so different from those mothers across the world struggling to feed children. For years we have seen images of these women and their malnourished children. They have been distant from us, Other: the glass of plenty in our world separating us from them. Now I recognise similarity in our frustrated desire to feed our children.

There is a difference, though. Even now those women in places of drought and war, literally have no food; that is what denies them and their children nourishment. For us, the barrier is not lack of food, but rules and attitudes to rules around Coronavirus that is life-denying. That is why the Scottish Government, in its Advice, stresses the importance of kindness towards one another.

For food, nourishing in itself, points to a deeper source of energy that it represents. Sara Miles, in her book **Jesus Freak** (Canterbury Press, Norwich 2012) describes her ministry to feed food to hundreds of people a week, from the church of Saint Gregory of Nissa, in San Francisco. She writes of the impulse of her mission to feed:

“God gives us everything we have, and whenever we are willing to receive that blessing and pass it on, we live in the kingdom of abundance. He gave the food to the disciples, who gave it to the crowds. And they all ate as much as they wanted.”

We hear in the parable of the feeding of thousands, fear before the transformation of the disciples, before all were fed. In Coronavirus times, pray for transformation of our frustrations. If we can transfer our attention from material reality of food, the practice of ministry, to life-giving connections, we may become a new community.

We might begin with humble acknowledgement that through our own new situation - powerlessness, uncertainty, fear, loss of relationship, anger - we begin to share experiences of our fellow human beings across the world, who endure afflictions formerly unrecognised by us. This might help us recognise ourselves as a worldwide people, gathered round one table, all dependent on God.

Relationship, meaning and purpose are to be found, positive intentions towards protecting others, listening to others, especially when they hold views different from our own, practising kindness, noticing and giving thanks; in all this following Jesus' example of serving, rather than being served.

In this, there is an opportunity that we can all together be the living bread: raised, blessed, broken and offered for the life of the world.

Prospects Across Scotland News



Around 100 people attended the first Prospects Across Scotland virtual annual celebration on Zoom. A film was made to show as part of the day. You can see it on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BtMtlocAkHU&t=66s>

The weekly Wednesday coffee morning continues to be very popular. There will also be some drama taster sessions on Zoom to help support friends with learning disabilities who are often very isolated at this time.

Further details from Ivy Blair ☎ 07827 939520

ivy.blair@prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk

Check updates on Prospects Across Scotland's website.

[www.https://www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk/](https://www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk/)

Connect Plus in 2020

Elaine Rumney tells how Barclay Viewforth Church in Edinburgh has made simple changes to ensure that everyone feels welcome in that church. Despite the lockdown, the church has found new ways to connect with adults with additional needs.



“Connect Plus is a community within Barclay Viewforth Church. It was set up in November 2014 to help adults with extra needs to engage more in our congregation.

“In March 2020, the first sign of things changing was the simple instruction to our members as we crafted, sang, worshipped, learnt and ate family tea together; “Please wash your hands”. There was some disgruntlement initially over this instruction. I had no idea how much things would change over the next months.

“As we shut our church doors, there were two weeks when everything was at a standstill. Then, with encouragement from one of our elders, Connect Plus online was born. So many positives have come from this. When we met in the church, we had problems with the technology for sharing videos and music. It would seem fine in the half hour before the meeting and when the time came to switch it on, suddenly there were gremlins in the mix. Since meeting online, we have been able to share all sorts of things, have interactive games and quizzes, lift ideas from other church websites. (If you have never watched the adventures of Hamish the Coo and Sullie from Bellie and Speymouth Church, you have missed a treat.)

“Of course there have been some downsides. We miss eating tea together. A couple of our members cannot join us online, so we communicate in other ways.

“In 2019, Connect Plus was asked to take a service in our church for Ability Sunday. We were asked if we wanted to organise the whole service or just part of it. I have to confess I leaned towards the latter, but our team decided that as it was Ability Sunday we should go for it. The service was well received, and a large group from the church have since engaged with issues of accessibility and of valuing every single person in the congregation.

“This year, I thought, ‘Well, I don’t think we are going to do that this year’. But sure enough, up popped our oversight elder, who encouraged, cajoled and used her significant technical skills to put together all our random offerings into a beautiful service, even incorporating a Connect Plus Makaton choir.

“What have I learned this year? Principally, to trust God, even when things look impossible and unreachable. And to appreciate our wonderful team and members even more than before, as they take the anxiety and uncertainty on the chin and power through it all. We are all so thankful.”

News for the Deaf community



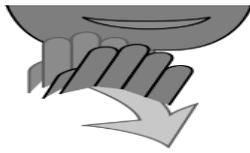
Romans Chapter 10 verse 18:

**“But I ask: Do they not hear? Of course they did:
“Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their
words to the ends of the world.”**

It ought to be easy now that we have the internet, I thought. We can reach the ends of the earth with God’s Word. Not so fast. Let’s visit a few challenges.

At Dalziel St Andrew’s Parish Church we have, for several years, incorporated a dedicated online stream for all who are deaf, allowing them to share in worship.

Utilising the skills of BSL Signers and Interpreters we strive to reach out to all who have this as their first language.



Realising that not all deaf people can follow BSL, we also arrange for Captions to be added to the screen. This is achieved by harnessing the skills of an Electronic Notetaker. Our experience over the years has caused some problems to surface.

BSL stands for British Sign Language. ASL (American Sign Language) is quite different. There are about 300 major languages in the world, plus many internal dialects. Nearly every language has its own Sign Language which is understandable. We seem to have reached an insurmountable challenge if we strive to reach out with Sign Language in a way that worshippers around the world can understand.

Captions are a more fertile field. Word recognition software may hold the answer. This is increasingly used in communication to augment the spoken word. There are various options available for this type of system but, to date, none which reach an acceptable level of accuracy to ensure that the watcher/reader gains an accurate representation of what is being said.

Church services provide a particular challenge, especially when Biblical names or words are spoken. Some of the more sophisticated packages promote the concept of turning English into another language for the caption content, thus reaching out to those who do not have English as their first language. This is driven by business demands, but churches may benefit from this development.



There is a long way to go, but a great prize to be won if we can make God's Word accessible "to the ends of the earth". We will keep trying.

Alex Baird (Dalziel St Andrew's Parish Church, Motherwell)
a.baird00912@btinternet.com

Dyslexia Awareness Week



This year's Dyslexia Awareness Week runs from 2 to 7 November. The theme is **Unlocking Potential**. This title reflects unexpected ways in which children and adults have adapted to the "new normal".

During lockdown Dyslexia Scotland has used Scottish Government funding to pay for tuition for children whose parents are financially affected by coronavirus. This has paid for over 100 hours of tutoring for children with dyslexia by tutors who have specialised experience in supporting the learning needs of children, young people and adults with dyslexia. The charity provides support and resources to teachers through its Education Conference, Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit and Modules and other training to build on some of the great practice that happens in schools already.

Full details of resources plus opportunities to donate in support of this work can be found at <https://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk/dyslexia-awareness-week> .

Including people with hidden disabilities in churches

By one of our members



Images are from [Bonnington Symbol System](#)

“I took part in an [online event about church disability inclusion](#) on 12 September. It featured a [talk](#) and break-out discussion. After the event there was a [question and answer session](#). One question was about including people with hidden disabilities in churches. I’d like to share some thoughts and guidance on that.

Churches should have inclusive practice

“I think churches should have practice that is inclusive of people with hidden disabilities. So if churches don’t already have inclusive practice, they should adopt it. For a full explanation of the reasons for this, please see chapter 2 of [Dyslexia-Friendly Churches Guide](#).

How can churches achieve inclusive practice?

“Through training, resources and action.

Training

“Churches can train their people to include people with hidden disabilities. Their people can then put this training into practice. Here is some training that’s available. The first 2 are free online, the 3rd costs.

- 1) [Supporting Vulnerable and SEND Children in Church](#) (video, 1½ hours)
- 2) [Sight Loss Friendly Church workshops](#) (print resources, 2 hours in total)
- 3) [Dyslexia Awareness Training](#) (usually in-person, currently remote)

Resources

“People in churches can use resources to work out how to include people with hidden disabilities and then act on this. Here are some free online resources.

- 1) [Communication tips card for hearing loss](#)
- 2) [Torch Trust's 'Sight Loss Friendly Church' best practice guidelines](#)
- 3) [Dyslexia-Friendly Churches Guide](#)
- 4) [Welcoming and Including Autistic People in our Churches and Communities](#)
- 5) [Dementia Inclusive Church Guide – Travelling Together](#)
- 6) [Through the Roof facebook page](#) - a good source of discussion on church disability inclusion and some video interviews.
- 7) Health in Mind's [resources to help people's mental health](#) during the Covid pandemic.

“Are you aware of any other training or resources for hidden disabilities? If so, please send details to Barbara Graham for the next SCDG newsletter.”
barbara.graham74@btinternet.com

Making music



Here are some more musical treats from Graeme McDonald:

By the Rivers of Babylon

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=K8cA1h05bPc>

Down by the Riverside

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxQGDIpYT_0



New resources on
SCDG's website -

Available at <http://scdq.org.uk/>

Our Webmaster adds links to video clips, some with BSL and Makaton signing.

[List of hymns](#)

[List of hymns with signing or Makaton](#)

If you have contributions for our website, please contact Ian Boe, Webmaster, at website.editor@scdq.org.uk. Please spread the word about this website and our newsletters within your church and other organisations. Feel free to pass on our newsletter to anyone who may be interested. Extracts can be included in church magazines or other relevant organisations.

Smiles Corner

Have you seen Oor Wullie's view of lockdown?



If you are weary of dismal weather, here are songs to cheer you:

There shall be showers of blessing,
This is the promise of love.
There shall be seasons refreshing,
Sent from the Saviour above.

Chorus

Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need.
Mercy drops round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.

There shall be showers of blessing,
If we but trust and obey.
There shall be seasons refreshing,
If we let God have His way.



CLIMB UP SUNSHINE MOUNTAIN

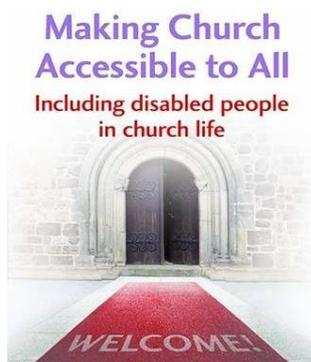
Climb, climb up sunshine mountain
Heavenly breezes blow.
Climb, climb up
sunshine mountain
Faces all aglow.
Turn, turn from
sin and sorrow
Look to God on high.
Climb, climb up
sunshine mountain
You and I.



How to contact SCDG

You can contact the Secretary, Scott Gillies, at secretary@scdg.org.uk.
Tel.0131-669-3301 or 07584-139587.

Please send your news to the Newsletter Editor, Barbara Graham:
barbara.graham74@btinternet.com or Tel. 01563-522108



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