



SCOTTISH CHURCHES DISABILITY GROUP NEWSLETTER

April 2021



Message from SCDG Chairman

At the time of writing we are well into the 50 “Days of Easter”. After the quieter and solemn days of Lent and Holy Week it is good to look at Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost.

At Christmas God, in his son, comes down. At Ascension God, through his son, goes up and ten days later makes to us the gift of his Holy Spirit. I find this a challenging, but exciting time as Jesus appears to his friends, forgives Peter, although I think he had forgiven Peter long before then as we read in the 21st chapter of John’s gospel.

It is true that, however far we may think we have drifted from Christ, he hasn’t drifted from us or forgotten us. He is always ready to welcome us home with open arms.

It is good to know restrictions are being a little relaxed. If everything goes to plan, we will begin to see our lives being lived again. I hope that in the Autumn our Executive can stage a meeting and we can begin to return to “Normal”. Watch this space.

I want to record my thanks to everyone who contributes to our newsletter. It always makes interesting reading and I never fail to be surprised at the rich variety found in the contributions. So thank you to you all. A special thank you to Barbara Graham who has kept the newsletter going so that, as far as it is possible, we keep in touch.

I pray that each and all of you will know God’s richest blessing in these Easter Days.

David Nicholson DCS – Chairman

Praying with Disability

By Katriona Goode

*Come and enter my multi-sensory world
A world where nothing is quite as you see....
A magical world I’ll show you,
Full of surprises, come enter with me!*

*A world where forest green - is the scent of a 100 foot fir tree.
Where winter white – is the wind when it bites through your clothes.
Where cobalt blue....is the warmth of a pool.
I can swish my legs and splash like a shining seal.
Look at me! I am free!
I can swim like a shimmering fish in the sea!*

*I may be blind but can **you** see
Gazing with my secret eye,
My world is very multi-sensory.
What's your world like?*

This poem was written about our disabled son, Matthew, when he was only about seven years old. It was published in a book produced by the children's Hospice, Helen House in Oxford. Matthew has had a challenging life journey. Following five months in hospital when he was two years old, he was accepted for respite at the hospice. Prayers were an important focus throughout that time.

Matthew's name means "God's gift" in Hebrew and that is exactly what he is to us every day of our lives. Now a young man of 24, he lives at home full time with care support, he is a member of our local church in the Scottish Borders and has affirmed his faith in God in a bespoke service themed "I have the joy of the Lord".

Prayer has been hugely important in our lives as a family. We have prayed and prayed for healing, for miracles, for getting through the day and night, for Matthew's survival. Without God in our lives, I just don't know how we would have got through our journey together, for the road has been very rocky indeed.

Matthew's story is quite remarkable. He has severe disabilities; cerebral palsy affecting all four limbs, making co-ordination very difficult, any movement is hard for him to control. He uses a wheelchair and cannot walk, he is non-verbal, but often very joyfully vocal, especially during the hymns in church! He is cortically blind and fed by a gastric tube, he has complex needs.



The Goode family

He loves music and has learned to control his voice, vocalising at the appropriate times within the service. Only by regular attendance and understanding the shape of the worship has he been able to develop this skill. He has always gone to church since he was a wee baby. We, his parents, have done everything in our power to

help him develop whatever skills he can. One very key skill is pressing a switch. Matthew has a communication aid called a BIG MAC (It looks a bit like a large red smarty). We record our voice onto the switch and then Matthew can press it to share his news. For he loves to communicate. We have used it so that he can say hallo and introduce himself, to tell his news from home and school, or to join in with a phrase in a song or a story. It is a most simple and joyful piece of equipment. It has taken years to teach Matthew to use this switch consistently.

I have been writing prayers for our local church for some time now, and when we decided we wanted to all worship there together as a family, it was because we wanted Matthew to become known in our village and to be an active member of our community. So it wasn't long before I came up with idea of him using this switch as an integral part of the prayers. It has revolutionised our worship as a family and greatly enriched the church congregation. It has helped break down barriers in disability, and meant people now come forward naturally to speak with Matthew, they have learnt how to communicate with him.

I specifically write the prayers with a response. Matthew has the key role to press at the right moment leading the response of the prayers and triggering the congregation to follow him.

I use sound as a way of prayerful expression, taking the multisensory approach. Bringing the world of nature outside into the church itself. Using birdsong and small toys that reflect our local countryside: sheep bleating, cows mooing and RSPB birds tweeting, their sounds become a focus of thanks within prayers. I have also made prayers in an Iona format, and I have even played sea wash in the background once. My prayers are very Celtic influenced, due to the wonderful Border countryside. It is inspiring to see God around every day, as I look out onto the hills from our home.

Usually I take a theme from a reading or a hymn. Here is an example of some opening prayers we made together in June:

Matthew is going to help with the opening prayers today
So when Matthew says:....

Lord, as the sun and stars shine, you respond:
May we shine with your love.

Lord, so often in our day to day lives. Everything becomes very fast. We forget to take time to stand and stare, to be still. We don't find time to notice the beauty of your world in the warmth of the early Summer sun.

In the bright white light of a moonlit night, in the glory of the millions of stars that pinprick the night sky, the moon and stars that guide our way through the darkness.

Lord, as the sun and stars shine,
May we shine with your love.

Lord, we need to take time to be still and to know that you are God. To feel your Holy Spirit, around us every day and within us. To feel your presence now, as we gather together here in this church.

Lord, as the sun and stars shine,
May we shine with your love.

We thank you for this time to feel your peace and calm upon us. We thank you that we may worship and praise your holy name in safety and peace without fear of persecution.

Lord, as the sun and stars shine,

May we shine with your love.

As we are gathered here together, open our hearts to feel your love, open our ears to listen and hear your word, open our minds to understand what your spirit is telling us. Pour out your spirit onto us all today, so that we may draw closer to you.

Lord, as the sun and stars shine,

May we shine with your love.

Disability is very challenging, it can be limiting, frustrating, it can close many doors. With Matthew's help, the church door has opened to accept him. He has learned to demonstrate his spirituality through prayer, connecting to God's Holy Spirit with his joy. We thank God for that every day. This is how Matthew has taught us to pray.

Hands on healing

Isobel Bracewell from Aberdeen follows up her article on prayer for healing with an account of another prayerful intervention for healing:-

'Hands on' healing where the person is present may not mean they are actually touched, because many healers work on the 'etheric', 'aura' or surrounding 'life forces' of the person. Healers then act as channels for healing energy which is being sent through them via their hands to the patient.

Points to note:

- Helping someone in this way should not be done as a matter of routine.
- Using one's own energy rather than acting as a channel for divine energy will leave the healer drained and exhausted.
- 'Hands on' healing is not something which should be done when one is ill.
- When being used as a channel for healing, great heat is often felt coming from the hands of the healer, which is felt by the patient.
- This form of healing is most effective when done in an atmosphere of prayerful silence.
- A prayer of thankfulness should be offered up silently at the end of the healing session.
- We do not need to know why a person has requested help. However, listening to someone's needs can be a healing in itself.
- If you are giving 'hands on' healing, at the end of the treatment always shake your hands well and, if possible, wash them.
- Sometimes after a healing session the patient will feel very thirsty, so always have fresh water and tumblers available.

Personal experiences of 'hands on' healing:

For three years I was a Sister in charge of a home for children who had severe physical and learning difficulties. Sometimes it was hard to know what was wrong with them when they were 'out of sorts'. This was quite different from when there was an obvious medical condition present, requiring the services of a doctor. I found that using my left hand as a 'receiver' and moving it around the child, I would experience warmth over the area that seemed to be affected. Using the right hand as the 'giving hand' in silent prayer, I found the heat being directed to the affected spot and the child, if able to speak, would say that they liked the heat. They usually became very relaxed and calm after 'healing'.

When nursing sick children in hospital, interestingly, I often noted that if a child had cancer, I would experience great cold coming from the affected areas of their bodies. Such children and babies loved it if I stood behind them and held my hands above their heads without actually touching them. This always seemed to have a wonderful calming effect.

When my mother was in a severe car crash, her face was badly injured and she had over 200 stitches inserted. She often asked me when visiting to hold my hands close to her face. She loved the heat. What was intriguing was on these occasions we would see a golden light between my hands and her face. To the consultant's surprise, she was left with little scarring.



There have been occasions when accompanying people towards the end of life, who obviously were finding it difficult to exorcise (leave the body), that placing my hands above the top of the head (where a baby's fontanelle would have been), again great heat would be experienced. The person would become very peaceful and often sleep away in a few hours' time. This is similar to the last anointing, which helps the soul to determine whether it is the right time to leave the body or continue with living.

I like this quotation by Akhenaton, Pharaoh of Egypt:

"Those who gave thee a body furnished it with weakness, but he who gave thee soul armed thee with resolution. Employ it and thou art wise. Be wise and thou art happy."

Taking Action on Captions

It's important for churches to take action on captions because captions will include more people in a church's online services. For example, people who are hard of hearing. This article by a SCDG member tells what churches can do about captions.

Auto-generated captions are added to all YouTube videos after a few days.

All videos on YouTube will, after a slight delay of perhaps a few days, automatically be given captions. These captions are called 'auto-generated captions'. You can see if auto-generated captions have become available on a YouTube video if this icon shows in the bottom right of the screen:



Church services that are streamed live don't have auto-generated captions

When you stream (= broadcast) a video live on YouTube, auto-generated captions are only added if your YouTube channel has thousands of viewers. If a church streams services *live* on YouTube, people cannot use auto-generated captions for it.

What are the options for captions then?

This means that people who need captions will have to either...depend on the church doing something to provide captions live, or wait until the recording of the service is posted on YouTube and the auto-generated captions become available.

The problem with the second option is that many people watch their church's online service live or soon after it goes online, i.e. before the auto-generated captions are added. One way round this is for churches to add captions themselves to services that they are going to stream live.

Adding live captions

There are many ways that churches might add live captions, depending on which streaming software they use. For example, if you are using the free [Open Broadcaster Software](#) (OBS), you might be able to generate captions through OBS. However, this is not a straight-forward process.

Adding captions manually

If a live service includes pre-recorded contributions, you can add captions manually after you've made the recording, but before streaming it live. An example of this is [South Leith Parish Church of Scotland](#) which currently has some captioned content in its online services. These services go out live on twitch (an alternative streaming platform) and YouTube. The recordings are then available on both platforms.

How to navigate to the captioned content

If you'd like to see this captioned content from South Leith, hover your mouse over the slider bar at the foot of the image. A red dot will appear. Click, hold and drag this dot along the bar until you see the captions appearing in the mini picture above the slider. Then release your mouse and click on play.

How to add captions using OBS

If you'd like to make your own captioned video content in the form that South Leith uses, you can do so by using the image slide show option in OBS. Create your text as a slide deck (presentation) in PowerPoint, save each slide as a jpeg image, then combine the images with your self-shot video.

South Leith's captioned content shows that 'ordinary' congregations don't need 'specialists' to do this for them. They can do it themselves if there is someone in the congregation who has the digital skills to work out how to use the software.

Auto-generated captions

Even if your digital skills are up to it, adding captions manually is time-consuming. If a church cannot provide live captions, they can at least put recordings of their online services on YouTube so that people can use the auto-generated captions once they have been added.

Many people don't know anything about captions. So it's crucial that churches tell their congregations that auto-generated captions exist, and explain how to turn them on. If people want to use auto-generated captions, they can only do so once they become available, a few days after the service goes on YouTube.

Here is how to turn on auto-generated captions.

1. Click / tap on the 'settings' icon. (It looks like a wheel).



2. Click / tap on 'Subtitles / CC'.

3. Click / tap on 'English (auto-generated)'.
4. To change the appearance of the captions, e.g. the colour of the text and background, click / tap on 'Options'. When you have finished customising your options, click / tap on the Play icon and the Options box will disappear.
5. If the captions are turned on, a red line shows under the captions icon (as in the image above). If they are turned off, the red line isn't there.

Prospects Across Scotland

Prospects Across Scotland has made several films, including their Easter Celebration. These can be found at the Prospects Across Scotland YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOq9-eCaPFIsZyDu45G2eFA>

For more details of Prospects Across Scotland activities, contact Ivy Blair at ivy.blair@prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk or tel. **07827 939 520**.

Roofbreakers

People who join Roofbreakers receive a new version of the '**Roofbreaker Starter Kit**'. This includes **10 Steps to being a Roofbreaker**, sharing how to enable inclusion, participation and belonging for disabled people in Christian life.

Contact janet@throughtheroof.org for a copy.



My Sighted Guide Friends and Family Training

Guide Dogs Scotland offers free online training in guiding someone with sight loss. Join the **My Sighted Guide Friends and Family Training** on **Wednesday 28th April, 10-11:30 a.m.** via Zoom. The training consists of: how to use sighted guiding techniques, a discussion around the practical and emotional consequences of sight loss and a basic awareness of eye conditions.

Spaces are limited and can be booked by e-mailing MSGNIandScotland@guidedogs.org.uk, or calling 0800-781-1444.

Please share with colleagues who may find this relevant. If you are on Facebook, you can find the post to re-share here:

<https://www.facebook.com/guidedogsscotland/posts/2922742284671300>

Emma Brown
Services Marketing Officer (Scotland)
Mobile: 07500-823-894

Video review

Video: 'Disability and Belonging in Church' with Roofbreaker Sally Whitney

Sally lives in Brighton with her husband, Ed, and assistance dog, Ethan, and enjoys being by the sea. Sally shares how she has been part of her church, St Peter's Brighton, for 11 years.

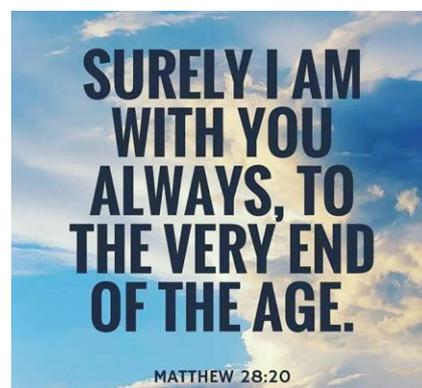
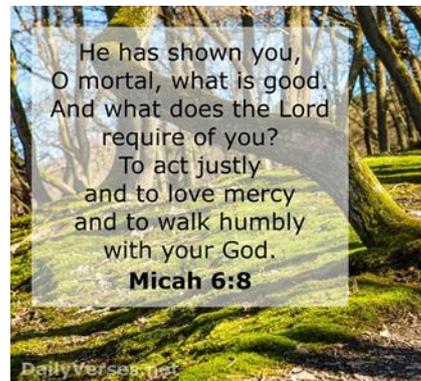
"It's quite a hard thing to articulate that you don't feel part of the church like other people. Everyone is unique, and it is important we ask everyone the question, what would serve you in this situation?"

Sally's challenge: Is there a fair representation of the disabled community in church, for example, when delivering a sermon or on a poster that you display outside your church building?

You can watch Sally's video at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbKyyXdds1c&list=PLEf9FEehPBOVKAIGrmgkc4RnNE3kFu8iR&index=16&t=23s>

Inspiring verses





<http://scdg.org.uk/>

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

[List of hymns](#)

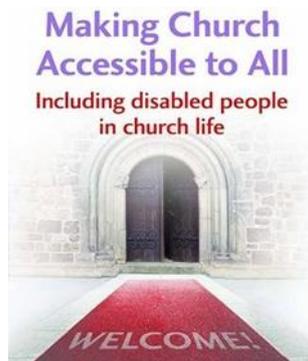
[List of hymns with signing or Makaton](#)

To contribute to our website, contact Ian Boe at website.editor@scdg.org.uk. Please tell others in your church and organisations about this website and our newsletters. Feel free to pass on our newsletter to anyone who may be interested. Extracts can be included in church magazines or other relevant organisations.

How to contact SCDG

Please send your news to the Newsletter Editor, Barbara Graham:

barbara.graham74@btinternet.com or Tel. 01563-522108.



Scottish Churches Disability Group
A registered Scottish charity, No. SCO39567