

Toolkit for churches for Dyslexia Awareness Week Scotland 2021

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Purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit is intended to help people and churches take part in Dyslexia Awareness Week (DAW). DAW is a week dedicated every year to help people understand dyslexia. This year, DAW runs in Scotland from 1 - 7 November inclusive.

Contents of this toolkit

This toolkit:

- 1) Says briefly what dyslexia is and how it affects people;
- 2) Explains why it's helpful for people in churches to be 'dyslexia aware' (to understand what dyslexia is and how it affects people);
- 3) Invites you and your church to pray during DAW, and to suggest some things to thank and ask God for ('prayer points');
- 4) Suggests some hymns and songs that go with the prayer points;
- 5) Suggests a Bible passage you can engage with during DAW;
- 6) Gives a Bible reflection you and your church can use during DAW; and
- 7) Gives sources of further information

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1) What dyslexia is and how it affects people

- **One possible definition of dyslexia**

One person defined dyslexia as: "A group of difficulties that includes problems with literacy skills, memory, perception, sequencing and organisational skills".¹

- **How dyslexia affects people**

Dyslexia affects a person's brain and, as a result, their ability to do things.

- **How dyslexia affects a person's brain**

Dyslexic brains are really good at some types of thinking, for example, seeing the whole of something, solving problems and making unexpected connections. But they can really struggle with other types of thinking, for example short-term memory, taking in or giving out information, and thinking that doesn't involve words e.g. getting a joke.

- **How dyslexia affects a person's ability to do things**

Dyslexic people are able to do some things really well but find other things very difficult. For example, they might be good at writing stories but find it difficult to write reports. They might love listening to audiobooks but struggle to read a book in print. And they might be good at giving an oral presentation but flounder in conversation.

- **For more examples of how dyslexia affects people**

See section 5 below.

2) Why it's helpful for people in churches to be dyslexia aware

- **Dyslexia is very common so you will come across it in your church**

Dyslexia affects 1 in every 10 people. So you have a 1 in 10 chance of being dyslexic yourself. Even if you aren't dyslexic, 1 in 10 people you come across *will* be.

- **Dyslexic people might need to do things differently**

Dyslexia can affect many things, not just a person's reading and spelling. For example, dyslexic people might forget a question they are answering. So it helps them if you can give the question in writing.

- **Being dyslexia aware lets you recognise it in people, including yourself**

If you recognise the signs of dyslexia in yourself, it can prompt you to explore whether you are dyslexic, and to find out what you can do

¹ Sylvia Moody, 'Dyslexia - How to survive and succeed at work' (Vermilion, 2006), page 3

about it. And if you spot dyslexia in someone else, and tell them, it can prompt them to do likewise.

- **For more information on how to include dyslexic people in church**
See section 5 below.

3) Some suggested prayer points for Dyslexia Awareness Week 2021

1. Creator God, thank you that we are all 'fearfully and wonderfully made'² in your image³, and that you so loved the world - including dyslexic people - that you sacrificed your only son Jesus for us⁴.
2. Help us to accept that it is a human instinct to fear difference. Help us to overcome this fear by remembering Jesus' compassion and your commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself'⁵.
3. Help us not just to *welcome* dyslexic people to our church, but also to do things in ways that let dyslexic people *take part* in our church activities, like follow a sermon or contribute to a Bible group discussion.
4. Thank you for the holy spirit and for the things it can help us do, that we wouldn't be able to do otherwise. Please help us to draw on its power as we do anything we need to do to let dyslexic people take part.
5. Help churches in Scotland to have dyslexia-friendly practice by default, so that dyslexic people can take part in church without having to ask churches to make changes that they might not know they need.
6. Thank you that many of the things we can do to let dyslexic people take part in church activities are simple and easy, like acknowledging something they have contributed, or wearing a name badge.
7. Thank you for the things that dyslexic people can be particularly good at, such as thinking up innovative ideas. Help us to value and accept whatever they offer, for example by implementing their ideas.

² Psalm 139 verse 14

³ Genesis 1: 27

⁴ John 3:16

⁵ Mark 12:31

8. Help people in churches to remember that the church is like a body: to work, it needs all its parts (i.e. people) to contribute, including parts that people might see as weak⁶.
9. Help us to accept that dyslexia is difficult to understand, but that we don't need to fully understand it in order to include dyslexic people: we just need to know what to do - and not do - to let them take part.
10. Help us to be aware that although some dyslexic people are famous and successful, others are struggling with unaddressed dyslexia and the many problems it can lead to, like poverty and poor mental health.
11. Help the Scottish Government to fund dyslexia assessment for adults, so that every adult in Scotland who wishes to be assessed for dyslexia can be, whether they can afford to pay the cost of assessment or not.
12. Help people with dyslexic family members to love their dyslexic family members, and to support them to fulfil their potential, no matter what stage they are at in their dyslexia journey and life.
13. Thank you for [Dyslexia Scotland](#). Help all the people involved in its work. Especially help everyone who is (or has been) doing things this week to help people across Scotland understand dyslexia.
14. Thank you for the [Scottish Churches Disability Group](#) and the [Roofbreaker networks](#) in Scotland. Please help them and churches to work together to include disabled people.
15. Help education workers and employers to include and support dyslexic learners and workers. Help school management to support their staff to use the resources and training in the [Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit](#).
16. Help dyslexic people to find out what their individual strengths are, and to use them in their ministry. Help church leaders to give dyslexic people opportunities to use their strengths in their ministry.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

17. Help dyslexic people who understand how dyslexia affects them and what will help them to take part in church activities, to use effective ways to ask their churches clearly and confidently for what they need.
18. Thank you for the work of [Disability Equality Scotland](#), especially for distributing the Scottish Government's [Face Covering Exemption Cards](#), for its [weekly members' poll](#), and for its [online information hubs](#).
19. Thank you for the employability support that [ENABLE Scotland](#) provides to dyslexic and other disabled people across Scotland through its ['ENABLE Works'](#) programme.
20. Thank you for the ['We Can Work' internship scheme](#) run by [Inclusion Scotland](#), and for the opportunities it gives dyslexic and other disabled people to gain experience in employment.

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I invite you to add any prayer points you wish about dyslexia here:

and to ask your church leadership to include some or all of my prayer points, plus any you wish to add, in church activities during 1-7 November. Maybe your church leadership could circulate this document to your congregation.

4) Some suggested music for reflection or singing

Here are some pieces of music that feature the Bible verses I used above.

- **Psalm 139**

1. [O God, you search me and you know me](#) by Bernadette Farrell, from Church Hymnary 4, no. 97
2. [Psalm 139 verse 14: lyric and dance video](#) by Kids on the Move

- **Genesis 1: 27**
[His Own Image](#) by Mike Blackwood
- **John 3:16**
[God so loved the world](#) from Stainer's Crucifixion
- **Jesus' compassion**
Love Divine all loves excelling: Church Hymnary 4 no. 519 tune [Hyfrydol](#);
or Church Hymnary 4 no. 468 tune [Blaewern](#); or [a modern setting](#) by
Howard Goodall
- **Mark 12:31**
'[Love your neighbour](#)' by Scottish singer songwriter Jamie Kimmett

5) A suggestion for a Bible passage you can use during DAW

[Luke's Gospel: chapter 5 verses 17 - 25](#)

6) A suggestion for a Bible reflection you can engage with during DAW



I think the story in Luke 5 verses 17-25 is telling us 3 things:

1. We need friends

- We all need friends not just to share the good times with but also to do things for us that we can't do for ourselves.
- Those things can be the most important ones, like reaching Jesus, as was the case with this man.
- So I think there are 2 questions here:
 - a) What do I need other people to do for me so that I can be close to Jesus?
 - b) What do other people need me to do for them that will let them be close to Jesus?

Something I do to bring people close to Jesus is [complete]. It brings people close to Jesus because [complete].

2. There is a way for everyone to reach Jesus, and the way that works for dyslexic people might be different from the way everyone else uses.

- I think this story shows this point very clearly because everyone is using the door to reach Jesus except for the disabled man, who is using the roof.
- I think it's important for dyslexic people to accept and be aware that they need to do some things differently.
- It's also really important for churches to accept this too, because dyslexic people need churches to let them do some things differently to everyone else, so that they can take part.

For example, if I want to study the Bible, I don't take in the content if I just read it - I need to use other ways to study it, for example listen to it or look at it in pictures. So to take part in a Bible study group at church, I need the leaders to tell me which passage we'll be discussing a week in advance so that I can study it using my own ways. Then I'm able to discuss it in the group.

3. For churches to include dyslexic people, they have to want to include them, to work hard, and to work in teams

The friends in this story are a perfect example of these 3 things:

- They want their friend to be healed by Jesus - that's why they bring him to the house;
- They work hard to make that happen, which involves them finding ways to overcome the barriers their friend faces (barriers are things that stand in the way of us doing things we want or need to do); and
- The friends work well as a team because all the things they do are things that you can only do together with others.

This is a perfect model for churches then.

- **Churches need to want to include dyslexic people**
It's all very well dyslexic people wanting their churches to include them. But dyslexic people need their churches to want to include them, because it's the churches that are doing the including.
- **Churches need to work to include dyslexic people**
For example, a dyslexic person might need their worship leader to change the way they preach. This might take some effort, if that's the way they have preached for decades.
- **Churches need to work in teams to include dyslexic people**

For example, if a church doesn't have any signs in its building (to help dyslexic people find their way round it), the church needs to work out which signs are needed, where they'll go, and to display them.

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7) Further information

1. How dyslexia affects people:

- a) For all ages: a [checklist by Dyslexia Scotland](#)
- b) For adults: the British Dyslexia Association's [Adult Checklist](#)
- c) For children and young people: [a leaflet by Dyslexia Scotland](#)

2. Dyslexia Awareness Week: [Dyslexia Awareness Week Scotland](#)

3. How churches can include dyslexic people:

- a) '[Dyslexia-Friendly Churches](#)' by Aurora Betony;
- b) '[More than Welcome](#)' by Livability

4. Book:

'The Other Side of Dyslexia: God's Faithfulness to Redeem, Restore and Heal the Wounded Heart' by Hope S. Beale. Xulon Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781545671269. Addresses the social and emotional effects dyslexia has on adults, from a spiritual perspective. Includes a 30-day prayer guide.

5. Hashtag (#) for DAW:

If you are sharing anything on social media for DAW Scotland 2021, please use the hashtag #DAW21

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