

SCOTTISH CHURCHES DISABILITY GROUP NEWSLETTER

August 2020



Message from David Nicholson DCS, SCDG Chairman

To all my friends in the Scottish Churches Disability Group.

Lockdown restrictions for folk being shielded are now being eased and they can meet friends and family, both inside and outside. This must make a better future.

For my own reflections, I have been re-reading the story of Jonah. At the beginning of the tale his future doesn't look exactly exciting and certainly challenging or even scary. Hardly surprising he heads off in the other direction, thinking he can escape God, only to discover that God is well ahead of him.

As we think of our own future, while lockdown restrictions ease, we must stop and wonder what 'normal' will be like. Of course, Jonah does respond to God's call and fulfil all that his Lord asks of him.

I can report that, when conditions allow, Paul Goode, our Vice-Chairman, and I plan to have a conversation with Albert Bogle of Sanctuary First – an online ministry. We will report back and keep you all in the loop. I have already been in a number of virtual meetings and it is becoming normal.

In the meantime, every blessing.
David Nicholson DCS – Chairman.



Sanctuary First is an online congregation of the Church of Scotland, producing films, podcasts, blogs, live-streamed music, worship, personal reflection resources and training workshops.

Message from Jeremy Balfour MSP, SCDG President



Greetings to my friends in the Scottish Churches Disability Group.

First of all, I hope you are all keeping well. These times have not been easy and on top of the many challenges that so many of us already face, they have provided extra difficulties for people with disabilities.

This has also been a time in which the Church across Scotland has faced some unique challenges; and as churches navigate their way out of lockdown, there are some important decisions that must be made in terms of what the next steps should be and what should go back to normal and what can be changed for the better.

If you are like me, I am sure that you are missing physical church services and activities. Online streaming services were wonderful during lockdown, but there are many aspects of church that online streaming cannot replicate, including fellowship. For people with disabilities, church is often a key place for socialising, as it provides friendship and volunteering opportunities. While church has taken place online, I am very sure that most of us are greatly missing the social aspects of church.

Many lessons have been learnt by the Church during lockdown, not least how to navigate the digital world. It has been fantastic to hear of some churches introducing subtitles or sign language to their services in order to be more inclusive. However, sometimes digital platforms create further barriers for people with disabilities.

While churches across Scotland have been forced to take a step back and rethink how they do things, it would be a missed opportunity for them not to also pause and draw lessons about the accessibility of church for disabled people. Online church has resulted in many people feeling isolated and detached from what is going on, and it would be a positive step for the church to consider and acknowledge that for some disabled people this is the reality, not just during a time of online services, but indeed all the time.

To conclude, I hope that we can all return to church sooner rather than later, but I also hope that churches across Scotland use this time wisely to consider how to make their activities more inclusive of all and make the changes that are necessary.

Jeremy



In recent years SCDG's Annual General Meeting has been held in September. It will not be possible to hold it in September this year, but we hope that it will be possible to have an AGM later in the year. Further details will follow in our newsletters.

Preparing to return to church for worship



Congregations across the land look forward to meeting again in their churches. Already some RC churches are celebrating Mass in their sanctuaries, while other churches are following guidelines to ensure that they comply with Scottish government guidelines.

Alex Baird of Dalziel St Andrew's Parish Church reports on his church's preparations to resume worship within their sanctuary:

As, gradually, church congregations are permitted by the Scottish Government to welcome worshippers into our sanctuaries, many minds are trying to see how best this may be achieved. With a limit of 50 persons, including minister, organist, welcome group, plus no singing, the need to maintain 2 metres social distancing, keeping a log of attendees; restricted toilet access; and deep cleaning regimes, it is easy to see why many congregations have decided to postpone re-opening for worship.

At Dalziel St Andrew's Parish Church in Motherwell we are fortunate to welcome into our sanctuary around 250 each week, "in normal times", increasing when children in Sunday School are added. Our focus, as we consider how best to re-open our sanctuary for worship, is on ensuring, if at all possible, that no-one is turned away.

For six years, in addition to opening our sanctuary for worship, we have provided a live online stream each Sunday, with the service available on You Tube afterwards. A separate stream provides the same service for the deaf community with BSL and Captions available. We will continue to provide this. An unexpected bonus we and others, have experienced, is a significant increase in the number of people logging in each week to share in worship. We pray this will continue after we are fully open.

We are considering options to augment our recorded Sunday service. This includes the possibility of providing mid-week services, perhaps for 30 minutes, and held on a morning, afternoon and evening. The same service would be delivered on each open

day. We are liaising with the congregation by email, letter and telephone to see if this would be worthwhile and which time/day would suit our members to attend.

Although, via the Scottish Government, the number permitted to attend may increase in the weeks ahead, it looks unlikely that we will be permitted to expand to full use for some months yet, perhaps even into the new year.

Meanwhile, we will continue online recorded services; DVD recordings, telephone access to the service; transcripts of the service as we strive to maintain our mission to make God's Word available to all who wish to listen.

Alex Baird (a.baird00912@btinternet.com)

To mask or not to mask? That is the question.

Action on Hearing Loss has sent news about the **Government Exemption Card** for deaf people who depend on lip-reading.

With face coverings required in shops, public transport and medical settings, communication has become almost impossible for many people living with hearing loss. Find out [here](#) how the new rules apply to you.

Action on Hearing Loss has worked with the UK Government to ensure that they consider the needs of people who rely on visual cues to communicate. Public awareness of this issue is low and this causes stress and anxiety for many people.

Government guidelines say you do not need to wear a face covering if you have a legitimate reason not to do so. Two exemption cards for people with hearing loss have been issued. One explains why you need the person you're speaking with to remove their face covering. This card says:

PLEASE REMOVE YOUR FACE COVERING SO I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU BETTER on one side, and on the other side:
BE KIND. KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. THANK YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING.

There is also a personal exemption card, if face coverings interfere with your hearing aids or cochlear implant. This says:

I AM EXEMPT FROM WEARING A FACE MASK.

Carrying an exemption card is a personal choice, but it may ease some of the worry. You can print a card or download a digital version for your mobile.

[PRINT CARD >](#)

[DIGITAL CARD >](#)

Keep Doing These Things, Please!

Lockdown has been a strange experience, but it is worth considering what has been gained when churches had to make significant changes to keep in touch with their congregations and wider communities. In our next newsletter we should like to see your suggestions on what you would like to see continuing in future. Some things may be about online worship, but please include other means of lifting the spirits of church members and of showing communities how churches step forward to help in times of need.

Please send ideas to the Newsletter Editor at barbara.graham74@btinternet.com.

A positive view of lockdown

Opportunities lockdown has given me

By a member of SCDG

“I’d like to share with you the opportunities lockdown has given me to learn, to model disability inclusion, and to signpost to accessible worship resources.

Things I’ve learned

My experiences under lockdown have given me insights which have let me identify some [actions churches can take](#) to include disabled people. I’ve also learned through being a [Roofbreaker](#) how technology has helped:

- a [wheelchair user](#) to take part in his church fellowship group; and
- a [visually impaired person](#) to access her church’s online services offline.

Modelling disability inclusion through accessible communication

I gave a Bible reflection to my [local Roofbreaker network](#). That let me model accessible communication by:

- using [plain English](#), so that everyone could understand it;
- reading it out, so that people with [print disabilities](#) could listen to it; and
- providing the script and a sketchnote (see on the next page) which were circulated in advance, to give people who find it difficult to take in what they read the chance to read it and gain the gist in advance.

Signposting to accessible worship resources

My church’s news bulletins have let me tell people about accessible worship resources such as [Jesus Calms the Storm](#), [Mary Magdalene meets Jesus](#), and SCDG’s [lists of hymns](#). This feels like a breakthrough because there’s no special provision at my church for the people these resources are for.“



Spreading good news

We are keen to direct more people to the valuable resources on SCDG's website. The following article appeared in the online version of "Life and Work", the Church of Scotland's magazine. This article was repeated in the newsletter of Colinton Parish Church, Edinburgh. Please let us know if churches of other denominations would be willing to feature a similar article in their magazines, on this topic or anything else which would raise the profile of the Scottish Churches Disability Group.



The Scottish Churches Disability Group (SCDG) is compiling lists of hymns available on YouTube, to help people continue to worship during this difficult time. The lists began as a weekly email to a member's congregation, but has now been added to the SCDG website. Updated every week, the list consists of hymns and songs of praise available on the video-streaming site, ranging from traditional to modern. They usually have lyrics to allow you to sing along. There is also a second list, consisting of hymns and songs of praise, which includes sign language, BSL or Makaton.

SCDG is an ecumenical group which aims to help churches to be inclusive of people with all disabilities, by demonstrating and promoting good practice, raising the profile of talented people with disabilities within the churches and offering solutions to the barriers which keep disabled people from fully participating in church life.

[List of hymns](#)

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

With a song in your heart



Music is a precious gift. In the next article we are invited to enjoy music created by Graeme McDonald, the musician at Richmond Craigmillar Church in Edinburgh.

“Hello, everyone. During the lockdown I have been creating videos of the songs we sing at Richmond (as well as some new ones to learn for when we can gather again).

You can find them on this YouTube Playlist -

https://m.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpUNRsPwToNWJY3QVvB_svyIbWyYkIZCp

I also lead music workshops for adults with learning disabilities. For them I've made this Playlist of pop & folk songs (as well as some magic..!).

<https://m.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLpUNRsPwToNXZ48pO9I7-HkuuhZPDt1OB>

In recent weeks I've been invited to perform for Prospects and L'Arche via Zoom. These events are happy memories for me from an otherwise sad period in time.

I am happy to respond to enquiries from organisations and / or musical requests which can be emailed to graememcdonald@gmail.com.

God be with you in this new period of re-opening. I hope our paths will cross in future.”

Inspiration Orchestra Under Lockdown

The guest speaker at SCDG's Annual General Meeting on 2019 was Ian White, the founder of Inspiration Orchestra, which gives people with disabilities the profound joy of making beautiful music with specially adapted instruments. This has been a life enriching experience for many people.

As with all other groups, the pandemic has presented difficulties for music tutors, but now that lockdown has eased, Ian has met up with some orchestra members who have been missing making their music together.

The following photos show how this was done when Ian met Owen and Amanda, two members of the Orchestra. Let the music flow!



Amanda's dog looks as if he is keen to learn how to play the keyboard too!



Owen and Ian enjoy the sunshine as well as the music.
Where there's a will, there's a way!



Sight Loss Friendly Churches

Torch Trust helps churches to take simple measures to become more welcoming for people with sight loss. Here is what they say.

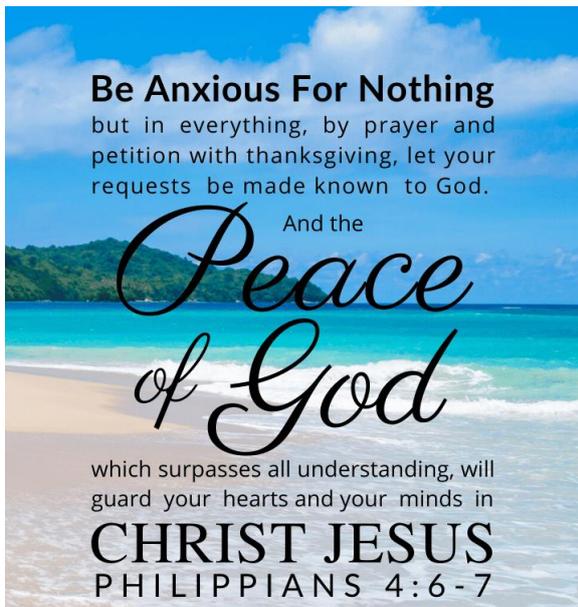
“Attitude is the most important thing about being sight loss friendly. In any church it can be hard to meet everyone’s needs at the same time and this is true with sight loss.



New resources on
SCDG's website -
Available at <http://scdg.org.uk/>

- Our Webmaster adds links to video clips, some with BSL and Makaton signing.
- 10 steps to give visually impaired people and people who aren't online access to your virtual church services. Find out how a local church has devised a new way under lockdown of letting its members listen to its church services.
- Lockdown articles – SCDG members share their experiences, insights and actions during this time.

Bible verses to treasure



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:
newslettereditor@scdg.org.uk or Tel. 01563-522108

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