

SCOTTISH CHURCHES DISABILITY GROUP NEWSLETTER

October 2020



Despite the autumn chill in the air, October's paint box has been busy colouring the landscape with golden, red and russet tints. Each season brings its own pleasures. Even as we are enjoying the final glory of the trees for this year, we can plant the bulbs which will bloom in the early spring. In a year which has been tough for all of us it is good to think of the dull, brown bulbs beneath the soil being transformed by almighty God into a miracle of new life.

As we go forward towards winter, let's keep hope burning brightly. We all have our ups and downs, but if we encourage one another in the days ahead, we shall surely win through to better times with God's help.



**River Spey at
Craigellachie,
near Aberlour.
Photo by
Stuart Gordon**



SCDG's Annual General Meeting is postponed until 2021. Public gatherings are not possible at present and we are not able to deal with the complexities of setting up a remote meeting for a large number of members. Nevertheless, please continue to send your suggestions or questions to office bearers. Contact details for the Secretary and the Newsletter Editor are at the end of this newsletter.

Supporting those with learning disabilities during lockdown

Lockdown has been challenging for everyone, but the next article reminds us that some people have suffered more than others.

“My friend Eleanor [Names have been changed.] is a fit and active 70 years old. Until Covid-19 appeared she was a reflexology practitioner. She posts a picture of her fruit and vegetable garden every day on social media. This is therapeutic for her since her supportive family insist that she stay at home during lockdown. The caption for all her photos is ‘another groundhog day’. But Eleanor knows that she is fortunate, as she has family contact and many friends ring, text or comment on her lovely garden on social media posts. This, she says, stops her going ‘stir crazy’.

“A definition of groundhog day is ‘*a situation in which a series of unwelcome or tedious events appear to be occurring in exactly the same way*’.

“All of us have felt this at some time during Covid-19. For those of us who have full cognition, a supportive family and hobbies our Groundhog days are manageable though very unsettling. Others we know have endured unimaginable stress, particularly those with learning difficulties and their family carers.

“Angus is 43 years old, has moderate learning difficulties and autism and lives with his mum, Gwen, aged 68, who has been caring for him all of his life. For Angus and Gwen groundhog days run into groundhog months of real distress and exhaustion. There is no respite. Angus is a poor sleeper and is upset through the day without the diversion of the day centre, which closed in March due to the lockdown. Being upset, he may shout and repeat himself over and over again. Gwen tries to keep him occupied and active, taking him for short walks if he is compliant. Gwen also has an elderly mother living nearby who she visits. She is exhausted and at her wits’ end. Those at her church who would help to keep company with Angus cannot, due to the restrictions of the lockdown.

“As an Ordained Local Minister in the role of Chaplain to Vulnerable groups in Ross Presbytery, and a volunteer with Prospects Across Scotland (PAS) - an accessible worship group for those with learning difficulties, I want to raise awareness of the unbearable strain that those with learning difficulties and their carers are living under. Are our churches implementing co-ordinated efforts to demonstrate support and inclusivity for those in this situation?

“We appreciate that the elderly and those with underlying health conditions are having an extremely upsetting time. Many Care Home residents are particularly distressed with lack of physical connection with their family. Do we consider that those with learning difficulties and their carers at home are having an exceptionally hard time, lacking support and connection, their routine being completely upset due to having no

respite? Some have said they feel abandoned as, unlike Care Homes, they do not make headline news.

“There are many acts of kindness by individuals in our community to those in need. It would therefore be hoped that local church fellowships would be alert to those who are vulnerable and the carers and put an organised structure in place to keep those under immeasurable strain connected and supported.

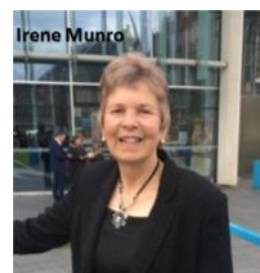
“It was heartening to hear recently that a church which opened their building again for worship has prioritised inviting the vulnerable in their community. After the first trial service which was open to all, the church made a special effort to invite those who had been less connected through media platforms and who were socially very isolated, to worship in a safe environment. This is a wonderful example of inclusion especially when it is presumed too easily that the vulnerable will all choose not to attend. Other assumptions are that those with learning disabilities will be all physically at risk or shielding, when many may only need to take the same health and safety precautions during this time as the rest of the population.

“Teams from Prospects Across Scotland keep contact with their members through media and/or doorstep visits and when it was possible, to enjoy outdoor tea and buns. Delivery of crafts to PAS members and presenting flowers for family carers is much appreciated. The national PAS group is attempting new technical ways of being accessible hosts at a weekly Zoom coffee morning and also conducts local group meetings on Zoom. Members, carers and helpers all appreciate this, as it has helped greatly to improve their lives during Covid lockdown.

“It is impossible for those of us who do not endure such hardship and difficulty and who have much more interconnectedness and support through this time to identify with their experience. Anything that churches can do to lighten the load of people like Angus and Gwen in or outside our church community is to be encouraged. While many of us are much less restricted in our movements than at the beginning of the pandemic, for those in the situations I have described, little has changed. Their groundhog days continue not just in boredom, but in great distress.

“It would be good if churches could share their approach as to how they support those in this area of need, remembering Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 9: 8: *And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*”

Irene Munro, Ordained Local Minister and
Prospects Across Scotland Volunteer



Please respond to Irene's invitation to share news of how churches in your area are reaching out to the most vulnerable members of the community to assure them that they are not forgotten and to bring a little brightness into their lives. Send your news to the Newsletter Editor at barbara.graham74@btinternet.com or Tel. 01563-522108.

Prospects Across Scotland News

There is plenty of activity for Prospects Across Scotland members to enjoy.

- Weekly coffee mornings continue on Zoom on Wednesdays at 11 o'clock.
- A new Zoom group called **Precious Gems** meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 2 o'clock with the usual mixture of singing, Bible story, prayer and chat.
- The first Zoom Makaton training is full, but there are plans to run other taster sessions.
- The annual celebration is on **24th October**. There will be a Zoom social part and then the celebration meeting on YouTube.

Further details from Ivy Blair ☎ 07827 939 520
ivy.blair@prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk

Check updates on Prospects Across Scotland's website.
[www.https://www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk/](https://www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk/)

The gift of music

Kaylee Rodgers is twelve years old and has autism and ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). These conditions made it challenging for her to interact with others at school – until her amazing talent for singing was allowed to flourish.



Her clear, powerful voice is unusual in one so young and now video clips of her songs are a blessing to people around the world. Kaylee's confidence has soared as her talent is used to give pleasure to others. You can hear Kaylee singing the following hymns at these links:

Hallelujah!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oOVWvjy24&list=PLZIHdtLDmmM-c5nqQtXGb-6CYQ_fI9B5&index=1

Noel

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOh6UhNiR8U&list=PLZIHdtLDmmM-c5nqQtXGb-6CYQ_fI9B5&index=18

Many other autistic children are musical prodigies. The following video clip shows a 13 years old boy named Jewels, playing a complicated Beethoven composition:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmfFuZIJ5Pc> .

You don't need to be immensely talented to enjoy listening to or making music. It is a treasure available to everyone, as Graeme McDonald explains in the next article.

Making music



Hello, everyone

As mentioned in last month's Newsletter I'm now offering my (secular & Worship) musical services to adults with learning disabilities via interactive Zoom sessions. My flier & promo-video here gives you More information: <https://youtu.be/22z-fcb0ZVs>

As David mentioned in September's newsletter, "the nights are fair drawing in"... I'm hearing sounds of geese arriving at night, robins declaring their Winter territories - and so it seems a good time to join them in their music-making (perhaps whistling a tune as we add our Autumn fruits to the 'Homemade Jam' ..!).

God bless,
Graeme McDonald (Richmond Craigmillar Church)

You may also like to see video clips of Graeme's Out and About series. In these he plays tunes as background to Scottish scenes. Very restful! You can see examples at:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=sESsVYLGAS0> Rockpool music

https://youtu.be/MGT6GO5m_Nw Images of Craigmillar Castle

Aids to communication

Our members are always on the alert for ways to improve communication so that no one feels excluded. Here are hints from a member to aid people with hearing loss.

Tips on communicating with people who are D/deaf or have hearing loss



Image credit: [Bonnington Symbol System](#)

People who rely on facial expressions and lipreading to communicate are finding communication difficult during the coronavirus outbreak. For example, on phone calls or when someone is wearing a face covering.

Action on Hearing Loss's [Communication Tips Card](#) shares things people can do about these difficulties. It gives one set of tips for people who are D/deaf or have hearing loss, and another set of tips for the general public.

One of our members has created a more visual version of the Tips Card. It is available to download from the [SCDG website](#).

[Sign of the times: COVID-19 response and recovery must be accessible says Guterres](#)

This article is encouraging because it indicates that the United Nations (UN) are keen that disabled people are included. It is about 3 initiatives:

- [International Sign Language Day](#) (23 Sept.);
- the [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy](#);
- the World Federation of the Deaf's [Global Leaders Challenge](#).

The International Day of Sign Languages began in 2018 as part of the [International Week of the Deaf](#), which was first celebrated in September 1958. It has since evolved into a global movement of deaf unity and concerted advocacy to raise awareness of the issues deaf people face in their everyday lives.



The **UN Disability Inclusion Strategy** provides a foundation for sustainable, transformative progress on disability inclusion through all United Nations work: peace and security, human rights, and development. The Strategy enables the UN to support implementation of the **[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)** and human rights across the world.

Event for Your Diary

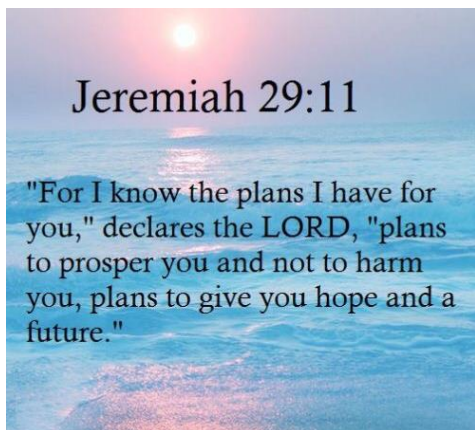
A flyer for an event titled "Telling Encounters: Stories of Disability, Faith, Church & God". The flyer has an orange background. It includes the logo for "St Martin in the Fields" and a circular logo with a rainbow. The text on the flyer reads: "Telling Encounters: Stories of Disability, Faith, Church & God", "10.00 - 16.30, Saturday 17 October 2020", "Zoom", "Registration opens 21 September 2020", "Twitter @livingedgeconf", and "#TellEnc20". To the right of the text is a photograph of warm-toned string lights.

Registration for this conference was due to open on 21st September (as the flyer above says), but is slightly delayed. To find out when it does open, please check Twitter ([@livingedgeconf](#)) or sign up for updates on the event [here](#).

“This conference is the 9th annual ‘Living Edge’ conference *for* rather than *about* disabled people. It is run by St Martin in the Fields Church in London and an organisation called Inclusive Church. Usually the conference takes place physically in central London. But this year it will be entirely online. I attended the conference last year. I found it helpful, informative and well organised. This year’s conference is being supported by an outreach project of St Martin in the Fields Church called HeartEdge, which has gained much experience of organising online events this year. So I expect it will be well run.”

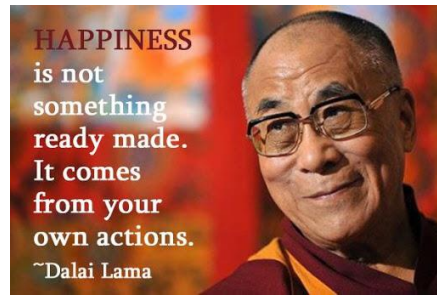
By a member of SCDG

Bible verses to treasure



Action for Happiness

Action for Happiness is a movement of people committed to building a happier, more caring society. They welcome people of all faiths (or none) and all parts of society. Their patron is the Dalai Lama.



Each month they produce a calendar to prompt people to encourage one another to have a positive outlook on life. It is difficult to show it here so that you can read it, but you can print a larger version at

<https://www.actionforhappiness.org/optimistic-october> .

It can also be translated into 26 other languages (including Welsh, but not Gaelic).

ACTION CALENDAR: OPTIMISTIC OCTOBER 2020

MONDAY "Choose to be optimistic. It feels better" - Dalai Lama

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

1 Write down your most important goals for this month

2 Look for reasons to be hopeful even in difficult times

3 Take the first step towards a goal that really matters to you

4 Be a realistic optimist. See life as it is, but focus on what's good

5 Start your day with the most important thing on your list

6 Do something constructive to improve a difficult situation

7 Remember that things can change for the better

8 Make progress on a project or task you have been avoiding

9 Avoid blaming yourself or others. Just find the best way forward

10 Take time to reflect on what you have achieved this week

11 Focus on a positive change that you want to see in society

12 Look for the good intentions in people around you today

13 Put down your To-Do list and let yourself be spontaneous

14 Do something to overcome an obstacle you are facing

15 Look out for positive news and reasons to be cheerful today

16 Thank yourself for achieving the things you often take for granted

17 Share your most important goals with people you trust

18 Make a list of things that you are looking forward to

19 Set hopeful but realistic goals for the week ahead

20 Find the joy in completing a task you've put off for some time

21 Let go of the expectations of others and focus on what matters

22 Share an inspiring idea with a loved one or colleague

23 Write down 3 specific things that have gone well recently

24 Recognise that you have a choice about what to prioritise

25 Plan a fun or exciting activity to look forward to

26 Start the week by writing down your top priorities & plans

27 Be kind to yourself today. Remember, progress takes time

28 Ask yourself, will this still matter a year from now?

29 Find a new perspective on a problem you face

30 Set a goal that links to your sense of purpose in life

31 Think of 3 things that give you hope for the future

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

www.actionforhappiness.org

Learn more about this month's theme at www.actionforhappiness.org/optimistic-october

Keep Calm · Stay Wise · Be Kind



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.

[List of hymns](#)

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

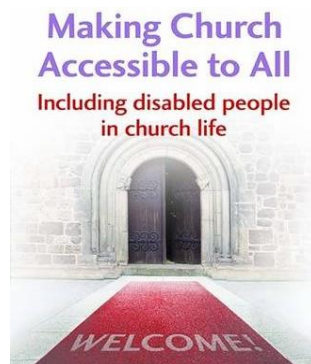
If you have contributions for our website, please contact Ian Boe, Webmaster, at website.editor@scdg.org.uk.

Please spread the word about this website and our newsletters within your church and other organisations.

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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