WINTER 2025

Vital Link

The Newsletter for Through the Roof | **www.throughtheroof.org**

Transforming Lives Through Jesus with Disabled People

When Hope Rolls In: Harriet's Journey from Surrender to Renewal

New International Missions Manager, Faith Mendy, shares a story from her first mission with Through the Roof's Wheels for the World project

In a modest church in Jinja, Uganda, a woman named Harriet sat quietly among the congregation. At 70 years old, she had lived with the effects of polio since childhood. Her mobility was limited, and the years had been hard. Though surrounded by children and grandchildren, Harriet had recently fallen ill and felt her strength fading. She believed her time had come.

That Sunday, she came to church not seeking healing, but peace. She wanted to dedicate her life to Christ, to prepare herself spiritually for what she thought was the end. After praying with the pastor, she was told about our Wheels for the World wheelchair distribution, happening the following week. Harriet declined. "I don't need one," she said. "I'm ready to go."

But God had other plans.

Harriet met the group of UK volunteers from Through the Roof at church – people who spoke with warmth and encouragement. Their presence stirred something in her that made her change her mind. On the final day of the Wheels for the World distribution, Harriet arrived. She received a wheelchair, a Bible, and prayer. Her face, once weary, lit up with quiet joy.

A few days later, the Wheels team visited her at home, in her native African hut. What they found was unexpected: Harriet was singing, smiling, and moving about with new energy. She thanked the Wheels team in her local language, offering blessings and praise. Her gratitude, profound. **"God has given me a new lease on life".** The wheelchair hadn't just given her mobility – it had given her a reason to keep going.

Harriet was one of 216 people who received mobility equipment that week during the Wheels' distribution. Each person had a story. Some came with hesitation, others with hope. But all left with something more than a chair or a walker – they left with dignity, encouragement, and a renewed sense of possibility.

In Harriet's case, it wasn't a dramatic transformation. It was quiet, personal, and deeply human. And sometimes, that's where the most meaningful change begins.

In a world often weighed down by despair, Harriet's story reminds us: sometimes, the smallest acts of kindness can carry the greatest power to resurrect joy.

Please pray: for Harriet, and all those who received mobility and the Gospel.

In this issue:

Neil shares God's Word in BSL.

Emily asks about your heart.

Share your travel recipes!

Accessible formats available: large print, audio, braille.
Call 01372 749955 or email **info@throughtheroof.org**

Visual Word Ministry in BSL

My name is Neil Robinson, a profoundly deaf BSL (British Sign Language) user with cerebral palsy. I have worked full-time as Chaplain to the Deaf Community within the diocese of Salisbury since October 2019. In fact, I happen to be an ordained Church of England priest.

I am so privileged to be able to express my love for Jesus through my natural language, BSL. Many people in my hearing parish church came to me saying how much they loved watching me, as a priest, leading the Holy Communion in my language. I have spent time reflecting on the word 'image' for a while now. The word 'visual' jumped at me like a tiger because I visualised this word linked to the term 'image'.

I have led Visual Word Ministry (VWM) for a good number of years now. The aim of this ministry is to make Jesus known among the deaf community across the UK and to equip deaf Christians for ministry in their local communities.

Since God called me to serve the deaf community, I started to upload my vlogs (video blogs) to YouTube (@neilrobinson4202), sharing God's Word in BSL. Communicating the truth of God's Word through BSL provides visual access to the deaf community, which is important.

BSL has its own grammatical structure and syntax; as a language it is not dependent on – nor is it strongly related to – spoken English. It helps me understand that BSL is very much a part of who I am. I am proud to be part of the cultural-linguistic group that identifies as Deaf (deaf with capital D describes someone who is culturally deaf). BSL is my heart language which allows me to worship God freely. To me, BSL is like a fragrance being lifted up to the Lord.

It is very interesting to think about a couple of verses from Psalm 139. They inspired me in a way that I had not thought of before.

Psalm 139:13-14 reads:

> **"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvellous – how well I know it."**
> (New Living Translation)

Looking back, I realised that God has created me in His own image which includes a visual gift to express my love for Christ through British Sign Language (BSL).

If you are inspired by this beautiful language, why not apply to join BSL classes? Perhaps this is for you and may be part of God's will for your life.

▲ Neil with his wife Helen who also uses BSL.

Disability Awareness Sunday Success!

This year, God has really amplified the message and we're celebrating that over 600 churches registered for Disability Awareness Sunday (DAS)!

We thank God for all the services, events, media coverage and, not least, the prayers lifted for DAS 2025. So many interviews, including UCB radio and BBC local radio, and lots of articles, including a blog by Christian evangelist J. John (at **https://jjohn.com/blogs/all-blogs/disability-awareness-sunday**).

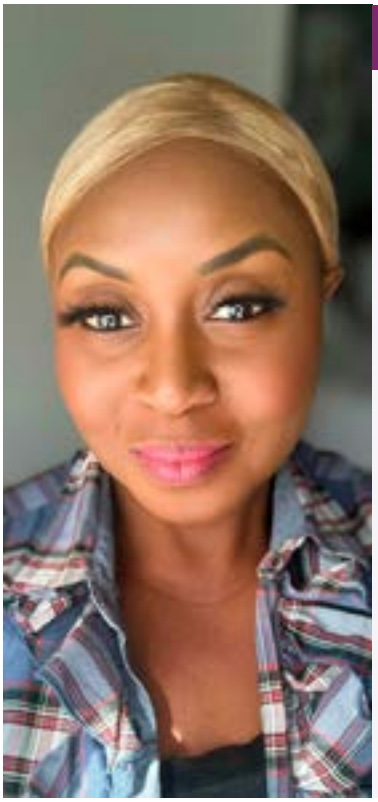
It's been wonderful to hear of churches reaching out to disabled people in their community. Alan Stacey, a Roofbreaker in Ealing, shared that their DAS cafe-style service welcomed many new people, including some who were homeless, and it sparked the idea for a new group called 'Lifted and Gifted'.

It's never too late to celebrate, as any date can be Disability Awareness Sunday! If you missed the fantastic 24 hours of prayer, organised by our Together at Home fellowship, you can still access great prayer resources on our website DAS page.

Meet Amanda Say: Our Newest Trustee

I live in Cwmbran in South Wales, where I worship at The Salvation Army. I worked as a Biochemist for many years, specialising in Medical diagnostics, a career that I loved. Life suddenly changed when I had a car accident on the way home from work, resulting in me needing to use a wheelchair. It was a life changing experience, but I was sure that God had a plan for me, as he did. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." **(Romans 8:28)**

I now have a very full and active life, volunteering, using my lived experience of disability. I work closely with my local council, and with Transport for Wales, looking at access. I am the secretary of my church and of Cwmbran Churches Together, as well as being a 'Roofbreaker'. I love horses and used to compete in dressage; now I use my experience as a coach for Riding for the Disabled.



Meet Faith Mendy: Leading Our Mission with Heart and Vision

I'm honoured to serve as International Missions Manager – a role that brings together my lifelong passion for ministry, inclusion, and global impact. With over 25 years of experience spanning the corporate world, church planting, and international outreach, I've witnessed the Gospel break barriers and transform lives across cultures and continents. I speak five languages, which helps me connect deeply with diverse communities.

Born in France, with my roots in Africa, I am now living in London as a mother of two young adults. I'm a Reverend minister, gospel artist, and I spend my spare time inspiring women on radio and social platforms.

My journey into disability inclusion began when my mother needed a wheelchair. That personal experience stirred a deeper calling to advocate for dignity, compassion, and practical support for those often overlooked.

Now, I'm focused on building strong partnerships across Africa, empowering churches, and expanding our network of Roofbreakers – leaders who champion inclusion across Africa. Together, we are preparing for an impactful 2026, driven by faith, collaboration, and a shared mission to uplift lives through Christ.

Thank you for supporting us. The best is yet to come.

Please pray: For God to use Faith and Amanda and their unique gifts for His glory.

Made in God's Image – God looks at the heart

Trevor, our Chair of Trustees, shares a reflection

God's image has always fascinated humankind. So many pictures, sculptures, and images of God, of Jesus, and yet no one knows what Jesus looks like. He may have had a beard, **Isaiah 50:6**, and presumably He looked like everyone else as, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas had to identify Jesus with a kiss so the guards would know who to arrest.

Despite all the wondrous variety in our global humanity, God's Word proclaims that we are, all of us, made in God's image, male and female. God created the universe and everything in it, so all creation bears the mark of God, its' Creator, yet humankind is special, set apart, as being the only part of creation made 'in His own image.'

Jesus was the perfect personification of the image of God and we are called to reflect that image in our lives. Not physically, which is perhaps one reason why no one knows what Jesus looked like; His physical appearance is irrelevant, but we are to imitate His image in our characters, through our lives and words, through our ability to create, love,

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be generous, kind, compassionate, joyful, peaceable, gentle, promoting mercy and justice, and so on. 'Our (heart) attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.' **Philippians 2:5**

Scripture also tells us that 'the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God [yet]....God [has] made His light shine in our hearts,' **2 Corinthians 4:4-6**. We are called to 'look upon God with unveiled hearts to reflect the Lord's glory and be transformed into His likeness', **2 Corinthians 3:18**.

May our gaze be always upon God, and our hearts full of the light of God's glory, so not only would we reflect the Lord's glory and be transformed into His likeness but so all humanity may look upon the Lord Jesus, who is the image of God, with unveiled hearts and be transformed too.

Please pray:
that the momentum will continue from Disability Awareness Sunday 2025, Made in God's Image, bringing a heart-change in openness to commit to disability inclusion in the Church.

Thank you to all who give anonymously. We're unable to thank donors directly, without contact details, but we appreciate your gift!

If you're expecting a response but haven't had one, or donated via BACS, please contact us so we can connect all the information.

To financially support Through the Roof (anonymously or otherwise), please visit **www.throughtheroof.org/donate-2/** or contact us on **01372 749955**.

Finding Hope through Disappointment: in-person retreat

"Hopelessness is a bigger problem than the original problem itself," said Neil and Sonya Chitty, church leaders who hosted our recent TTR retreat at High Leigh.

The theme, Finding Hope Through Disappointment, resonated deeply with attendees, many of whom live with disability or chronic illness. Some shared how God answered prayers in unexpected ways: through spiritual healing, belonging, or purpose. Neil, after years of waiting, fulfilled his calling as a church leader – even as he and other family members were diagnosed with a condition that causes muscle weakness. He and Sonya reminded us that God's power is made perfect in weakness. By fixing our eyes on Him, not the problem, we can bring our disappointments to God, uncover lies we've believed, and rediscover that we are all 'made in God's image' and loved by Him.

Heidi, a disabled Roofbreaker who joined us, shares her reflections:

I went on the in-person retreat for refreshment and wanting to spend more time with God – I wasn't disappointed... It was lovely to get to know people and their varied stories. Neil and Sonya were the main speakers and if I had to pick two of their sessions that most spoke to me, they would be Neil's session on Promises (drawing from the story of Abraham and Sarah) and Sonya's session on Hope. Sonya's message was that, although we live in a fallen world, with the devil prowling around, we still have full authority in Jesus' name. We are hidden in Jesus – when God looks at us, he sees Jesus, so we need to see ourselves more as Jesus does. We were also treated to a workshop by Andy Smith, a visiting poet and a double-amputee. When we were invited to write a poem in 20 mins, most of us looked blankly at each other but, after praying, this is some of what God wrote through me:

When I took the hand of God
I saw challenges turning into opportunities
I began to walk with purpose rather than being tossed upon the waves
I felt joy in being able to live completely freely
I worshipped like I had never done before.

We praise God for blessing our time together, and thank all who made it possible. We're excited for our next retreat – details also on this page.

Together On Pilgrimage

As we enter the New Year, you are invited to join a Virtual Pilgrimage, entitled The Windows of the Soul. Using the imagery of church windows, it will be an opportunity to reflect on your life: what should be let go, what sustains you, and what is new/developing.

Join us on **Zoom, 2-4pm**, on the afternoons of **Monday 19th, Wednesday 21st and Friday 23rd January 2026.**

Find out more on our website. Email: **together@throughtheroof.org** to register.

Together on Holiday: Calvert Trust

We had a wonderful holiday at Calvert Trust in Exmoor, Devon, this summer. We're returning there again in 2026, from **Monday 15th to Friday 19th June.** Calvert Trust is an all-inclusive "accessible, exciting and memorable adventure break for everyone".

Here's what people thought of the holiday:

"It has been great to make new friends, to try new activities and worship and learn together."

"The depth of friendship has been amazing."

Join us for another fantastic activity holiday. It's a week filled with fun and fellowship! Costs include activities with qualified instructors, spiritual reflection and full-board accommodation (twin/shared – additional cost for single occupancy – unfortunately, we are not legally able to provide carers).

Guests - **£630 per person** if booked before **2nd February 2026** (then £655)

Helpers/Carers - **£495 per person** if booked before **2nd February 2026** (then £515).

Contact **together@throughtheroof.org** or visit our website for the application form.

Disability and Belonging: Norwich Roofbreaker event

▲ Margaret leads in prayer at the Norwich event.

We had an amazing day as Roofbreakers gathered in-person for a regional event in Norwich about Disability Inclusion and Belonging.

Carol, from our Roofbreaker staff team, shared about the ABC of disability inclusion: Access, Belonging, Commission, so disabled people are fully included in church life.

Roofbreakers from Ely led worship, including Margaret who has learning disabilities and co-founded the Rich Tea Community for adults with additional needs. Margaret led us all in an opening prayer and later closed the meeting in spontaneous prayer – a skill she has developed since becoming a Roofbreaker.

Bob Hamiliton, a Pioneer worker from Suffolk, shared about a new Suffolk hub for disability inclusion at Holy Trinity Back Hamlet in Ipswich. This has led to a potential new Roofbreaker network in Suffolk. Praise God!

14 New Children & Youth Roofbreakers Welcomed

Through the Roof, represented by Grace and Carol of the Roofbreaker team, hosted an exhibition stand at the Belong Conference in Coventry.

The event brought together children's and youth workers serving in church contexts to equip them to focus on additional needs.

Our team had the privilege of engaging with attendees about what it means to be a Roofbreaker and how we can support them in their journey of disability inclusion.

It was a joy to participate in sung worship, receive inspiring teaching, and have meaningful conversations around disability inclusion in church settings. The highlight of the day was welcoming 14 new Roofbreakers – a wonderful sign of growing passion and commitment to serving children with additional needs in our churches.

We're so encouraged by the enthusiasm and heart of those we met, and we look forward to supporting this growing network of Roofbreakers.

Mirroring God's Heart

Emily Owen, Christian author and speaker, shares a final reflection on this year's Disability Awareness Sunday (DAS) theme.

'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.' **(John 1:14)**

Art galleries around the world hold painting after painting depicting Jesus, the image of God, God-in-man.

Have you ever noticed that none of those paintings are the same?

We don't know what Jesus looked like.

Yet the Bible tells us that we are all made in God's image **(Genesis 1:27)**.

Look at the people around you. All look different, yet all are made in the image of God, and we don't know what God looks like.

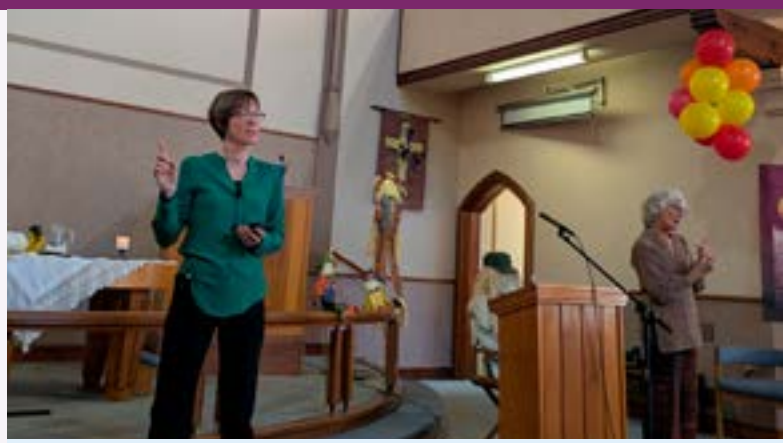
So how can this be?

Well, we don't know what He looks like, but we do know what He is like.

'The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.' **(Psalm 103:8)**

So when we are kind, when we are merciful, when we are patient, when we are loving, we are living the image of God in us.

J. John, in an article published ahead of Disability Awareness Sunday, wrote: 'Our culture asks, "How do you look?" God asks, "How is your heart?"'



▲

When my face became damaged in surgery, I found great encouragement from **1 Samuel 16:7.**

'Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.'

Other people saw my damage, but God looked past it to my heart. That was alright, then. Until I asked myself 'What's He seeing there?'

'How is your heart?' It's a good question. It's a question that, as God's image-bearers, we can dare ask. We can invite Him in. We can ask Him to shine His image in and through us.

How is your heart?

You can read more of Emily Owen's reflections on being made in God's image in her new book: **'You Say: 101 devotions on your identity in Christ'**.

Recipe Request

Through the Roof needs your help! I am a volunteer fundraiser compiling a book of recipes from around the world, to sell as a fundraiser for TTR. I'd love your ideas!

Please can you send me **(karen@throughtheroof.org)** a recipe from any international trips you have been on, with a short story of where you ate it, if possible, and why it is important to you? Please do include simple ingredient lists and methods, and photographs if you can.

Perhaps you could also include a memory of the most humbling meal you experienced during your trip – and maybe your favourite Bible verse about food? (I love the loaves and fishes verses from the feeding of the five thousand.) Also say if you would like your name, and where you are from, to be included in the book.

I look forward to hearing from you and trying out the recipes!

Email: karen@throughtheroof.org

Bringing the Word of God: Could your Church Help?

What could be more important than bringing the life-giving Word of God to people who have been unable to access it for themselves?

What a privilege during our recent International Roofbreaker event in Rwanda to be able to distribute solar-powered audio Bibles to recipients who are unable to read because they have never been given an education, or because they are unable to see. It is truly life changing.

One of these people was Simon, who became disabled at a young age. When he was a child, Simon's parents chose not to send him to school because they believed he had little value due to his disability. Now, for the first time, Simon can hear God's Word for himself in his own language through the audio Bible. Praise God!

During the Roofbreaker event, our East Africa Roofbreaker Co-ordinator Pastor Davis and our local partner Rev Dominique, delivered the Bible message, beginning with the essential truth that we are ALL made in the image of God. Seminars were run for church leaders, community leaders and families with disabled children. The impact was obviously powerful – one participant proclaimed, "This training has changed our mindset. We now see our children not as burdens, but as blessings."

One church in Devon had generously donated money towards Bibles for Rwanda. We are immensely grateful, and we would love to encourage more churches to join the mission in this way.

Would your church consider helping to bring the life-giving Word of God to people who have never had access to it before?

Contact **tim@throughtheroof.org** to explore how your church could partner with us. Whether in print or audio format, the Bible brings life. There's nothing more important.

In the words of one of our international partners, **"Thank you for your partnership and providing these audio Bibles. Together we desire to see Christ transform lives and communities. Only eternity will tell the real impact."**

"We now see our children not as burdens, but as blessings"

The Rwanda Roofbreaker 2025 event.

International Mission opportunities

Wheels for the World trips

Kenya (Elburgon): Wed 21st – Sat 31st January 2026, Partner: Abundant Hope of Glory Church (Ps Davis)

Ghana (Accra): Wed 3rd – Sat 16th May 2026, NEW Partner: Royal House Chapel International

Rwanda (Kayonza): (location TBC), 27th August – 7th September 2026, Partner: FoH Rwanda (Rev Dominique).

Please email Kathy on **kathy@throughtheroof.org** to apply or get more information.

International Roofbreaker events

India (Kolkata): Wed 18th – Sat 28th February 2026, Partner: Sathyam Ministries (Dr CV)

Mozambique: October 2026 – dates: TBC. (No UK team)

Please email Faith for more information on **international@throughtheroof.org**

Please pray
for the development of our international missions, as Faith works with our in-country partners to discern God's plans.

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Who is Made in God's Image?

All are made in God's image to serve and be served

'Anything you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' **(Matthew 25:40)**

Your support changes lives:

Welcoming without barriers

equipping churches, through Roofbreakers, to include disabled people in all of church life

Mobility and hope

providing wheelchairs and Bibles to bring freedom and faith to disabled people in developing nations

Belonging through community

creating accessible retreats, activities and groups, feeding the soul through community.

Together, we can build a church where everyone belongs.

Will you join with us?

Scan the QR code for our Just Giving page or visit **www.justgiving.com/charity/ttr** to donate directly and securely online – please state if donating for a specific purpose

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I'd like to donate to:
(Please tick a box below to show your preference.)

- ☐ Where the need is greatest
- ☐ Wheels for the World
- ☐ 'Together' Fellowship
- ☐ UK Roofbreakers

We'd like to keep you informed of this good work.
Tick here to receive our:

- ☐ Vital Link newsletter by email
- ☐ Vital Link newsletter by post
- ☐ International Mission newsletter (email)
- ☐ 'Together' newsletter (email)

Gift aid

Gift Aid enables us to make your gift go further without any additional cost to you.

Please advise your full name, including title and middle names, together with your full address, in the 'Your Details' section (see top left) to allow us to apply for Gift Aid.

I would like Through the Roof to treat as Gift Aid donations* all qualifying gifts of money made:

- ☐ on this donation
- ☐ in the past 4 years
- ☐ in the future

Please tick all boxes that you wish to apply then sign and date below.
or

- ☐ It is not possible for me to Gift Aid my donations.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

* I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify the charity if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

How to donate: By cheque made out to **Through the Roof** • By bank transfer (BACS) to: **Through the Roof Charitable Trust**, sort code: **82-12-08**, Virgin Money account number: **20047444** (please use your name & the purpose of the donation as the reference) • By Credit Card (please complete details below)

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- ☐ I have sent my money by bank transfer, my reference is .....
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Card number: ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Issue number (If applicable): ☐☐ Valid from date: ☐☐/☐☐ Expiry date: ☐☐/☐☐

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- ☐ I would like to make a regular donation of £ ..... to be used for .....
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Signature: ..... Date: .....

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