



# vital link

The Newsletter for Through the Roof



**How Can We Ensure The Gospel Reaches Everyone?**



**2021 Vision**



**Is Your Church On The Map?**



**Keep Wheels Turning**



## Keeping Wheels Turning

Through the Roof has found an alternative way to meet the needs of disabled people and keep the wheels turning for Wheels for the World throughout the ongoing restrictions to international travel.

We will continue to ship wheelchairs overseas while now offering live remote support from the UK to provide a 'Supported Wheelchair Distribution'. We're delighted to launch this project in partnership with Hope Health Action (HHA). HHA are a Christian healthcare and disability non-governmental organisation (NGO) working with some of the world's most vulnerable people.

Visit [www.hopehealthaction.org](http://www.hopehealthaction.org) for more about Hope Health Action.

Through the Roof will work with HHA's team on the ground in northern Uganda, to empower them to take lead responsibility for a wheelchair distribution. Back in the UK Wheels for the World therapists and techies will be on hand to give one-to-one input and mentoring via video calls to their Ugandan counterparts. We hope that relationships with partners will be strengthened despite the 5,000 miles between us.

We first worked with HHA in 2019. Now we'll combine resources for this supported distribution in rural northern Uganda to disabled refugees. The wheelchairs are currently on their way, and the distribution is

planned to take place early 2021.

This new model will help those in great need, whilst also empowering local people to use their skills, and grow in confidence and responsibility with the experience of UK practitioners to call upon for quality assurance.

**"Life without mobility in a refugee settlement is extraordinarily hard. This project brings a great deal of hope."**

HHA are recognised as being 'COVID-compliant' and can conduct the distribution to ensure the safety of all workers and every disabled client. Izzy Cumming-Bruce, HHA's East Africa Director, said, "COVID-19 has presented many challenges in Uganda and this project brings a great deal of hope. Life without mobility in a refugee settlement is extraordinarily hard and the need for wheelchairs remains very high. HHA is extremely excited to put all their training and experience into practice to serve our disabled brothers and sisters together. We're so grateful to TTR for this innovative partnership."

This project will help people like Maurice who was helped the last time the two organisations collaborated. Maurice is 34 from South Sudan. Paralysed in an accident he now lives in the refugee camp in Uganda, along

*(Continued on page 2)*



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## Our Vision

*'... is all people enjoying life together, mutually giving and receiving, as God intended'*

## Our Mission

*'... is transforming lives through Jesus with disabled people'*

*Through the Roof Charitable Trust Ltd is a UK Registered Company number 04201510 with offices at Alpha House, Alpha Place, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4TQ. It is also a Registered Charity Number 1087788.*

*Quotes are sometimes edited for clarity and length*

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with 270,000 others, 19,000 of whom need a mobility aid!

Maurice's wife left him because of his disability, so he's a single Dad bringing up a 4-year old child in the harshest of circumstances. He is hampered by nasty pressure sores resulting from living on a mud hut floor. Free healthcare exists on camp but Maurice has been unable to reach it, stuck indoors with no-one to carry him there.

On our last visit to Uganda, our team assessed

with a wheelchair and pressure-relieving cushioning. He can now get the medical help he needs. "Disability is not inability", he smiled and said. The wheelchair will not just help him get about, but enable him to visit other disabled people to encourage them in their situation.

Please do pray for the success of this new venture, and consider donating to keep Wheels turning—there's a donation form at the end of this issue.

## How Can We Ensure The Gospel Reaches Everyone?

We were delighted to welcome 95 people to our fourth UK-wide online event during September. With coronavirus restrictions forcing churches to adapt the way people meet together, this title seemed appropriate: 'Church Disability Inclusion As A New Normal – How Can We Ensure The Gospel Reaches Everyone?'

It was our pleasure to have Roy McCloughry giving a thought-provoking talk. Roy is the National Disability Advisor to the Church of England, a disabled person himself and author of several books – including 'The Enabled Life – Christianity in a Disabling World'.

Roy encouraged us to question the word 'normal'. Does this word not prompt us to ask, "what does it mean to be normal? Are we not more than normal according to the Bible because we are made in the image of God?" We were challenged to recognise that through this awful pandemic, the church needs to lament and grieve over our losses – not only because of loved ones who have died, but businesses that have failed, domestic abuse in lockdown, or deteriorating mental health. Roy reminds us that: "there has never been a time in recent history where people living in so-called wealthy countries have come across the unfairness of life. Do Christians try and neaten up the rawness of



**Roy's talks are up now on our Youtube and Facebook pages. Go to [www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org) to find links.**

this in order to defend a good God, or go with it, journeying with people in their darkness? So, we need to be realistic now about the lives we are living and give space for the hurt and grief that has come with it".

The talk provided us with plenty to stimulate our thinking during breakout room discussions. Following the event, we organised a Question and Answer session with Roy. Questions included: 'How does our thinking need to change to be less focused on Sunday services?' And 'How do we discover folk in our community who have a disability and might be interested in being part of a church?' A video of his talk and the Q&A follow-up video are now up on our Facebook and Youtube.

## A Pastoral Ear

Are you a disabled person struggling during this time of uncertainty and in need of someone to listen? Perhaps you have lost a friend or are anxious and would like someone to talk to? We are delighted that two Christian Pastors, with counselling skills, and experience of living with disability, have kindly offered a listening ear through telephone support to the TTR family. Places are limited, but if you would like to speak to someone, please call the office on **01372 749955** or email us on [info@throughtheroof.org](mailto:info@throughtheroof.org), and we'll put you in touch with Alex and Anne.



**Anne speaking at our Roofbreaker event in January**

# Interdependence Works!

By Dr Mike Townsend, Chair of Trustees

## I'm just back from my holiday touring Scotland in our motorhome. We managed to visit relatives and friends. But, as soon as we left them, each place was put under restrictions.

This year has been very different for holidays. My wife, Edith, and I enjoy cruises. Why? Because we love a break where everything is done for us. We meet interesting people and we see exciting places.

I also enjoy specialised holidays for disabled people. We had a weekend break in Jordan with Traveleyes in March. It should have been two weeks, but we were concerned about being locked down there.

Sadly our DCF holidays for 2020 had to be cancelled. So much disappointment! They are the preferred option for so many disabled people.

Recently I have been challenged about providing holidays and services especially for disabled people. A few people have said that such provision fosters a dependency culture. I was shocked! I began to reflect on how we each make choices about what works for us.

The disability world went through a period of fierce independence. But we are all 'interdependent' whether

we see ourselves as disabled or not. Edith is a great cook, but hopeless at tech! I sort the tech out. We work together.

The Bible is full of instances where interdependence is the key. The church is a 'body' with Christ as head - working together. At the beginning, in Genesis, loneliness was seen as an issue. **Genesis 2:18** "The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him."

Interdependence is the way Jesus works.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." **(Matthew 11: 29-30.)**

Through the Roof's mission is: "Transforming lives through Jesus with disabled people." Jesus shares our lives with us. Remember the feeding of the five thousand? A young boy shared his lunch. The disciples served it out. Could Jesus have done it all by himself? We work together with Jesus.

## Congratulations, Brian!

Many congratulations to Through the Roof's great friend and supporter, Brian Gault, who was honoured to be awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2020. Brian received his MBE for services to Thalidomide survivors in Brazil and children with disabilities throughout the world.



Congratulations Brian!

# Luke 5 Award

## Our new award for Christian disability inclusion

### Congratulations to Myles Pilling – the first recipient of our new ‘Luke 5 Award’.

The new award is for churches, ministries, or individuals, who are nominated by a disabled person to recognise the difference they have made in enabling true inclusion in Christian life.



**Frenchie nominated Myles for the Luke 5 award – do you know anyone who deserves recognition for their work?**

of online events held on Zoom, but was unable to see well enough to select the correct screen to see the sign language interpreters. Myles stepped in to help.

After a lot of thought, Myles set up a separate video link with Frenchie so that he could display the sign language interpreter’s screen large on his own laptop, and send the images directly to Frenchie, who then had both a connection to the Zoom event and also a separate screen highlighting just the sign language interpreter. When the

Luke 5 is the chapter in the Bible where the four men lower their paralysed friend through the roof to meet Jesus. This passage gives our charity its name, and also our ‘Roofbreaker’ Project. It is a fitting name for an award to celebrate Christian disability inclusion.

Myles was nominated for the award by ‘Frenchie’ who is Deaf and uses British Sign Language and is also partially sighted. Frenchie wanted to take part in the recent series

interpreters changed over, Myles ensured the right screen was displayed for Frenchie.

Myles literally made the difference between Frenchie feeling completely excluded and being able to fully take part – able to follow the whole content of the events and to contribute herself to discussions as well.

Here is what Frenchie said in her nomination about the difference this experience made for her:

“I never looked at myself as an anybody, I looked at myself as a nobody in the past, I didn’t think much of myself because people didn’t have much patience with me. But now all this has happened I’ve started to look in the mirror and not feel like punching myself for being useless, I’ve started finding identity which I never had before... it’s helped me totally accept myself for the first time. You have given me a voice that a lot of people can understand.”

### “You have given me a voice”

We look forward to more disabled people nominating churches, ministries or individuals for this award. We are hoping that the stories the award highlights will encourage others to see the life-changing impact of true disability inclusion. We want to celebrate this and pray that it causes others to be inspired.

If you are a disabled person and would like to nominate a church or ministry, please see the Luke 5 Award page on the TTR website or contact TTR by email or phone.



**Myles going above and beyond to include Frenchie**

## Congratulations Mr & Mrs Dakin

Congratulations to Ros, (our Training and Resources Developer) and Keith on their recent wedding. They were married on the 26th September in a lovely, socially-distanced ceremony. We’re sure you’ll join the whole team here in congratulating them, and praying for a very happy future together!



# 2021 Vision

By Tim Wood, Chief Executive

2020 has been a year that has affected the life of virtually every person on the planet in some way. Uncertainty has become the new normal – disrupting the hopes and plans of millions. In the Western world we have had a small taste of what most of the world live with daily, particularly those who are more vulnerable – can I keep myself and my family safe? Can I put food on the table? Can we stay physically and mentally healthy? Will I earn enough money to pay the bills?

In light of all this uncertainty, then, what is Through the Roof's vision for 2021, where we can't be certain of fulfilling plans as we knew them previously? How can we make a difference?

We are committed to remaining true to our vision, values and principles. Overall, we want to 'fix our eyes upon Jesus' (Hebrews 12:2) because 'unless the Lord builds the house, (we) the builders labour in vain'. (Psalm 127:1). He is our Provider, our Guide, our Shield and Protector. Our Strategic Plan is focussed on going Deeper, Wider and Higher. Going Deeper means more Christian community through connecting with others online (or physically, when possible) for Supported Distributions, Networks and Events. Going Wider means expanding

our impact, increasing the numbers of Roofbreakers, Networks and disabled people helped. Going Higher means encountering more of God through distributing Bibles alongside our wheelchairs and providing online opportunities to meet with God.

Things may look a little different in the coming months but with your prayers, encouragement, support and financial gifts together we can meet the challenge of uncertainty in the world with the certain hope of Jesus for all people.

Please do get in touch with your questions, words of encouragement or financial donations, we rely on your involvement – thank you.



Tim: "Together, we can meet the challenge of uncertainty"

## Is Your Church On The Map?

Our new online map of disability friendly churches

In our last Vital Link we celebrated having over 300 Roofbreakers (disability champions in churches), but the question is - how do disabled people know where the churches are that have a Roofbreaker? So, we've now put a map on the TTR website so that Roofbreakers' churches and ministries can be easily found, and give the message loud and clear that they are positive about disability inclusion.

Lockdown has brought an extra urgency to this work as churches have become more aware of disabled people in their local communities. This is something we pray will continue and grow – long after coronavirus restrictions. We have also developed a 'Disability Toolkit' for churches covering the different things they need to know.

We would love everybody reading this Vital Link to take up the challenge of getting their own church 'on the map' and giving a positive message to local disabled people.

The map has only recently launched, so it will take some time before it gives the full picture of churches with Roofbreakers – but we hope that more and more churches will be on there soon. The map also shows where our Roofbreaker Networks are – which enable Roofbreakers to link together locally for support and encouragement.

Please do pray with us for this work and join with us in sharing the message of the importance of churches being aware of the challenges disabled people can face, and in equipping churches to respond so that disabled people can be fully included in Christian life.

For further details see the Through the Roof website 'Church Inclusion' section.



Check out the map of churches that are Positive about Disability Inclusion at [www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org)

# Introducing our Network for Rural Churches

Rural churches have their own specific challenges for disabled people. We're thrilled to be able to respond to this through our new Network for Roofbreakers in rural churches – led by Lynda Herbert, a Roofbreaker who knows the challenges herself. Here's Lynda's introduction...

It's wonderful to get the opportunity to write to like-minded folk. I've been disabled 25 years and it's only been in recent years that I've managed to contact others in a similar situation. That is why I'm absolutely delighted to join Through the Roof, as it's an organisation centred on including everyone.

I'm married to Simon and we have two sons, two dogs, a goldfish, and a hedgehog called Spiky Norman, who terrorises the dogs when they go out late at night, and I'm quite convinced he'd pop my tyres if he had half a chance, he's quite a formidable character.

My faith life is a little more complicated. I've been in ministry 8yrs, and serve in two multi parish benefices. Before Covid I would take several services a week, across a range of churches. My Sundays are very interesting—the challenge isn't in the sermon I'm going to preach, but whether I can get into the church to preach it!

**“Not being included, and feeling left out, has been the hardest part of being disabled”**

Not being included, and feeling left out, has been the hardest part of being disabled, and the thing I've struggled with most. It rivals dealing with chronic pain—In fact, I would class exclusion as a form of chronic pain!

As disabled folk we face many challenges, some of which we can readily overcome and some we must find ways around. Our rural churches offer unique difficulties;

access, funding, small congregations, and potential closures, to name a few. I'm excited that together we can do something about this, look at the problems, and if we can't find solutions, try and find ways to navigate around the physical and attitudinal obstacles we face.

**“I would class exclusion as a form of chronic pain!”**

It's been months since I was last in church, as Covid 19 has meant all previous activities have temporarily ceased, and like many others, my ministry has had to move online. Now as we prepare to head back to our churches, it's time to regroup, to plan, and create the inclusive future we want.

If you are in a rural church and want to connect with others who face similar challenges, do get in touch with us and we'll connect you to Lynda and the Network.



**Contact us to join the Rural Churches Network**

## Magnifying The Message

You might have already heard the good news that we are developing a stronger relationship with students who share the vision of inclusive Church and Christian ministries. It is a pleasure to be invited to speak as part of Just Love's mini-series ([www.justloveuk.com](http://www.justloveuk.com)) on Zoom this winter. Just Love have a vision to inspire and release every Christian student to pursue the biblical call to social justice. The aim of the events is to help equip students to pursue justice for disadvantaged groups within

**JUST LOVE.**

local churches. It will be a fantastic opportunity to share Roofbreaker stories and how important inclusion is. Please pray for Fiona as she speaks.

# Together let's...

## Keep



## Wheels



## Turning!

**Through the Roof is the only UK Christian charity working with churches and people across the range of disabilities to extend God's kingdom**

From supported distributions to online Roofbreaker meetings, we're working hard to develop new ways to continue serving disabled people in the UK and overseas by bringing freedom, encouraging friendship, and enabling faith. Your donations keep the wheels turning and the work going! Thank you.

### I would like to support Through the Roof by standing order

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01372 749955 [www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org)



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*giftaid it*

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**I enclose a cheque for £.....made out to Through the Roof**

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