



vital link

The Newsletter for Through the Roof



Pray with us for Disability Awareness Sunday



Share your stories



Making sense of our senses



Transformation in Kerala

Mixed blessings in Bidi Bidi

Through the Roof's Wheels for the World team in Bidi Bidi Refugee camp, Uganda

By Lucie Myall, team member and physiotherapist

Our Wheels for the World team recently showed the refugee community of Bidi Bidi, northern Uganda that everyone is uniquely loved and valued in God's sight – but not in the way we originally expected...

We returned to Bidi Bidi, one of the world's largest refugee camps, near the South Sudanese border for our first visit since June 2019. Five of the nine team members were on that trip and were excited to serve again with new and old friends. Since then, there had been supported distributions where the UK team supported our Hope Health Action (HHA) partners supplying wheelchairs and mobility aids through skilled support online.

Frustratingly, the container bringing over our wheelchairs was extremely delayed in port and only arrived once we were heading home. A disappointment for the team, but God gave us alternative opportunities for productive use of the time, working with HHA's stock of chairs, and assessing other local disabled people for the HHA team to serve with the wheelchairs once they arrived.

We were anxious to get working and serve some of the most needy people in the world. We began at the Rehabilitation Centre, supporting our HHA Wheelchair Technician colleagues, Scovia and Moses, with provision of a wheelchair from their existing stock.

Therapist Lynne was able to get a child on his feet and demonstrate his potential to walk, to both the wheelchair technicians and his family, showing that a wheelchair is not always necessary and that supportive footwear, along with a walking aid would be more suitable, once it arrived.



Much of our time with the HHA staff was spent mentoring and teaching, identifying factors for providing specialist chairs and helping with the needs of people with

more complex conditions that may benefit from support when lying and sleeping. It was a joy to see the skills our partners had learnt and the reassurance we could offer through encouragement and sharing realistic expectations around what we can achieve with the recipients we're serving.

We were blessed to support Scovia as we reviewed Karim, a 5-year-old boy with Cerebral Palsy who already has a wheelchair from the supported distribution in 2021. His needs are extremely complex, with widespread contracted muscles, epilepsy, and pain – along with malnutrition. We worked together with his mother and family to create a supported position for lying and sleeping and modified his wheelchair to make him more comfortable and better supported.

Reflection, learning and working in partnership with the HHA team enabled us to share professional skills as well as show to the community that we are all loved and valued in God's sight.

Despite the frustrations of the delayed container, power problems and some tough working conditions, the team did amazing work with people living in difficult conditions as refugees from South Sudan. You can read more about the trip in the full blog posts at www.throughtheroof.org/international-blogs. Thank you for your support in making this work possible – please donate to enable future trips at www.throughtheroof.org, or by calling 01372 749955.



Pray with us for Disability Awareness Sunday

This year's Disability Awareness Sunday is about the unique gifts God gives each one of us. We would love you to join with us in praying that this will be an opportunity for churches across the UK to hear from disabled people themselves, telling how God is at work in their lives.

We have prepared a service pack based on this theme, with a video of Ashleigh Milroy from Edinburgh sharing some of her own



Please pray for churches to take the opportunity of Disability Awareness Sunday

message. We also have postcards available to give out to everyone attending the services.

If you are able to hold a service in your church (either on September 17th or a date of your choice) please do get in touch, or visit www.throughtheroof.org/disability-awareness-sunday and fill in the form. And please do share the link with friends.

Here is one of the prayers that forms part of the pack:

A prayer from Emily Owen, a Christian author who lost her hearing overnight. She knows what it is to be broken, and what it is to meet God there.

Father God,
Sometimes I compare myself with other people. I can't be like them, however much I wish I could.
Help me to remember that You made me. I don't need to be like someone else. I'm special to You just as I am.
You rejoice over me! Help me to do what I can without worrying about what I can't. Help me to be who I am without worrying about who I'm not.
Thank you that You are always with me, encouraging me, strengthening me, and guiding me as I fill a space in Your world that only I can fill.

Amen

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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'

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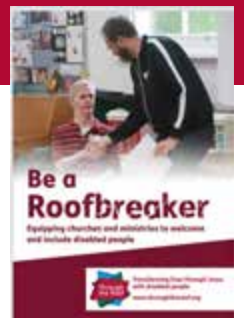
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'Be a Roofbreaker' revised

A new version of the 'Be a Roofbreaker' resource, fully revised and updated for 2023, is now available. This guide contains lots of new material, making it an ideal purchase for churches looking to deepen their work in welcoming, encouraging, and empowering disabled people.

You can find it on the TTR shop, at www.throughtheroof.org, or by contacting the office on 01372 749955. It's on sale for £5 (plus p&p), for either print or download versions. And Roofbreakers can claim an amazing 50% off (visit our website to sign up as a Roofbreaker, or contact katie@throughtheroof.org if you've lost your discount code).

The new guide contains sections on: the theology of disability; the responsibility of the church; inclusive language; and sections on including wheelchair users; people who are blind; people who are deaf; those with learning disabilities; mental health issues; dementia; speech difficulties; autism; children with additional needs; people experiencing disability later in life; ongoing support available for Roofbreakers; and much more. It also contains ideas to support those who're unable to attend church meetings and encouragement to take a person-centred approach. We're really excited to see how this new version of this classic guide will be used, far and wide, in churches and beyond. If you pick up a copy, please let us know how you use it in your inclusion work.



Now available from our website shop

Get involved and make a difference

The mission of Through the Roof is: 'Transforming lives through Jesus with disabled people'. We believe God has called us to this work – based on the 'Through the Roof' Bible account in Luke chapter 5.

We can't do this work without the involvement of a lot of wonderful volunteers, and we would like to encourage more people to consider getting involved. To make that easier we now have a new section on our website... **'Get Involved'**.

On the website you can hear from some of our volunteers and find out about:

- Opportunities in the UK
- International opportunities
- Other ways of getting involved

There's a wide range of ways to get involved with Through the Roof, giving huge opportunities to be part of God's work in and through the lives of disabled people.

Kathy volunteers on our 'Wheels for the World' mission trips, using her skills as a physiotherapist. She has been on various trips to Kenya, to Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana.

Kathy says: "I always learn more than I give when I go on these trips. I always learn more about love, compassion, resilience and faith in God" (Kathy was interviewed on Songs of Praise, July 2021).

Karen uses her talents by making and selling greetings cards – raising funds to support the work of Through the Roof... and raising awareness too!

Karen says: "I love finding ways to inspire others to support Through the Roof prayerfully and financially using the gifts God has given me."

Steve volunteers at the Through the Roof warehouse in Aldershot where mobility equipment is refurbished before being shipped out to developing countries.



Clockwise from top left: volunteers Kathy, Steve, Lynda and Karen



Steve says: "I basically look at wheelchairs, fix them, clean them, repair them and put them back together again – all ready for a shipment for whichever country they're going to. So it's fantastic, a fantastic group of people and we get on really well."

Lynda is a Roofbreaker 'Network Co-ordinator' linking together 'Roofbreakers' who are disability champions in their own churches. Lynda says she loves the: "wonderful peer support and hopefully inspiring people to go out and make change and to welcome people into church."

From mission trips to making cards... there's something for everyone

There's such a broad range of opportunities, there really is something to suit anyone who would like to get involved – and we're always open to new ideas too! If you feel you would like to be part of the mission of Through the Roof, we would love to help you find the role that will suit you. Whether it's volunteering in the UK, going on international trips, sponsoring a wheelchair, joining us in prayer, or any of the other opportunities available... **you can be part of the mission too.**

There are even opportunities to get involved from home or in your local church, and due to the nature of our work, we particularly aim to ensure that disabled people are able to get involved and to use their gifts in serving God.

If you think you might be interested, but want to find out more, **please get in touch for a conversation** about what would suit you best.

Everyone has a part to play – meaning that more lives can be transformed! To get involved and make a difference visit www.throughtheroof.org or contact Janet Eardley: janet@throughtheroof.org or 01372 749955.

Developing good taste

By Dr Mike Townsend, Chair of Trustees

Through the Roof's latest online event was about our senses. Naomi Graham of Growing Hope helped us pay more attention to our sensory perceptions. There's more to sensory awareness than I had thought.

In addition to the regular 'five senses', Naomi introduced three additional sensory channels: balance, body awareness, and internal sense. Please look at our online version of the event for a deeper understanding.

I have recently become all too aware of one of the five traditional senses – 'taste'. I am just back from a Danube river cruise. The food was top rate. My scales tell the tale!

My one-year-old grandson, Joah, was born with only half a heart (hypo-plastic left heart syndrome). Since Joah's second major operation, he has started to try to walk. But one thing that he has never done is eat. He is tube fed through his nose.

Experts tell us that one way to encourage Joah to eat is for him to be at the table with us. Joah can then see what we are all doing – eating and enjoying.

I long for the time when Joah gets to enjoy taste as much as his granddad!

This year, a lot of Christians are re-focusing on ways in which we can grow spiritually and build stronger relationships with God.

In my church, we talk about developing Christian habits. They are often called Christian disciplines which makes them appear rather onerous. Reading the Bible is one of these habits.

I am halfway through reading the whole Bible this year. This phrase has just jumped out at me: "Taste and see that the LORD is good;" (**Psalm 34:8**). Some of the habits can be rather hard to get into. Going through all those numbers, names, and tragic kings can seem tedious.

But meeting God in my daily Bible readings is getting to be quite compulsive — even blessed. Taste can be very enjoyable. I am also having a go at other Christian habits through reading 'The Celebration of Discipline' by Richard Foster.

Disciplines are tough. But once we start to embed them into our lives and 'taste' the goodness of God through them, we get to enjoy that stronger relationship with Jesus.

As Peter says, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." (**1 Peter 2:2-3**.)

What Christian habits are you 'tasting' at the moment?

Oh, and please pray for little Joah that he will get a taste for eating.



Celebrations for Joah's first birthday

Thank you to our anonymous donors

Thank you to everyone who gives anonymously to the work of Through the Roof. Without an address, we're often unable to thank those donors directly, but we appreciate every gift!

If you're expecting a response to a donation and haven't had one, please get in touch so we can join up all the information and properly acknowledge your gift.

If you'd like to financially support Through the Roof (anonymously or otherwise) please visit **www.throughtheroof.org** for a donate link or contact the office on 01372 749955.

Share your stories

Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God using stories or parables. Why was that? There were many reasons, but it's likely that Jesus knew our human hearts can be touched more powerfully by a story than by a thousand words of explanation or logic. That's why we are asking you to share your stories – with us, and with others – about lives transformed by God's ministry of Through the Roof. We want you to use the power of story to help change hearts and minds, so more people catch the vision for disability inclusion.

It could be a story from your local church about a disabled person getting more involved in church life; it could be from your own lived experience of disability; it could be a story from a TTR holiday or mission trip. Tell others and send in your story for the **TTR Resource Bank** – where others can find stories to use for TTR publicity.

Just email any stories to annette@throughtheroof.org They can be anonymous and they don't have to be perfect!

You may think your story won't make a difference but remember Jesus's parable of the mustard seed: 'Jesus told the crowd another story. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. Someone took the seed and planted it in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it grows, it is the largest of all garden plants. It becomes a tree. Birds come and rest in its branches."' (Matthew 13:31-32, NIV®)

An example of a mustard-seed story: an anonymous lady TTR supporter and wheelchair user was talking over coffee to a man at a Disability Awareness Sunday service. She told him all about TTR's work, and he was inspired to contact us – he asked for an interview, as his job is as a presenter on TWR Christian radio. That lady sharing her story once has led to hundreds of people hearing about TTR (see interview with Katie Mobbs, 3rd June 2023 episode at <https://www.twr.org.uk/show/the-supplement/>).

So, every story counts, and you never know how God will multiply its impact!



We'd love to hear about lives that have been changed by Through the Roof

Thanks Pete

We want to say a massive thank you to Through the Roof's tech expert, Peter Tye, as he moves on after 16 faithful years of service at the charity. Pete's first role was a humble Admin & Publicity Assistant, but over time he developed his role to become a giant of everything tech-related and an integral part of all the charity's digital communications.

He has served the team willingly, always being on-hand (or on Zoom) to problem-solve the latest technical challenge, as well as edit and produce our Vital Link newsletter, organise online events, oversee the print and design of our publicity and publications, edit and subtitle videos, run the database, find relevant photos and produce posts for social media and the website!

Pete believes the time is now right for him to explore other opportunities, including pursuing some educational study. He and his skills and experience will leave a massive hole at the charity, but he goes with our blessing and grateful thanks for being such a vital team-member and essential part of all that we do as a charity.



Making sense of our senses

Thank you to Naomi Graham, CEO of additional needs charity 'Growing Hope' (www.growinghope.org.uk), for sharing your expertise with us all during May's online event on 'Sensory Processing & Church Accessibility'.

Naomi explained that Growing Hope works with children with additional needs. She shared how we all like to start the day with a sense of calm. However, people with additional needs may find it difficult to find the calm they need, as they may struggle to process the input from their senses.

Naomi used stories from the Bible and her own experience to explain how God speaks through each of 8 senses – the usual five, plus balance, body awareness, and internal sense – including our sense of God.

She emphasised the importance of understanding each person's sensory experience – including children with additional needs in the church – and seeing everyone as Jesus sees them.

Naomi got participants to try sensory experiments, such as writing a sentence without your feet touching the floor; these brought alive how much our senses affect us. She explained how particular sensory experiences can be calming or alerting – such as loud or quiet noises, and geometric or irregular patterns. But Naomi explained it's important to ask each individual what helps them – she shared an 'about me' form, that people can fill in with their sensory preferences – such as whether they need a quiet space, or struggle to sit still.

We heard how the senses can be used to enhance worship – including the huge boost to concentration created by movement, through 'body awareness'; as well as the importance of using images and objects as well as words, to help everyone understand.

During the discussion time, people showed enthusiasm about using sensory experiences within their churches,



Catch Naomi's talk at [youtube.com/TTRChangesLives](https://www.youtube.com/TTRChangesLives)

and raised questions which Naomi answered later. A poll of those present showed great support for disability inclusion in church, but there is a great need for sensory strategy resources, with 80% asking for these.

Naomi suggested simple tips for churches, including quick wins such as providing ear defenders and pipe cleaners as simple fidget toys. She explained how vital church support can be for families and children with additional needs, including the strong link between trauma and sensory processing issues, with movement and physical activity helping heal and calm.

So it is important that we educate the church not to judge people for using fidget toys or moving around. Growing Hope provide free therapy to children with additional needs, as well as supporting parents, carers and siblings. You can read the story of Growing Hope in Naomi's blog at www.growinghope.org.uk/growing-hope-our-story-so-far/

Brenda Murray, one of our new Regional Roofbreaker Co-ordinators who helped facilitate the event, said "We look forward to making connections with all those who attended to ensure people have the resources so everyone can be part of God's family."

You can find a video of Naomi's talk, plus answers to some extra questions at our YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/TTRChangesLives

Transformation in Kerala

Wheels for the World in India 2023

We had an amazing team from Wheels for the World working hard in Kerala, India earlier this year. In partnership with Sathyam ministries and its founder, Dr C V, the Wheels team brought joy and freedom through the gift of a wheelchair or mobility aid to around 100 disabled people, plus countless other family and community members.

It was an emotional and challenging trip, filled with heartwarming experiences that left a lasting impact on everyone involved.

Upon their arrival in Kerala, the team was full of excitement and determination. They set up their base at Pushpagiri Hospital, and prepared for the mission ahead, ensuring that they were well-equipped to change lives.

After meeting the dedicated staff, they also visited the Sathyam Ministries, where they were warmly welcomed and enjoyed a time of fellowship. The team then visited the Justin's Home Disability Centre, a moving experience as they met with the residents, witnessed their talents, and shared in their joy.

After set-up was concluded, the team embarked on their first day of distribution at Pushpagiri Hospital. It was an emotional day, working with individuals with all sorts of needs. The team worked tirelessly to provide the best mobility aids for each person, constantly chatting and checking in with the patients and their families. The gratitude and appreciation expressed by the people they served was very moving, and a reminder of the profound impact this freedom-bringing work has.

When Sunday arrived, the team attended Dr C V's church, where they were warmly welcomed and thanked for their mission. The service, primarily in Hindi, was filled with passion, and the team joined in the heartfelt singing. They participated, broke bread together and were inspired by the devotions shared by Susan and Martyn, translated by Dr C V.

Throughout their journey, the team encountered numerous heartwarming moments, including their visit to the 'Little Servants of Divine Providence' home for disabled children. The therapists and technicians carefully assessed eight children in need of wheelchairs, and as each child adjusted to their newfound mobility, their transformations were dramatic and moving. The joy and smiles that radiated from these children were a testament to the profound impact of their work.



The team shared the wonderful new audio Bibles



Working with the fantastic team at Pushpagiri hospital

The joy and smiles that radiated from these children were a testament to the profound impact of their work.

The team felt God's hand in the constant stream of acceptance by so many – including lifelong Hindu followers – and were delighted to give people 35 traditional Bibles and 46 wonderful new audio Bibles (both in local languages). The team also offered pastoral support, prayers, and scriptures suited to the needs of each person.

Thank you for all your support in making this life-changing work happen. If you'd like to donate to help fund future trips, you can find a donate button on our website, use the paper donation form, or contact the TTR office on 01372 749955. To find out more about the India trip, you can read the team's blog (and blogs from all our international missions work) at www.throughtheroof.org/international-blogs

Meet our new regional co-ordinators

Introducing Brenda

Hi everyone, I'm Brenda Murray, the new **Roofbreaker Co-ordinator for London, East and Southeast of England**. I am a former Probation Officer with additional experience working with children, families, and education.

I have a degree in Criminal Justice and a master's degree in Coaching Psychology. I am passionate about social justice and believe that everyone should have the options and opportunities to flourish, which is why I am very excited about the co-ordinator role and really look forward to connecting with people.

My hope is to equip churches and Christian communities to fully involve disabled people. To also recognise and utilise their talents, gifts, and skills to enrich and be more inclusive within mission and ministry.

I would appreciate prayers for God's guidance to enable us to serve and empower people to achieve their God-given purpose in disability ministry – to bring the good news of the coming of Christ kingdom, accessible to all, in word and deed!

To quote Joni Eareckson Tada: "Each one of us is God's special work of art. Through us, he teaches & inspires, delights, and encourages, informs, and uplifts all those who view our lives."



Hello from Jess

Hi, I'm Jess Poole and I'm the new **Roofbreaker Co-ordinator for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Northern England**.

I'm so excited to be working with TTR and meeting everyone! My background is in children, youth and family ministry in which I've had the privilege to work with many wonderful children and young people, all who have taught me something about God.

I am also currently working with the URC Synod of Scotland as their Children's Ministry Development Worker, where the focus is on intergenerational and inclusive church.

I'm really looking forward to working with Roofbreakers and enabling disabled people to feel not only included in their churches, but that they have a Christian family where they belong, sharing their gifts and talents to further the Kingdom of God.

Your prayers for this role are greatly appreciated, especially for God's guidance and for more people to be moved to become Roofbreakers.



A new role for Katie

As mentioned in the last issue, Katie Mobbs, formerly our Outreach Co-ordinator, has now enlarged her role, and become our **Roofbreaker Team Leader and Co-ordinator for Wales, West and Southwest England**.

The vision is that every church in the UK will have a Roofbreaker. If your church does not yet have one, please do pray and consider it – you don't need to be an expert in disability: you just need to be available to connect with disabled people in your church. Find out more about Roofbreakers by visiting our website www.throughtheroof.org

We thank God for Roofbreakers and pray that He will guide this new phase of the project.



**“I’m proud of this wheelchair.
It has helped me so much.”**



Lazarus from Kenya told us that his mother had to carry him in a wooden chair on her back to get to school and home again! Now, with this wheelchair, he’s made new friends and plans to become a lawyer to help other disabled people!

Could you inspire others like Lazarus to fulfil their dreams with the gift of a wheelchair and a Bible in their own language?

As the costs of materials, flights and shipping increase, your prayers and financial support are vital to help us continue this work. Please use this form to donate or scan the QR code below to give online. Thank you!



**Scan the QR code
for a direct link
to our donation page**

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

01372 749955 www.throughtheroof.org

All About Wheels

Over 100 million people in the world need a wheelchair but don't have access to one. A report from the Wheelchair Foundation found that less than 10% of people who require a wheelchair in developing countries have access to one.* Most of these people don't have the money or opportunity to buy one. Through the Roof's Wheels for the World programme restores and distributes donated wheelchairs to people in developing countries, giving disabled recipients increased independence and demonstrating the love of God in a practical way. You can find out more at www.throughtheroof.org.

(*<https://www.wheelchairfoundation.org/fth/analysis-of-wheelchair-need>)

Please return this form to:

Through the Roof, Alpha House, Alpha Place, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4TQ **01372 749955**

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Other Ways to Give

Please visit www.justgiving.com/ttr to donate directly and securely online, and reference 'Wheels Donation'. To donate by bank transfer, use **A/C 00008105, sort 40-52-40** and reference 'Wheels' so your gift goes to Wheels for the World. Do let us know if you do this, so we can claim gift aid and keep you informed about the good work you're making possible. Or call us on **01372 749955** or email info@throughtheroof.org