



from TORCH TRUST

Introduction to Sight Loss Sunday





What is Sight Loss Sunday?

Sight Loss Sunday is an initiative from Torch Trust. It has three main purposes:

- To raise awareness of the prevalence of sight loss in church and local community, and the need for churches to be aware and inclusive of blind and partially sighted people.
- To introduce churches to Torch's Sight Loss Friendly Church initiative to enable them to receive ongoing advice and support.
- To encourage Christians to nurture the unique gifts, talents and abilities that blind and partially sighted people can bring to church life.

At Torch, we believe that all blind and partially sighted people have a valuable part to play in churches and Christian communities, and Sight Loss Sunday is designed to equip you to live out these values in your own congregation.

This year Sight Loss Sunday falls on 15th October 2023, following on from the previous Thursday's World Sight Day. In 2023, Sight Loss Sunday coincides with White Cane Awareness Day (which always falls on the 15th of October). Because sight loss is marked in so many ways by the secular world, we wanted to provide a Christian response to raise awareness of sight loss in churches and Christian communities.

This is the third year we're marking Sight loss Sunday and we have a wide range of resources you may use to celebrate it in your church. The first set, created in 2021, is themed around 'Is Seeing Believing?' and focuses on the many and various gifts people with sight loss have which can be used to enrich their church. The second set of resources, from 2022, is themed around 'Made in God's Image' and focuses on how blind and partially sighted people are as unique and valuable as everyone else. Both sets of resources can be found at torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church/slsunday2/

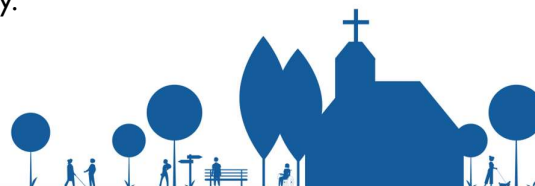
Both sets of resources contain everything you need to create a service with a focus around sight loss. You may use as few or as many of these resources as is appropriate for your church. Please feel free to pick and choose from both sets to suit your own situation and needs.

There is no one with sight loss in the congregation – can we still observe Sight Loss Sunday?

Yes – Sight Loss Sunday is for all churches, irrespective of whether or not there are people with sight loss in the congregation.

However, as RNIB estimates that approximately 20% of any given community will experience sight loss in their lifetimes, it is extremely likely that at least one person in your church will have sight loss, although it may not be obvious and the person may not have made you aware of it.

We would encourage you to use Sight Loss Sunday as an opportunity to think about how your church would respond if a blind or partially sighted person came to visit or started to attend regularly.



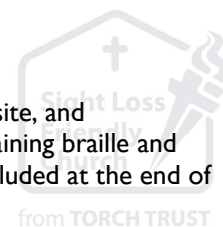
We would also encourage you to contact your local sight loss agency and invite them to attend and promote your service. For more information about sight loss agencies in your area please contact Torch Trust.

Make your Sight Loss Sunday service accessible

Even if blind or partially sighted people aren't involved in the service directly, they will still want to participate as a member of the congregation. There are a few things you can do to make this as smooth an experience as possible:

- Designate one or two volunteers as sighted guides, to be available for blind and partially sighted guests. 'Practical Guiding Tips' is available to download at torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church/slfc-benefits/#slfc-resources
- If you prepare an order of service and/or notice sheet and the person with sight loss can read large print, enlarge it for them. Remember to ask what size of print they need before doing so, and take account of any other special requirements such as choice of font, bold text or coloured paper. Alternatively, you could offer to send the order of service and/or notice sheet by email. 'Making your Newsletters accessible' is available to download at torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church/slfc-benefits/#slfc-resources
- If you project information on screens, offer to produce a paper or email copy as above. 'Preparing materials for people with sight loss' is available to download at torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church/slfc-benefits/#slfc-resources
- If you sing from a hymn book, obtain a large print or braille copy. We have made some hymn/worship song suggestions for each theme. These are available for

download on our website, and information about obtaining braille and large print books is included at the end of these documents.



- If your service involves actions such as sitting, standing or coming forward for communion, ask someone to offer to sit alongside blind and partially sighted guests and tell them when these actions are taking place.
- If there is a social time or refreshments after the service, ensure blind and partially sighted people are included and introduced to others. 'Guide for after the service' is available to download at torchtrust.org/sight-loss-friendly-church/slfc-benefits/#slfc-resources

Send Us Your Stories!

We hope you will find Sight Loss Sunday beneficial. If you intend to observe it, we would be very grateful if you would send us your stories and feedback. Contact SLFC@torchtrust.org

You're not limited to using these resources on Sight Loss Sunday itself, but they're here any time you may want to include them.

We hope you enjoy these resources and that they will enrich your church.

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Equipping churches to enable blind and partially sighted people to contribute to church life..