

# Our Stories



## Our Mission:

To encourage, inspire and resource churches to welcome people with learning disabilities and autism and tell them about Jesus.

# Acknowledgements



Prospects Across Scotland is very grateful to **The Bishop Radford Trust** for making it possible to produce this booklet which has given people with learning disabilities an opportunity to share their faith.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who agreed to share their faith story with us through this booklet and to everyone who supported them to do so.

You created the deepest parts of my being.  
You put me together inside my mother's body.  
How you made me is amazing and wonderful.  
I praise "you for that.  
what you have done is wonderful".

**Psalm 139, verses 13-14 of the  
New International Reader's Version of the Holy Bible**

## ‘Jesus loves me this I know’

It has been my privilege to worship alongside so many folks with learning disabilities and to learn from them as well as hearing about and witnessing their faith stories.

Sometimes we may say that people with learning disabilities have a simple faith – they seem to me to have it just right – trust and obey for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus.

In this booklet you will be able to read about 12 people with learning disabilities from around Scotland – all unique and special with gifts and talents to share to build up the church and to encourage others. They have found love and genuine friendship in our groups and churches as well as opportunities to hear the wonderful gospel message in a way that is understandable and relevant to them.

Of course, people with learning disabilities want to receive all that church communities can give to enrich their lives, but they also have so much they want to contribute to church life – they are a full part of the body, and their beautiful gifts are needed. Someone said that a church that fails to include disabled people is itself disabled, which is so true.

Those gifts include:-

- Being brilliant welcomers
- Speaking to others about Jesus
- Giving someone a smile just at the right time
- Worshipping with freedom and exuberance
- Praying
- Cleaning the church
- Teaching Makaton
- Being themselves – the people God created.

People have come to know Jesus – sometimes as a child and sometimes later – what a joy for them to be in churches who nurture them in their faith so they can grow as Christian men and women.

I hope and pray you enjoy reading this booklet and will be encouraged by it. Please also think about how your church can be part of the Prospects Across Scotland mission:-

***To encourage, inspire and resource churches to welcome people with learning disabilities and autism and tell them about Jesus.***

Get in touch if we can help.

We hope to have some of the people in this booklet telling their story on our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@prospectsacrossscotland6425>

This will take time so please keep checking.

Ivy Blair, Management Coordinator



**Meet: Michael**



**Group: WoW in Kennoway**



**Church: St Kenneth's, Kennoway**

I first went to church in Livingston where I was in the Sunday School and Boys Brigade – I enjoyed shining my belt and shoes.

Later my family moved to Kennoway where I am a member of St Kenneth's church. I love the church – it feels like home to me, and God is always there for me. I'm on the Welcome Team and a church cleaner – doing the Hoovering and dusting every Thursday. Sometimes I pray in the service.

I go to the WoW group with my girlfriend – I love singing and Makaton signing and hearing about God. I like to pray for others – prayer makes the world a better place.

I have Down syndrome and that is good – my disability makes me feel special.

I go to the Prospects coffee mornings on Zoom and that helps me make new friends. At the Prospects choir I love to sing – I was born to be a singer.

Jesus is a gentleman, a good man and it's good to follow him. I pray to him a lot at home, and I take my wee cross out with me to remind me to be bold and strong.

I wish I could see Jesus and give him a cuddle.







**Meet: Lori**



**Group: Precious Gems on Zoom**



**Church: Bethany Evangelical,  
Dumfries**

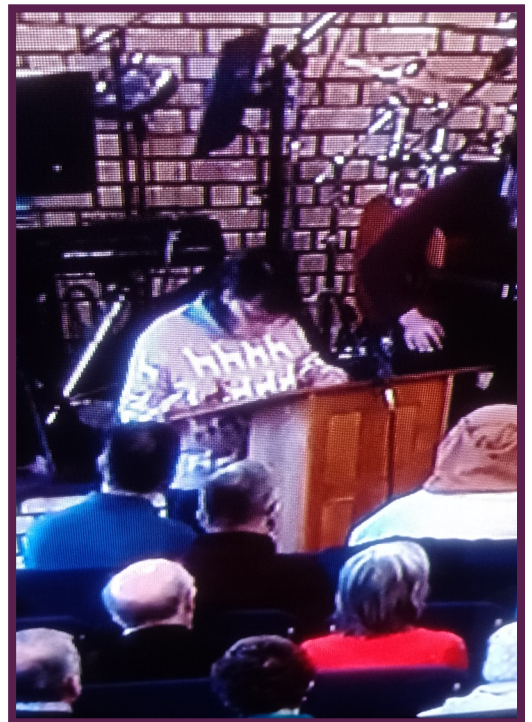
I came to know Jesus through a visiting man speaking at the Bible Truth church when I came back to Scotland from Australia.

I asked my own pastor what did I need to do to have Jesus in my heart. He took me in another room to pray. After speaking to me, the pastor asked did I mean it and I said, “Yes”.

I went to the church and got to know the family more and meet other people, as I wanted to meet people my age. After a while I started to understand what was being said about Jesus in small bits. One day a speaker was talking about why Jesus died on a cross for my sins and it reminded me of why I came to Jesus.

I attend Bethany Evangelical church and enjoy going to gatherings with other Christian people. It has helped me to learn more about Jesus being in Prospects Precious Gems group and going to their Bible Buddies Zoom group. I enjoy getting to see all my friends in Prospects, from all over Scotland, via the Zoom and learning the Bible stories in an easier and simpler way, for those with learning disabilities.

My favourite hymn is ‘Because He Lives’.





**Meet: Douglas**



**Group: Praise Pals, Kilwinning**



**Church: St Margaret's Parish Church,  
Dalry**

This is a picture of me in my church, St Margaret's, Dalry. I was christened in St Margaret's and it is very special to me. I love my church and all my friends there. I go to church every Sunday. I am on the Social Committee and help with teas after the service on a Sunday. I also help with the Care and Share Lunch on a Monday and I am on the Messy Church Team.

I love hearing about Jesus, singing and praying for all my family and friends. Jesus is my friend and he walks with me and I trust Him. I also enjoy all my Prospects online meetings and meeting up with my friends at Praise Pals in Kilwinning. I enjoy going to Prospects Tulliallan Holiday Weekend with Mum and my friend Alison.







**Meet: Elizabeth**



**Group: Shining Stars**



**Church: Ayr & Prestwick**

My name is Elizabeth and I live in Prestwick which is on the west coast of Scotland. I like living there as it has a beach. I was born in a hospital in Germany as my dad was in the army and was posted there at the time.

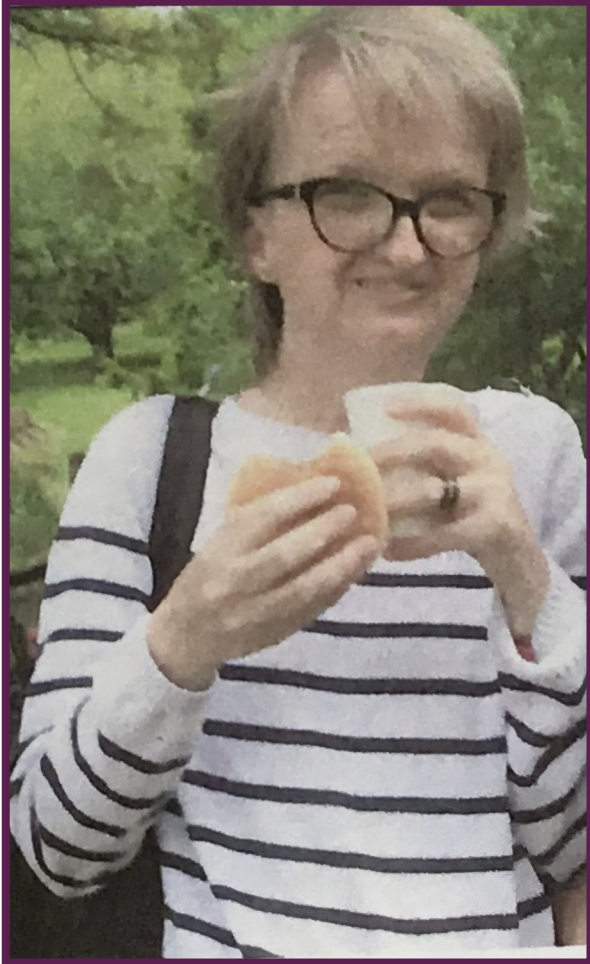
When I was younger I went to a special school in Irvine and then another special school in Kilmarnock. I can't say I have happy memories of school days.

I live with my parents. During the week I go to the library with my friend Tracy. We are part of a reading group. I also like to go to the swimming club. On a Wednesday evening Tracy and I go to Sutherland House where we meet lots of other people. There is a disco, craft room and coffee shop and also we can play pool.

My favourite TV programme is 'Vera'. I like how she dresses and would like a coat and hat like hers.

I enjoy going to Shining Stars. We meet once a month in Riverside Church Centre in Ayr. I have been going for 7 years but had to stop for a bit during lockdown. I like to have lunch with my friends and have a chat with everyone. We sing praises to God and sometimes I have a dance. One of my favourite songs is our theme song 'We are here together' but I also like 'I will make you fishers of men'. We are given a memory verse from the story and I always try to remember it for our next meeting. My favourite Bible story is the Good Samaritan.

I go to church regularly in Ayr and in Prestwick. I like to read a devotional from the Bible every day. Jesus is all powerful and I pray to God all the time. Sometimes some of the helpers from Shining Stars pray with me. I recently helped to plant a tree in memory of my friend who died and I said a prayer then.







**Meet: Ailsa**



**Group: Precious Gems on Zoom**



**Church: Bethany Evangelical,  
Dumfries**

I was born and lived in Halifax with Mum, Dad, three older brothers and a younger sister. We attended church and Sunday school growing up and then youth activities.

Mum and Dad were doctors and we moved to South Africa then back to the UK. Dad was then a minister for ten years and when they retired we moved to the Borders of Scotland. I moved with them and then later to be nearer my brother.

In Dumfries I met a lady at the Community Centre Group and she invited me to her church, Bethany Evangelical Church. I enjoyed meeting people and started going to the Sunday services and became part of the church family. I like it because it is friendly and you get good preaching from the Bible. I am on rotas for cleaning and teas and coffees after the service. I also take part in doing a reading in the service sometimes and sing a song with a few others at the front of the church. I go to the drop-in coffee morning on a Tuesday from 10 till 12.

We had a 'Friends together' gathering at the lady's flat weekly. Then later we joined Prospects Across Scotland as a group. In June 2020 when Covid lockdowns started we went on Prospects Zoom meeting as a group. I have learned more about Jesus in our Precious Gems monthly group and at Bible Buddies study group and enjoy the coffee mornings, drama and music groups which Prospects have on Zoom.

Thank you.







## **Meet: Lindsay**



## **Group: All Friends Together, Kinross**



## **Church: Kinross Church**

I was born on 10th August, 1973. I had a shunt put in my head to relieve pressure in my brain when I was 1 month old. Many people prayed for me. My mum thinks their prayers made me strong enough for the operation.

Lots of people prayed when I had further surgery and one day when guisers were at the door Jesus told me to get up and walk. My mum got a shock to see me there!

When we moved to Kinross-shire we joined Kinross Church. I played the piano for the collection song at Sunday School, and at 17, I joined the church with 3 others.

I have done over 130 flights gliding including a flight for charity. At pottery I made lots of things for friends and the Church Sale. I did horse carriage driving and wheelchair curling. Now I play Boccia. MAF and Air Ambulance are my favourite charities and I made pottery planes for both. I also did a trike ride for Christian Aid.

I have spoken at meetings and conferences. I did church leadership training with two elders. This helped me with praying. I am part of the church Welcome Team and the Minister's Sunday evening prayers.

I was part of Faith and Light and Prospects in Dunfermline. I wanted our own Prospects Group so I asked the minister. For nine years we have had All Friends Together and at our last gathering nearly 40 were at lunch. I do the welcome and play the piano for birthdays. I was on the committee of Scottish Churches Disability Group. I am also on our Church Accessibility Group. I love Prospects and go to many of their groups on Zoom





**My motto is if you  
want to do something**

**GO FOR IT!**





## Meet: David



## Group: Burntisland Prospects Group



## Church: Glenrothes, Burntisland & Kinghorn

Hi everyone

I'm David and I live in Kinglassie in Fife. I go to Burntisland Prospects Group with my friend and housemate Matthew and our carers, and we also go to the Dunfermline group and sometimes to Kinross All Friends Together group.

I have been going to Prospects groups for nearly 25 years. I like to meet friends there and learn about Jesus. We have YouTube videos and activities and Bible stories. I like to use my Makaton signing in the songs.

I have always gone to Church since I was a baby. My dad is a retired minister. My favourite part is the worship songs, especially when it's the band. When I really feel the music I do my best to sing along. I love to watch 'Songs of Praise' on tv as well. At the end of the service when dad got to the benediction I often used to shout Amen!

I like being part of the church and Prospects and getting to know everyone. Matthew and I often bump into people from Church when we are in the shops or on a walk and they always say hello and stop for a chat.

My favourite job in my old churches used to be helping the elders sort the money to be counted. I also loved playing my djembe drum with the band in Burntisland church for a few years.

Matthew and I go to church in Glenrothes now, but every 3 weeks we come to my old church in Burntisland and Kinghorn, when they have a relaxed and family-friendly service called Chilled Church. I can see old friends and my family there and there are fun activities that Matthew and I enjoy, as well as a cuppa and something nice to eat.

All our carers know Matthew and I love to go to Church and to our Prospects groups. I think they like taking us!







## **Meet: Rebekah**



## **Group: Friends of Jesus, Breich Valley**



## **Church: Livingston South Community**

Rebekah was baptised at Nicolson Square Methodist Church in Edinburgh and throughout childhood spent Sundays travelling around East Lothian, Edinburgh and Fife (Edinburgh and Forth circuit) as both her parents were Methodist local preachers. She took part in Sunday School along with her sisters and always enjoyed hymns and children's choruses. She attended confirmation classes with her elder sister Ruth and became a member of Livingston Ecumenical Parish in December 2008.

In 2009 Rebekah was a founding member of SPRED Livingston encouraged by local priest Father Jeremy Bath. Over the years she formed lovely relationships with her catechists, particularly enjoying the sharing of food and the farewell 'Shalom' song at the end of each meeting.

Rebekah's life of worship was further expanded when she joined her local Prospects Across Scotland, 'Friends of Jesus' at Breich Valley Church in 2012. She takes part in craft activities using stickers and gluing/stamping craft materials and uses a BIGmack communicator to offer a Bible reading during worship.

Since 2013 Rebekah has been a member of her local church, Livingston South Community Church, where she is very well known by her church family. She enjoys clapping and rocking during worship when she recognises old hymns that she has known for many years. She likes the social time after services sitting round the table with friends, listening to the chat.

Rebekah has Down syndrome, autism and a profound learning disability so it is challenging to understand what Jesus means to her but sharing worship with her brothers and sisters in Christ in many different ways has enabled her to feel part of God's family and be accepted as one of God's children. The words of a Prospects song come to mind - 'God loves you just the way you are'.







**Meet: Neil**



**Group: Celebration Group**



**Church: Deeside Christian Fellowship**

When I was a wee boy I went to Sunday School at Brightons Church. I also went to the Anchor boys - I wore a red jumper.

When I was a bit older, I went to a Bible class at the Methodist church but my really big adventure was going to SU holiday at Pitlochry. It was the first time I went on holiday on my own – I went there twice I think and had lots of fun – Jesus was there. We did some sports, and I remember I fell in the loch when we went canoeing. Everyone laughed and so did I – I’m a great swimmer.

I went to Lourdes on an aeroplane – Edd the Duck came too. I was baptized at the People’s Church in Falkirk – when I came up out of the water everyone was clapping and cheering – I liked that – it made me feel special.

On Sunday I go to Deeside Christian Fellowship Church – and I play in the band sometimes – then we go out to the Celebration group for a Bible story, and to sing – I like to pray. Church is important to me – I love the people there and they love me. They pray for me when I am in hospital. I have good friends at church. I like talking to everyone after church and getting hugs.

Sometimes we have bread and wine at Church – it’s very special and we have it to remember that Jesus gave his life for us. He died on a cross but he’s alive now.

What do I think about Jesus? He gives me joy, joy, joy down in my heart. One of my favourite songs is ‘He’s got the whole world in his hands’ – when we sing it makes me feel safe. God’s got me in his hands – that’s good.







## Meet: Hazel



**Group: Friends of Jesus Group,  
Brightons**



**Church: Redding and Westquarter  
Parish Church**

Hi, I'm Hazel and I live in Redding, Falkirk.

I have gone to Redding & Westquarter Parish Church with my mum since I was a little girl. I went to Sunday School there. I also went to Brownies in Westquarter and enjoyed it too.

I enjoyed chatting to everyone at church and used to help with the teas and coffees after the service. I sometimes help with the collection and giving out hymn books.

I love listening to music and enjoy the Prospects CD, I like to sing along to it.

I really enjoy going to Friends of Jesus Group in Brightons and other Prospects events like the Annual Celebration and Christmas services.

At Friends of Jesus group I take the register as people come in. I have lots of friends there and we have a good time. We always learn something from the Bible about Jesus and we do games and some acting. I like to play Jesus when we do dramas. I like when I am asked to do a reading from the Bible or a prayer.

I always have my Bible with me wherever I go. I read my Bible in my room a lot and I like to listen to services on the radio. I like to tell other people about the Bible too. If I am feeling stressed or upset about something, it makes me feel better when I read the Bible or if people haven't been nice to me it makes me feel better reading about Jesus.

I like to talk to Jesus and pray in my room.







## Meet: Tracy



## Group: Shining Stars



## Church: St Meddan's, Troon

Hi there, my name is Tracy. I live in Troon but was born in Irvine Central Hospital.

I like living in Troon because I can go for walks on the beach and I sometimes help with litter picking. When I was younger I played games with my friends like skipping and hide and seek.

I enjoyed going to Primary School but not Secondary School so I went back to a special school in Ayr called Rosebank. I liked it there as it had a swimming pool and I love to swim. I got badges for swimming and also for Beavers.

I live by myself which I like but sometimes my neighbours are a problem. During the week I help in a charity shop, I also attend groups at Sutherland House in Ayr where I do different things and I really like my aquatrim classes at Troon swimming pool.

I like to watch the 'soaps' on TV particularly 'Corrie' and 'Emmerdale' but I also particularly like 'Vera'.

I go to a group which meets in Riverside Church Centre in Ayr. I started to attend in 2018 and we meet once a month. It is called Shining Stars. I go with my friend Elizabeth but I also meet other friends there. We always have lunch to start then sing and learn a story from the Bible. Towards the end we spend time in smaller groups called Buddy Groups when we do things like crafts, crosswords or word searches about the story. We always have some prayers. I don't often pray but if there was something really important happening in my life I would. I go to a church in Troon called St Meddan's and when I was young I attended the Sunday School there.







**Meet: Graeme**



**Group: JAM (Jesus and Me)**



**Church: Inchinnan Parish Church**

My name is Graeme, I am 33 I will be 34 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September. I go to the JAM (Jesus And Me) group in Erskine. I have always gone to church with my mum sometimes. I loved Sunday School although I was sometimes a bit distracted. Mum's favourite story to tell was during the nativity play I pick up baby Jesus and gave him a kiss, she said it was very cute.

I wanted to join the church. Our minister Ann came and chatted to me about loving Jesus. It was a lovely service and lots of people cried, I didn't. We had a party after the service as it was Easter. I was born far too early and very poorly and Mum said everyone in church prayed and asked after me all the time. I guess that's why we call it our church family and I'm very lucky I have loads of people who care for me in church.

When JAM started, I loved it. They told bible stories in a way I could understand. We sometimes act out the stories, one day I was King David. We pray in a way that's easy for me, we even play games to help us understand the story. We sing lots of songs, my favourite is 'Welcome Everybody'. At the end of our worship, we have tea, coffee and cakes.

Loving Jesus is important to me as he was a very kind person and he died for us. I'm so lucky to have my church family at Inchinnan church and also my JAM family who I know all love me the way Jesus does.



*Left: Graeme joining the church*







Jesus is Central Everyone matters

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