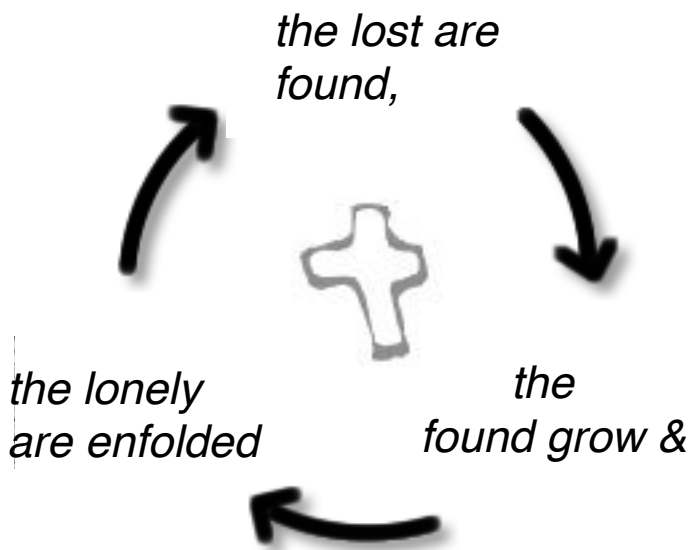


# Confirmation Stories

2018



*As God's family our calling is that with Jesus,*



# Caroline Ayre

I was born in Cudworth, Barnsley. My earliest memory is waking up, the whole house was silent, and I was playing with the balls on the cot. I began to sense God mainly through my Aunt Penny and cousins when I was younger. In 2015 my aunt took me to church. During the talk I thought she had told the Vicar all about my life and was annoyed, because I didn't know then that God speaks to you through his word! God started to ease his way in gently a few years ago and it started with a vision/dream before I became a Christian.

I feel most peaceful and sense God's presence in worship at church, out on the beach with my kids, when I'm with other Christians i.e. at Joyce's Bible study, and in my home when I spend time with God. I love creative writing and enjoy digging and planting down the allotment! I do love practising clarinet with my daughter, but must get a new guitar because I miss playing it.

I felt drawn to do Alpha after being saved on October 17th, 2017. My hunger to learn more was huge. Alpha was the next step on my journey, learning who I am in Christ. Being baptised and confirmed is symbolic to me of the death of the past and start of my new life.

I'm ready to take this next step; I can't wait! I love Jesus, I want to show this and also washing away of the old sins and things done to me, and start fresh. To show the church, my family and God I am born again and not ashamed. Before Christ I was truly lost and in the dark. I feel so blessed to know God and now I am found. I'm far from perfect, but everything is a choice now the Holy Spirit lives in me, whereas before it wasn't a choice.

I was caught up in a really difficult, dark and lonely place and cried out to God and asked him into the whole of my life and change it and it did! through the encouragement, and prayer of my close friends, I just saw things more clearly a bit at a time. I knew what was dark and what was light and really began my growth journey. Christians against Poverty was a great help in my clearing my debt and enjoying a new freedom.

Now I know God, I am not anxious, people have noticed changes in me I didn't even notice. I had no confidence, I didn't like myself at all. Now I do. I know I'm a child of God wonderfully made. I feel blessed to have my family in Christ, and I thank God for all my experiences good and bad, because I know God will use them through my life to help other people.

# Fiona Bottomley

I was born in Leeds, but I've grown up and spent the rest of my life in Woolley. My earliest memory is going to the park as a young child with my older cousins and being pushed on the swings, watching my brothers playing football.

Having been brought up in a Christian family I've always attended church and had an understanding of the faith, however, never particularly felt a strong connection with God until a year or two ago. It was during a church service, one Sunday, when I looked around and noticed the happiness and glow in everyone's faces around me, whilst singing and praising God. I realised the power that God had in each and everyone's lives, each person had an individual circumstance yet was so happy and joyous in that moment, praising and thanking God. Seeing this had such an impact, that I too felt the presence of God and became overwhelmed with all sorts of emotions – I started crying and laughing at the same time!

I experience God's presence when outside, sitting surrounded by nature on a summer's day. Everything is so peaceful - the birds singing, the flowers bright and colourful– it seems the best medicine for a calm and peaceful mind. An important aspect of the Holy Spirit, for me, is that of tranquillity – when I am surrounded by this, I feel the presence of God's Holy Spirit the strongest.

I love being creative. I enjoy baking, sewing and all sorts of other crafts – basically anything where I'm getting stuck in with my hands! I also love playing hockey; it's not only a time of fitness and competition, but also a time spent with friends, working together as a team.

My mum decided to come and support some friends who wanted to experience Alpha. It was then suggested that I come along. I decided to come and see what it was like – admittedly I was unsure at first! I quickly learned, however, that it was a good opportunity to find out more about my faith in order to deepen and strengthen it.

I decided to join the journey to Confirmation as I believe that it is something that would show my commitment and faith in God. During the Alpha course, I saw and listened to many witnesses where God influenced their lives – in how he helped them in many various and amazing ways. It helped me to strengthen and deepen my faith and realise that I wanted to show my faith in God, I wanted to thank him for

everything he's done to help all those around and myself. I saw confirmation as a way of showing this love for him.

When I first started Alpha, I'm afraid to say that I was sceptical. I didn't feel comfortable about opening up and talking about something as intimate as my faith. However, during the course of Alpha I realised that talking about God is important and isn't scary in any way – instead it's uplifting and in a way quite relieving to sometimes hear how some people may have similar doubts to myself. It made me realise that Christianity isn't black and white, that it's good to have different thoughts and interpretations, as that's what makes us all diverse and unique.

## Hannah Buck

I was born in London but grew up in Yorkshire. My earliest memory is at St Helen's when I was about 7 and refusing to go to Sunday school. Also, I vaguely remember attending Tehilla, the children's choir. I sensed God in my life when I was in year 5. I moved to a Roman Catholic primary school and have been in a Catholic school ever since. If that hadn't have happened, I would not have met any of the amazing friends or teachers I have met. I strongly believe that God planned for that to happen so I would become the person I am today.

I feel most peaceful and can sense the presence of God's Holy Spirit when I get to school at 7:00 every morning before any of the teachers or other students arrive and go to the study. It is always completely silent which gives me the time to think and reflect on my life and how powerful God must be to have acted to create the amazing world in which we live.

I am not a very creative person and I don't do very much exercise. I like reading when I have the time, baking and then eating it, and listening specifically to songs from musicals. Alpha was a way to learn more about God in preparation for baptism and confirmation so now I feel more ready to follow God and trust Him in my path for life.

Ever since I moved to a Catholic School, I have learned so much about God and Christianity. I have been thinking of getting baptised and confirmed for a while and in a year I will hopefully be going to university so I may never have the chance to do it in the future. I feel, at this point in my life, that I am ready to commit to God.

## Louisa Buck

I was born in London and my earliest memory is myself and my twin sister (Hannah) being terrified of Bear in the Big Blue House. We would always hide behind the door when he sniffed the screen.

I sensed God in my life when I was 14 and I spent a week at a Catholic summer camp. They put music on and we just stood and prayed. I felt an overwhelming sense of peace, and it felt like there was a much larger power. That feeling has stayed with me for years.

I feel most peaceful and can sense the presence of the God's Spirit when I have challenged myself to overcome an obstacle by facing it head-on, I feel so peaceful because I have overcome a barrier, and I know God has given me the courage to do so.

I enjoy reading, watching *Holby City*, and learning (particularly about biology).

Having spent 6 years at Catholic schools, I learnt so much about God. I wanted to deepen my understanding and learn more.

I will (hopefully) be starting university in a year, and I figured that I might never get the opportunity (or be in the position to take it) for a long while. I also believe that God has had a massive influence on how I've lived my life in the past few years, so now felt like the right time.

## Craig Fallis

Thinking about my life journey over the years I've experienced a sense of '*something*' at work in my life. This became real to me when I began to attend Chapel services at Fieldhead. The first service I went to was Holy Communion. It was then that I found myself giving out hymn books and saying hello to those who came to the service. A few Sundays later I was taking home the Purificators and Corporals, (to you and me that means altar cloths), used during Holy Communion to launder them. This is a bigger job than many might think.

Over the many months of attending Chapel services at Fieldhead I have found that '*something*' at work in my life was the presence of God. I now felt I belonged. This led me to go to St Helen's Church to take part in their Alpha Course and to confirm my faith in the love of God.

# Elliot Greenwood

Life began on Thursday 27th September 2001 in Wakefield, it was a typically autumnal day (so I am told). My earliest memory in life was being with my child minder at a soft play area. I must have been about 3 years old, where I climbed what seemed to be the highest point ever, which was in fact a slightly inclined ramp. I truly believe my obsession of adventure and exploration began from a very young age. For some reason it felt very good to explore and climb. A possible tone setter for the rest of my life.

A family tradition for us all was to attend church each Sunday and my Grandmother took me to Children's Church every week at the Barnabas rooms and I grew up believing that God was present and watched over our family life.

I can sense the presence of the God's Holy Spirit just below Whitby on the North Yorkshire coast, where there is a small area of beach called Ravenscar. The climb down to the rocks is very technical and challenging. This makes the experience all the more special - I love the freedom the shore gives.

My passion for sport and adventure brings out my competitive personality. The one thing I love apart from cricket is the contact element of playing football. Battling to achieve something, even as small as a football, has taught me resilience and helps me to succeed in adversity. My thirst for challenge has immensely impacted upon my life. I have ambitions to climb some of Europe's most beautiful mountains.

I was drawn to do the Alpha Course and begin the journey to Confirmation when my grandparents had a car accident three years ago and I witnessed first-hand the effect that faith had in aiding my grandmother's swift recovery. Experiences throughout my life have led me on the pathway to wanting to have Jesus more into my life. I am sure there are going to be challenges ahead for me, but I am confident that my faith will help me and deal with these in a mature & thoughtful way.

I am fortunate to have I secured the opportunity in the summer of 2019 to attend the 24th World Scout Jamboree in West Virginia USA. It is being held at the Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve. The Jamboree aims to bring people of all faiths, of all backgrounds and of all nationalities together in one place. I am currently fundraising £4,000 to enable scouts from developing countries the opportunity to attend this unique international adventure.

# Stefan Grieve

My name is Stefan Grieve, and like just about every human being who has ever lived, I have been on a journey, a journey that sometimes involved pain and darkness. But there has been light. And I am choosing to try my best to follow more of that light, that love, in the form of God, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. I doubt, many times, but there have also been many times along my journey where I believe I have been guided to this enlightened point, However large or small the sign or enlightenment.

In the past I have dwelt in misery and darkness and focused upon it, and sometimes that turns up now and again still. But I have learnt the way is forward, with love, compassion and wise understanding. Those things are those that I have gleaned on my journey of being a Christian so far. With all the support, love and grace I have been shown at St Helens, that has helped make my choice easier. That is my hope. My heart. My story. Thank you.

## **Church family**

*Dedicated to St Helens*

To have a family  
Not just one in blood  
But in spirit  
Beneath a church roof  
Within it  
Fills me with joy

For the flow that connects me  
And a wisdom that corrects me  
Has built upon my character  
Has helped a heart so full of space  
Be filled with a more incandescent grace

To be part of the church body  
And to be more separate from my folly  
I can only say with honest faith  
I'm thankful for my newfound place.



# Ross Knowles

Hi I was born 17/9/1965. I had a good childhood and remember my brother Steven picking me up from school and helping me like a second father. From six I had to walk home on my own as my Mum worked. This was ok then, but as a young lad I explored and climbed onto a house, I slipped and fell really badly. I broke my arm but also knocked my head which meant that from then on there was damage to my brain and I had to write with my other hand. I was in hospital for 12 months and couldn't go to school. I wanted to learn but was told to play with toys. All my school life I struggled, I was so frustrated and I couldn't catch up. My school life was horrible so I got really good at sport playing football and rugby really well. I was a sports instructor and a sergeant in the TA paras. I married and had two beautiful children but after 23 years felt badly let down and so angry that it had gone wrong.

I had another awful accident when I had moved on in my life and was working in Peterborough. My back is totally debilitating and with many things going wrong I ended up homeless and with nothing. My kind sister Nancy gave me a home until I could get a council bungalow. Being on my own was strange and so lonely, I had so much time to think and my depression got worse. I could not think right and didn't see much of my children but I would always pray to my Lord for help. I was going to a church in Ossett, but one day Sarah Cutts from Christians Against Poverty came into my life. She came with so much compassion and helped sort out all the debt I had been left with. CAP helped me be able to take control of my life and finances again. She also introduced me to St Helen's with Rupert and Sally. I have joined the Choir and also been hungry to learn from the Bible. The frustration of my childhood and school is beginning to be fed with God's word. I did the Alpha course to learn more and recognised my spiritual pathway was learning and understanding and that brings me closer to the Lord.

This is not an easy journey and depression has meant I have felt like taking my life but I went to the window and talked to the Lord to give me a sign for me to carry on my life. The next day I walked past my bedroom door and a voice talked to me "Ross it is not your time to die it is your time to preach." So I am taking that as it is my time to tell my story, to learn and grow as a Christian. I am very interested in science as well. I wanted to get baptised and confirmed now because God talks to me and I know he loves me as I do him.

# Amanda Matthews

If God exists, then why has my life been so bad? is a question I used to ask myself all the time. Someone once said to me; We are all like a clay pot with all its imperfections. Let the love and light of Jesus shine through the cracks. But I couldn't go to church could I? How could God love me? I was a sinner.

Then in 2011, I was invited to go to a church in Wakefield. I instantly felt an over whelming sense of love and warmth. (Something I wasn't used to feeling.)

As my love for Jesus grew, I gave my life to Him in October, 2011 and was baptised in January 2012. My life changed and I began to love God more and more. Then in February 2017 I stopped going to church and began walking my own path, leaving God behind. I got myself into debt and when my youngest daughter left for University in September 2017, I felt I had nothing left to live for. I isolated myself from everyone, my friends, family and even my children.

A few weeks later, I plucked up the courage to 'phone Christians against Poverty where I received help and support through the money course. Sarah, Janet and Sally-Anne all invited me to St Helen's the following week. I have been attending St Helen's for 8 months now and I love it. My relationship with God is growing again and I am enjoying doing Kid's church with my Grand daughter every other week. I am also part of a very small and intimate house group and have gained many friends within the church family and from the Alpha Course.

I would just like to thank everyone who has journeyed these last few months with me and supported me this far.

*"But as for me, I will sing about your power.  
Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love,  
for you have been my refuge,  
a place of safety when I am in distress.  
O my Strength, to you I sing praises, for you,  
O God, are my refuge,  
the God who shows me unfailing love."*

Psalm 59:16-17

# Jonathan Perrott

I was born in Hereford in England. My earliest memory is looking at tractors out of the window.

God has been in my life since I was small. This is because I grew up in a Christian family, so I don't actually remember when I sensed him in my life.

I sense the presence of God's Holy Spirit, fishing on my two favourite estuaries in South Africa. My favourite hobbies are Fishing, hockey, squash, flying and Remote Controls.

I have been wanting to be confirmed for a while, so Alpha was the perfect thing. It felt like the right time to take this stepping stone of faith, and also because we had just moved here it was also a nice way to meet new people and get to know the church a bit.

# Ann Dobson

Wear the belt of Truth buckled around your waist  
And the breastplate of Righteousness in place.  
Wear the helmet of Salvation upon your head,  
Your feet fitted with the Gospel of Peace to spread.

The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit,  
Hold the shield of Faith and pray every minute.  
Fearlessly declare the Gospel of the Lord,  
Remember his teachings and pass on His Word.

Always speak the Truth and resist temptation,  
Hold fast to your Faith it will bring you salvation.  
Extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one  
And thank your Father in Heaven for sending his Son.

*This poem was inspired by Ann hearing Kerry on the Alpha Course describing how she puts on the armour of God every morning.*

Caroline Ayre, Sarah Bottomley, Hannah Buck, Louisa Buck,  
Craig Fallis, Stefan Grieve and Ross Knowles,  
**Baptised on June 16th, 2018 at**  
**Wakefield Baptist Church by**  
**The Revd Rupert Martin**

Caroline Ayre, Fiona Bottomley, Hannah Buck, Louisa Buck,  
Craig Fallis, Elliot Greenwood, Stefan Grieve, Ross Knowles,  
Amanda Matthews, Jonathan Perrott,  
**Confirmed on June 17th, 2018 at**  
**St. Helen's Church, Sandal by**  
**The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds**



For further information about the life of the Church  
in Sandal Magna Parish in the Diocese of Leeds  
visit our web-site, [www.sandalmagna.com](http://www.sandalmagna.com)  
or our Facebook page, **Sandal Magna Parish**.  
You can get in touch with us through the Parish Office,  
**01924 259966** or **sandalmagna@gmail.com**