

Confirmation Stories

2017



Craig Binns

About two years ago I walked through the doors of St Helen's church, I was visiting only to support my wife who struggles with the social aspect of life, due to her Aspergers. The moment that I entered the building I knew I was somewhere special. After the service as I sat having a cup of coffee, I turned to Karen and said; "Can we come back next week?". Not the words what Karen expected me to say, after all I was an atheist who didn't believe in anything at the time and would often unknowingly upset Karen with "so called atheist humour". She smiled at me and said; "Of course we can". The first step of my journey had begun.

Fast forward two years; here I am feeling confident enough in my learning to realise that I wanted to be baptised and accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour. It's been a long journey in a short time but through the weekly teachings in Church every question and doubt I had has been answered, I have made many awesome friends and now refer to these as my church family.

I'm currently doing the Alpha Course with Mick on a Wednesday afternoon; each and every week the doubts and questions I had are answered. I urge anyone and everyone to do this course, I have personally learned so much.

Also a special thanks to Rupert and Sally who have made my family and me feel so welcome. This parish is truly blessed to have this couple who are a true inspiration for everyone.

Joyce Bloomfield

My journey of faith started by an amazing sister in Christ who by just stopping me in Normanton and wholly trusting God spoke to me. Since that day I have been on a lot of spiritual highs that have never sustained me long enough. I realise now I was chasing after God at conferences, camps and church and not knowing how to have a personal relationship with Him. Through the ministry of Christians against Poverty, I have seen the love of God in action. Through a lot of Faith-filled people who have inspired, prayed and encouraged me to carry on with my journey of faith, even when I had stopped going to church. I am so blessed to have so many people in my life that have prayed for me. Being totally honest I had to keep saying the salvation prayer over and over again and again, as my life became bigger than God. My spirit knew it needed to change

and so did I. Then the day came when I had to cry out to God in prayer. Inspired by worship (Lifesong - Casting Crowns) on 25th June last year, my new journey began as I depended on God. With scripture, prayer and worship I became free from addiction to smoking and chaos in my life. It has been very emotional but so rewarding and I could not have done it without the love and support of the CAP Release group in church. I am forever changed, forever loved and forever thankful and I will Never Ever Ever stop talking about Jesus in my life. A scripture that means so much to me is Romans 12:1-2 in the Message version. A worship song I love is 'In over my head' by Jenn Johnson.

Ben Cutts

As a young boy, my earliest memories of enjoying school are of singing in assembly and scripture lessons.

My grandparents showed me a wonderful welcoming and graceful way of living as I lived with them for my first 8 years of life, together with my mum.

Interestingly my mum also chose biblical names for all five of us as brothers but when I was young we didn't go to church.

In 2002 however, when it came to choosing a place to marry Sarah, it was me digging my heels in and saying it must be in church – we married at Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds in November that year.

We also got Luca christened there 10 years ago and enjoyed attending church there together.

Later that year, we both visited St Helen's Church with Luca one Sunday and were overwhelmed with a) how much the church was doing in the community b) how welcoming everyone was and c) we were blessed with a lunch in the Emmaus Rooms. We left about 4 hours after arriving!

By 2009 we had brought Theo to be christened in Church and I was seeing Sarah bear witness to the amazing power of God's help in changing people's lives while she worked at Christians against Poverty Head Office in Bradford

In 2011, we went on our first Discovery Break (with CAP clients and families who haven't holidayed in years). At this break I felt the Holy Spirit in action through the way the entire team and clients were touched by the peace and love of God over that weekend. It was a blessing to be

part of this, seeing lives start to turn around, and we have been on several more breaks with CAP since then with the boys, as volunteers.

I also started an Alpha course around that time and appreciated the chance to ask all the difficult questions that nag away at you until you seek the answers and realise there is a spiritual side to life (which I had been largely ignoring until this time).

Since then I have attended House Group and must give credit to the whole group but especially Steve and Joss Thorndike, Caroline Rountree, Andy Chapman, Sally Anne Lewis and Anne & Brian Pratt for letting me be carried along with the group. Our “non-judgemental” sessions have been a real help to me in understanding some of the challenges we face together.

Of course, I must give most credit to my wonderful wife Sarah whose gift in helping others, patience and positivity are a shining beacon of God’s gifts bestowed upon us and can’t fail to inspire me. With the support of Sally and Rupert Martin at this amazing church, I am delighted to now be confirmed.

Ali Hardcastle

My journey so far - I was brought up in a Christian home and loved going to Sunday school and from a young age. Through my teenage years I drifted away from God.

Three years ago my husband and I did the Alpha course from the beginning I felt part of the family at St Helen’s and over time rebuilt my relationship with God. I am ready to take the next step with Jesus to dedicate my life to him and be cleansed of all my sins

Isaiah 12:2- *“Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord is my strength and my song; and he has become my salvation.”*

Laura Truter

Life without Jesus is a frightening thought, He has given me a new beginning and a new life.

Being in this church has given me the opportunity to get to know Him and how important I am to Him. I have always felt the need to go to church but never had the confidence to do so. It was only when I had my

little girl, Elena I found the courage to start my faith journey here at St. Helens. That was about two years ago. During Elena's baptism preparation meeting God's words spoke out to me, "*For I am fearfully and wonderfully made*". It really made me think deeply on how amazing our creator is and how comforting it is to know He is ever present. Hearing these words, prayers and studying with my loving Refresh/Alpha family has guided me into finding faith in Jesus. I am so blessed to have been adopted into God's family.

In a time of darkness I felt the hope of Jesus' presence and giving away my fears to God has set me free. Trusting in His plans and promises has saved me and I will praise and follow Him.

Sophie Hale

It's easy to look back on your life as a series of negatives. A broken home, bullying, abuse, self-harm, eating disorders and mental breakdowns.

At first I would wallow in my misfortune, crying: "Why me?" But now I am completing the toughest test which is to forgive the wrongs of my past and to turn terror into love; to turn blame into giving.

With my new faith-found eyes I can see how amazing my life has been and what I have overcome.

Where there was chaos at home, I brought peace. I stood up to the bullies, eventually, and stopped them in their tracks. I went to court to prevent other girls being abused. I now talk openly about self-harm and eating disorders in the hope of helping others.

And whilst life isn't perfect, my mental health is more stable with the help of church, my own little family and my safe home.

There has always been some inner strength that has guided me through. I grew up without religion, I was bitter and I thought to be a Christian you had to be 'perfect' -going to church in your Sunday best - when all I wanted to do was drink myself into oblivion.

Christianity wasn't for broken, sports-clothes-wearing, damaged goods like me. Now I realise though that it is for people like me and you.

And my faith has grown since becoming part of St Helen's attending Refresh, Families @ 4, and now the Alpha course. I am so thankful for my life, my faith and my family today. I have found my calling too which is to share my story through speaking out, blogging and film-making.

Andy Hodson

Everyone takes a different path to faith. My journey begins with my wife, Rachael, who attended the Alpha course and was confirmed here at St Helens a few years ago. My two daughters, Isabel and Emily, have brought into focus the true power of faith as we, as a family, have become part of the St Helen's Christian community.

For me, music is an integral part of my life and now part of my faith. Playing guitar in the worship band has shown me how much strength people draw from their faith and, in some small way, supporting this via song, has been both a spiritual and uplifting experience.

Working away from home means I very much value the time we spend together, as a family, at the weekends. Our time in church is an opportunity to reflect on what we have, to remember how blessed we are to have each other, and to recharge our 'life batteries' before taking on the world once again.

I recall Rupert reflecting one Sunday morning on the sense of community we enjoy as Christians. This is very important to me at a time when much of the world appears to be focusing on what divides us and not what unites us.

Stuart Lamb

I have long admired Rev Rupert Martin and my son Rev William Lamb who have dedicated their lives to God and the communities which they serve. They have both inspired me on my journey to Confirmation and whilst I have looked for more explanations in the past, I have come to realise that faith comes not from the head but from the heart and I want to demonstrate my beliefs through my Confirmation.

James Mullen

Being baptised as a child and brought up with Christian values my faith has always been in the background in my life. I never felt the motivation to explore my faith and beliefs until my early teenage years when my mental health deteriorated. I was 15 and became depressed and anxious about the gradual transition to adulthood. I was angry at life and blamed people as I was confused how my life had become this way. However, this dark part of my life influenced me to explore the idea of faith in

something that was bigger; this is when I found Jesus. I searched for a long time for answers, but when I had completed the Alpha course I felt a sense of understanding, belonging and satisfaction that I had never felt before and could not explain. Gradually, I felt the need to stop reading other philosophies and religions because I had started to accept the bible's messages and values. It was made clear to me that God wanted me to take on these values.

As I started attending Church regularly I met a community devoted to faith in God, friends, influences and inspirations for life. Even in times of doubt, with the encouragement of the Church community, my acceptance of Jesus as God grew stronger. As a result my prayer life thrived and my understanding of the bible became increasingly clear.

Two years ago I made a full recovery from my mental illnesses and would not be here today without God's guidance to my position of faith. Every day I become more aware of Jesus' presence in everyday life and now know that he was there all along.

Ever since, God has driven me to actively help others that have mental health issues and people that are struggling in faith or just generally. I am now more willing to give my time for the people that are struggling. Perhaps this was the reason for my illness, to give people my experience and to give me clear purpose in life, a new life of bearing my cross for God and others, while being nurtured, strengthened and supported by a community in wherever God leads me.

God found me and gave me grace and help to understand his message for me and I want to promise him that I will give back that same love that he gave me.

Catherine Rozanski

I didn't know my own strength...After being baptised soon after being born and then taking my holy communion at 8 years old, as my grandparents and aunts attended church regularly as practicing Catholics. But because my parents weren't involved I drifted away. Then after having my sons, I had them baptised in 1992. I started working full-time in 1993, became a single parent to 4 young sons (youngest twins) in 1994. Life was extremely tough as I was juggling bringing up my family, had just started working full-time in further education, was learning to drive, bought our family home, adding a two-storey extension and

beginning to establish a social life in 1996. All this with no support network.

Life was regimental & constant. For years, I thought, 'all I need is a good man'; I trusted the wrong guy and was thrown into major adversity, facing many tough years. This impacted greatly on my family. We lost our family home in 2009 and life became chaotic. Each time employment ended, my confidence plummeted becoming more broken and insecure. Unfortunately, needing the support of Christians against Poverty. My journey of faith began here. Sarah prayed with me. Thoughts of my church-life past started to creep into my dreams at night. The desire to return to faith became stronger and I had an empowering chat with Sally.

During the past 12 months, I have been invited on a two-day retreat, have since completed the Steps to Release course, successfully completed the Money course, currently attending the Alpha sessions, became part of an incredible House Group and I'm becoming actively involved in Families@4, looking forward to being involved in The Big Church Day Out 2017. For many years I have asked myself 'Why am I here?'. Now, I feel totally blessed.

The more I immerse myself into God's family my anxieties decrease. Praying constantly for Strength, Courage, Protection and Peace, I now have 'Hope' as The Lord watches over all who love him.

I thought that all I need is a good man, that 'good man' was already in our life. I'd become burnt out and was far too busy to see him walking beside me. I feel totally broken inside but by being confirmed at St Helen's represents new life and new beginnings. I've learned what Japanese pottery can teach us about feeling flawed (kintsukuroi: an art form where broken pieces of pottery are glued together with gold)

I strengthen my faith by going to sleep at night saying 'What next?'

A scripture that means a lot is the passage about the Armour of God in Ephesians chapter 6 and this verse 24. *"Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love."*

Nigel & Julie Smith

We have both had a religious upbringing but neither of us have been devoted to the extent that we would make time to regularly attend church, read the bible, pray etc. Time was taken up with visiting and looking after the extended family and although many times we said we should go to church we only occasionally managed this.

We did marry in church as we believed that our marriage should be conducted in a religious place and we should say our vows to each other and be witnessed by God. Over the last few years our family commitments have reduced and we felt we should make time to give thanks for what we have in our lives, a loving and caring family, friends, neighbours and our general life style. We began attending St Helen's and were immediately welcomed into this new community with warmth and friendship.

Neither of us were confirmed and we felt that taking communion without confirming our belief in God was not something we should do, although following a conversation with Rupert we were put at ease and have since taken communion. We now feel ready to make this next step in our journey to becoming better Christians and deepening our belief in God, by being confirmed.

Kath Spivey

My journey towards Christianity has been a very personal one. I have been dipping my toes in and out for about 12 years now but have been unable to make the final leap of faith. Now, things have changed for me. I have a new home, new friends, a new life really. Doing the Alpha course has helped a great deal and reaffirmed for me that I'm doing the right thing at the right time, for me. Now I can't wait to make that final leap.

**Confirmed on April 30th 2017 at
St. Helen's Church, Sandal by
The Rt Revd Tom Butler**

For further information about the life of the Church
in Sandal Magna Parish, visit our web-site, www.sandalmagna.com

or our Facebook page, Sandal Magna Parish.
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