



Vital Link

The Newsletter for Through the Roof | www.throughtheroof.org

Transforming Lives Through Jesus with Disabled People

“I don’t need working legs for God to use me”



Jade Reynolds believes we need to think differently about disabled people. Her assertion that ‘I don’t need working legs for God to use me’ is not an aspiration – it’s her life story.

Aged 12 Jade’s life changed overnight as a rare condition paralysed her spine, leaving her needing a wheelchair. Now, Jade, and her husband John, who are Theology graduates, are seeking to dispel the stigma surrounding disability.

The couple are Spring Harvest speakers with 1 million ‘followers’ on social media: @johnejreynolds. They presented at our online Roofbreaker event where Jade recounted her story before they encouraged attendees to share the power of their own story with others. Watch the video on YouTube @ TTRChangesLives.

During four months in hospital, the support Jade’s church provided was a witness to staff. Since then, God has used Jade to bring hope and encouragement to many. Whether we admit it or not, everyone needs others – and God.

Jade says that disabled people have discovered that truth through their own lived experience. “Chronic illness, pain or disability are not obstacles to God”, she says. “He can use you in every circumstance – And he’s not just going to use you in spite of your disability or illness, he’s going to use you because of that. Because that’s how God works.”

Jade read **2 Corinthians 12: 9-11**, and commented, “I think that’s such an encouraging verse because God uses our weaknesses, and... as someone with a disability, I’m very aware of my weaknesses... my limitations. Sometimes I find that frustrating. But if that’s going to keep pointing me to God then that’s amazing. That’s the only thing that really matters!”



Jade and John are changing minds as they speak and share videos about everyday life with honesty and humour – which helps normalise disability. Jade comments that people often say:

“I don’t share your faith, but you’re really normal and funny! That normalising of our faith and disability makes it worthwhile... People are more open if they know you’re speaking honestly from your life experience.”

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Lives transformed in Rwanda



Kingdom Storytellers on Songs of Praise



Alternative gifts in TTR shop

Accessible formats available: Large print, Audio, Braille.
Call 01372 749955 or email info@throughtheroof.org

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“I don’t need working legs for God to use me”

continued...

Their lives are now represented in a book, which could reach new audiences. ‘Able to Laugh – Finding joy though the struggle is real’, is in bookstores and online via <https://amzn.to/3VwVvk7S>

People enjoyed the online event. One attendee enthused that the “webinar featuring Jade and John exceeded all my expectations. Presentations were

engaging, authentic and humorous and I appreciated the opportunity to connect with new people during breakout sessions.”

Jade finished with an encouragement to anyone in a similar situation: “There is hope, we’re not without hope, and God can use us, no matter what!”

800 UK Roofbreakers are championing disabled people in their church or ministry context.

To join this story and benefit from free resources, training, and events, register as a Roofbreaker at: www.throughtheroof.org

Sharing stories for Disability Awareness Sunday

Journey with Jesus

Andrew’s story



Watch the video at <https://youtu.be/jsKXLUU2Q2g>

Retired Baptist minister and hospital chaplain, Revd Andrew Miles, has an incredible story which he shared on video for Disability Awareness Sunday.

In 2014, as a preacher in Brazil, Andrew and his wife Talita were injured in a car crash. A drunken driver asleep at the wheel smashed into the back of their car while they waited at a red light. Andrew is now a wheelchair user with an assistance dog called Rolo.

Andrew says: “I think because I’ve seen God do so many wonderful things and I’ve had such an amazing journey with God, even in that situation, which was extremely difficult, I wasn’t going to let anything destroy my faith.” A significant Bible passage for Andrew is Mark 4 where Jesus calms the storm. Andrew says, “Sometimes storms blow up in our lives and things aren’t easy, but God is always with us and God isn’t finished with any of us. There’s a purpose and a plan He has for each one of us to be a blessing to other people.”

This year we celebrated a whole Disability Awareness Week, launched by Methodist Church President, Revd Helen Cameron, at a special service. Helen shared daily videos focussed on disability inclusion which can be seen on YouTube @TTRChangesLives.

Across the UK, churches held Disability Awareness Sunday services, including Cairnlea Parish Church in Airdrie, Scotland. Lis Johnstone and her husband Ian are both disabled and were asked to lead a service. They explored the role of disabled people in sharing the gospel of Christ. Using TTR’s resources and ‘Andrew’s Story’, Lis and Ian said their thought-provoking content challenged people, and their church’s response was very positive.

UCB Radio also celebrated the week, featuring daily 3-minute audio recordings from five disabled TTR supporters sharing their experiences. Listen on our YouTube channel @TTRChangesLives to UCB1 ‘disability diaries’ and share the link with others. Here are quotes from two diaries.

Michael: “advice to anyone encountering a disabled person is just try to treat them as you would anyone else.”

Triona: “It’s a myth that autistic people don’t want to be social. We want to belong just like everyone else.”

If you held a service, thank you so much. If not, any Sunday can be Disability Awareness Sunday. Get free resources at: <https://bit.ly/DisabilityAwarenessSunday>



▲ Disability Awareness Sunday at Cairnlea Parish Church, Airdrie.

Stories are better Together

'Together' is Through the Roof's fellowship programme of holidays, retreats and online gatherings.

Becky C shared her story of joining us for the first time.

"A friend invited me on a Disabled Christian Fellowship holiday with Through the Roof when I was getting used to life without my dear mum, who never let me hide behind disability, as well as wondering what God had for me beyond university. I haven't looked back since that first holiday. Momentary panic that I hardly knew anyone quickly turned into feeling part of a new family where I could be myself and fellowship with joy and laughter. I've met many people who have been hugely encouraging as we share the joys and challenges of living for God with a disability."

Here are recent and future highlights...



▲ Accessible abseiling on Exmoor.

"I did activities that I never thought I'd be able to do!"

This was the story of several holiday-goers, including Ellen, at our Calvert Trust holiday. She experienced the exhilaration of crate stacking from her wheelchair 20 feet up in the air!! People enjoyed abseiling, zip wire, canoeing, horse-riding and swimming – guided by qualified instructors who provided skills, equipment and encouragement.

People from 7 different nations, aged 19 - 70+, gathered for the holiday so it seemed appropriate to use Revelation chapter 7 as Biblical inspiration. It describes a 'great multitude of people from every nation, tribe, people and language before the throne of God.' It reflected the sense of togetherness amongst everyone.

Centre staff exceeded our expectations. Nothing was too much trouble for them, which complemented TTR's family feel where we look out for, encourage, and support one another. One guest commented: "The location is beautiful. Staff are very kind and helpful." Our last evening of Communion together and worshipping God through music and sign language was very moving.

Join us at the Calvert Trust next year from 16th – 20th June 2025.

Together on Pilgrimage

Leading up to Easter, our virtual pilgrimage to the Holy Land (online), will journey through the first Holy Week. This will be led by David Smith, a former physiotherapist, whose mobility was affected after a stroke.

Previously a keen walker and cyclist, he became interested in pilgrimage and initiated Bible-based virtual spiritual journeys to bless those with restricted movement.

Find out more at: www.pilgrimageoftheword.org.uk

Sign-up for this special journey on Zoom on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, 31st March – 4th April. Email together@throughtheroof.org to register.

Regular get-Togethers

The Lounge – our online coffee, chat and short devotional – meets monthly from January.

Do drop-in on Tuesdays – 21st January, 25th February, or 25th March.

Together at Home, our online home-group, still meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday afternoons every month.

To join us or receive more information about our fellowship activities, email: together@throughtheroof.org



▲ All 'Together on Holiday' at the Calvert Trust.



▲ “Jesus entered the world, became fully human.”

The greatest story ever told...

Rev Trevor Hahn, Chair of Trustees, considers God's great story.

Ultimately the Bible is a story. A story of God and His relationship with humanity, with us. How out of love He created the universe, creating planet earth, a paradise for us to live in, in communion with Him, and how we rejected God, choosing what pleased us rather than obedience to our loving Father.

It is the story of how God chose Abraham and his descendants to be His people, how He blessed them, called them to be a blessing to the whole world, and showed them how to live through the law, the prophets, and ultimately through His Son, Jesus.

It is the story of how Jesus entered the world, became fully human, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross to save us from our sins, 'for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'
John 3:16.

As a result, to all those who believe in who Jesus is and what He has done, have been forgiven, the price of our sin and disobedience has been paid, and we have received the right to become children of God, heirs of the Kingdom, reconciled back to God, sanctified. We have received the gift of His Holy Spirit, a foretaste of what is to come, the power to live lives of obedience, as disciples, as followers, so the light of Christ may shine so brightly others would join us in following.

Jesus told the story through His life and memorable stories, telling parables of the sower, the lost sheep, the lost son (or loving Father), the mustard seed and so many more to illustrate what God is like, revealing His love for us.

And now, it is our turn, we too can share the stories from the Bible, but we have our own unique story to tell of how God first chose us, and lovingly knocked on the door of our hearts, and the blessing and joy it is to have Jesus in our lives.

Will you sing with me?

**I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me
How He left the realms of glory
For the cross of Calvary**

**I was lost, but Jesus found me
Found the sheep that went astray
Raised me up and gently led me
Back into the narrow way**

Francis H. Rowley

Lives transformed in Rwanda

A Wheels for the World team distributed life-changing mobility aids in Rwanda to disabled people who don't have the money or opportunity to buy one. Volunteer therapist, Jill Jenkinson, shares about the mission trip...

▼ Therapist Jill with overjoyed Appoffie.



▼ Emmanuel, disabled by a landmine.



“Time was of an essence and God’s timing was perfect. We arrived to find the container still locked on a lorry. By late afternoon the Customs Agent had inspected the contents, and the team had sorted everything ready for distribution next morning to change the lives of people like Appoffie...

Appoffie had polio and crawled until given a wheelchair in 2004, which is now unusable. She crawls or is carried while looking after 3 grandchildren. They live ‘hand to mouth’ relying on the goodness of neighbours as they beg for food. I was so pleased to have assessed and fitted her with a wheelchair for her needs. Appoffie is a basket weaver and with her newly found independence plans to set up a small business.

It was a memorable surprise to witness Appoffie, seen only the day before, in church on Sunday! Unable to attend church for such a long time, the wheelchair we provided enabled her to visit at the first opportunity. She glowed with happiness and attended the entire service - even joining her old choir to sing her heart out. What joy!

Rwanda is a beautiful country with lovely people proudly rebuilding their infrastructure following the genocide horrors. Partners, FHR, work with disabled and marginalised people within Eastern Province. Our distribution helped raise the profile of disability and the great work FHR are doing. The equipment we provide is extremely scarce... one man told us that the wheelchair he’d received would cost ten years’ wages!

Pastor Dominique, our main contact, held a Roofbreaker Conference last year, so we saw local people who’d been identified and assessed by FHR. Their volunteers were organised, thoughtful and keen to learn more about disability whilst interpreting and caring for recipients. The pastoral team shared God’s love with beneficiaries who received Bibles in their own language. We heard harrowing stories, but each of the 203 recipients who received mobility aids, like Emmanuel, can now look forward to more positive futures...

Emmanuel was herding cattle when he stepped on a landmine blowing off both feet and killing two cows. He lay alone in the field until found by neighbours who took him to hospital where he spent 6 months.

He has been without a wheelchair for 3 years, so his friends daily carry him to a kiosk where he sells mobile data cards. Now he’s thrilled to have the independence to push himself to work, restoring his dignity and self-worth - freedom indeed!

The gift of a wheelchair or walking aid and a Bible is truly life transforming!”

International trips in 2025

Wheels for the World trips

Kolkata, India: 19th–29th March 2025

Partner: Sathyam Ministries

Jinja, Uganda: 16th–26th July 2025

Partner: Petra Foundation Christ Ministries

Contact: Kathy@throughtheroof.org
to apply or for information.

International Roofbreaker trips

Lagos, Nigeria: 19th February–1st March 2025

Partner: Tarela Aghanti of OIF Nigeria

Kayonza, Rwanda: 16th–26th April 2025

Partner: FH Rwanda

Contact: Shaun@throughtheroof.org
to apply or for information.



▲ Entertaining waiting children with puppets in Rwanda.



▲ Cate Allen (left) with co-founder Margaret Human (right) and RTC member Sarah Best (centre).

Luke 5 Award for Rich Tea Community

The Rich Tea Community, a group for adults with additional needs meets in the Countess Free Church in Ely, Cambridgeshire. The community and its Co-founder Cate Allen received our Luke 5 Award for disability inclusion.

Beyond the barriers

Access to church isn't always easy for adults with additional needs. Many are dependent on others to bring them to church.

Church services may also create barriers to understanding and a feeling of belonging – such as complex and figurative language, few visuals to help with processing information, and sensory extremes from silence to loud music... All these factors can be difficult.

Friendship, faith and fun for all

Rich Tea Community (RTC) was founded to overcome these barriers and to create accessible church in Ely. RTC gathers monthly on a Sunday, at Countess Free Church for friendship, faith and fun for adults with additional needs – plus volunteers, family, friends and carers. An engaging short talk is accompanied by sensory objects and visual aids.

The award was presented at RTC alongside parachute games, table tennis, craft and music.

Co-founder, Margaret Human, gave the certificate to Cate Allen and flowers were presented by Sarah Best, an RTC member and nominator for a previous Luke 5 Award.

Margaret, who has additional needs herself, made the award nomination because she really enjoys RTC. She said:

“At Rich Tea, I lead prayers and do readings. I feel part of the church and like I really belong and am valued. We started the group to share about Jesus with people with learning disabilities and let them know God loves them and church is a welcoming place for them.”

Cate Allen, a Roofbreaker and Baptist Minister awaiting ordination, said: “The need is huge for reaching people who are often left out of church and society, yet have amazing gifts to offer. We have been running Rich Tea sessions for people in local care homes, as well as providing small-group faith-building sessions for current RTC members.”

Luke 5 Award nominations are welcomed from disabled people wanting to celebrate the positive experience they have had in a church or Christian ministry.

Do you have a story to tell?

We all have our own unique experiences which can encourage and build others up. Through the Roof is partnering with Small Voice Projects to equip disabled people to tell their stories of faith using a smartphone.

Jazz Shaban, a Roofbreaker and video maker is offering 'Kingdom Storytellers – 90 second stories' – an online workshop plus follow-up mentoring to disabled Christians wanting to share their story on video.

The next workshop will be on Saturday 25th January 2025 at 10am-12 noon on Zoom. If you are a disabled person wanting to share your story online, email katie@throughtheroof.org or visit www.smallvoiceprojects.org.uk for more information.

Katie Budd (nee Mobbs) shares her reflections on the workshop:

"At Through the Roof we are working to enable more disabled people to be commissioned to use their experiences gifts and skills to share God's love with those around them. I saw this 'commissioning' in action as story after story was shared in the workshop.

Using the medium of our favourite photograph, Jazz taught us how to build a structure around key points and think through the message we want to



▲ You can see Jazz Shaban on Songs of Praise on BBC iPlayer, on catch-up from 3rd November's episode.

leave with our audience. It was brilliant to see people's stories unfold, testifying to the way that people had seen God at work in their lives. The stories highlighted that no two people's experience of disability is the same, but God's faithfulness is constant.

Some of these key themes emerged: the love and faithfulness of God; resilience; the importance of community; advocacy; and the importance of education. I am very excited to see the final videos!"

Stories of Praise

We were delighted when BBC TV programme Songs of Praise got in touch for an interview.

They chose to interview Jazz Shaban about her journey to faith which led her to work with disabled people in international development. We were thrilled that they also wanted to mention Through the Roof and Jazz's Kingdom Storytellers workshops.

▼ Roofbreaker Lynda Herbert joined the Kingdom Storytellers video workshop with Jazz Shaban.



Here, Roofbreaker, Lynda Herbert shares some of her experience of the workshops:

"I was very pleased to have the opportunity to join the Kingdom Storytellers Workshop with Jazz Shaban on Zoom. The purpose of her initiative to equip disabled people to video their faith stories in under two minutes. It is a wonderful and encouraging initiative. It gives voice to those whose stories might not otherwise be heard.

I wasn't the only one fascinated by this, as the team from Songs of Praise recorded a staged version of the workshop, but it did not make the final cut for the show.

Jazz spoke about how the Kingdom Storytellers project works to give voices to those of us who are disabled.

She also shared her inspiration and some of her life story. She was awesome, and I hope you get to hear her story on Songs of Praise (from 3 November) on catch-up for yourself."

As part of her Kingdom Storytellers project, Jazz Shaban shares her lived experience in a fortnightly blog which she publishes online at:

<https://smallvoiceprojects.org.uk/the-last-word/>

New ideas for Christmas!

How about purchasing an alternative TTR gift for family or friends?

Disabled people are the most excluded people-group worldwide and only 5 – 10% will hear the gospel in their lifetime. You can change that by giving a wheelchair which brings freedom; the gift of a mobility aid which brings possibility; or the gift of a print or audio Bible, which brings the Words of life.

Visit our shop site at www.throughtheroof.org/shop to buy an alternative gift for a friend to bring 'life in all its fullness' for a disabled person. When you buy the gift, you will receive a full-colour e-card to print or send online to a loved one who will know your gift to them is transforming someone's life.



Alternative Gifts



Visit our shop site at
www.throughtheroof.org/shop

SHOP NOW

The story of easyfundraising

'Fundraising' can conjure up images of gruelling marathons or hours spent baking or crafting things to sell. But one entrepreneur used his business knowledge to create a way to fundraise for free, through the spending power we hold, as consumers. This is the story of easyfundraising founder, Ian Woodroffe.

It all began at a New Year's party in 2002. Ian Woodroffe was an account manager for a telecommunications company. It was in the early days of online shopping. Ian knew that companies were willing to invest to get customers to visit their websites.

At that time, Ian was being treated for cancer, so spent a lot of time in hospital. While there, he heard a lot of conversations between nurses and patients about charities needing funding. He realised there are many people who hold causes very dear to their hearts who are prepared to use their time and energy to support those charities.

Ian also knew how to harness the power of big business. He had a revelation: why not ask businesses to pay a small charity donation in return

for people's custom? All charity supporters would need to do is to access online shopping sites via a tracking website, so donations are registered. The idea of easyfundraising was born!

Work began in 2003, and easyfundraising was officially launched in 2005. Since then, over £50 million has been raised for more than 180,000 charities and causes. Ian says, "Our purpose is simple. Together we turn the everyday spending of life into a force for good."

You can fundraise while you shop by visiting websites via our 'Through the Roof Charitable Trust' easyfundraising page at

<https://bit.ly/TTReasyfundraising>

The donations are paid by the businesses you shop with, not by you. It's completely FREE. So, we'd really appreciate it if you could take a moment to register for easyfundraising and support Through the Roof. Thank you so much!

► Scan this code to fundraise FREE for TTR on the easyfundraising site.



Thank you for reading Vital Link!

We hope you like the new design. Please do send any feedback to annette@throughtheroof.org or call the office on 01372 749955. Accessibility is so important, so please let us know of any issues. All blessings for the advent season!

Through the Roof Charitable Trust Ltd is a Registered Charity no. 1087788 with registered offices at Alpha House, Alpha Place, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4TQ. Registered UK Company number 04201510.

Be part of HIS-story of change

Transform lives through Jesus with disabled people!



You can be part of God's 'history in the making' and change life stories for the better, today!

Your gift to Through the Roof can:



Equip church Roofbreaker champions with resources and training



Provide wheelchairs to restore freedom to disabled people in developing nations



Enable Christian fellowship through accessible holidays, retreats and groups

"She glowed with happiness at joining her old choir to sing her heart out." Appoffie in Rwanda was given a new wheelchair which changed her life story

Appoffie had polio and crawled until given a wheelchair in 2004, which is now unusable. She is a basket weaver and, with her newlyfound independence, plans to set up a small business. With the new wheelchair, Appoffie goes to church and sings in her choir again. What joy!



Scan the QR code for our Just Giving page or visit www.justgiving.com/ttr to donate directly and securely online – please state if donating for a specific purpose (in the Message box).



Please return this form to: Through the Roof, Alpha House, Alpha Place, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4TQ.

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I'd like to donate to:

- Where the need is greatest
- Wheels for the World
- 'Together' Fellowship
- UK Roofbreakers

Please tick a box above to show your preference.

We'd like to keep you informed on this good work.

Tick here to receive our:

- Vital Link newsletter by email
- Vital Link newsletter by post
- International Mission newsletter (email)
- 'Together' newsletter (email)

Gift aid

Gift Aid enables us to make your gift go further without any additional cost to you.

Please advise your full name, including title and middle names, together with your full address, in the 'Your Details' section (see top left) to help us in applying for gift aid.

I would like Through the Roof to treat as Gift Aid donations* all qualifying gifts of money made:

- on this donation
- in the past 4 years
- in the future

Please tick all boxes that you wish to apply then sign and date below.

or

- It is not possible for me to Gift Aid my donations.

Signature: Date:.....

* I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Please notify the charity if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

How to donate: By cheque made out to Through the Roof • By bank transfer (BACS) to: **Through the Roof Charitable Trust**, sort code: **82-12-08**, Virgin Money account number: **20047444** (please use your name & the purpose of the donation as the reference) • By Credit Card (please complete details below)

- I enclose a cheque for £..... made out to Through the Roof
- I have sent my money by bank transfer, my reference is
- I would like to donate £..... by credit / debit card

Card number:

Issue number (If applicable): Valid from date: / Expiry date: /

Security code (Last 3 numbers on back of card):

- I would like to make a regular donation of £..... to be used for
- I have set this up with my bank Please send me a form to enable me to do this.

Signature: Date:.....

I do not require an acknowledgement for my donation

Please return this form to: Through the Roof, Alpha House, Alpha Place, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4TQ.