

# Has someone you loved died?



**This booklet has been written for adults  
with learning disabilities.**

# Has someone you loved died?



This is a very hard time for you.

This booklet is yours.  
You can write or draw in it.  
You can stick in pictures.

**The name of the person I want to remember:**



\_\_\_\_\_

**A picture of them:**





# What is in this booklet?

## Pages

- to help you understand what is happening.
- about your feelings.
- with Bible verses and prayers.

It may help to use the **yellow pages** often

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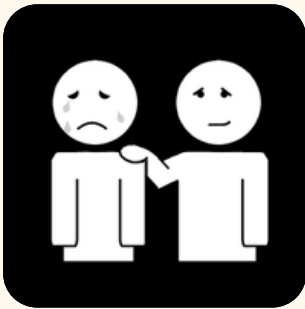
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When someone you love dies,  
it is a big shock.  
You may feel pain in your body.

## I need...



family  
or friends



a hug



photos



a blanket



a hot drink



to cry



to pray



to be alone



something  
else





## Psalm 23:4

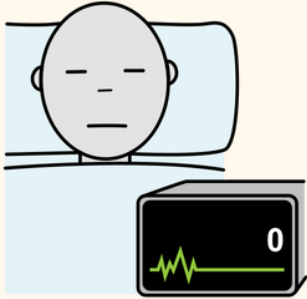


I may walk through a  
valley that is dark as  
death.  
But you are with me,  
Lord.



Help me God,  
to know you are with me.  
Amen.

# 1. What is death?



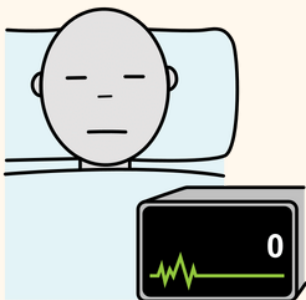
When someone dies,  
their body stops working.  
They stop breathing.  
Their heart stops.



When someone dies,  
they cannot see.  
If their eyes are open,  
someone will close them.



When someone dies,  
they cannot hear anything.  
You can speak to them,  
but they cannot speak to you.  
You can say 'goodbye'.



Their skin will begin to feel cold.  
They will look pale.  
They will look different.





When someone dies,  
they will not wake up again.  
They do not need their body  
any more.



They do not feel pain.  
They do not feel sad.  
They are at peace.

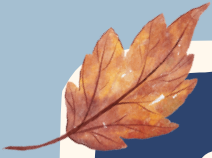


Jesus will take care of

---

Jesus will look after you.  
He knows how sad you are.





## 2. Why do people die?



Death is part of life.  
Nobody can live forever.  
Plants, animals and people die



Some people die because they  
are old.  
Other people die when they are  
young.



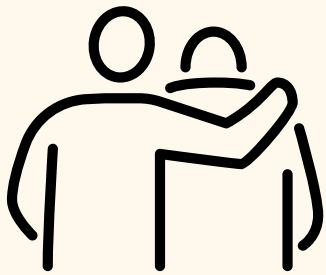
Some people get very ill and  
they die.  
Other people have an accident.  
We don't always know why  
someone has died.



Jesus died on the cross.  
He knows what death is like.  
He is with us when we die.



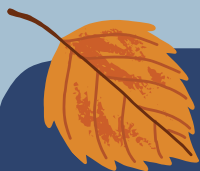
## Luke 23:45



Jesus shouted loudly,  
"Father, I give my spirit  
to you."  
After this, he died.



Loving God,  
This is hard for me.  
Thank you that you understand.  
Amen.



## 3. Grief



When someone dies, it is a big shock.

You may feel sad.  
You may have lots of feelings.  
You may cry. This is ok.

These feelings may be painful.  
This is called **grief**.

## What can I do?



Talking about how you feel is important.

Who can you talk to?





## Psalm 34:18



The Lord is close to those whose hearts have been broken.



Thank you God,  
you know how I feel.  
Amen



## 4. Feelings

When someone dies you might feel lots of big feelings. Your feelings can change quickly. This is normal.



You may be very **sad**.  
You have lost someone you loved.  
Crying can help, it's OK to cry.



You may be **angry**.  
You might be angry at the person for leaving you.  
You might be angry because life has changed.



You may feel **worried**.  
You may not be sure what is going to happen next.



You may feel **confused**.  
There may be many things that you don't understand.



You may feel very **tired**.  
These are big feelings.  
Grief is hard work.



You may feel **ill**.  
You might have a sore tummy  
or head. Your body might feel  
different.  
This is normal.  
Your doctor may be able to  
help you.



You may feel **happy**,  
when you remember the  
person you loved.  
You may feel happy when you  
are with family or friends.  
It's OK to feel happy too.



You may feel **calm**.  
Sometimes a person's death  
can bring peace, especially if  
they were unwell for a long  
time.

All of these feelings are OK and normal.

# I am feeling...



sad



tired



ill



angry



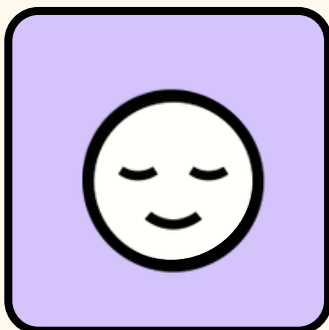
I don't know



scared



confused



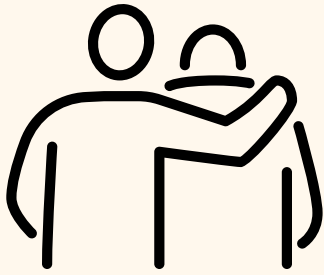
calm



happy



## Psalm 130:1-2




Lord, I am crying aloud  
to you because I have  
great trouble.

My Lord, please listen  
to me!



Thank you God,  
that I can tell you anything  
Amen





## 5. What can I do with my feelings?



Talk about your feelings.  
It helps to share them with  
someone who cares about  
you.



Take some big breaths,  
in and out.  
Do it slowly.  
This may help you feel more  
calm.



Do things you enjoy,  
like watching TV or listening to  
music.  
It will give you a break.



Some people find it helps to  
draw or paint what they are  
feeling. This can be easier  
than talking.



## 6. Looking after yourself



You may not feel like eating as usual.  
Try to eat healthy foods, like fruit, vegetables and protein. This can help you feel a little better.



Gentle exercises may help you relax.  
Try some stretches or go for a walk outside.



Try to go to bed and get up at your usual time.  
It may be hard to sleep, or you might want to sleep more. Having a routine will help.

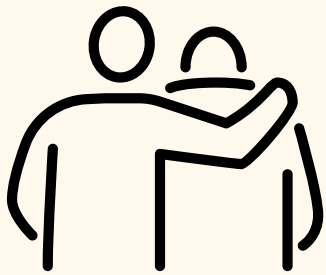


This is a hard time.  
Be kind to yourself.





## Isaiah 41:3



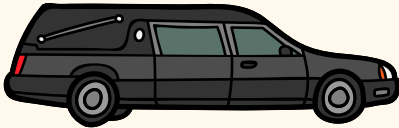
I am the Lord your God.  
I am holding your  
hand, so don't be  
afraid.  
I am here to help you.



Jesus,  
help me know that you are with me.  
I am not alone.  
Amen.



## 7. Where is my loved one now?



When someone dies their body is taken away to be looked after.

People called **undertakers** do this.



They will go to a **funeral home**.

Their body will be put into a special box called a **coffin**.

They will stay there until the day of the **funeral**.



Sometimes you can go and see the body to say goodbye.

It can be hard to see a dead body.

Some people find it helps.

You can ask about this.



Their body is in the coffin.

Their **spirit** is with God.

You can trust God with





When a person knows Jesus,  
death is like going to a perfect  
home to meet a friend.  
We call this heaven.

There is nothing to be afraid of.



Sometimes we don't know if a  
person believes in God.

But we know that God is good.  
We know we can trust Him.



God loves you.  
God loves all the people you  
love.





## John 14:1



Jesus said: "Do not be worried and upset, believe in God and believe also in me."

"There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you."



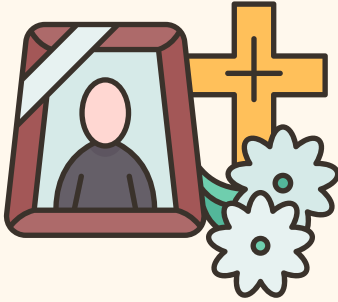
Jesus, please help me trust that you will take care of



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## 8. Funerals



When someone dies there is a special service to remember them.

It is called a **funeral**.



The **undertaker** helps the family to make a plan for the funeral.

A church minister or pastor can help too.



At a funeral people will talk about the person who died. There may be special songs or music.

There may be prayers.

The family can choose them.



Funerals can be sad.

It's OK to cry.

A funeral can help us say 'goodbye' and to remember the person who died.



Often people wear dark clothes to funerals because they are sad.

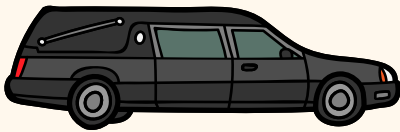
Sometimes they wear bright clothes to remember the person.

Your family or carer can help you choose what to wear.



The funeral may be at a **funeral home**.

It might be at a church or somewhere else.



A special car will bring the coffin to the funeral. The body is in the coffin.



Undertakers will help at the funeral.

They will move the coffin and help people know what to do. They may wear a suit and top hat.



The coffin is taken inside the building.

People stand as a way of showing respect.







Usually the coffin is closed. We do not see the body of the person at a funeral. You can ask about this.



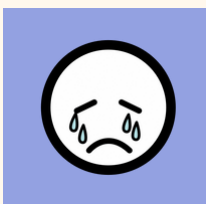
There may be flowers on the coffin.



There may be people at the funeral that you don't know. They have come to remember too.



You may be given a booklet which tells you what is going to happen during the service. It will have photos of the person in it. You can keep it if you want.



During the funeral there may be pictures of the person. There will be stories about their life.

People may smile, laugh or cry as they remember them. This is ok.



At the end of the service the coffin is taken out. It is put in the special car.



Sometimes the family will shake hands with everyone who came to the funeral.

It is a way of saying thank you for coming.

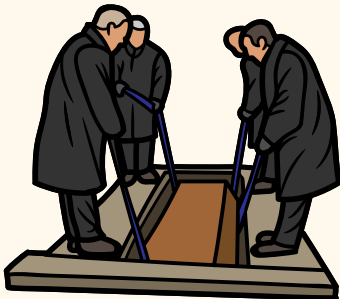
You can choose if you want to do this.



Sometimes there is a collection of money.

The money will go to a charity.

It is another way to remember the person.



As well as the funeral, there is a **burial** or **cremation**.

You can usually choose if you want to go.



At the end, there is usually something to eat and drink.

You may feel very tired, so this can help.





## Matthew 11: 27-29



Jesus said:  
"Come to me, all you  
who are tired. I will give  
you rest. I am gentle.  
You will find rest for  
your souls."



Jesus,  
help me to rest,  
Amen.



## 9. What happens at a burial?



When someone dies, their body may be put in the ground. This usually happens after the funeral.

This is called a **burial**.

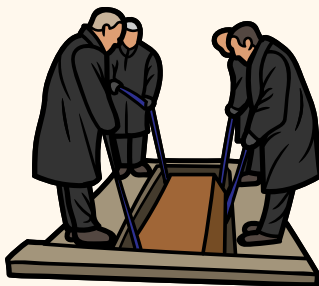


The burial is in special quiet place.

It is like a garden.



There may be short readings and prayers.



The coffin is put into the ground. It is covered with earth.

This is called the **grave**



You can visit the grave. Some people like to bring flowers and remember the person.



## 10. What happens at a cremation?



When someone dies, their body may be burnt. This usually happens after the funeral. This is called **cremation**.



Cremations happen in a special building. It may look like a church.



There may be short readings and prayers.



The coffin is moved behind some curtains. You will not see it again. The body and the coffin are burned to ashes in a very hot fire.



The family are given ashes in a special jar. The ashes can be buried or put somewhere special.



## Philippians 4:6-7



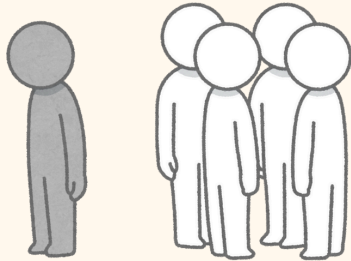
Do not worry about anything. God's peace will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. The peace that God gives is so great that we cannot understand it.



Help me God,  
to know your peace  
Amen.

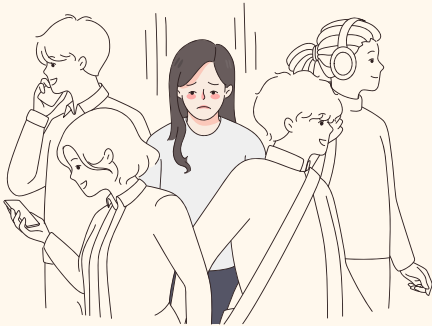


## 11. I feel alone



When someone dies you may feel alone.

Other people may not understand how you feel  
It is hard to talk about death.



This can be very painful.  
You may see other people are living life as normal.

It might make you feel lonely.



Sometimes it feels that God is far away too.

The pain of grief makes it hard to feel that God is with you.  
You might ask "Where is God?"



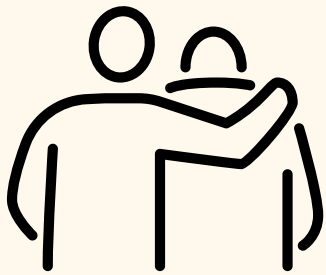
All of these feelings are normal.  
Many people feel like this when someone dies.

It can help to talk to someone else who has had a similar experience.





Romans 8:38



"I am sure of this.  
Nothing can stop God  
from loving us.  
Death cannot do that.  
Life cannot do that.  
Nothing can stop God  
from loving us."



Thank you God, that you love  
me always.  
Amen



## 12. Saying goodbye



A funeral can help us to say goodbye, but you may want to do that in your own time and way.



What would you like to say to the person who has died?



There may be things you want to say, such as:

- thank you



- sorry

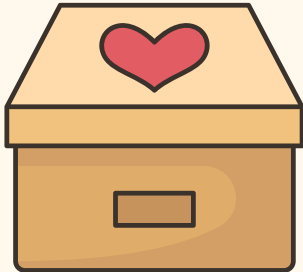


- I love you

**Write or draw your goodbye here:**



# 13. Remembering



Memory boxes are a good way to remember someone special. You can decorate it if you wish. You can keep things that remind you of them.

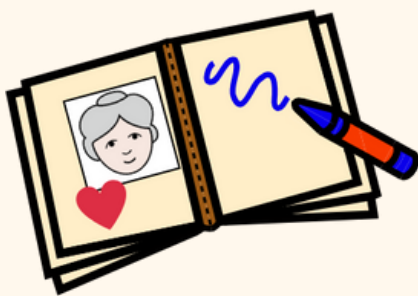


Here are some ideas:

- photos, photo albums
- jewellery
- a piece of clothing
- perfume
- their favourite book
- cards or letter



You can keep the box in a special place.



You might like to make a book about the person.

You can use photos, drawings or write your memories in it.



You could make a photo album on your phone or computer. Perhaps you have some videos of the person too?



You might like to go and visit the grave and take some flowers



You can remember someone when you eat their favourite food.  
You can listen to their favourite music.



Some people like to plant a tree or flowers.  
They can remember the person they loved as they watch the plant grow. Taking care of it can feel good too.



**What would you like to do to remember your loved one?**  
**Write or draw it here:**



## 14. How long will I feel like this?



Grief is how we feel after someone dies.  
Grief is different for everyone.  
It can feel painful for months or years.



There will be days when you feel OK again.  
There will be days that are hard.  
Good days and bad days.



Some days, like birthdays or Christmas can be very difficult.  
You may really miss the person and wish they were with you.



This is normal.  
Slowly, you will begin to get used to how life is now.  
You will have more good days.  
You will feel able to do more.



# 15. How are you now?

When someone you love dies, there can be a lot of changes.  
**How you are now?**



sleep



eating well



exercise



family and friends



# 16. Getting help



Sometimes the pain of grief is too much.

You may feel that you are having a lot of bad days.



Your doctor may be able to help. They can make sure that you are ok.

They might decide that you need more help.



This could be

- a **support group**.

It can be very helpful to meet with other people who are living with grief.



- a **counsellor**.

Their job is to listen and help you with your feelings.



- **medicine**.

Sometimes people need medicine to feel better.



Your local church may be able to help you too.



Church leaders often help people when someone they love has died.

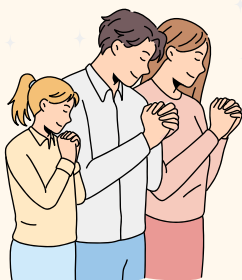
They might suggest:



- A church group. This can be a good way to make friends.



- people who can listen and pray with you.



- special church services or activities.

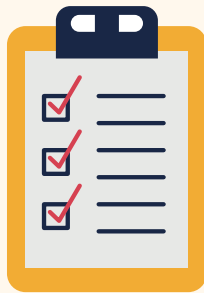




# 17. Living with grief



You will remember the person you loved.  
You might continue to have lots of feelings.  
This is ok.



It's also ok to look ahead.  
It's ok to feel happy.  
It's good to make plans.



This could be:



- going out with friends
- new activities
- a holiday
- new hobbies



**Something I would like to do:**





## Psalm 23

- Prospects Across Scotland version



The Lord takes care of me  
like a shepherd with his sheep.



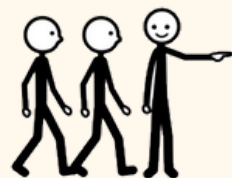
I have everything I need.



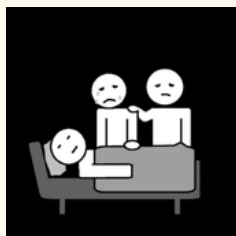
He gives me rest.



He leads me to quiet places  
He gives me new strength.



He shows me the right way  
for the praise of His name.

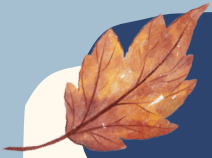


Even though I walk  
through the darkest times,



I will not be afraid.  
You are with me.





## 18. Hard words

<b>counsellor</b>	A person who listens to and helps people with their feelings. This is their job.
<b>cremation</b>	The dead body is put in a coffin. This is then put into a very hot fire until it becomes ashes.
<b>body</b>	What is left of a person after they die.
<b>burial or committal</b>	The dead body is put in a coffin. The coffin is put in a deep hole in the ground. It is covered with earth. This is done because the body will start to break down.
<b>funeral home</b>	A place where a dead person's body is looked after until they are buried or burned.
<b>grave</b>	The place where a dead person's body is buried



<b>graveyard</b>	A place where dead 's bodies people are buried. It is a quiet place like a garden.
<b>grief</b>	The pain we feel when someone we love dies.
<b>headstone</b>	A piece of stone used to mark a grave. It has the person's name on it. Sometimes there are other words to remember the person.
<b>hearse</b>	A special car to carry a coffin.
<b>mourning</b>	Feeling very sad about someone who has died.
<b>spirit or soul</b>	The deepest part of a person. The place inside us where we know God. It is the part of us that thinks and feels.
<b>undertaker</b>	A person who helps to look after dead bodies. They also help with funerals.



## For family and carers

This booklet has been written in response to the spiritual and pastoral needs of adults with learning disabilities, especially during times of loss and bereavement. It draws on some of the questions and experiences we have encountered.

We know that this may also be a really difficult time for those supporting individuals who have lost a loved one, so we thank you for your part in caring and helping. Here are a some simple guidelines for you to consider:

- **Communicate as openly as possible.** It can be hard to break bad news but people with learning disabilities may be good at picking up when something doesn't feel right.
- **Avoid unclear language** such as 'passed on' or 'asleep'. It is better to be honest and talk about 'death', 'dying' and 'dead' and to explain what that means. For some, being able to see the body and say goodbye, is helpful.
- **Be courageous.** It is natural to want to protect the person from pain. Hiding the truth or discouraging a person from being part of a funeral may make it harder for them to understand what has happened.
- **Allow the person space and time to grieve.** It will take time to process the enormity and finality of the loss. They may respond in denial, shock or disbelief. Try not to 'jolly them along'.
- **The person may respond to death in all sorts of ways - this is normal:**
  - **Physically:** For example: difficulty sleeping, reduced or increased appetite, headaches, tummy pain, tension, shakiness, nausea and exhaustion. Seek support from a doctor only if these things persist.
  - **Emotional responses** such as tears, anger, regret, guilt, fear etc. These may be expressed through behaviour, withdrawal or outbursts.
  - They may need a lot of **reassurance**, have many questions and to talk repeatedly about what has happened.
- **Be aware of yourself,** your own emotions and previous experiences of loss. These may affect you as you try to offer support. Take time to care for yourself, and try to find your own support. You may wish to find a wider circle of people that can also offer support to the person.

- **Make this booklet their own.** This has been designed to be used by and with people with learning disabilities. Encourage them to write, draw, stick in photos and so on.
- **Take what you need.** You may find all of this booklet is helpful, or just certain parts.
- **Take your time.** It may be used over many days, weeks or months, as the person is ready. You might read the text or just talk about the pictures together.
- **Return and repeat.** You may find it is helpful to return to some pages frequently, especially:
  - 'I need' page 6
  - 'I am feeling...' page 16
  - 'How are you now?' page 39
  - These have been designed for a person to simply point at.
- **Involve the person.** Having a part to play may help. James, a man with Down's Syndrome, was able to give a beautiful tribute to his Dad during the funeral. If possible, being able to contribute to the funeral or memorial acts afterwards, can be therapeutic. There are spaces and ideas in the booklet for remembering and moving forward.
- **Spiritual care.** You may not share the beliefs of the person you are supporting – and they may not share yours! However, during times of loss, many people have a need to turn to God, to hear familiar words of Scripture, or have space and time to reflect. Sometimes God meets with us in our darkest times, in mysterious and comforting ways. At other times, God may feel distant. People with learning disabilities also share these experiences and have spiritual needs.
- **Prayer.** We have included a number of pages with verses from the Bible and simple prayers. Try reading them to or with the person, looking at the pictures or praying in your own ways. Allowing space for quiet and for God, and to voice real feelings can be healing.
- **Psalm 23** on **page 43** could be included as part of a reassuring bedtime. You could try using Makaton or simple signs with it.



In Prospects Across Scotland, we believe in a God who walks with us. God, in Jesus, lived as a human and knew pain, suffering and death. He wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. He understands death and what it is to be human. He offers us hope, peace, forgiveness and compassion as we turn to Him.

## Further help



- **Prospects Across Scotland.**

We can let you know about our groups. They are run by churches across Scotland, especially for adults with learning disabilities to come together for worship, prayer and friendship. We also have online groups.

**Website:** <https://www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk/>

**Email:** [info@prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk)

- **Music** can be helpful. Here is a Spotify playlist of Christian songs made to go with this booklet:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1505rBrOPPkVMYGxgGjzD8?si=31727c21d6b5426d>

- Count Everyone In have made a **Makaton video of Psalm 23:**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0Qc\\_kQex\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0Qc_kQex_0)

- **Books beyond Words** publish picture books dealing with grief. These may be useful for anyone needing a simpler resource.

<https://www.booksbeyondwords.co.uk/bookshop/grief>

- **Breaking bad news to people with intellectual disabilities.** Watch Gary Butler, an adult with learning disabilities talking about this topic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZXvOCs9o7k>

- **Understanding Grief**

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/understanding-grief/>

- **The Bereavement Journey:** An award winning church-based bereavement course that enables people to come together in groups over 7 sessions. Run online and across Scotland  
<https://www.ataloss.org/how-churches-can-lead-the-way-in-community-bereavement-support>







# Acknowledgements

**Sir Halley Stewart**  
TRUST

Prospects Across Scotland is very grateful to the **Sir Halley Stewart Trust** for making this much-needed project possible. Our warmest thanks to you.

## Scripture Quotations from the Holy Bible:

Easy English Bible – Psalm 23:4, Psalm 130:1–2, Romans 8:38,

New International Reader’s Version – Luke 23:45, Psalm 34:18, Matthew 11: 27–29 (simplified)

Contemporary English Version – Isaiah 41:3

Good news Translation (simplified) – John 14:1

International Children’s Bible –Philippians 4:6–7

Psalm 23 is our own simplified version



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**Thanks to all that contributed.....**



This booklet has been written by **Prospects Across Scotland** for adults with learning disabilities when someone they love dies.

This our response to the spiritual and pastoral needs of adults with learning disabilities, especially during times of loss and bereavement.

We have learned how important it is for people with learning disabilities to be given space, time and expression for their grief.



It can be used in the days, months or even years after the death of a loved one.

The reality of death and loss is faced, but we offer the hope that Jesus walks with us in difficult days. Verses from the Bible and prayer is woven throughout.



### **Our Mission:**

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

This project was made possible by the support of the

**Sir Halley Stewart**  
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