



PRESS RELEASE

Anna Chaplaincy for Older People helps churches care for a generation at risk of neglect

BRF refocuses its work with people in later life

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A generation of men and women in both the church and the wider community is facing unprecedented levels of isolation in later life. Age UK claims that 1.2 million older people are chronically lonely and 200,000 have not had a conversation with friends or family for an entire month.¹ Faith in Later Life has said that ‘churches are ideally placed and have a biblical mandate to serve... older folk’.²

Anna Chaplaincy for Older People – raising the bar on spiritual care for older people

How can churches respond? This month, [The Bible Reading Fellowship](#) relaunches its programme The Gift of Years as [Anna Chaplaincy for Older People](#). Led by former BBC broadcaster and Anglican Licensed Lay Minister Debbie Thrower – who first developed the Anna Chaplaincy model of spiritual care to older people nine years ago, as an ecumenical initiative in Alton, Hampshire – the programme now:

- connects and supports **a growing national network of more than 80** church-based Anna Chaplains and others in equivalent roles who work with older people of strong, little or no faith in the community, including in care homes
- produces and promotes **resources** around later life and dementia
- develops and promotes **best practice**, including through the comprehensive [Anna Chaplaincy Handbook](#)
- runs an **annual Gathering** for the network: an opportunity to share knowledge and boost skills
- offers **presentations and training to wider groups** on improving the spiritual care of older people, including the [Cliff College course ‘Introduction to Ministry among Older People’](#)
- works with **dioceses and other regional groupings** to develop a joined-up approach
- collaborates with [Messy Church](#) to provide [Messy Vintage](#): a creative, inclusive way to offer church to older people
- **champions the needs of older people nationally** through Christians Together Against Loneliness.

For churches and individuals concerned about the spiritual care of those in later life: BRF's Anna Chaplaincy team can offer training to pastoral workers, help people to discern a vocation or upskill those already focusing on this area.

For dioceses and other regional groupings: Anna Chaplaincy for Older People can support regional initiatives, for example the Anglican [Diocese of Rochester's Anna Chaplaincy](#), where the focus is on supporting those with dementia, and the Newcastle and Durham Dioceses area, where several denominations have commissioned twelve Anna Chaplains across the region.

For hospices: Trained Anna Chaplains can offer much-needed additional help to people with life-limiting illnesses, such as dementia, who are living in the community but receiving hospice care, for example the Heart of Kent Hospice Anna Chaplaincy team in Kent.

Anna Chaplaincy to be discussed at Anglican General Synod

A motion has been tabled for debate at the Anglican General Synod in York on 9 July by the Diocese of Rochester, to encourage development of Anna Chaplaincy across the church. A Synod fringe meeting on 8 July will see the launch of *Anna Chaplaincy in Rochester Diocese: A blueprint for other dioceses across the UK* by Julia Burton-Jones. This account of the development of Anna Chaplaincy in north Kent and south London is published as a companion to the *Anna Chaplaincy Handbook*. To get your copy of *Anna Chaplaincy in Rochester Diocese*, please email annachaplaincy@brf.org.uk.

Comments

'I have found my calling... There is a joy in serving and helping those in the winter years of life.'

John, an Anglican Anna Chaplain serving care home residents and housebound older people in Anglican parishes near Chester

'To do this kind of work, you need to be committed and flexible. The Anna Chaplaincy resources are first-class; the best thing is meeting people involved in the same kind of work, sharing experiences, picking up new ideas. In the future, I'd love to see an Anna Chaplaincy Coordinator appointed for this area of the north-east, working with Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Free Churches.'

Graham, who has been working pastorally in care homes (including four secure units) for over 20 years through his local Roman Catholic church in Northumberland

'The growth since 2014 has been dramatic. We give thanks for all that has been achieved and look to the future with great excitement as we see Anna Chaplaincy rapidly spreading from just one town in Hampshire right across the country.'

Debbie Thrower, Pioneer, Anna Chaplaincy for Older People

'The tried-and-tested Anna Chaplaincy model is the essence of what BRF's The Gift of Years programme has been offering to the life of the church – it's the right time to make it the focal point of this programme, as is reflected in the new name: Anna Chaplaincy for Older People.'

Richard Fisher, Chief Executive, The Bible Reading Fellowship

¹ ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/archive/12-million-older-people-are-still-chronically-lonely--extend-the-hand-of-friendship-this-summer

² premier.org.uk/News/UK/The-church-is-vital-in-solving-the-social-care-crisis-say-Christian-charities

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