

Background Information about Anna Chaplaincy and St Catherine's 'journey' thus far

The Anna Chaplaincy has been part of the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF)'s ministry since 2014, although it actually started in Alton in 2010. The vision of this BRF ministry is: "to promote standards of excellence in spiritual care for older people, and to see the pastoral needs of older people given much greater recognition nationally and locally".

The name "Anna" was chosen for its echoes of the widow of that name in St Luke's gospel who appears with Simeon – both of them role models of faithful older people who believed God's promises. The Anna title resonates with the fact that much of the work is with those who have suffered various losses, and bereavement.

Anna Chaplaincy seeks to accompany older people at this age and stage of their lives. It is an ecumenical, community-based chaplaincy promoting the spiritual welfare of older people. Anna Chaplaincy is a person-centred and non-judgemental ministry for people of strong, little or no faith at all.

Such a focus on spiritual care may express itself in helping people to reflect on their life's journey – both the joys and the sorrows – and, where appropriate, enabling the healing of memories and the celebration of life experiences to foster more hope and resilience.

An Anna Chaplain also has a wider role within the community as an advocate and a champion of the contribution older people make to society. They may enable cross-generational encounters in the church and wider community for the benefit of people of all ages.

Spiritual support provided in a gentle and loving way brings comfort and succour to people who may be at a low point in their lives. It enables older people to live with greater meaning and purpose. Finding some peace in their later years, they may be better prepared to face the end of their earthly lives.

Anna Chaplaincy involves visiting older people wherever they may be living, whether in residential and nursing homes, sheltered housing, retirement complexes or other private homes. The emphasis is on spiritual support but,

clearly, people's emotional and practical struggles will also play a part in their overall well-being. In our 2022 post-pandemic world it has become apparent that many older people have felt socially isolated.

Within the parish of St Catherine's, Littleton we have two Nursing Homes (Flowerdown and Westholme), as well as parishioners living in other care facilities outside of the parish, and a congregation which includes many in their senior years who attend our Church services. We have identified various needs expressed by the older residents of the parish, and of those caring for them, which include practical, emotional and spiritual needs. St Catherine's PCC were excited to introduce Anna Chaplaincy within our parish in 2022 and are now seeking to recruit a replacement chaplain following the resignation of our first Anna Chaplain (due to personal reasons). We look forward to seeing this ministry to those in the later years of their lives develop, both locally and in tandem with the work nationally. There are now almost 400 Anna Chaplains and similar ministries nationally, forming a mutually supportive network supported by BRF who offer training and resources.

To gain a fuller picture of the variety of work Anna Chaplains are undertaking please see

www.annachaplaincy.org.uk