

Anna Chaplaincy and Care Home Ministry

Anna Chaplaincy is an ecumenical, parish-based chaplaincy to older people. It is named after the faithful older woman, Anna, who appears with Simeon in Luke's Gospel. (*Luke 2: 22-39*) Anna Chaplaincy values and respects the elderly and it is now moving into the Canterbury Diocese, co-ordinated by Julia Burton-Jones, the dementia specialist project officer, who has led Anna Chaplaincy in the Rochester Diocese. Elizabeth Bryson has done extra studying about the spiritual care of the elderly and those living with dementia. She was commissioned as an Anna Chaplain at the Readers' Service at Canterbury Cathedral on Sunday 22nd September by Bishop Tim.



In the Cathedral Elizabeth was asked 'what do you hope to do as an Anna Chaplain in Maidstone?' She said:

'I will continue to lead services at 3 care homes in my Parish of St Michael and All Angels. I hope to enable more care homes in Maidstone to have Church services. I hope to do what the General Synod recommended in July and *'raise the profile of work with those diagnosed with dementia and their carers.'* Some people in care homes are put away and forgotten by their family and friends, who find visiting them distressing. These people have been called 'the forgotten generation' and they need to know that the Church has not forgotten them and that Jesus loves them and is with them. They can no longer go to Church, so the Church needs to go to them to provide services, give Holy Communion and an opportunity for them to talk about their faith.

People living in care homes are all parishioners in a parish. By having Church services this enables the home to meet its CQC requirement¹ for providing spiritual care for the residents. I would love Care Home Ministry in Maidstone to include all the care homes in the Deanery and Archdeaconry. Indeed it would be wonderful if all the care homes in the Canterbury Diocese had Church services, giving pastoral care and missional opportunities.

We are having a meeting in November for all those in Maidstone who lead care home services and for those who would like to find out more about this ministry. I am happy to mentor people who would like to lead care home services, share the services that I have planned and help train up more people to do this important ministry of providing spiritual care for the elderly.

Proverbs tells us 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, ... defend the rights of the poor and needy.' (*Proverbs 31: 8-9*) Residents in care homes cannot always 'speak for themselves', and we should help those who are former church-goers to have their rights to spiritual care and Church services; so those needy people are reminded that Jesus loves them.

I would love to see Care Home Ministry develop like the *Street Pastors*, where people from all the Churches in each Deanery who feel called to this ministry receive training by becoming Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends. Anna Chaplaincy is an ecumenical, parish-based chaplaincy to older people. So then together let us arrange that all the care homes in each Deanery and the Diocese are receiving Church services.'

The meeting in November brought together people who already go into care homes in Maidstone and others volunteering for this ministry. Elizabeth gave a talk about Care Home Ministry when she spoke about the regulatory, biblical, theological and practical aspects of this ministry. She also showed helpful visual aids.

¹ Care Quality Commission CQC Regulation 9 (3)(a) requires ¹ 'carrying out, collaboratively with the relevant person, an assessment of the needs and preferences for care and treatment of the service user...(health, personal care, emotional, social, cultural, **religious and spiritual needs.**'

Since then Elizabeth has been coordinating and linking people from different Churches who lead care home services in Maidstone. There are still 3 care homes that have no church contacts. In December she started to train volunteers to be a team going into *Pilgrim's Way*.

Elizabeth leads services at *Abbeyrose*, *Lukestone* and *The Poplars* every month. Eleanor leads a service at *Mont Calm*. It is good that these four care homes in our parish have monthly Church services and the residents who are communicants can receive home Communion.

Elizabeth Bryson, Anna Chaplain