

Anna Chaplaincy

By Margaret Hollands - Reader at Hoo St Werburgh Church.

I became involved in in this project because my Dad had Dementia and we found life a struggle so when Jean Kerr suggested I was involved, I agreed.

Julia Burton-Jones, who is the Dementia Project Officer for the Diocese, has been working with a small group of people including myself, and in conjunction with The Gift of Years which is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship to develop Anna Chaplains in our Diocese.

Debbie Thrower, a Reader in Alton, Hampshire who works with The Gift of Years, really pioneered Anna Chaplaincy and we have been working with her. The name Anna has been used as a reference to the elderly prophetess who was in the Temple with Simeon when Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the Temple and the name Anna means Grace.

The role of Anna Chaplains is mainly to older people but in this Diocese we are specifically looking at ways of meeting the spiritual needs of people living with Dementia whether they are living at home or in care. We are also looking at ways of meeting the spiritual needs of the families and carers.

We are also looking at creating a new role of Anna Friends and are working with The Gift of Years to help provide a model of this new role. We are pioneers here in Rochester and hopefully others will follow.

It is envisaged that Anna Chaplaincy will work alongside the Parish – we are not there to take over. Anna Chaplaincy will be embedded in other Diocesan Strategies and I understand that those who are on LLM training will have the opportunity to do a module on Anna Chaplaincy.

This is a new venture where we are trying to fulfil a need in our communities. As we all live longer, it is a fact that more people will be diagnosed with Dementia. What we want is to show that people can live well with Dementia and their spiritual needs can be met even though it may be in a slightly different way to how they have previously been met whether in church services or in smaller groups or individually.

It is difficult to give much information in such a short time but if you want to find out more, do look on the Diocesan website or The Gift of Years website or come and have a chat with me or contact Julia.

