



Anna Chaplaincy for Older People in Kent

Later Life Challenges

Every older person has a story to tell and, while there can be challenges in advancing age, faith and spiritual care can help in finding meaning and purpose and making sense of later life. Older People with dementia or other health issues want to stay connected with their church and community, but this is not always straightforward.

Why Anna Chaplaincy?

A new way in which our churches are responding is through appointing Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends. Anna Chaplaincy is a new role across all Christian churches aimed at supporting older people, pioneered by The Bible Reading Fellowship; it provides community-based spiritual support for older people of strong, little or no faith. 'Anna Chaplain' was chosen as a title because it echoes the work of Anna, who the Bible tells us recognised the baby Jesus as the fulfilment of God's promises; the name Anna emphasises that this is a hope-filled ministry, in the tradition of older people having prophetic voices and life lessons to share. Anna Chaplaincy keeps the needs of older people at the forefront of church life and enables those with a calling to minister with older people, fulfilling this distinctive vocation.

What have we done so far in East Kent?

Anna Chaplaincy was launched in Canterbury Diocese in Autumn 2019. The first Anna Chaplaincy projects are based in Thanet and Maidstone. We are developing a team of volunteer Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends supported by project lead Julia Burton-Jones.

How is an Anna Chaplain appointed?

Anna Chaplains can be lay or ordained, male or female, and are appointed by their local church to lead ministry with older people. They are offered training and support, are supervised by a member of the church leadership team and spend at least a day a week in the role, usually as a volunteer, though some are paid. They may have Anna Friends working with them who spend several hours a week providing hands on spiritual care with older

people. Some Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends are new to ministry, others are experienced ministers who have discovered their calling in ministry with older people.

What do Anna Friends and Anna Chaplains do?

Each person has their own role supported by their church leadership, which may include:

- One to one spiritual and pastoral support for older people;
- Being the parish link with a local care home, visiting and taking services;
- Working with organisations supporting older people, signposting help they provide;
- Setting up or supporting church activities for older people (dementia cafes, singing groups, dementia friendly worship services, holidays at home, friendship groups).

So how can Anna Chaplaincy help?

- ✓ Recognising and affirming a sense of **calling** to ministry with older people.
- ✓ Being a **voice for older people** and their families, in a rapidly ageing society, working with others to help our communities become age friendly and dementia friendly.
- ✓ Responding to **spiritual needs in later life and dementia** so that faith continues to be a source of strength and encouragement.
- ✓ Helping the local church to **reach out** to older people outside its regular membership.
- ✓ Ensuring older people living in **care homes** have their spiritual needs met.
- ✓ Building effective **ecumenical links**, working with other local churches.
- ✓ Contributing to **partnership working** between churches and other local agencies.
- ✓ Facilitating **networking and learning** on issues related to ageing and dementia.

Want to find out more?

Please contact Julia Burton-Jones, Anna Chaplaincy lead for Rochester and Canterbury Dioceses (julia.burton-jones@rochester.anglican.org), or visit www.annachaplaincy.org.uk.

