

ORDINATIONS 2016: New curate's diagnosis featured on BBC documentary

WHEN she was diagnosed with cancer for a second time, Katy thought she might not make it to ordination.

The mum-of-three was in the middle of her theological training when she discovered a lump that turned out to be cancerous. She was convinced she wouldn't be able to complete her course.

So when she is ordained deacon at our cathedral this month, she will be excited, relieved – and thankful that God is allowing her to fulfil this calling.

Not only that, but she believes she will be able to minister more effectively as curate to those living in West Meon, Warnford, East Meon and Langrish because of her experiences of living with cancer.

Katy was featured on the BBC programme *The Big C and Me* last month. It followed her during the last year of her theological training, including during her daughter Harriet's wedding.

"I couldn't believe that God would call me to ordination if I wasn't going to live long enough to see it," she said. "He wouldn't have called me to this unless he was going to give me the resources to see it through.

"And when you have been to the brink and back, and you have experience of what living with cancer is like, it does help you to minister to others.

"I haven't got the answer about why God allows suffering, but cancer has not made me lose my faith. You have to work through these questions, and I believe that a journey through difficult times can actually strengthen your faith."

In hindsight, Katy can see that her journey towards ordination started as a 13-year-old, when she became the first female server at Exeter Cathedral. Her family worshipped there and her brother became head chorister.

As a girl, she wasn't allowed to sing in the choir, but was keen for a role during worship. She questioned why a girl wasn't allowed to be a server and the then dean and bishop eventually agreed she could.

"I found myself serving at the Lord's table, and I knew that was the right place to be," she said. "I had no concept at the time of how important that would be. Perhaps if women were allowed to be ordained sooner, I might have put myself forward sooner. However, I also recognise that God has called me now, equipped with more experience of life."

Katy worked as a research scientist at Bristol University for 12 years, and then more recently as children and families co-ordinator

Cancer will make me a better priest



Katy Garner in the chapel at Ripon College, Cuddesdon, near Oxford

ORDINATIONS: July 2016

To be ordained deacon

(July 2, 11am): Ben Bryant (Harbour Church and St Alban's, Copnor) **Adam Denley** (St Jude's, Southsea), **Edwina Fennemore** (St Alban's, West Leigh), **Katy Garner** (East Meon, Langrish, West Meon & Warnford) and **Mark James** (Christ Church, Portsdown)

To be licensed as curate

(July 2, 11am): Emmanuel Nazir Masih (St James, Milton)

To be licensed lay minister (July 2, 11am):

Victoria Morgan and David Morgan (both St Faith's, Havant)

To be ordained priest (July 2, 6pm):

The Revs Andrew Goy (Church of the Good Shepherd, Crookhorn), **Chris Richardson** (Alverstoke), **Darcy Chesterfield-Terry** (St Mary's, Fratton), and **Amy Webb** (Botley, Curdridge and Durley)

at Bath Abbey. She and her husband Peter had three children, Beth, William and Harriet. Katy had the first inklings of feeling called to ordination before 2009, but that was blown off course when cancer struck.

"I found a lump on my groin, and everyone said it would be nothing, but it was still there a month later," she said. "I had some tests and it was a melanoma, which I then had removed in a Bath clinic, and scans confirmed it had been cancerous.

"A good friend then put me in touch with the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, who looked after me very well. Because my melanoma was a secondary cancer and they couldn't find the primary source, they removed all my leg lymph nodes in 2009.

"They told me that if the cancer came back, it would be life-limiting. But if it hadn't returned in three years I could have a small

party, and if it hadn't come back in five years, I could have a big party.

"In fact we chose to have a party after six years because that was our 25th wedding anniversary, and Peter and I renewed our vows. But just before that, I found a second lump in the same place, and I knew that it was likely to be

my faith

You may have already seen Katy Garner talking on a BBC documentary about living with cancer. Now she's preparing for ordination and a new role as a curate within our diocese

the same problem."

By that time, Katy was at Ripon College Cuddesdon, near Oxford, training for ordination. In 2011, she had been on a trip to the Holy Land with worshippers from Bath Abbey and found herself telling one of the clergy, the Rev

Claire Robson, that she felt called to be a priest.

"It felt like it wasn't me talking – it was little like an out-of-body experience, as if God was directing me," said Katy. "But Claire did a little jig and said she had also thought so. My mother also said she had known for a long time, and wondered why it had taken me so long!

"As it happened, I went through the process very quickly – I saw the director of ordinands in the September and by March 2012 I had been approved by a bishop's advisory panel.

"So when I heard the cancer had returned halfway through my course, I lost confidence in my own body," she said. "I didn't want people to spend money putting me through theological training only for my body to let

the second melanoma, the BBC documentary showed Katy being given a new treatment which is still on trial in the UK. This novel therapy aims to prevent the cancer returning. The immune-boosting therapy, which stimulates her immune system to kill off any cancerous cells, had worked for patients in the USA.

The programme showed the side-effects of this treatment – the fact that good cells are sometimes also killed off, making her feel ill. She came off this treatment after seven months, and she remains cancer-free.

"I'll only really know if it has worked if the cancer hasn't come back for 10 years," she said. "Melanoma is totally unpredictable, and in the past has often meant a death sentence. But the consultants say that, from their experience, those who react strongest to these drugs, in terms of the side effects, do have the best chance.

"Faith is a journey and does involve doubts. But that does make you revisit the Bible. I've found that it has made me ask questions, and that has meant a more permanent and beautiful relationship with God. I see God in this situation and I couldn't have walked this journey without him."

● *Katy is featured in the third episode of *The Big C and Me*, still available on BBC iPlayer.*

me and them down.

"I thought I wouldn't be able to carry on, but the principal, Bishop Humphrey Southern, said 'Why would we not want you back?' To have someone else believing in you is great."

After an operation to remove