

Chaplain to help older people in West Wight



Anne Powell, Anna Chaplain

A NEW volunteer chaplain who will work alongside older people in West Wight has been commissioned.

Anne Powell is the first 'Anna Chaplain' in our diocese. She was commissioned at All Saints, Freshwater, in October by her vicar, the Rev Leisa Potter. She's now working across the whole of West Wight, but with a particular focus on the Freshwater area.

The first Anna Chaplain was former TV presenter Debbie Thrower, who pioneered this work in the Alton area. There are now dozens of such chaplains working across the UK. Much of the work is with those who have suffered loss or bereavement, but it also recognises older people have much wisdom to impart.

Anne, who has lived in the area for 52 years, retired in 2006. She had always been a committee person, but felt God calling her to a more pastoral role. She did so in the parish of All Saints, Freshwater, and spent 12 years volunteering with the chaplaincy team at St Mary's Hospital, Newport.

More recently, she felt a calling to Anna Chaplaincy, but was unable

to pursue it while she cared for her terminally-ill husband Elwyn. He sadly died in January 2020.

Since then, she has discovered more about Anna Chaplaincy, which is co-ordinated by Christian charity BRF, and offered to take on the role in the West Wight area. She won't be ordained, but will perform the role as an unpaid lay person.

"I've been involved in this kind of ministry since the 1980s, when I used to bring elderly people to the 8am services at Freshwater," she said. "But I did have a further prod from God after I retired in 2006, which prompted me to switch my focus from sitting on committees to visiting people in need.

"I had the privilege of being a ward visitor at St Mary's Hospital for 12 years. It was interesting to see how similar my training there was to my training to become an Anna Chaplain. And I learned a lot during those 12 years from all three hospital chaplains I served under.

"I started to feel this calling to the ministry of being an Anna Chaplain. I had encouraging conversations with my vicar, and enrolled for the training course held in March and

April this year.

"And having been accepted for the role, I've started to visit several of the local groups that help local people – such as Our Place, Remember When, Independent Arts Singabout, Alzheimer's Café – and some of the care homes and independent living complexes. I want to see how I can help.

"I expect that my role might include taking Communion to people at home, reading to them, praying for them, talking through funeral preparation, and listening to the stories of their lives too. There are often things that people need to get off their chests in order to have a peaceful end of life."

Anna Chaplains are named after the widow, Anna, who appears in the Bible recognising the baby Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. Anna Chaplains aim to support older people emotionally and spiritually, and are available to help those of all faiths or none.

If you know someone who would appreciate a visit from Anne, do contact her on westwightannachaplain@gmail.com.