

Anna Chaplains learn the power of stories

ALMOST 60 Anna Chaplains and colleagues met at our cathedral for their annual Candlemas gathering - and heard about the power of stories.

Anna Chaplains, who offer spiritual support to the elderly around our diocese, were joined by Anna Friends and those considering the ministry, for fellowship and to be inspired by a number of guest speakers.

Caroline Free, from the Anna Chaplaincy team at Warblington-with-Emsworth, shared a story of their vision for a space for those living with dementia and their carers. It came to fruition in the form of an 'Anna Café' under the leadership of their curate, the Rev Lizzie Davidson. The Anna Café community is thriving with many, including carers, calling it 'their church' - despite having no church background or particular connection otherwise.

Gemma Gillard, chief executive and founder of the charity Truth Be Told, shared why stories are so valuable in sharing God's love. She told those gathered that 'truth plus story' is often a more palatable way of communicating things. Gemma encouraged them to recognise that we are all part of God's story and our stories matter.

Debbie Thrower, who originally founded Anna Chaplaincy in Alton, and Marian Muskett, both from BRF, joined them for the afternoon,



Above: the Candlemas service in our cathedral; left: Gemma Gillard shares about the power of stories



sharing their own stories. They encouraged those gathered to stay connected with the network of over 480 Anna Chaplains nationally through regular gatherings and training being offered.

Bishop Jonathan encouraged them all to consider their baptism, and that people's stories are not complete at that point. He pointed out that we grow into our baptism - our story in God - illustrating this with a story of an oversized jacket he wore in his youth!

During the afternoon the Anna Chaplains had a chance to share something of their stories from

their ministry by creating the Living Wall - which involved compiling pictures and other pieces describing their ministry. It was then exhibited during the Candlemas Eucharist service held in the cathedral. The Living Wall showed that over the

Christmas season, 1,075 lives were touched by the ministry of Anna Chaplaincy across our diocese.

The theme for the afternoon was inspired by St Peter's first letter, which talks about us being living stones, which can be built into a spiritual house with Jesus at the centre as our cornerstone.

Anna Chaplaincy is an ecumenical ministry from BRF Ministries. Find out more about our network of Anna Chaplains and Friends ministering to older people in communities, on www.portsmouth.anglican.org/anna