



death and bereavement.

Rev Vic Van Den Bergh is well known in Tamworth, Staffordshire, where his ministry extends to schools, cadets, veterans' organisations and other groups. Known locally as 'Vic the Vicar', he is resident minister in the urban estate church of St Francis in the town.

Around two years ago, he set up a group to encourage people to think about death and dying in a gentle and positive way. "The Church needs to go out into the community, our mission is to be where people are and to answer their questions," he said. A local micropub, The King's Ditch, gave over its premises one evening a month to a gathering known as 'Dying - in the Ditch'. The meetings were publicised in local newspapers and social media, through notices in a GP surgery and word of mouth.

Since its start, attendance levels have ranged from a handful to more than 20 people. The evenings have included conversations, helped by the Church of England's Gravetalk conversation cards. Memorable events have included support for a family arriving directly from the loss of a loved one, through to funerals being planned, discussion with local undertakers and support for those faced with a 'direct funeral' where there is no funeral service – or it is postponed to a later date.

The best assessment of 'Dying - in the Ditch' comes in the quote, "There was good beer, good company, good conversation and in the middle of it I dealt with the loss of someone special in something that felt safe and normal!"

After a short break to assess the event, 'Dying - in the Ditch' resumes at the King's Ditch in Tamworth on May 20.

:: Dying - in the Ditch takes place in the Diocese of Lichfield. Find out more about the diocese's work to help people navigate death and dying at

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/death-dying-funerals/>