

Worship at Home
'Celebrating care home ministry'
18th Sunday after Trinity

WELCOME

Debbie Thrower

Licensed lay minister and founder of Anna Chaplaincy for Older People

Good morning and welcome to our act of worship. Today we're celebrating care homes. More than four hundred thousand older men and women live in residential settings, that's 4% of the population. About forty per cent of those are receiving specialist dementia care.

Of course, since the start of the pandemic care homes have been much in the news. A high proportion of deaths from coronavirus have been among older people, particularly those in residential care. Our thoughts and prayers are for the bereaved, and for staff (those key workers under such pressure).

Today we think of all who are suffering as a result of the virus, as each of us tries to pick up the threads of normal life. And we'll celebrate what's being done to keep people in care connected to church, to draw on their faith at this time.

Our service begins with the hymn, 'My song is love unknown'.

OPENING HYMN

My song is love unknown

Sung by the St Martin's Singers

My song is love unknown,
My Saviour's love to me;
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know:
But O! my Friend,
My Friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend.

Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:
Then "Crucify!"
is all their breath,
And for His death
they thirst and cry.

They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they save,
The Prince of life they slay,
Yet cheerful He
to suffering goes,
That He His foes
from thence might free.

In life no house, no home,
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb,
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was his home;
But mine the tomb
Wherein he lay.

Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine;
Never was love, dear King!
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend,
in Whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

*Words: Samuel Crossman (1664)
Tune: Love Unknown, John Ireland*

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. I'm speaking to you from Alton in Hampshire where the way of supporting older people known as Anna Chaplaincy first began.

It's named after the widow Anna who appears with Simeon in Luke's gospel, both of them fine role models of faithful older people. Today's Anna Chaplaincy is for everyone in later life whether they go to church or not.

Part of the Bible Reading Fellowship, BRF, Anna Chaplaincy offers spiritual care to people in the community, whether they're living in care or living independently. What we mean by spiritual care is offering time for people to talk about life's big questions, to tell their stories and make better sense of their lives, to have their souls nurtured.

This spiritual accompaniment is a person-centred, non-judgemental process of being alongside the other person, listening and affirming their life experience. It is an immense privilege but also a demanding role that requires love and commitment.

In today's service we'll hear from older people and their Anna Chaplains in different parts of the country.

ACT OF PENITENCE

First, though, let us say sorry to God for those times when we have let him down.

(All) Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.

(All) Amen

Almighty God,
Who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(All) Amen

Our first reading is from Luke chapter two, (the story of Simeon and Anna), and it's read for us by Canon Dr Erica Roberts, who leads the Anna Chaplaincy team supporting care homes in Southampton.

FIRST READING

Read by Canon Dr Erica Roberts

Luke 2:25-38

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

TESTIMONY

Canon Dr. Erica Roberts, Debbie Gurling (Anna Chaplain) and Dot Pooler (Anna Friend)

SECOND READING

Philippians 4.1-9

Read by Debbie Gurling

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. Amen.

THE COLLECT

Led by Canon Dr. Erica Roberts

Let us pray
Almighty and everlasting God,
increase in us your gift of faith
that, forsaking what lies behind
and reaching out to that which is before,
we may run the way of your commandments
and win the crown of everlasting joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(All) Amen.

TESTIMONY

Presenting Booklets for carers at Lawnbrook care home, Southampton

SERMON

Debbie Thrower

Licensed lay minister and founder of Anna Chaplaincy for Older People

PRAYERS

Led by Anna Chaplain Church Lead Julia Burton-Jones and Anna Chaplain, the Revd Colin Terry, Anna Chaplaincy Team Lead for the Heart of Kent Hospice

Lord God,
we pray for our world, in the grip of a deadly pandemic.
We lift to you especially today all who live, work and visit in our care homes.
That staff may have the physical and emotional resources they need to protect and cherish the vulnerable older people in their care,
That managers may receive advice and help in leading their teams,
that care teams may be resilient and united in surviving the relentless pressures the virus has introduced,
That residents living in care homes may know that they are loved by relatives and friends prevented from visiting regularly,
and that families will be comforted in the pain of this enforced separation.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(All) Amen.

Heavenly Father,
we pray for your Church at this time of continued anxiety and uncertainty.
We ask for wisdom for church leaders as they seek to make the best decisions for their congregations and communities.
Guide them in the choices they face over how to lead us in worship.
Inspire them in presenting the message of your love in new ways.
We lift to you all who provide spiritual care to care home communities.
Be with them in their frustration over being unable to minister in person.
Reveal to them ways they can meet the needs of staff, residents and relatives in the homes they support.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(All) Amen.

Lord God,
hear our prayers for parts of your world where there is conflict,
where natural disasters have left many destitute and homeless.
We pray for refugees, and communities facing drought and starvation.
Keep the plight of marginalised people in our hearts and minds, in spite of the pressures we face through the pandemic.
Supply relief agencies with essential resources so they can help and provide hope in places of great need.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(All) Amen.

Merciful God,
we entrust to your tender care
those who are ill or in pain,
knowing that whenever danger threatens
your everlasting arms
are there to hold them safe.
Comfort and heal them
and restore them to health and strength,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(All) Amen.

Lord Jesus,
We lift to you all who are dying, at home, in hospices and in care homes,
and those who care for them.
Give peace and assurance of your love to those in their final days.
Help their caregivers to know how to ease their suffering and offer comfort;
Renew daily their reserves of love and compassion.
We hold before you those who have died, especially care home residents and staff
we have lost this year to COVID-19.
In our sorrow at their passing, may we stand firm in your promise of everlasting life, remembering the ones we have lost with thanksgiving.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(All) Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

(All) Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours,
Now and forever.
Amen.

TESTIMONY

Bob Weighton

When filming 102-year-old Bob Weighton near his flat in the grounds of Brendoncare nursing home in Alton in 2010, little did we know that he would survive to be lauded as 'the oldest man in the world'! Survived, though, is hardly the word, for Bob positively *thrived* into his extreme old age. According to Age UK there are almost fourteen and half thousand centenarians in Britain. That number has increased by 85% over the last 15 years. Shortly before his 112th birthday Bob recorded some of his own poems which he had self-published in an anthology. Copies were sold in aid of ministry among older people. Here he is reciting a wry poem of his, about love.

The argument against love

If you do not want to suffer, do not love!
Love neither friends nor family,
For they can be taken from you.
They can cause disappointment, frustration and pain,
They can reject your love and leave you desolate.
What they say to you can hurt,
More than if it were said by a stranger.
For if you do not care,
The barbed words fall to the ground.

Love not the world:
The brightness of the sun, for night falls;
The colour of flowers, for they wither and die;
Love not the sound of music, for the song comes to an end.

Love not life overmuch, for youth and strength depart,
Love not the high moments of pleasure,
For they can be followed by dry crusts of time,
Cherish no dreams, for they may never be realised,

Strive for no goals, as they may ever remain out of reach,
Attempt nothing and fail in nothing.

Trust no one, venture your life for no one, not any cause.
Give your heart to no-one and in so doing,
Much pain will pass you by.

But what will you have left to remember?
And oh! What you will have missed!

(Bob Weighton, written in Alton, in 1983)

Bob died this summer, peacefully and at home. He had been cared for in the last few months of his long and distinguished life as an engineer and missionary, by staff from the nursing home opposite.

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Led by Debbie Thrower

Let us pray:

Father, as the years advance and I cannot do the things I once did,
help me to change the focus, as I would with a camera,
from sweeping panoramas to the beauty of things seen close.
Help me to enjoy the flowers on the windowsill,
as I once loved a garden;
The birds at a feeder, as the birds I used to see on country roads;
The play on TV, when theatre was a joy;
The cup of tea with a friend, instead of a party;
My small, cosy room instead of my old house.
Help me to realise that enjoyment lies not in things,
but in my attitude to them.
grant me I pray the ability to find
uncommon joy in common things.

(All) Amen

(Author unknown)

THE BLESSING

And our final blessing:

The love of the faithful Creator,
The peace of the wounded Healer,
The joy of the challenging Spirit
The hope of the Three in One
Surround and encourage us
Today, tonight and forever.

(All) Amen

FINAL HYMN

Take my life and let it be

Sung by the St Martin's Singers

Take my life and let it be

Take my life, and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;

Take my moments and my days,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love;

Take my feet and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing

Always, only, for my King;

Take my lips, and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold;

Not a mite would I withhold;

Take my intellect, and use

Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine;

It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart; it is Thine own;

It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour

At Thy feet its treasure-store.

Take myself, and I will be

Ever, only, all for Thee.

Words: Frances R. Havergal

Tune: Savannah

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The Pattern of Our Days – Liturgies and resources for worship, Edited by Kathy Galloway, The Iona Community, Wild Goose Publications, 1996, p.165.