

# *“The story so far”*

## *News and views from our Care Home Chaplaincy*



The Care Home Chaplaincy is an Ecumenical project, initiated and funded by the Methodist Church in collaboration with other churches in the Wyre Forest District. Its aim is to befriend and support residents, visitors, families and staff of Care Homes in the area. The project has been in operation for four years and has consistently grown. Stella Gray is the Care Home Chaplaincy Coordinator, responsible for leading the volunteer team and building the Chaplaincy across the circuit.

Stella says: “I really can’t believe that we are entering the fifth year of the chaplaincy project. Our success is down to the dedicated volunteers who visit the care homes regularly and over the years have built strong relationships with staff, residents and families”.

It is lovely to be part of such a team and we have compiled a few special stories to share with you.

### **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

As the Vicar was on holiday, he had cancelled the communion service at the Herons last month but some residents had forgotten. I went along to see them anyway and a couple of the male residents came into the lounge expecting to attend the service. They were disappointed but I asked them if it would be OK to

visit them in their rooms as I had all afternoon to spend with the community. I shared quality time with both residents, hearing about their lives and their work. It was especially rewarding when one of them spoke of his faith and I plan to take him a Bible at my next visit as he only has a Bible commentary.

That same afternoon, in conversation with a new resident, I dis-

covered he had spent his whole working life at Steatite and was able to point out to him that another resident had also worked there. To our delight, he remembered his fellow worker and we hope that they will get together and share memories of old times. I felt thrilled to have such a productive afternoon and to establish relationships that I can continue to develop on my regular visits.

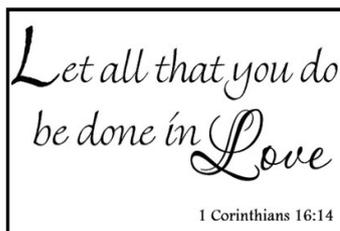
### **SHARING LIVES**

It’s been a pleasure to involve one of the residents in reading the gospel at the communion services (“I have a good foghorn voice!”). One day I noticed that she enjoys the adult colouring books and remembered that there were some Christian versions. With the help of John at the Trinity Christian Bookstall, we got hold of some and gave them to her as a present. The pages are detachable and I suggested she gave the completed pages to people as a simple way of sharing her faith in the home.

The next time that I saw her, the lady said: “I’m downsizing. I used to do cross stitch and I have a version of the Lord’s Prayer. Would you like to see it and say if you’d like it.” It’s beautiful and is now on the wall of my lounge.

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE CARE HOME**

‘Phil and his congregation from the Stourport Churches have become like family to us all at Ravenhurst. They have brought joy and fulfilment to our residents’ lives. We are greatly appreciative of them all but especially Joy, the care home chaplain, who devotes her time and affection to our residents. A big thank you to all the Churches from the Ravenhurst family!’



Joy has received this lovely poem about what her visits and care mean to the residents. In fact, the activities coordinator has set up a poetry corner in the Home!

### **A POEM TO JOY (an extract)**

Joy it was a delight to meet you  
And chat with you last week  
About personal Christian events  
For it’s fellowship I seek

I think I talked a great deal  
But it was good to share  
How I came to know the Lord  
And arrive here in care

The past few months have been bad  
With problems all the way  
But I’m so grateful to Him  
That I’m in Ravenhurst today

I couldn’t get to the church at all  
For such a long time  
But Phil’s service in this house  
Was truly divine

So I hope we’ll talk again  
When you come to visit here  
With Jesus as our companion  
We hit it off—that’s clear

## THOUGHTS FROM A CHAPLAIN

I was walking down the corridor in one home when a lady resident coming the other way asked: "Are those your knickers hanging on that door handle, vicar?" I assured her they were not! She might have believed that bit but still thinks I'm a vicar (and clearly has some interesting ideas about what they get up to).

I usually wear fairly casual clothes when on my visits but sometimes a previous engagement means that I turn up in a suit and tie. This invariably provokes comments along the lines of: "Ooh, you look smart today!" The last time this happened, I blessed the member of staff who replied: "Well, I've never seen him look anything other than smart".

**A STITCH IN TIME!** A lady refused to go to a craft session when I was with her. She said she had had some new pants for her birthday and needed to sew her name tags in them – a task that was going to be her activity for the afternoon. She might be well into her 90's but some things are just not for sharing!!

*To make a difference in someone's life, you don't have to be brilliant, rich or perfect. You just have to care.*

Being able to address someone by their first name always helps to get a conversation going. One trick I learned early on is to look on the handle of their Zimmer frame to see if there is a clue there – not a foolproof technique but often helpful. Of course, remembering the names is another matter!

I'm beginning to think chaplains should be issued with a folding chair; I spend a lot of my time on my knees at the side of chairs and beds; that's not too bad, but the getting up again .....

Someone thought it would be a good idea if, when we took services at Minster Grange in Stourport, we all wore the same bright

colour, so we were easily identifiable as a team of chaplains. In due course, Cherrill got us all bright yellow polo shirts, emblazoned with a red cross. We certainly stand out now!

As a Methodist Local preacher and Chaplain, I have had the privilege of presiding at, or assisting with, a number of funerals of care home residents I had come to know. It has been humbling to learn how much one's visits were appreciated by their families, and very enriching to discover so much that we never knew about the lives of the people we only met in their twilight years when, as is so often the case, they were unable to remember or relate to their earlier lives.



**JUST A THOUGHT** "When God can't come himself, he sends an angel!" I'm not sure we are an angelic host but I thought these were lovely words from a resident when I visited one of the care homes recently.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

There are around 31 Residential Care Homes (or similar establishments) in the Wyre Forest District and the Chaplaincy Project provides support to residents in 13 of them. We have eight volunteers who share the visits with support from nine members of the local clergy.

It is our vision to continue expansion until all Residents who would benefit from our support have access to our services. To achieve that aim, we will need more volunteers. Each volunteer brings a unique set of skills and personal talents and we encourage each to find their own way of relating to the people they meet in the care homes as they seek to make a difference to the lives of older people in our community.

**Please remember the care homes, residents, staff, Chaplaincy Team and their stories in your prayers and, if you feel moved to help in any way, we are always looking for volunteers as we grow our service into new homes.**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION OR WISH TO BECOME MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THIS CHAPLAINCY, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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**"The best of it is, God is with us" John Wesley**