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Anna Chaplaincy pioneer Debbie Thrower hands on the baton

Anna Chaplaincy pioneer and lead Debbie Thrower is standing back from the ministry in November, 14 years after she founded the work in Alton in Hampshire. Anna Chaplaincy for Older People has been part of BRF Ministries since 2014.

Named after the widow Anna, who appears with Simeon in Luke's gospel, Anna Chaplaincy provides training and support to individuals and churches who want to offer skilled, compassionate spiritual care among older people, including those living with dementia. Anna Chaplains are there for people of strong, little or no faith.

From small beginnings, the network has grown to well over 300 Anna Chaplains and the vision remains to have an Anna Chaplain in every small- and medium-sized community throughout the UK.

A bittersweet feeling

Debbie Thrower says of her decision: *'There's nothing like receiving notification of your state pension to bring home the fact that you're officially an old-age pensioner. It's a bittersweet feeling handing on the baton to my colleagues as Anna Chaplaincy has been such an overwhelming part of my life, but it's time to practice what I preach and try to "age well." Part of that is about less "doing" and more "being"; going on growing spiritually and keeping relationships in good repair. I am delighted that I shall be able to continue to lobby on behalf of Anna Chaplaincy nationally as a BRF Ministries vice president.*

'It is hard relinquishing a hands-on role when this is something that has been so much a part of me, but the next phase beckons. I have every confidence in the team carrying forward the work on a day-to-day basis, and we're fortunate that Debbie Ducille brings so many talents to the leadership role. I just pray we can find the resources we need to maintain a strong, and growing, team and make the most of the opportunities God is providing for the hugely exciting expansion of this ministry.'

A new lead



Debbie Ducille, currently responsible for church relationships, will take over the lead role from Debbie Thrower in late November.

She says: *'When I joined the Anna Chaplaincy team 20 months ago, I reflected that "Sometimes you encounter a ministry that is so bursting with life, potential and the transforming power of the Spirit, you just want to join in!" Anna Chaplaincy felt like such a ministry then and I rejoice that this remains true, for me and many others, today. The ministry continues to grow rapidly both in number and stature as a trusted voice, promoting sensitive spiritual care as a gift to be made available to all in later life: a dream, perhaps, back in 2014 when the only Anna Chaplain in existence was Debbie Thrower.*

'I am hugely grateful to have been able to work alongside Debbie during this time and have learned so much from her. I feel humbled by her trust in me and the team as she steps aside now, into retirement but also into a new, exciting form of advocacy for the ministry model she has worked so hard to establish.

'Rapid growth of any ministry can lead to losing sight of its original principles and it is my hope that, as a team, we can hold fast to what is good, but also continue to develop a "gold standard" for best practice in this form of chaplaincy. There is much to be grateful for, and much still to do.'

A visionary and innovative ministry

Chief executive Richard Fisher has a strong track record of recognising visionary and innovative ministries and giving them a home in the BRF Ministries family. For him, Debbie Thrower's legacy is immense:

'Without doubt, Anna Chaplaincy has been one of the most significant ministries to emerge in the past 15 years. It is a ministry for our time. The pandemic illustrated why Anna Chaplaincy is so necessary when the lack of value and care for older people in our society became so apparent. Debbie's ministry has been rooted in practice, but her vision has led her to develop this into a growing national network of Anna Chaplains who are able to offer high quality spiritual care within their communities.

'Debbie has been given a deep tenacity to challenge and champion the spiritual care of older people both within and outside the church. Her passion for her work is driven by a desire to see older people get the care, and especially spiritual care, they deserve.

'Debbie will be very much missed by the Anna Chaplaincy team and the wider BRF Ministries staff team. As a colleague, I will miss her wisdom, insight and all that she brings to the charity. We are so pleased that she has agreed to become a vice president of BRF Ministries and will continue to champion Anna Chaplaincy in her retirement.'

To find out more about Anna Chaplaincy click [here](#).

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