



DIOCESE OF **Bath & Wells**

Living the story. Telling the story.



Diocesan Healing Advisory Group Newsletter & Resources Summer 2022

Stay wide-awake in prayer. Most of all, love each other as if your life depended on it. Love makes up for practically anything. Be quick to give a meal to the hungry, a bed to the homeless – cheerfully. Be generous with the different things God gave you . . .'
(from 1 Peter 4, The Message)

Healing Service in Wells Cathedral

A healing service will take place during Evensong on **Sunday 23 October** at 3.00 pm in the Cathedral, with prayer for healing available afterwards. [Details of our events are available on our website.](#)

From the Diocesan Healing Adviser

This year has highlighted the importance of the effect of trauma and poverty at home and abroad. We are hoping that you have leisure over the coming weeks to ponder these two articles which engage with healing in those contexts in some depth.

The first comes from Sally Walters and relates to traumatised refugees, looking at how we might offer them compassionate understanding. The second is a summary of Gabby North's work with families under stress in the UK.

How might we offer compassionate understanding to traumatised Ukrainian refugees?

Supporting the long journey towards healing with awareness

Sally Walters, Diocesan Adviser and Counsellor in Wellbeing and a member of the Diocesan Healing Advisory Group, writes:

Many people long to help by welcoming strangers into their own homes and communities. Despite feeling helpless in the face of the desperate needs of people who are deeply traumatised, they respond actively and selflessly. War brings deep psychological suffering to those severed from the familiarity of dear ones, home and culture.

Because we know ourselves ill-equipped, except through prayer, we underestimate the vital power of fully attentive listening, which Jesus shows so often as he comes alongside people. Through his wholehearted attention, whatever their culture or beliefs, they find they know themselves anew, loved and valued.

Sensitivity and awareness are vital in the unhurried hearing of people's experience of distress and trauma. For those listening, it can result in compassion fatigue over time. The cost to those of any age telling their story, relates to the hypervigilance and post traumatic shock triggered through the amygdala in the brain. The anxiety associated with intrusive flashbacks, may affect mood and sleep and for children, the stress of communicating in such a different culture, demands extraordinary trust and courage.

It is an honour to be entrusted to listen gently to people's memories of trauma, but be aware that frequent or repetitive questions can be overwhelming. Re-living such stark events may re-traumatise as it can feel as if past dangers are recurrent immediate threats. Heightened arousal makes it hard to feel calm or safe. Recovery means coming down from that, despite the continuing threat and unease. As you seek to gradually establish some normality alongside the ongoing trauma, please remember to seek any help you need from your doctor, church, or support group.

'I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand . . .'

Isaiah 41 v10

Please join us in praying for Ukrainian refugees and all those hosting or supporting them in our parishes.

Healing Forum: Healing Through Families

'Healing through Families' took place on 14 June. Gabby North talked about her work with Safe Families, a Christian charity which offers 'support, hope and belonging' to resource and improve the lives of young families who are in difficulty.

Here is a summary of her excellent talk.

Young parents can be isolated and struggle to cope; the Covid pandemic increased loneliness and any financial or relationship stresses.

We were asked to imagine a personal 'Stress Bucket,' which fills up if a person's stress fills the bucket faster than it can drain. Outlets for stress help our wellbeing, such as exercise, hobbies and friendships, keep the levels down. Poverty, isolation, worry, poor mental health and abusive relationships are likely to keep it topped up so fast that it overflows, threatening the stability of the family and sometimes leading to the removal of children to Social Care.

Anything which severely impacts parents affects the children, leading to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs.) Around 50% children experience one. 10% children experience 4 or more and are more likely to have adverse outcomes; behavioural, mental health, drug and alcohol problems and contact with the police, and as adults they tend to have poorer physical and mental health. Positive supportive intervention in the family and community can change this, preventing the need for children to go into care.



'Safe Families' exists to work with local authorities, charities and local church members. Together they work with vulnerable families to enable and support confident life skills and healthy relationships. 'Safe Families' recruit and train people from within local churches not only to support, mentor and, over time, befriend families who are struggling, but to host vulnerable children in family crises. This approach not only affirms their human dignity as beloved children of God, but is statistically extremely effective in preventing crises and re-connecting families with local communities. Around 770 adults and children in Somerset have been supported since 2018.

Watching the video of Gabby's talk, you will hear about 'Cara' and her daughter, and there is a YouTube video about 'Tam,' both of which demonstrate the truth of Tam's' words about the invaluable support she received: "they make me feel like I've got a family." They feel valued, seen, heard, understood and that they 'belong.'

'Safe Families' invites and welcomes prayerful, practical and financial support. They are cost effective and offer their volunteers excellent training based on trauma informed practice.

We are immensely grateful to Gabby for showing us so vividly how vital local churches can help resource families, bringing happiness and hope.

You can find out more at <https://safefamilies.uk>.

[Watch a recording of the Forum 'Healing through Families'](#)

Previous Healing Forums

Videos are still available of our previous Healing Forums:

‘Listening in Healing’ with Preb Dr Alison Perham – the vital importance of being heard. [Watch a recording of the Forum ‘Listening in Healing’](#)

‘Healing at the end of life’ with Revd Ann Fulton, Spiritual Care Coordinator, St Margaret’s Somerset Hospice Care – reconciliation of body, mind and spirit, and how we may approach this prayerfully with respect and sensitivity.

[Watch a recording of the Forum ‘Healing at the end of Life’](#)

If your parish pastoral team is interested in support and training in spiritual care at end of life, please email Ann. ann.fulton@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk

Information about Healing Forums for 2023 will be available in due course.

Healing Resources

[Resources to assist parishes wishing to introduce or develop a ministry of healing are available](#) on the Diocesan website.

Please keep in touch with the Healing Advisory Group, as we are here to resource you, and be assured that we pray regularly for you. Do please email us with any comments, questions or requests. Within the bounds of confidentiality, it is good to share something of our struggles and joys with each other and, with permission, with the wider community if it is appropriate.

Trusting that you have opportunities for refreshment over the summer.

Gilly Bunce
Diocesan Healing Adviser
July 2022

