



Image by [waldryano](#) from [Pixabay](#)

## Anne & Pauline- Part One

Anne met Pauline, apparently by chance; the very first time she visited Wandleford Care Home.

Anne, as the newly appointed Lead Chaplain, had been finding her feet in her new role. It was her very first pioneering visit, and she had been delighted to find a friendly face and someone willing to engage in conversation.

Pauline had just been visited by her daughter, and was standing by reception, upset by her departure, tearful, and obviously vulnerable.

Anne had offered her the comfort of a timely shoulder, and Pauline declared that her arrival was a godsend.

There was some confusion about the Chaplaincy name - and both had a chuckle when Pauline eventually grasped that it was 'The Anna - with an 'a' - Chaplaincy and not Anne's personal organisation!

The relationship had gone on from there, with the usual exchanges of personal and family histories, always ending with a brief prayer, but latterly it had drifted into a pattern - and this was a pattern which Anne increasingly disliked.

*It feels like we are stuck, she mused.*

*Hmm, in which case, I need to discern the cause of this stuckness?*

*Was that even a word? Stuckness - maybe staleness?* Dismissing this tangent, she thought on.

The presenting issue was that Pauline suffered from a very nasty physical ailment long - ago diagnosed as endometriosis, always chronic but sometimes flaring up into acute pain, yet somehow it seemed more than that, as if *that* was not quite enough to cope with, by itself, thank you very much!

Anne knew that everybody with a long-term chronic condition has to deal with it in some way; the suffering patient is forced into a horrible and intrusive relationship with her own disease. Some people choose to deny and ignore, while others embrace the condition to the point that it becomes a defining aspect of their identity. Some choose to become victims, and woe betide the unholy alliance that this can create between the Victim and a co-dependant Carer!

Anne felt a rising disquiet.

Each gets their value from this distorted connection, and Anne knew this was extremely unhealthy.

*Is this what is happening to Pauline and me?*

This thought hit her like a thunderbolt one morning when she was preparing to go for her usual visit.

As she was praying, she realised she was fretting about how she would greet Pauline, about her opening words, and it suddenly struck that she was now in danger of appeasing rather than working with Pauline for her peace and betterment.

*Appeasing? No that's not quite the right phrase, she thought, it's more that - it feels like I am tiptoeing around Pauline's condition and allowing it to darken God's light in me. This lessens me and so I'm not at my best either for myself or for her. How did this happen?*

*Or am I being impatient and not loving enough?*

As she checked her make up in the mirror she sorted through her memories of recent visits.

*Yes, she decided, the relationship had definitely drifted into an unhealthy area. Yes, it's up to me to do something about it.*

Pauline did not have the self-awareness to recognise the pattern.

*Yes, just like nail polish remover has to be used to remove nail varnish, sometimes you have to apply some challenge, some remove- but oh so gently! - otherwise everyone would stay stuck, like insects on old-fashioned fly paper.*

Much struck by this insight, and throwing a quick glance at the clock in the hall, she realised she had a few more moments before she had to leave and those moments would be time well spent in further prayer.

She plonked herself down in her favourite chair and took a deep breath, settling herself.

It was raining outside she vaguely noticed, then dismissed this thought as a typical intrusion of her monkey mind. Sometimes it was better to hear her own words.

"Speak, Lord for your servant heareth."

*Funny how this plea always felt wiser and more effective in archaic English!*

She sternly rebuked herself for this further distraction, then chuckled at its evanescence, and stilled herself once more.

What was it about Pauline's behaviour – and more to the point, what lay behind it – that had given rise to this niggling feeling?

Suddenly, like a small fish that suddenly flashes visible in a stream as one stands over it on the bank, Anne realised something.

*Pauline was just going through the motions when Anne visited, keeping Anne at arm's length and even, perhaps, getting some sort of negative pleasure from fending Anne off; asserting some sort of control.*

*Hmm, totally understandable, but energy wasted, and aimed at the wrong target!*

Had Pauline hardened her shell and cut off all outside sources of life and joy? Was she blaming God? Maybe her bitter anger was a poison, turning everything toxic. She was probably unaware that she was doing it.

Another flash of silver swam into Anne's mind.

*Pauline's life was narrowing down, prison walls closing in, but this was not graceful relinquishment, there was no calm or peace in this. Instead, like an animal with its leg caught in a trap, which gnaws its own limb in order to escape, she was also attacking herself, her rage turned mostly inward so she was not merely under attack from her horrible disease but also from herself. Pauline was suffering physically, but as bad if not worse, she had fallen ill with an ailment of her soul.*

*There were tendrils of doubt, fear, anger and despair, all seeking to wrap around Pauline's heart and smother her. And her own defence mechanisms were only making matters worse.*

*Bingo!*

Suddenly feeling quite jaunty, Anne stood up, grabbed a coat from its hook on the back of her front door, and checked that her keys were in her pocket. It was time to set off.

*Hmm, doors... and keys...*

She felt that she had a key, but she was savvy enough to know that 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread', and it would be wise to wait to see if this visit was the proper time to raise the issue. Perhaps the locks in Pauline's soul needed oiling before Anne offered her the key?

But who could do such a thing?

As she set off for the Care Home, Anne marvelled again at the subtleties of the work of the Holy Spirit.



Time for a quick request, so Anne started singing to herself, startling a passing pedestrian whose surprised expression gave Anne a fit of the giggles, which she quickly stifled.

*Oh bother, that'll be another person who thinks the local Chaplain is a loony. Oh well, too late to worry about it now!*

"Lord, make me a channel for your peace,"

*Drat, I've forgotten the exact words... something like...*

"Where there is injury your pardon, Lord;  
And where there's doubt true faith in you."

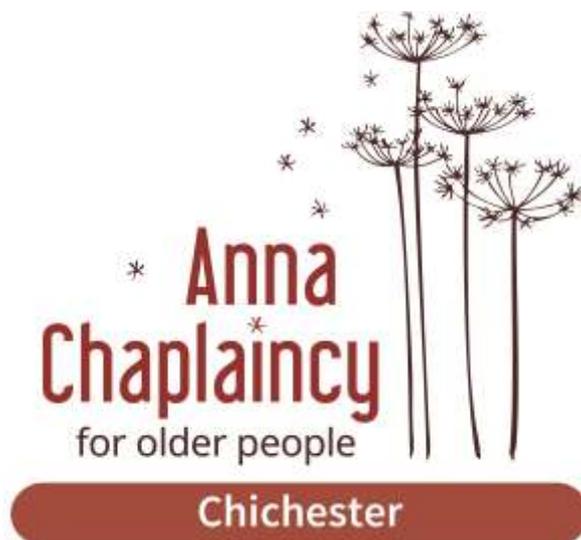
*How does it go on? Ah yes.*

"Where there's despair in life let me bring hope:  
Where there is darkness, only light...  
And where there's sadness, ever joy."

Singing and humming to herself- and to God - Anne fortified herself for what was to come.

[Love and blessings, David](#)

### Chichester Anna Chaplaincy



**Offering spiritual care in later life:** Charity number 1172058

Supported by the Henry Smith Foundation



Chichester Anna Chaplaincy is affiliated to Anna Chaplaincy for Older People, which is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), a Registered Charity, number 233280, [brf.org.uk](http://brf.org.uk)