

Ministry of Consolation Updates

It is over 18 months since we held the very successful day at Ushaw which inspired over 120 people to give up a Saturday and to be rewarded with great wisdom and insight from our speakers looking at end of life care.

Since then, we have been working on a course designed to help people to develop the skills most of them already have in order to support people locally—either at the end of life or during bereavement. The first couple of courses were for people who had expressed an interest in learning more—and we learned a lot through working with them. We are now at the point at which we can offer the formation (a bit more accurate than “course”!) more widely. It is already running in Brinkburn Partnership and will start shortly in St Mary the Virgin (East Durham). Plans are afoot to run it in the south of the Diocese—open to anyone in the Episcopal Area.

The formation is designed to be open-ended as we are aware that everyone will use what they have gained in very different ways. For some, it might be to work with local clergy and others to develop an “End of Life/ Bereavement Support Group”. This might link into the local hospital or hospice chaplaincy and, where the patient or family give permission, contact can be made to befriend and support a family walking this last journey with a loved one and on into continued care during the time of the death and beyond. It can offer the spiritual support that the health services are beginning to see the need for but are not certain how to address.

For others, it might enrich a ministry they already do—a welcomer being that bit more attuned to the people coming in and out and having the confidence to make a gentle approach to someone who seems a bit lost or distressed. It may be that a Eucharistic Minister is helped to develop listening skills which adds a deeper dimension to their visit. Or a school, prison or port chaplain might bring new understanding to their service of the people they walk alongside.

And, of course, there is the indispensable “everyday”. Every family—or group of friends—or work-colleagues—faces loss and bereavement. The formation offered by the course could be of considerable help in preparing for those times. It can make us aware of the feelings we ourselves have (especially if we are closely involved)—but also of how others feel and how we can support them.

The participants in the courses to date (almost 100 of them!) have been unanimous in their appreciation of the course. If it seems to be appealing to you get in touch and we can explore ways in which we can bring it to a Partnership near you! 



Blue Christmas Services

November is traditionally a time of Remembrance in the Church and many places organise visits to cemeteries or special Masses.

It is also a fact, though, that for many, it is December that brings with it a sense of dread.

As Christmas approaches, the bereavement—the terminal illness—the unemployment—the loss—all begins to feel sharper as music in shops and shows on television all urge us to be festive and jolly.

Our joy at Christmas is of much deeper sort and is founded on a Child born far from his parents’ home—who very shortly found himself a refugee—and whose life would end horribly on a cross... And yet, faith in him gives hope and purpose for our lives.

Something parishes and Partnerships might like to consider is a Blue Christmas Service. The name came from the United States and is taken from an Elvis Presley song—but the services we offer are our own.

We now have three to choose from—all of them available on the Advent Resources CD or from the diocesan website.

Kindle a Flame—talks about the darkness many people feel and leads to the hope of the light that will dawn on the people walk in the shadows of death and loss.

Cloth for the Cradle—invites people to write the name of a loved one—or a situation they are facing on a strip of cloth. This is then placed in the manger into which the image of Christ Child is placed—the Lord coming and making his home among all the sorrows—Emmanuel: God with us.

In the Palm of God’s Hand takes up an image from Julian of Norwich, a mystic who had a vision of something the size of a hazelnut in the palm of her hand and seeing in this all things being held in being by the love of God. Participants take a hazelnut away with them—to pop in a pocket or on a bedside table to touch or hold and remember that they are being prayed for as they put on the brave face.

If you would like to hold a service and would like support, do get in touch but basically you need:

A couple of people to organise things—venue/ booklets, etc
A couple of people to promote it—in the parishes but also in schools and even places like doctors’ surgeries.

A couple of people to lead it—a mix of clergy and lay people.
A hospitality team—to welcome and provide refreshments.

A few listeners—people who have a good listening ear to offer time to those who just need to talk for a while. 



Contact Details

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Upcoming Events in the Diocese and Local Centres

Diocesan Events

A TIME OF REFLECTION WITH MARY

Saturday 1 December 10.00am—1.00pm
St Thomas Aquinas Hall, DARLINGTON

&

**Saturday 8 December commencing with
11.00am Mass, followed by refreshments
11.00am—1.00pm**
St Bede RC Church, SACRISTON



*"Truly I am
the Lord's servant.
Let everything
you have said
happen to me."*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT
DEPARTMENT FOR SPIRITUALITY
Telephone 0191 243 3302
email spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk

Centre for Prayer and Mission

Ongoing Formation Tuesday 1.30pm

From Oct 30th – Nov 26th
We will look at five Saints, how they followed Christ in different circumstances and times and how they can help us today.

Biblical Scripture Monday 1.30pm—3.30pm

For those who wish to go deeper into understanding the Word of God. We follow a form of Lectio Divina - reading and understanding the Word of God, reflecting and discussing how it touches our lives, praying with words and without words.

Prayer Shawl Ministry Thursday 8th November 1.30pm

We meet every second Thursday of the month to pray together and knit/crochet shawls for sick people, vests and hats for babies in Kenya, pullovers for street boys in Nairobi, hats for seamen, scarves and mitts for the homeless. Newcomers always welcome.

*For further information or to book please
contact Sr Michael on 0191 5813249 |
marymichael.lee7@googlemail.com*

Minsteracres

On pilgrimage while standing still Friday Nov. 9th— Sunday 11th Nov.

The very popular John Bell will lead a series of reflections on how, throughout our lives, we are gradually moving to deeper understandings of ourselves, our world and our Maker.

Walking Retreat Saturday 17th Nov. 10.00am—5.00pm

Enjoy a walk of seven to ten miles through the beautiful countryside around Minsteracres.

Quiet day Wednesday 21st Nov. 1.00am—4.00pm.

Rosarie Spence RSM.
An opportunity to step aside, listen to God in scripture and enjoy the peace and tranquility at Minsteracres. Coffee and tea are provided. Please bring a packed lunch.

Weekend of Inner Healing Friday 23rd Nov. – Sunday 25th Nov.

Led by Alan Guile, Gerry & Anne Connor
This weekend is primarily for those with little or no prior experience of inner healing prayer, and who wish to learn more about how Jesus can bring emotional, spiritual

*For further information or to book
please contact Minsteracres Retreat Centre
01434 673248 | info@minsteracres.org*

Prayer Station for November

Recognising that this is the November in which we are remembering the centenary of the Armistice, here is a Prayer Station which honours that—but also recognises that the 'War to end all Wars' was not the end...

Place a collection of items on a table with a label attached to each one inviting people to pray for what it represents.

A photo of a soldier (WW1)

"We pray for a generation of young men, so many of whom lost their lives in mud, squalor and horror of war – and for those who continue to do so."

A bandage

"We pray for those injured in war – especially those whose whole lives were blighted because of the injuries they sustained."

A handkerchief

"We pray for the countless tears shed around the world because of the death and suffering caused by war."

A rail or similar ticket

"We pray for those who have fled their homes because of war – and those unable to afford to do so."

A teddy or soft toy

"We pray for the children whose lives are torn apart by war".

An empty or sparsely-filled plate

"We pray for those who go hungry because war has destroyed their land – and made cultivating it too dangerous.
Candle to take to your candle stand.
Basket could have prayer cards:

*"We pray in hope that, one day,
humanity will see the agony of war
and turn away from it – that the
darkness will give way to the light of a
new dawn of peace and prosperity for
all peoples."*

Feel free to add ideas of your own.

