

**Monthly Letter, May 2020**

**From the Bishop of Sherborne, Karen Gorham**



### **Communities of Hope**

I have appreciated over the last few months having a little extra time to read and one of the books I have been challenged by has been 'Accompaniment, Community and Nature'\* by one of our local clergy, the Revd Canon Jonathan Herbert.

It is easy to think of Christian Community as a rather exclusive thing, with its own rules and rhythms known only to those who belong there. Far from it, writes Jonathan, as he describes some of his own experiences of communities of hope and welcome, including two in our diocese- Pilsdon and Hilfield.

As these particular communities, and others, have shaped Jonathan's life it is encouraging to observe how these communities themselves have also been shaped by all those who come into contact with them, bringing about a ministry of healing, fellowship and a generosity of service which transforms life far beyond itself.

For Jonathan it has been the ability to accompany individuals that has been informative and transformative, something many of our chaplains also would testify to. To live, sit or stand alongside individuals, to listen, advocate, encourage and give time is itself a precious gift which should not be underestimated or squandered.

Reading this book at this time has caused me to reflect on how a church without walls can be transformative in its own welcome, how we as individual Christians can be alongside others in their own life journeys meeting them, as Christ meets us, just where they are and how going forward we need to take time to stop, listen and engage with those outside our boundaries in new ways. The ministry of chaplaincy can do much to inform the work of the Church in its interaction with the world as we all contemplate a different future.

What Jonathan has shown me is that churches with very definite walls have to decide how to keep the door firmly open, not only to enable the needy, searching and interested to enter, but also, as

we are reminded at Pentecost, to welcome God the Holy Spirit of possibility, surprise, interruption, creativity and discomfort in too.

\*Accompaniment, Community and Nature by Jonathan Herbert is published by Jessica Kingsley