



How Meryl beat the lockdown blues

Description



Meryl Bedford was one of millions hit by lockdown loneliness.

She was desperate to do something to lift her spirits, being without her regular visits to husband Derek, who was suffering from dementia.

Loneliness can be hard on mental health â?? we can counter it by connecting

Derekâ??s nursing home closed its doors on 11th March 2020, the start of the first lockdown. Praying about her isolation, Meryl had an idea. How were others coping with Coronavirus life?

She consulted her local church directory. Meryl started phoning every number â?? then became more strategic. â??I thought I should ring the people who are by themselves,â?? she said from her MMHS property by the Wales-England border.

Meryl asked church friends how they were getting on. She did the right thing. The Mental Health Foundation warned that long-term loneliness can be hard on mental health â?? but we can counter it by connecting.

A busy and active 84 year-old, Meryl would spend as much time as possible with Derek before lockdown. As lockdown eased, Meryl enjoyed a brief visit with him.

Lancashire born and bred, the couple married in 1962. Derek was asked to pioneer a new church on the Hattersley estate where Ian Brady and Myra Hindley had just been arrested for the Moors murders.

With an Anglican vicar, Derek launched the nationâ??s first ever â??sharedâ?? church, St Barnabas, in that needy community. One headline described the Anglican-Methodist project as a â??daring experimentâ??.

Itâ??s been a life of spiritual and social action

The Bedfords had three children â?? Simon, David and Elizabeth. Derek retired on health grounds in 1992. He and Meryl moved into an MMHS property. Ever the community activists, Derek and Meryl became Mayor and Mayoress of Ross-on Wye in 2001 and 2007.

Derekâ??s health worsened over the years. Sadly, he died just after Meryl shared their story in the [Summer 2020 edition of Roof â??nâ?? Roots](#).

Itâ??s been a life of spiritual and social action. â??Some people say religion and politics donâ??t mix,â?? said Meryl, â??but they have got to mix!â?? (*Photo of Meryl and Derek, courtesy of Ross-on-Wye Town Council*)

Category

1. Our residents

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