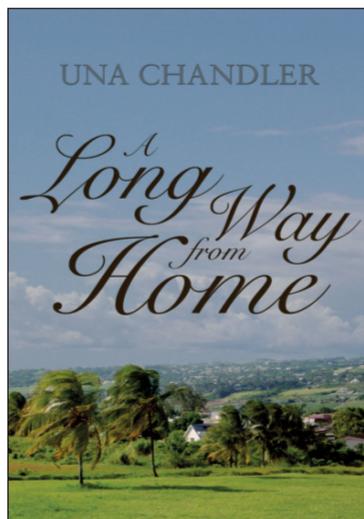




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A LONG WAY FROM HOME

Una Chandler

Growing up in Barbados in humble surroundings as a devout Christian, Una was the oldest of ten children. Living in a small rural village with a simple school, church and local shop, life was poor but easy. Then, one day, a blue airmail letter arrived, addressed to Una's mother. The letter brought a sense of adventure and changed Una's life drastically – for the better. John Chandler, a Christian who had once worked with her mother, was writing to invite Una to come to England, get married and start a new life.

On her 17th birthday, Una left the West Indies to make her first journey to England, with 2 pounds for a new life in her pocket. Saying goodbye to her parents and other siblings, she arrived at Gatwick airport on 1st November 1961. There, she was greeted by a bright and beaming young man with a friendly smile – John. He and Una went on to have 20 years of happy marriage and 6 children.

Unfortunately, John developed lung cancer and passed away on 25th December 1982, leaving Una a widow at the age of 38. As life moved on and grief slowly faded, Una went back to adult education college and studied to become a Methodist Local Preacher – for eighteen years, she was the only female West Indian Lay Preacher on the Methodist Church Circuit for Reading and Silchester. She is the first female West Indian-born Chaplain at Reading Borough Council, where she also works as a volunteer.

This is her story, of courage, faith, determination, hard work and a sense of humour. Life is for living and *A Long Way From Home* is about making that journey.

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