



Growing Old Grace-fully

ANNUAL REVIEW

DECEMBER 2024

OUR VISION IS TO SEE:

Older people across the Catholic Diocese of Leeds experience spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing in positive and inclusive parish communities

OUR MAIN ACTIVITIES THIS YEAR:

A series of six online sessions (see overleaf) Between May and November 2024

Diocese of Leeds Synodal Meetings March and November 2024

Caritas Day of Action September 2024

Parish visits Throughout the year

A busy year - Chair's Report

I am delighted to introduce this review of our work covering two years from September 2022 to September 2024.

We paused much of our activity in 2023 because of uncertainty about funding, however we were able to commission someone to review and update our website. (One of the outcomes of that work is our website always comes first in any in Google search) .

We were able to secure funding in the second half of 2023 to support the implementation of our strategic plan. Thanks to the Diocese of Leeds for their commitment and to the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales who have awarded us a grant in 2023 and now 2024 from the Day for Life fund. This has enabled us to



Growing Old Grace-fully Chair of Trustees, Carol Burns

deliver and engage with several parishes across the Diocese. We also took part in the Caritas Day of Action in September.

The new funding has made it possible to take advantage of the freelance services of Greg Mulholland who supports the

trustees in their work.

I am grateful to the trustees of GOG who have a wealth of experience and skills and who all have contributed to the sessions we have provided.

Thanks also to Sir Harold Hood Foundation and the Charlotte Marshall Gift Fund who have awarded us grants.

Faith in Elderly People is a local project that this year decided to formally dissolve and we were very pleased to receive a contribution to our costs when they dispersed their funds.

In particular I want to thank everyone on our mailing list both electronic and postal, thank you for your interest and support.

Carol Burns, Chair of Trustees

Immaculate Heart of Mary Befriending Service

The parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Huddersfield is centred around our two churches, English Martyrs' in Dalton and St Joseph's in Aspley.

In 2022 we ran a pilot **befriending scheme** to get in touch with housebound older people (anyone born in 1930's) who may benefit from a regular well-being telephone call.

Following a recent parish appeal, we launched the scheme with three people making up the team. We offer information about parish events, dates of Masses for the sick, offers of lifts with SVP support for those who

otherwise would not be able to attend, the provision of a soup lunch & cake lunch and a chance to meet others after the service.



Offers of prayers, together with a regular well-being chat will take place with the aim of understanding through ongoing friendship, relating to a person's

needs, that the parish may be unaware of and with which if shared, the parish may be able to offer assistance.

The calls have been initially made from the sacristy so recipients can be assured of their authenticity, however, once the relationship has been established, the caller may use their home phone to make the contacts, the work load will be fairly distributed between the three of us.

The befriending service is a really easy way to engage with and involve people in our parish.

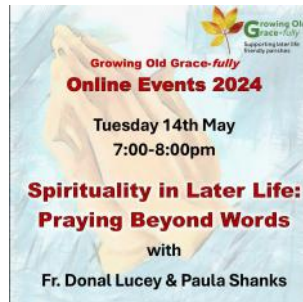
Maureen Crossley

2024 Online Sessions - six sessions

'The whole session was beautiful, very prayerful, very Ignatian, and delivered by two very authentic presenters. Thank you very much'.

One of our main activities in 2024 has been delivering a programme of 6 online sessions on a variety of topics.

The first event was in May, **Spirituality in Later Life: Praying Beyond Words**, with Fr Donal Lucey and Paula Shanks.



The second session, in June, was **Reconciling with Our Past** led by two of our trustees, Pippa Bonner and Cath Mahoney.

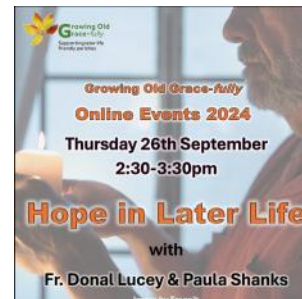


The third session, in July, was **Learning From Each Other: Sharing Experience** with

contributions from Maureen Connolly about the activity at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Huddersfield; Andrew Winfield from the SVP about the Celebrating Later Life event at the Parish of St. John Mary Vianney, Leeds; and Breda Theakston, a volunteer from the Elizabeth Prout Bereavement Centre.



The fourth session in September was **Hope in Later Life** led by Paula Shanks and Fr. Donal Lucey.



The fifth session in October was **Spiritually Accompanying**

People Living with Dementia led by our trustee Rev. Dr. Joseph D. Cortis, co-author of *Journeying Together Accompanying People Living with Dementia*.



The sixth and final session, to end the series, was **Finding Hope in Community and Parish Life** with contributions from our Chair of Trustees, Carol Burns, Maureen Crossley and Susan Clarkson.



We thank all speakers and contributors and all who have attended the sessions throughout the year.

With special thanks to the Catholic Bishops Conference England and Wales Day for Life Fund, Faith in Elderly People (Leeds), Society of the Holy Child Jesus, the Diocese of Leeds, Sir Harold Hood's Charitable Trust, The Charlotte Marshall Trust and individual donors for enabling our work this year.

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