



They shall bear fruit in old age. They shall be fresh and flourishing.

PSALM 92: 12-15

Annual Review 2015-2016

About us

We are a small charity working across the Roman Catholic Diocese of Leeds focused on **supporting Later Life-Friendly Parishes**. We were formed to champion the idea that an ageing Church is not a failing Church. We have been raising awareness of the contribution of older people in our parishes and helping respond to their spiritual and practical needs since 2010.

Our work includes:

- **Sharing** best practice
- **Helping** create local solutions to local needs
- **Offering** spiritual and practical support and advice to parishes
- **Encouraging** dementia-friendly parishes.

Our achievements in 2015/2016...

Increased reach through our website

The launch of our website www.growingoldgracefully.org.uk in June 2015 has been a significant step in helping to build on the good work that is already taking place in parishes, and spread this good news so that parishes can learn from each other.

We now have regular postings on a range of different topics including:

- growing dementia-friendly parishes
- reflections on loss and dying
- a personal reflection on the importance of shared memories from Fr John Dunne, a retired priest in our Diocese
- extracts from the writings of recognised spiritual teachers, such as Radio 4's Thought for the Day contributor Revd John Bell's reflection that 'Christmas is for Old People'.

Our website has now had over **2,000** visitors, helping us promote and report on events relevant to Later Life, both our own and those of other organisations in our Diocese, such as the annual conference of the organisation Ageing Without Children.

A network of 'friendly neighbours'

Over **350** people from parishes in our Diocese have asked us to keep in contact with them, so that we are building a network of 'friendly neighbours' to support the development of local solutions to local needs. These are all people who have attended events organised by Growing Old Grace-fully and so we know they have an interest in valuing older people. We have sent out both a Christmas and an Easter Newsletter to this group, and we are considering sending a survey to them in the coming year to help us research the contribution and needs of older people in their parish.

Events

We have organised the following events in the last 12 months and reached nearly **150** people who are interested in exploring practical ways their own parish can be more Later Life-Friendly:

1. June 2015: A Day of Reflection for Older People Harrogate

2. Sept 2015:	Welcoming People with Dementia	Baildon
3. Oct 2015:	'Called To Be Old' Conference	Leeds centre
4. April 2016:	Growing Dementia-Friendly Parishes	Pudsey
5. April 2016:	Growing Dementia-Friendly Parishes	Shipley
6. May 2016:	Growing Dementia-Friendly Parishes	Leeds East



We always invite feedback from attendees in the form of a simple questionnaire. People have commented they have found 'encouragement' and 'new insights' into older age, as well as inspiration in looking at God's purpose for us; *"Today has been a real THERAPY – better than medicine."* We have also helped to create nearly **50** new Dementia Friends in our Diocese.

Refining our strategy

The Board of Trustees, and our Co-ordinator Rachel, spent some time at the start of 2016 thinking and praying about where we need to focus our efforts in the coming year - a renewal of our approach. We have asked the questions *"What is the difference we want to make in the Diocese?"* and *"What are the changes we would like to see in the parishes relating to older people and later life by 2018?"*

Our purpose has not changed. We will continue to seek to raise awareness of the spiritual and practical needs of older people and their contribution across the Diocese. We want to focus more of our efforts on inspiring and supporting practical actions within parishes and to be clear about how we will measure the impact of our work. A Summary of our Strategic Plan, including our proposed aims, outputs and outcomes, has been posted on our website www.growingoldracefully.org.uk under the heading "About Us".

Future Plans

We are planning to develop a Parish Pack - a resource to inspire and support practical action to both support people and value their gifts as they get older. The first draft of our Chapter headings include:

- 1) What does a Later Life Friendly Parish look like?
- 2) Vocation in Later Life
- 3) Tackling Loneliness
- 4) Growing a dementia-friendly parish
- 5) Caring for Carers
- 6) Being Mortal / Bereavement and Loss

We would love to talk to anyone who would be interested in helping to develop content, and in particular to share stories or case studies that show a practical approach to any of these topics in a parish.



For further information

Please call Rachel on **07702 255142**

or email growing.old.racefully@dioceseofleeds.org.uk