



Growing Old Grace-fully

ANNUAL REVIEW

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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:

'Learning from Lockdown' sharing event
04/11/22

Synodal Process—contribution by GOG
Jan 22

'Over the Hill or Embracing the View?' lunch event
26/04/22

Jubilee Tea Party at The Briery
12/06/22

Jubilee Tea Party at Wheeler Hall
16/06/22

Losses and Later Life online event
12/07/22

Time of Transition

With much of life now seemingly more or less 'back to normal' for many of us (but not all), it is easy to forget that only a year ago we were still stepping very cautiously into autumn with a great deal of uncertainty.

This was reflected in our online event on 4th November 2021 **'Learning from Lockdown—sharing ideas'**, where we discussed issues around restarting activities and reconnecting with people; we can contrast that with our **2022 series of events on 'Perspectives on Later Life,'** which we were



Celebrating Later Life at our Jubilee Tea Party at Wheeler Hall

very glad to hold in-person for 3 out of the 4 events. We were inspired by a rich variety of input and discussion on both the joys and challenges of later life through short talks, personal stories and sharing, including enjoying 2 Jubilee Tea Parties!

The **Synodal Process** was also a significant feature of Autumn 2021, so GOG trustees drew up a response highlighting the voice of older people.

In the background we have been busy with applying for funds (a constant task), discussing strategy and working with partners, and we are delighted to have welcomed a new trustee Deacon Joseph Cortis (Caritas Leeds Coordinator).

We look forward to this next year **with hope and faith** for increased connection and opportunities across our parishes.

Learning from Lockdown - sharing ideas event



On 4th November about 20 of us met on Zoom on a cold evening with fireworks going off in the background!

We had a good time together sharing issues and ideas around

starting up and continuing activities and support for older people in our parishes at this strange time of transition. After a contemplative reflection led by Sr Bernadette (IOLM), we had 3 discussion groups on:
a) Restarting/Starting activities,
b) Online or in-person or both?,

and c) Supporting the vulnerable and reconnecting. The ideas shared were summarised into [readable infographics on our website](#) for everyone to access.

Those attending found it a helpful and supportive event on our journey out of 'lockdown'.

Synodal Process - the voice of older people

During the important listening exercise for the Synodal Process, GOG trustees felt it was important to draw up [an additional response](#) to highlight **the voice and needs of older people** based on our experiences of listening to older people across the Diocese of Leeds

over the last 10 years. Using the framework of questions supplied, the response covered matters of isolation, reaching out to those who 'disappear', the danger of marginalization of older people, spirituality of ageing, affirming contributions of older people and ideas for inter-

generational activities. The response was well received.





'Great event; liked the variety of speakers and their varying emphases. Delighted to find an event which deals with old age'

'Very helpful session, well thought out. I very much appreciated the courage and optimism shown by the 2 interviewees'

'Over the Hill or Embracing the View?'

What is your perspective on later life? Is it a decline or an ascent? A blessing or a burden? **How can we balance both the joys and challenges of later life?**

On 26th April we gathered at Wheeler Hall in Leeds for lunch and 4 short talks bringing a breadth of thought provoking insights on later life. Rev Keith Albans explored

'items for our AGE-nda' to help us **work at growing old intentionally and positively**; Pippa Bonner shared encounters from her work as a Pastoral Worker in a care home; Helen Reid of Leeds Church Institute talked about the older generation as a 'pivot generation' based on Ann Morisy's book 'Borrowing from the Future'.

After interesting discussion in groups, retired Baptist Minister Gaynor Hammond closed the event by reflecting on her own journey of ageing and quoting from Oscar Romero.

All of this content can be seen [on our website](#) and it was also made into a dedicated [issue of the City Theology magazine](#) by LCI for many more people to enjoy.

Celebrating Later Life - 2 Jubilee Tea Parties

On Sunday 12th June over 25 of us gathered at the lovely Briery Retreat Centre in Ilkley. We enjoyed **celebrating our Queen by reflecting on her life and faith**, and by hearing Thelma Laycock's reflections on opportunities she has had in later life, followed by chatting over a

scrumptious tea made by the catering team at The Briery.

On Thursday 16th June a similar number joined together at Wheeler hall in Leeds; we were aided in our reflections on the Queen by thoughts from Mary Marshall of the Mother's Union, and enjoyed an interview with

Cath Mahoney about the **opportunities she had embraced** after retirement.

After sharing in small groups we enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea. All attendees received a lovely booklet about the Queen's life and faith.



Losses and Later Life



As 'losses' of many kinds can increase in our later years, **how do we face and make sense of these changes?**

This was the topic at our online event on Tuesday 12th July, starting with an overview about **'Types of Loss and How we can Respond'** by Carol Burns. As well as this thought provoking talk, we also listened to Hannah Stone reading 4 of her own **poems about loss**, and shared in the **personal stories** of Mo

Crossley and Gaynor Hammond through 2 interviews. We enjoyed sharing in discussion groups before closing with a moving **reflection** by Mgr Peter Rosser.

Again we have worked hard to make sure this [content is available on our website](#) in creative formats.

With special thanks to Catholic Care, the Diocese of Leeds, the Sisters of Mercy, The Harold Hood Trust, The Charlotte Marshall Trust and individual donors for enabling our work this year.

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