



# Growing Old Grace-fully

ANNUAL REVIEW 2025

## 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:

**Online reflections**  
A series of three online reflections on the theme of *Pilgrims of Hope*

**Dementia awareness training**  
Two *Dementia Friends* online sessions and two in-person dementia training events in parishes

**Jubilee Pilgrims of Hope: Journeying as an Older Person**  
In-person half day reflection at Leeds Cathedral

**Pastoral Worker for Older People**  
Appointed at Mary Mother of God Parish, Bradford and commenced work

## Chair's Report 2025

**It's been a productive year for Growing Old Grace-fully. We have focused on supporting those who have dementia to live as well as they can.**

Two online sessions to support individuals to be **Dementia Friends** were followed by workshops at St Benedict's in Garforth and Our Lady & All Saints in Otley. Over seventy people benefited from these sessions. Thanks to funding from The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales **Day for Life Fund** and sessions offered by Leeds Older People's forum.

Our other focus is always on supporting the spiritual needs of older people and we were delighted that Paula Shanks and



**Growing Old Grace-fully Chair of Trustees, Carol Burns**

Monsignor Donal Lucey offered to lead three sessions between March and July on the theme of **Pilgrims of Hope**. These are described in more details on the next page.

It was exciting also to have our first in person event for two years in October.

This was again led by Paula and Mgr. Donal.

Another milestone was reached when the parish of Mary, Mother of God in Bradford took up the challenge, with funding we had received from Ladies of the Grail, to employ a pastoral worker to work with older people in a parish. Frances' report is below,

I want to thank all those who have supported Growing Old Grace-fully this year those who delivered sessions, the Board of Trustees and also Greg Mulholland who support our marketing and communications.

**Thanks to our funders, The Diocese of Leeds, Mercy Sisters, Day for Life Fund, Charlotte Marshall Gift fund.**

**Carol Burns**  
*Chair of Trustees*

## Pastoral Worker for Older People report

**In my role as Pastoral Worker for Older People, I have been a regular visitor to older people of Mary Mother of God parish in Bradford.**

My role is to offer older people spiritual opportunities, giving space to develop a fuller faith and prayer life.

The SVP and Catholic Care have roles centred around the practicalities of living: Food, shelter, wellbeing of the vulnerable. Whereas my role is defined by its spiritual and faith based, formation and evangelisation priorities.

I've been seeing people during home visits, in sheltered housing, and in care homes for eucharistic services. I've also been meeting older people at various groups

and at the Tuesday lunch/ Wednesday lunch club. I have organised trips: To Our Lady of the Crag, Knaresborough, Our Lady of Doncaster (at St Peter-in-Chains), Our Lady of Manchester



**Frances Norton, Pastoral Worker for Older People in Mary Mother of God Parish, Bradford**

(at St. Mary's, 'the Hidden Gem') and also organised also one-off events funded through local council bids, such as the icon painting and

brambling for the Feast of the Assumption; and afternoon tea and memory box crafts.

I have been keeping contact with older people on the sick list and those recently bereaved.

Older people are less likely to want to come out or travel in winter, the shorter days and avoiding seasonal illness. I have had several pastoral chats on the telephone as the weather gets colder.

**In this very new role, meaning-making, thinking and praying about how to work with older people better will give clearer shape and form to future projects (and dreams!) of what might be possible.**

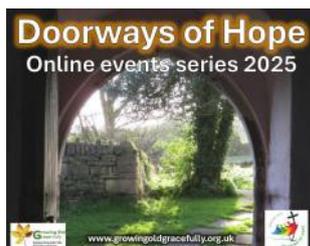
**Frances Norton**

*"Very thoughtful  
and inspiring  
window into the  
fruitfulness of old  
age. Thank you!"*

## Pilgrims of Hope - Jubilee 2025

### Doorways of Hope

**Growing Old Grace-fully** hosted **Doorways of Hope**, a series of three online reflections, exploring the invitation to be *Pilgrims of Hope*, the theme of the 2025 Jubilee Year of the Catholic Church.



The first session, *Glimpses of Hope*, explored the theme of springtime to explore how we can awaken to the invitation to be renewed in hope.

The second session, *Living in Hope*, explored how living in the flow of life offers invitations to a deeper sense of hope.

The third session, *Holding Hope*, explored how to notice spaces where hope is held out for us in everyday life

and the ways in which we do this for others.

We thank Paula and Mgr. Donal for leading this powerful series of reflections. They are available to watch on our website.

### Journeying With Hope

**On Wednesday 8th October 2025, Growing Old Grace-fully welcomed people to Cathedral Hall, at Leeds Cathedral, for a morning of reflection as part of the Jubilee Year 2025.**

The reflection was led by Paula Shanks and Mgr. Donal Lucey, building on the 'Doorways of Hope' series of reflections, with an invitation for people was for a deeper sense of themselves as pilgrims of hope in their daily lives at this stage of life.

The event began with guided prayer then the first session was led by Mgr. Donal who spoke about our history of being pilgrims and explored the theme of the journey of our lives.

Paula then explored aspects of the themes 'Glimpses of Hope' and 'Living in the Flow of Hope' to help see the



glimpses of Hope offer within each day and the places where there is a sense of 'flow' within our lives and ourselves.

Mgr. Donal then spoke to the group on the final theme, 'Holding Hope in a Fragile World' exploring the fragility of the world & how the wisdom, faith and strength of older people are all gifts that the world needs.

The morning concluded with a closing liturgy based on the theme of being pilgrims. *Isaiah 40: 28-31*, bidding prayers and a blessing.

**We thank Paula and Mgr. Donal for leading this very special event and to all who attended.**

*"That was a beautiful  
morning, thank you  
all who contributed.  
Will come again.  
Love, thanks and  
prayers".*

## Dementia awareness & training

**One of our main activities has been delivering a programme of dementia awareness & training.**

### Dementia Friends

We hosted two online training sessions delivered by **Leeds Older People's Forum**, to support people becoming **Dementia Friends**.

The session focuses on five key messages: Dementia is not a natural part of ageing; it is caused by brain diseases; it is not just about memory loss; there is more to the person than the dementia; & understanding makes a difference.



### In-Parish Training

We organised and hosted two in-person dementia training sessions, also delivered by Leeds Older People's Forum. One was at St Benedict's, Garforth and the other at Our Lady and All Saints in Otley. Both sessions were well attended and covered dementia as a condition, living with dementia, and how best to understand and support others.

Each workshop ended with a contribution from one of our trustees, Carol in Garforth and Rachel in Otley, giving information about the spiritual needs of people living with dementia. This involved advice on praying and giving communion and also reminded everyone that we remain individuals made in the image of God, no matter what our physical conditions may be. Please see the dementia section of our website for more details.

**We thank the two parishes and all who attended.**

## Contact Details

The best way to contact us is by email at:

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