

Spirituality and Creativity

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Mission Statement

Faith in Older People aims to celebrate the lives of older people and to support the spiritual care of older people and their families

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Archbishop Rowan Williams speaking about spirituality said

'It is about growing in the life of the spirit and thus educating ourselves in the new humanity'.

We speak of 'having our spirits lifted', of being 'in good spirits' of 'spirited people' of peoples 'spirits being dampened' We ask 'How is her spirit?' There is an understanding in everyday language that we are not just mind and body but also we are spirit. To grow in the life of the spirit is to become more alive, and to become more deeply human. It is also about becoming more attuned to the spiritual values of compassion, wisdom, truth, delight, goodness, beauty, kindness, and courage. To grow in the life of the spirit is to seek the presence of 'love and life' within the self, within relationships and in the interconnectedness of all life.

Creativity empowers, heals and gives meaning and joy. It is a deep part of what it means to be human and brings a quality of 'life' and vitality. Playfulness, openness, exploration, discovery, connection, surprise would be words used in relation to creativity. As a person engages with paint, clay, or a musical instrument something new emerges. As a gardener engages with the soil, a cook with food, a child with a story, discoveries are made and new things happen. Creativity involves the senses, whether the senses of the imagination or the actual senses. We hear, taste, see, touch or smell a new thing.

In working with older people creativity is vitally important.

Enjoying the pleasure of the senses together – food, nature, music, art, movement, brings people alive – each time there is something fresh - never made exactly that way before. In the sharing, it also builds community and relationships.

As the theologian Harrison puts it, *'we hear and see and touch one another into being'.*

Expression through use of colour, texture, movement, song or story allows for processing grief and suffering, for letting feelings be heard and valued, for sharing what really matters to us. It is clearly a way of seeking the presence of 'life and love' within the self, others and the world and thus deeply connected to spirituality.



...continued on back page

Ali Newell

We support clergy, laity and carers within health and social care and community organisation teams by offering a range of materials and courses:

Spiritual Care and
People with Dementia
Carers & Visitors
Sensory Issues
(pain, hearing, sight)
Loss & Bereavement
End of Life Issues
Promoting creative and
spiritually enriching activities
in care settings

These courses can be tailored to your own requirements; on a sessional basis (afternoon or evening), day seminars or workshops.

CD Evening Prayer

A retired clergyman whose lifetime habit had been to say Evening Office was being thwarted due to failing eyesight and increasing dementia, had his needs met when we enabled a CD to be made for his Christmas present.

His daughter wrote:

Thank you so much for taking the time to make the CD. The whole process was interesting, although much longer than we anticipated.

Last week we took it to Dad. Set it up to play on a laptop (plus speakers) and it came through loud and clear. It was moving to watch my father as he immediately started joining in. He sat with his eyes closed, and said out loud the parts he remembered. When it came to the blessing he made the sign of the cross and then opened his eyes and beamed at us.

CD available – see our website
www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk

Recent Activities by FiOP **(Faith in Older People)**

We recently ran a six session course on Spiritual Care & People with Dementia at Greyfriars for the Three Churches: Augustine United, St Columba's-by-the-Castle and Greyfriars Tollbooth & Highland Kirk who are in a Local Ecumenical Partnership.

The following is a quote from one of the participants, The Revd Jane Blackley:

The course "Spiritual Care and People with Dementia was both thought-provoking and enriching. Sensitively led, our group explored both spiritual and practical ways of supporting the growing number of folk who are diagnosed with dementia. This course helped us all: pastoral team members and visitors, clergy and carers."



The following is an extract from an email we received following a workshop we held with hospital staff and chaplains on the topic of making Christmas more meaningful.

I was thinking about all we have been saying about the importance of sensory stuff and also getting people to participate – so for our carol services in the Day Unit and the wards this year, we had a basket of Christmas bits – figures for a crib and a Christmas pudding and decorations and some cards.

We had a list of ten carols that were people's favourites, with the music and large print words available and we passed the basket round – getting people to pick an object, talk about what it meant to them and we sang an associated carol from the list, and gradually built up a Christmas display in the centre of the room.

It transformed the whole service – merry anarchy reigned, and everyone was involved. One particular group who are usually pretty passive were more lively than the staff had ever seen them.

Such a change from the usual format of everyone sitting quietly and doing what they were told as far as they were able!

Thanks for the inspiration.

Paddy Allen
Chaplain

Seminars

On **18th February** FiOP hosted a seminar led by **Dr Harriet Mowat** on the wide ranging topic of **Spirituality and Ageing**.

We considered what ageing might be for – a chance to mature and develop spiritually perhaps! We looked at what constitutes successful ageing; thought about “life as a journey”, and how we identify “what really matters”, and whether we encourage old people to share their insights by listening carefully to their stories.

In the afternoon the group of 25 of us considered what might be some of the *Spiritual Tasks of Ageing* and came up with our short list of five:

Childlike playfulness, inner lifework, fostering relationships, managing change and preparing for death.

We then considered examples of how these tasks become apparent and how they can be approached or acted upon in practical ways – eg – the need to find *meaning in life* and pay attention to *inner life work* in old age may involve setting aside time for regular prayer or silence or perhaps having help to write up one’s life story.

By the end of the day we realised that our speaker was so knowledgeable and the subject so vast that we would have to revisit the topic and I am sure FiOP will do so soon.

On **7 March** FiOP hosted an opportunity for people to hear about the recent work of three projects; **Mowat Research, Leveson Centre** and ourselves.

Dr Harriet Mowat gave a description of work recently undertaken in the Grampian Region entitled **“Voicing the Spiritual”**.

Research has shown that maintaining spiritual practices in later life promotes wellbeing and successful ageing.

Harriet with Chaplain Jim Simpson and artist Fran Marquis-Faulkes embarked upon a piece of *participatory action research*. They explored with several groups including older people with dementia and their carers ways to encourage people to “Voice the Spiritual” – to talk about what really matters!

Using art and other activities they created an environment where this was possible.

A full report will be published in due course.

Our second speaker that day was **Alison Johnson** from **the Leveson Centre** for the study of Ageing, Spirituality and Social Policy.

“The Centre brings together for study, reflection and exchange of ideas and information those of all faiths – and none – who share our belief that older people should not be considered passive recipients of care but as valued and cherished members of society who can inform and enrich the lives of others”.

The Centre only has three part-time members of staff but the impact that it makes on the issue of Spiritual Care and Older People is enormous.

Alison emphasized the importance of working collaboratively to ensure that we use the knowledge and resources that we each have to maximum advantage.

As part of this Alison makes sure that the Leveson Centre website is frequently updated and provides tremendous links to current work, new policies and many organizations which include:

CCOA – Christian Council on Ageing
– who produce a quarterly magazine
www.ccoa.org.uk

PSALM (Project for Seniors & Lifelong Ministry)

who offer consultancy and training
eg Artwork for Older People –
email: office@stpancraschurch.org

Simeon Trust – runs care homes and have funded a post at Ripon College – to work on a project – Understanding & Response to Abuse of Older People.
email: winwoods@ukonline.co.uk

MHA – Methodist Homes Association known as **MHA Care Group** – which employs and trains chaplains –
www.mha.org.uk

The Centre has also helped produce:

Working with Older People: A Resource Directory for Churches
listing various organizations working with older people throughout UK.

(Copies available in FiOP’s library)

We recommend subscribing to their Newsletter. Details can be found on their website

www.levesoncentre.org.uk

Mary Moffett, FiOP Training Co-ordinator, then shared with us her ten year's experience of working with older people in a parish -

The following is an extract from her talk

Remembering Ourselves

In the course of my work I am privileged to listen to a lot of life stories, some clearly told in sequence, others where the whole only emerges bit by bit over a long time. Almost invariably people apologise for going over some aspects again and again – but they need not. Hearing the stories is fascinating, and seeing people make sense of their lives with the perspective that comes with age is not boring.

Professional carers used to discourage older people from going over and over memories, but the positive therapeutic effects of "reminiscence" are now well known, and there are many books about it and materials to aid group work in day or residential care – eg war-time quizzes, photo albums, themed rooms or exhibitions.

I am lucky to be able to work with individuals as they remember their lives, working out where their childhood experiences fit in with their family or working lives, how painful mistakes somehow brought new directions, or how loss and bereavement are seen as part of the whole cycle of life – how the various parts of their lives fit together to make a whole.

There is a lovely South American folk tale about a wise old woman called La Loba (She-Wolf). She was a healer and midwife and had seen birth and death all her life. She also collected wolf bones and when she was old, laid them out on the ground and sang to them. Slowly they became covered in sinew then flesh and fur and finally the wolf breathes... with shining eyes she watches it get to its feet and move swiftly and gracefully off over the hill into the early dawn.

As an image I find it strangely powerful. It points to a way we can make sense of the bare bones of our lives and if we sing or breathe life into our own life's bones a new more coherent self may come to life and be free to set off into new horizons, a "free spirit" and ready to move on.

Mary Moffett

Conferences

Spirituality, Culture and Identity: An approach to Care

24th June 2008

at the University of
Worcester.

The conference seeks to explore how health and social care practitioners can best meet the spiritual needs of service users and carers.

This is organised by the Institute of Health, Social Care and Psychology, University of Worcester.

Booking and further information available from
Email: j.gibbs@worc.ac.uk

OLD AGE: 'WASTELAND or HARVEST FIELD'

29th October 2008

at the Gillis Centre
Strathearn Road,
Edinburgh

This is an ecumenical conference exploring the spiritual needs of the older members in congregations and ways in which these might be met.

The speakers will include:

Father Gerry Hughes
Margo MacDonald
Albert Jewell

together with a range of workshops.

This is an Ecumenical venture sponsored by ACTS.

Further information:

info@fiop.org.uk

Gratitude

*In giving thanks for the wonder that is life,
we can restore harmony and balance
in our own lives."*

(David Orr – Resurgence)

Today I got up as normal, took my dog for a walk in the fields around us and glanced at the clock: 7.45am. Time to get my mother-in-law's, Jakey, breakfast tray ready for her, as I had done nearly every morning for the past 10 months. Then I remembered. She was not there. She is no longer with us. She died in hospital at 3am aged 90.

With a start I sat back down and recalled those last few hours with her after we had been called back to the hospital, being told that she had taken a bad turn. She had been placed in a single room and was being made as comfortable as possible. She was a bit embarrassed by all of the attention and kept thanking the nurses for all that they were doing for her. She knew that she was dying and that these would be her last few hours.

I asked her if she was afraid. "No, I just want to go to sleep and not wake up ... soon!". Was there anything she wanted? "No, just sit beside me so I know you are there." My husband and I sat on either side of the bed, just being... being fully present to her and honouring her life with us this past year since she came to live with us. Over the next six hours of waiting, she thanked every person who came into her room for the care they had given her, and she thanked Mark and I several times for taking her into our family at a time when she was struggling to cope on her own. she told us it gave her hope and happiness at a time when she had seen only darkness ahead.

She had become an integral part of our family life and of my daily routine.

Until the end, she had been able to dress and bathe herself, and she joined us for family meals at lunchtime and dinner. When she needed medical attention the doctors and community nurses from the Strathbrook Practice had been marvellously attentive and kind, never complaining about having to make a house visit. I did not really think of myself as her "carer" until this morning, when I realised what a gap there was in my own life now.

I know that the hole will get filled up. But for today, I wanted to take the opportunity, when

I would have taken her breakfast and sat with her for a while, to express my gratitude. ... to the Faith in Older People project. There were two events in my life about 18 months ago which enabled me to say "Come live with us!" One was my 3 month journey in Jerusalem and Palestine where the tradition of hospitality – to strangers as well as to extended family members – was so strong culturally. The other was a 6 week FiOP course I did in Bathgate where I learned a bit more about how to value and honour older people and to appreciate all the gifts they have to offer. So, when the opportunity arose to invite Jakey to come north to Scotland to live out her last years with us. I did not hesitate! and when I invited her, she responded without needing time to think: "Thank you! When can I come?"

Thank you Jakey and grateful thanks to all at FiOP for helping me to appreciate the wonder that is life and for helping create harmony and balance in my own life.

Nancy Adams

Some Ideas on Pain Management

Chronic pain, from whatever cause, is often difficult for others to understand. Many conditions which afflict humans are long term. Good management and appropriate medication can provide relief and improve quality of life, but may not cure the pain.

The realisation that the pain is not going away and that relief is not possible can come as a severe emotional shock.

People can feel that their life is out of control and that pain dominates. This can lead to an ever increasing downward spiral of tension; pain; stress; which leads to more tension; pain; and sleep loss and so on ad infinitum. Those struggling with pain can become anxious, angry, withdrawn and have difficulty communicating and this can apply at any age.



Thinking of frail elderly people, visitors and carers need to acknowledge the reality of the psychological impact of chronic pain. Some may have had pain half their life and managed quite well, but increasing debility makes it more and more difficult.

Living with long term pain can be exhausting. If the person is bad tempered or unwilling to talk much, it may mean the pain is in control again.

If someone is still at home they may be struggling to do too much and so increasing their pain. It would be helpful to understand about pacing, so they can still do things. However, this is a very difficult area, especially for people who have always gone at things full speed!!

Learning how to manage pain allows the person to begin to feel in control again, regain a sense of self worth, and step out of the pain/tension/stress cycle, and begin to get their needs met.

It is vital that they understand that their pain is believed but that there may not be a cure.

Some methods of living with pain can include:

Learning to be realistic about the situation.

Using deeper breathing focusing on the out breath, as a method for dealing with the chronic tension associated with pain

Combining this with relaxation methods, learning the usefulness of distraction techniques

Doing gentle safe balanced movement

Learning how to use pacing to stop the over/under activity cycle

Learning to set manageable goals

Looking at priorities

Paying attention to how they think about their pain

Understanding the mind/body connection, how physical state / thoughts / emotions / mood / behaviour all continually interact.

Learning to reframe thoughts to lift mood & consequently feel more in control of the pain, & indeed, reduce it

Rediscover hope, have fun and get a life!!



All these strategies and insights can often help people rediscover their sense of being a valuable person, and reconnect with their own inner strengths and abilities.

Work at communication skills. Families live with the pain too and often have no idea how to help the person. They need support and understanding and ideally need to be included, when appropriate, at some point in a PM programme.

Understanding the use of breathing and distraction would be very helpful. Just empathically connecting and helping the person to slow and deepen their breathing, while providing some enjoyable distraction. Be aware that any medication needs to be regularly reviewed. Is this happening? Don't be offended when they just want left alone to sleep!

Penny Grieve

Pain Association Scotland has CD's and books which can help.

Free enquiry line 0800 783 6059

www.chronicpaininfo.org.

Meeting older people's needs

The following stories illustrate where care and attention could be improved and the importance of speaking out for vulnerable older people.

Edward had dementia for a couple of years and during a respite admission to hospital he fell and fractured his femur. He was transferred to an acute hospital, where I visited him.

He was obviously distressed and in pain. When I asked a nurse if my attempts to soothe him were making things worse she replied 'No. He needs his pain medication'. But, I felt he should never have been allowed to be in pain and that medication should have been administered **before** the pain broke through again.

Sheila had terminal stage of cancer but as she had experienced psychiatric problems for some years she lived in a psychiatric ward. However it had been agreed that she would move to the hospice when she felt the time was right.

The staff had grown attached to her over the years and they had found it difficult to let her move on to more appropriate care sooner.

When I visited her I pointed out that she was in considerable pain but was not complaining. The staff didn't have the specialist knowledge to manage her pain and hadn't realised this.

I wrote a letter to a committee investigating palliative care in relation to mental illness and copied it to the Mental Welfare Commission.

A friend in the south was seriously ill but her family didn't know the name of her lawyer in Edinburgh. However, I managed to locate him through the Law Society.

It would have been very useful to have a power of attorney to put her affairs in order but my friend was now unable to communicate. So although discussion of the options was helpful there was little any of us could do at the time.

My friend subsequently died – a merciful release for her and thereby resolving the situation for us.

It is vitally important to consider End of Life issues, including a Power of Welfare Attorney, and get them organised before you think you need them!

Visitors need to be confident that there is positive action that can be taken.

SUGGESTED READING

Ageing, Disability and Spirituality

This book looks at the effects of disability on people in later life and focuses on how people with either life-long disabilities or the acquired disabilities of ageing may live spiritually meaningful lives. The book presents ways of moving towards more effective relationships between carers and older people with disabilities.

Edited by Elizabeth MacKinlay and published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2008-03-24

Spirituality: Roots and Routes

- A secular reflection on the practice of spiritual care.

Gerry Burke

Published by Age Concern Reports 2007

Religion and Belief

Matter - *An information Resource for Healthcare Staff.*

Understanding and responding to the Religious and Belief needs of patients as they relate to their use of NHS services is no longer an option, but essential. This publication demonstrates why staff should try to meet and support the spiritual needs of patients.

Published by the Scottish Government, Scottish Interfaith Council, NHS Scotland and Fair for All (Religion and Belief) 2007



We celebrate ageing and faith

Developing an understanding of spiritual care of older people.

Encouraging people to celebrate growing older and

recognising and affirming their gifts and experience.

We offer support and training to pastoral carers and

ordained members on an ecumenical basis and amongst people of other faiths.

Supporting caregivers within health and long term care institutions to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing

by ensuring the inclusion of spiritual care for older people

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See our website for a gift aid form

An example of Spirituality and Creativity

This story about Alice gives an example of the importance of creativity and spirituality.

Alice had moved into a home when her dementia prevented her from living on her own and she was brought to a class with her carer. The theme was 'movement music and conversation', and she arrived in a wheelchair. We began by each person choosing a card from a selection.



She chose one of flowers and then spoke animatedly of her pride in her garden. As gardens in her area were often neglected, it made her tending of her little piece of earth all the more significant. Against the odds, in the past, she had created a place

of beauty. 'People liked my garden. I just love flowers. It was the nicest on the street. I miss it.' Then she looked at the flower card she had chosen with delight and repeated many times, 'I like this card, it's nice'.

When we began the movement, she joined in with pleasure from her wheelchair, smiling as she swung her arms round slowly. 'I'll be exhausted tonight but it's good, isn't it?'

I learnt sadly that the home she was in for 60 people in an urban priority area in Glasgow had no exercise class. Our class was very simple but I share it as an example of mutual involvement that involved different aspects of what make us up as individuals.

One way to check if people's spiritual needs are being met is to use the SPICE model we mentioned in the last newsletter and could be used to reflect the above story.



Spiritually: We were present and attentive to each other. We valued one another's ideas and feelings.

Physically: We enjoyed the sense of moving to music as far as we were able.

Intellectually: We were able to reminisce over what gave us enjoyment and life as well as what we missed and share it with each other.

Creatively: We chose cards that caught our attention and let them speak to our imagination.

Emotionally: We let the music touch our feelings and affect the way we moved, and the art cards affected the feelings within the memories.

Ali Newell