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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

**Faith in Older People**  
21a Grosvenor Crescent  
EDINBURGH EH12 5EL  
Registered Company SC322915  
Registered Charity SC03225  
Tel: **0131 346 7981**  
Email: [info@fiop.org.uk](mailto:info@fiop.org.uk)  
Website:  
[faithinolderpeople.org.uk](http://faithinolderpeople.org.uk)

### Some of us only show our true colours late on in the season of life.

True, but not the whole truth.

The fact is that there is a beauty related to every age, just as there is a beauty related to every time, whether the morning sunrise or the encroaching darkness of night-time, whether the cold frostiness of winter or the balmy days of autumn. Each season has its own beauties, its own shortcomings and its own compensations. And so it is with our lives.

The evening's dusk does not contain the promise of light and the warmth of sunshine, but nor does the break of day promise us the quietness and privacy of the evening. The autumn does not contain the excitement of new life bursting through, but nor does the springtime offer us the wonderful hues of the leaves as they drop wistfully onto the earth. And so it is with our lives.

There is never an age which does not contain the possibilities for wonder and beauty, which means that as we grow older we should anticipate and welcome the colours and sounds of ageing, the nuances and textures, the possibilities still open to us and the recognition of our own mortality. It is a great adventure.

For everything there is a time and season. The more we are able to appreciate this the more contented we are likely to become.

*Malcolm Goldsmith*



*"How beautifully  
leaves grow old  
How full  
of light and colour  
are their last days"*

John Burroughs  
1837 – 1921  
US Naturalist & author

## The Celebrations and Challenges in the Pastoral Care of Older People

A conference organised by FiOP was held mid-November at the Eric Liddell Centre and attended by visitors, pastoral carers and carers from a range of denominations.

The purpose of the day was to stimulate discussion amongst pastoral carers for older people about the education and support they would value in relation to visiting as a vital part of the church's ministry.

The day was organised so that it was participatory to enable those attending to share their experiences and aspirations; to consider the challenges and possible coping strategies and to help guide the work of FiOP.

The Rev. Alison Newell a Church of Scotland Minister who works for the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow introduced the conference with two personal stories about celebratory encounters with older people. These illustrated the importance of mutuality which she encapsulated in the mnemonic "**SPICE**"

**spiritual,  
physical,  
intellectual,  
creative and  
emotional.**

The experience might be mutual but it may not be equal. One may have more access to memory, one might be stronger physically, but at a deeper level there can be a giving and receiving on both parts.

However, there are also times of challenge in providing care which often relate to a situation of vulnerability. If this is met by sensitive responses from the family, church or professional helpers, a whole new vista can open up.

A faith perspective which says that God is known in vulnerability and knows our vulnerability is perhaps illuminative here. Jesus on the cross shares our vulnerability as he bears pain knowing what it is to be pushed to the limit and even feeling forsaken by God. We do not need to hide our vulnerability or be ashamed of it, and as carers we may find that it is as we are supported with sensitivity in our vulnerable, painful places that we become more able to support those we care for in theirs.

Sometimes a new place of strength emerges. This strength which comes in and through sharing our vulnerability and facing our fear is often experienced as a surprising gift and grace.

Alison finished with a quote, 2 Corinthians 4:7 and 4:16.

*"So we do not lose heart.....  
We are afflicted in every way  
but not crushed,  
perplexed but not driven to  
despair,  
persecuted but not forsaken,  
struck down but not destroyed..."*

The rest of the day was spent in small groups considering how people had met the challenges of caring; how their spiritual needs had been met as a carer and in proposing actions which FiOP could take in supporting carers.

These proposals included training and awareness-raising around dementia, communication, listening skills, working within residential care homes; creative activities and opportunities for carers to refresh themselves.

A conference report will be available from FiOP or to download from the website [www.faithinolderpeople.org](http://www.faithinolderpeople.org)

## PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Our future activities will include:

### **A one day course on Spirituality and Ageing**

This is planned for mid-February 2008 details will be on our website.

### **A one day workshop on Creativity and Spiritual Care**

This is planned for February/March 2008

During 2007 we ran courses for:

#### **Loss & Bereavement**

This consists of four sessions focussing on different aspects of practical and spiritual care for people who have been bereaved (although this is not recommended for those recently bereaved)

#### **Carers & Visitors**

This consists of four sessions, which includes exploring the concept of spiritual needs and encouraging, hearing and appreciating the older person's life story.

#### **Spiritual Care & People with Dementia**

This consists of six sessions focussing on different aspects of spiritual care for people with dementia.

We also ran "Taster Sessions" of all of the above

*If your group or congregation is interested in gathering together a group of people to study any of these topics please contact FiOP.*

#### **Any of the above courses can be tailored for your particular needs.**

We also produce Seasonal material for use with people with dementia

Currently we have available material covering the Christmas celebrations

*We are also developing work within care homes focussing on creativity and spiritual care.*

**For further details please contact FiOP or see our website**

**[www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk](http://www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk)**

## **My Experience of Running the Faith in Older People Training Courses**

Working as a trainer, with Mary Moffett, on the Course for Visitors & Carers, & the Course on Spiritual Care & People with Dementia, can be described as enriching & rewarding.

Those who have come on the courses are visiting or caring for frail elderly people. The groups comprised professionals or volunteers from within congregations and brought with them a wealth of experience, commitment, & love toward those in their care.

Some came along because they wanted to see what FiOP had to offer, and wanted to build on their existing skills and to learn new things in order to provide an even better quality of care to the frail elderly.

Wonderful stories were shared as a vital part of the learning. The training model of experiential learning combined with teaching input is one I am very used to, and I find works extremely well. It is good to have two trainers sharing the input, this enables us to notice what is happening in the group, as well as supporting each other.

The participants were able to go away having increased their knowledge about dementia, & empathy towards those whom they care for with dementia.

The Revd Sue Kirkbride helped us with concrete examples of successful ways of worshiping with people with dementia. This allowed us all to see how essential it is never to lose sight of the human being within the frail confused person.

These courses continue to be a deeply rewarding experience for me & I look forward to FiOP's expanding work in this field. *Penny Grieve*

## SHARED EXPERIENCES

Nell Graham invited me to visit the Monday Centre at Portobello, held in the Baptist Church Hall.

This is a lively group run for people with dementia on behalf of the Portobello and District Council of Churches.

There are about 24 trained volunteers involved and I think places for a dozen people each week. They have been meeting for twenty years, weekly.

It is a delightful tiny church hall down a close, with disabled access. It was warm, with sun coming in from south facing windows and had a very cheery and positive atmosphere.

The members had been collected around 10am and after arriving at the centre had a cup of tea and home made scones. I arrived as they were starting on an hour's worth of entertainment and sharing. They started with sing-a-long, accompanied by a piano, from a book in large print with a wide selection of war-time songs, folk songs, hymns and carols. Each person in the circle got to choose what to sing next. I could not tell who were the members and who were the volunteers! We had a lovely solo version of "By the Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond" by a lady who used to be a member of the Orpheus Choir in Glasgow. It was her birthday and she was offered a cake, beautifully wrapped with a tartan ribbon with candles lit. We all sang "Happy Birthday" and lamented the fact that she is moving north to Laurencekirk near Stonehaven this weekend.

Nell then took the chance to draw a rough map of Scotland on a big whiteboard and marked Laurencekirk on it and put the member's name beside it. She then asked people to volunteer their favourite place in Scotland, and encouraged each member to explain their choice.

The place chosen was marked on the map (e.g., St Andrew's, Iona and many others) and then the members name was written beside it.



It was an incredibly successful way of getting people to talk about a place they liked and a memory connected to it. Many chose to talk about where they had grown up or gone to school. Others chose where they had enjoyed holidays. One carer volunteered her name to be put beside John O'Groats where she had been most memorably bored, frozen and wet! Everybody laughed.

I think the exercise worked so well because it was visually based, designed to elicit good memories and un-prescriptive. After some more music recognition exercises the group went on to have lunch.

*Mary Moffett*

It is perhaps inevitable that in these early days of **Faith in Older People** the term spiritual care has a distinct Christian flavour because that is where we originated. It is, however, our desire and intention to be much broader than this and to include other non-Christian religious tradition and also an understanding of spirituality that goes beyond any particular religious framework.

*Malcolm Goldsmith*



## Coping with Dementia Conference

This conference was held in the beautiful seclusion of the 16<sup>th</sup> century surroundings of the Leveson Centre for the study of Ageing, Spirituality and Social Policy. It offered a haven of peace to consider the effects of dementia on someone who has it, the professional and the carer.

The three speakers, Peter Ashley, Paul Green and the Revd Judith Allford each gave a very thoughtful and thought provoking account of their respective involvement and concerns.

**Peter Ashley**, who has Lewy Body Dementia, gave us a strong personal insight into the challenges that face someone who has been diagnosed with dementia and described his very active involvement in the range of organisations that promote a better understanding of the condition and who campaign for better services for those who suffer from it.

He emphasised the need for those who are diagnosed in the early stages to feel empowered so that they can talk to others especially as they become the 'expert' given that they "see the world from the inside out". His coping strategy was to use his abilities and knowledge to influence policy and practice which was clear from his involvement with the development of guidelines and identifying the needs of those with dementia.

The professional view offered by **Paul Green** who described adapting cognitive behavioural therapy for older people gave the participants an opportunity to hear about case studies where the individuals had stopped doing activities because of the barriers they felt as a result of memory loss or because they feel they are unable to contribute in the way they did in the past.

The case studies illustrated how to determine what a person would really like to continue to enjoy and what was making it difficult for them and then working through how the various barriers could be overcome to allow people to do the things they can continue to enjoy. His emphasis on the 'compassionate mind

approach' which helped people to explore the skills and strengths they still had was really important but the technique he illustrated also provides carers and others a way of focusing on finding solutions to some of the problems with which they are faced.

**The Revd Judith Allford** gave us a moving account of caring for her mother as her dementia developed. She spoke of the sadness she felt at the gradual withdrawal by her mother's friends as her dementia progressed as people felt that they would no longer be recognised. Although the family could understand this they also knew that her mother was aware of and enjoyed the 'presence' of others even if she could no longer express it. The family had a visitors book which they asked everyone, professional or friend, to fill in when they saw her mother as this gave comfort and knowledge to the family as to who had been to see her and why and gave them the opportunity to reflect on the day with her.

She gave us insights into how they had evolved little methods to help her mother, one of which was her growing inability to recognise the house in which they lived. Her father used to take her out in the car so that they could come back home. However, there were times when her mother recognised this ruse!

As a minister herself Judith expressed sadness that the Minister from her mother's congregation in which she had been a stalwart member, had not managed to visit her in hospital. Judith recognised the demands placed on clergy are ever-increasing and this brought into question how support for older people and their carers could be better supported by congregations.

It was a day in which, importantly, our feelings of empathy were stirred but which also gave us some practical ways forward. It was good to be amongst a group of people who had come from all over the UK who showed such a strong concern for our older people.

*Maureen O'Neill*

## SUGGESTED READING

### **Lighting the Way: Spiritual and Religious Care for those with Dementia**

Patricia Higgins and  
Richard Allen  
Leveson Paper Number 16  
£5.00 including postage.

### **The Humour of Old Age Revd Dr Una Kroll**

The Sixth Leveson Lecture  
(Leveson Paper 17)  
£4.00 including postage.

[www.levesoncentre.org.uk](http://www.levesoncentre.org.uk)

### **Use the internet!**

Sheila, who lives in a care home, regularly receives letters from her cousin in the USA. She is no longer able to read these, but enjoys having them read out loud. It has taken me some time to work out the family tree! I thought it would be good to send them news of her, and I duly wrote, including my email address. In due course a message arrived from her cousin's son, quickly followed by one from his sister. Next came photographs, which could be printed out and delivered to Sheila. It was difficult for her to see the pictures clearly, but her delight was evident and the contact unleashed a torrent of reminiscences. Correspondence is now by letter and email and everyone is enjoying the two way communication. I am hoping that on my next visit to Sheila, the photos will have made it to the wall of her bedroom..... And I wish I had embarked on this sooner.

### **"What does it mean to have Dementia?"**

On the 27th November Alison Newell represented FIOP and spoke at the annual conference for the department of spiritual care in Ashludie Hospital, Monifieth. The subject for the day was "What does it mean to have Dementia?"

The first speaker was Dr. Dot Weaks, Nurse Consultant in Dementia who gave an informative talk on "Diagnosed with Dementia - what then?"

She was followed by Ms Agnes Houston who has had an early diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Agnes was both courageous and creative in how she was living with the diagnosis and was an inspiring speaker.

Alison Newell spoke on 'Spiritual care for those with dementia' and enabled a lively discussion amongst the chaplains. She introduced many to FIOP and promoted FiOP's courses and materials

### **"Is there a Retirement Age for Spirituality?"**

This was the title of the annual Social Care Lecture organised by the Gillis Centre in which Father Gerald Hughes SJ gave an inspiring presentation.

Father Gerry enabled us to think about the theme "is there a Retirement Age for Spirituality?" To which the answer was a resounding no! We focussed on "Finding God in our Fears" and remembered that the most common words made by God in the Bible are DO NOT BE AFRAID.

### **O Tidings of Comfort and Joy**

A CD of favourite Christmas hymns, chosen by older people living with dementia and sung by choirs and members of churches at Holy Corner, Edinburgh has been published in time for Christmas. The CD, price £5.00 (plus £1.00 postage and packing) is available by phoning 01786 467740 or e-mailing [dementia@stir.ac.uk](mailto:dementia@stir.ac.uk)

### **Ageing and the Care of the Elderly**

A paper prepared by the Working Group on Bioethics and Biotechnology of The Executive Committee of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches available from CEC-CSC Office in Strasbourg ([csc@cec-kek.fr](mailto:csc@cec-kek.fr))

Also, see our Website for other recommended reading. [www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk](http://www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk)

## The Spiritual Dimension of Ageing

Over the past few years there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of the spiritual dimension in ageing and the need to develop a greater understanding of it by both the individual older person and by their carers.

In considering spirituality it is essential to be aware that all human beings are spiritual and express spiritual needs at different times of their lives but that it might not necessarily be linked to a religion.

**Faith in Older People** focuses on enabling older people to develop this aspect of their lives and also to work with carers, professional, voluntary and family, through training and awareness raising.

It is therefore encouraging to see that spiritual care is being strongly incorporated into the care standards set within the health and social care services. The Patients' Charter sets out a universal standard of care and respect to be adopted by NHS staff.

This makes it clear that people 'can expect NHS staff to acknowledge their spiritual needs and aspirations and to sensitive to the wide variation in values and cultural backgrounds of their patients'. Those who provide spiritual care are expected to be integral members of the care team so that they have sufficient information to provide spiritual, religious and pastoral care. (Scottish Office; MEL(1994)50 and HDL (2002)76.

This is echoed within the National Care Standards for Older People in Scotland (Standard 12) in which the importance of enabling residents and those who are cared for to be able to continue with those social, cultural or religious beliefs which give their lives meaning.

Whilst it is good to have such a framework it does not bring instant understanding of what spiritual needs

are or how to focus on this aspect of an older person's life in addition to maintaining their physical requirements.

Elizabeth MacKinley in her book on 'The Spiritual Dimension of Ageing' points out that frail older people in care homes are commonly cared for by younger people who may not have the capacity or experience to understand the spiritual needs of their patients in the light of age and life experience differences.

She feels that this applies equally to nurses, social workers and health professionals, as well as the clergy, who fail to grasp the specific spiritual needs of older people.

This relates strongly to end of life issues where older people perhaps need to reflect on their lives and to talk to someone about their 'fear of the process of dying'. In the context of person centred care the spiritual dimension must not be ignored.

**Faith in Older People** brings together a focus on spirituality, which has been recognised as playing a key part in the mental well-being of individuals, and the key issues which affect us in old age, loss and bereavement, ill-health, and change, in order to increase awareness and to improve the quality of life for older people but also to provide practical measures for carers to employ to develop a mutuality of benefit.

*Maureen O'Neill*

*The Spiritual Dimension of Ageing; Elizabeth MacKinley; Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2001*

### PROTECTING VULNERABLE GROUPS

There continues to be some concern about the implementation of this Act. The consultation will be finalised on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008 and further information can be obtained from [www.protectingvulnerablegroups.com](http://www.protectingvulnerablegroups.com) or email [info@protectingvulnerablegroups.com](mailto:info@protectingvulnerablegroups.com)

## ADVENT PRAYER

This season of Advent reminds us to look forward with hope. May your love be like a lit candle to us banishing the darkness of fear and filling our hearts with hope.



## 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

## ADVENT PRAYER IN ACTION



To see the difference our Advent materials can make was wonderfully illustrated recently.

The joy it gave to a lady who was stuck in a very bare hospital room was visible.

The outside world with all its hustle and bustle of preparation for Christmas was brought into the quiet and sometimes isolated surroundings of her room.

As we looked through the material and talked about the Christmas tree on the Mound and where she had learned to ice skate she became increasingly cheerful and animated.



Before I left we stuck the photographs on the wall so she could continue to have happy memories and feel part of what was going on around town.



*Faith in Older People (FiOP), produces seasonal material as part of our course on Spiritual Care and People with Dementia and this includes readings, a very short reflection, prayer and some photographs or pictures to stimulate discussion.*

### Trustees: Faith in Older People:

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