

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
Registered Company
SC322915
Registered Charity
SC038225

Trustees:
Christopher Davies
(Chairman)
Margaret Stevenson
(Secretary)
Sandra Carter
Malcolm Goldsmith
Geoffrey Lord
Helen Mein
Lissa Smith
John Starr

Contact details:

Faith in Older People
21a Grosvenor
Crescent EDINBURGH
EH12 5EL

Tel: 0131 346 7981

Email:
info@fiop.org.uk

Website:
www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk



*"Cosmic Spiral" designed by Alan Davie **

As a child, in Lossiemouth, I remember my father getting us up out of bed to gaze in wonder at the Milky Way, with a comet clearly visible, and on another occasion to see the Northern Lights.

I studied science to university level, but somehow no scientific explanation of those phenomena ever got near touching the meaning-filled moments, shivering in the back garden aged 6.

We can try and get at "truth and meaning" in life using logos or reason, but we can also get close to it using myth and symbol; one the "rational" the other perhaps the "artistic" route.

At this time of year the image of the star is full of meaning and Alan Davie's tapestry, designed in his late 80s and made so beautifully by the Dovecot Studios, saves us a thousand words in the search for meaning.

For many older people, the search for meaning, the need to make sense of life is very strong, but can be hampered if the emphasis is all on words and explanation, especially if dementia is involved.

Amongst other things FiOP aims to explore the way creative arts can help access meaning when words don't quite hit the spot.

Mary Moffett

**The above tapestry is from an exhibition at The Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh during Aug/Sep 09.*

(websites: www.dovecotstudios.com and www.gimpelfils.com)

In 2004 Alan Davie was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by Edinburgh College of Art which he formally accepted this summer (www.eca.ac.uk)

Exploring the experience of ageing and reflecting on what may assist in making this a time to celebrate



An extract from a lecture given to the International Conference for Ageing and spirituality in New Zealand in September 2009 Rev. Malcolm Goldsmith

I want to reflect on how we might age creatively, with a sense of wonder and contentment. How we might journey towards death not with fear and apprehension but with gratitude and a sense of mystery.

I am moved to think about these things because of the many people I meet who begrudge growing old, who complain about it and face the future with growing apprehension. How is it, I wonder, that some people grow old complaining whilst others age with a sense of grace and satisfaction? Are there ways of accepting the ageing process that are rewarding and to be welcomed? If there are – then how do we discover them?

People often remind us that we only have one life and of course that is true. But it is also true to say that we have many lives and these lives piece together like a jigsaw puzzle - childhood, student days, marriage and family or the single life, different phases of work and responsibility and, of course, retirement – which itself can be divided into several phases.

We are faced with many problems as we enter that phase when our bodies and perhaps our minds too, begin to deteriorate. It is a time when pain, suffering, loneliness, regret and grief have to be handled in such a way that we do not lose that essential quality of being alive that reflects something of the mystery and majesty of human life.

"The problem with ageing" writes Joan Chittister *"is not age; it is petrification, rigidity of soul, inflexibility"*. When we

close our minds to what is new we close our minds to our responsibility to ourselves and to others to keep on growing.

However, it is important that we don't just reflect on the problems of ageing but also acknowledge some of its blessings – and there are many. First amongst them I would want to place a sense of wonder at the majesty and mystery of life and creation. The older we get, the more humble we probably become as we reflect on what it is all about and our place in this majestic cosmos.

We take our personalities with us as we journey into old age, whether that is a blessing or a curse is perhaps for others to decide upon. So those who, over the years have found ways to adjust to change and cope with loss will almost certainly have a less stressful time than those who have been unable to bend both their bodies and their minds. It is not a matter of coping, we always cope; we have to. The question is – do we cope well?

Jung wrote, eighty years or so ago, that when people are young they look for certainties, they want to know what is black and what is white, what is right and what is wrong. As we grow older, he said, we become less sure about certainties and we look for those things which can help and support us in our doubt and our unknowing.

When we are young we believe that we can change the world, when we are older we know that we have missed so many opportunities, made so many mistakes – so what we want then is some form of reassurance and acceptance – forgiveness perhaps?

In our youth we want certainty, in our old age we want understanding. What once we knew, now we are less sure about; what once was clear now is much more complex and ambiguous. It is not the world that has changed, it is us. We stumble on into our later years, bruised by our experiences, humbled by the extent of our ignorance and only too well aware of

our frailty and incompleteness. But this sense of vulnerability, this awareness of our limitations, this hesitancy about the great mysteries of life should not be seen as weakness but as strength; not the cause for anxiety or guilt but rather as the raw material of thanksgiving, for here, as we move towards the end of our life, we face the greatest mystery of all.

One of the tasks of ageing is to prepare ourselves to face it with a sense of dignity, even perhaps, with a sense of welcome, for it is a great mystery. For everyone there is what I would call "the spiritual journey towards our end". For only a few is it a religious journey, but it is a journey that we all have to make, whether we try to ignore it or 'rage at the dying of the light' as Dylan Thomas expressed it; whether we face it with calmness, rage or stoicism. The question is, are there any ways in which we can help ourselves and others in this journey?

One of the tasks of later life is to look back at the joys and sorrows, the successes and failures, the unresolved problems and unfinished tasks of the past; to look back in order to let go. It is what has been described as 'the increased interiority of the personality' and as 'the inexpressible experiences of transformation'. These are difficult phrases but I mention them to underline the fact that we are talking about something very serious and profound.

- How do we reach this inexpressible experience of transformation when we may be starting at a place in which we are struggling with grief, or with the decline of our body or with the onset of dementia?
- How can we prepare ourselves for residential care if the 'letting go' of things that are dear to us is more related to practical considerations than with the desire to move into a more detached and quiet time of reflection?
- How do we arrive at that 'contemplative context of time', when we gratefully accept the transition from doing to being and have time to consider the wonder and mystery of life?

What in theological language might be phrased as moving into an awareness of glory or what one 95 year old friend described to me as her 'growing awareness of wonder'?

The vitality of anyone's life, at any stage, depends upon them having a sense of meaning or meanings. The challenge for older people is to make sense of life at a stage when loss and changes occur more frequently and perhaps more painfully. We need to have a sense of purpose in order to cope successfully with the erosion and diminishment that takes place in so many areas of our life. These losses are real, the question is – will they overwhelm us?

When I hear people complaining about growing older, feeling depressed about their situation and fearful for the future, I am so often aware of a lack of purpose, a loss of meaning. This illustrates Kimble's oft repeated view that more and more people today have **the means to live but no meaning to live for.** *'The crisis in ageing'* he says *'appears to be a crisis of meaning'*. Frankl developed Nietzsche's view that: *He who has a Why for living can survive almost any How.*

Frankl maintained that we can find meaning in three ways.

- First, by what we give – in terms of creative work and endeavour;
- second, by what we take from the world – in terms of meaningful relationships and experiences, and
- third by the stand we take towards a fate that we can no longer change – be that a bereavement, an illness or whatever.

From such a simple assessment we can discover and develop a whole approach to creative aging and if we can approach death creatively it frees us to enjoy life more fully in our later years. This does not mean having the answers, far from it, it means recognizing the nature of the journey, not denying the struggle but being open to the possibilities for growth – right to the end.

Malcolm Goldsmith Sept 2009
A full copy of the lecture can be obtained from www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk

RECENT ACTIVITIES

FiOP was especially pleased that Rosas Mitchell and Chris Wilkins offered a day entitled 'The Stories We Live by' in Edinburgh in September. During the day Rosas helped us to explore life story work (the importance of listening to people's stories) and working out how to record them in creative ways to make sure that they could be used to produce good times in later years.

Chris gave us the background to the **Caring Memories** programme. This helps people create a life book with personal photographs explaining why capturing and sharing our life memories helps us to define who we are and enables communicating so much more about ourselves than might first meet the eye. More information can be obtained from www.caringmemories.net.

FiOP has been very active in the last three months working with congregations in the Lothians, the Borders and Fife on topics as diverse as 'Keeping the Spirit Alive', 'Why do we visit' and seasonal topics including All Saints, All Souls, and Remembrance.

In responding to demand over the past few years we have developed a broad range of topics on which we can run workshops, seminars or conferences. Please see our website for further details and we would be delighted to discuss developing a course which meets the requirements of your group or organisation.

See www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk

Examples include:

**Spiritual Tasks of Ageing
Communicating with People with
Dementia**

**Spiritual Care in Care Settings
Worshipping with people with Dementia
Chronic Pain and Spiritual Wellbeing**

Over the next few months we will be happy to offer materials or workshops on the seasonal topics of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Candlemas and Lent.

WORKING IN NEW AREAS

FiOP has recently developed a partnership with two Local Co-ordinators. This extends our work with congregations and care homes into new areas of Scotland and continues our collaboration with **Rev Ali Newell from the Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow**



and Dr. Harriet
Mowat, Mowat
Research and

Aberdeen University.

This collaboration has enabled FiOP to develop its training work in Glasgow and the North of Scotland by offering specific workshops.

In *Glasgow* four ecumenical sessions, which have been well attended, were held in Glasgow Episcopal Cathedral for members of various congregations and have focused on what lifts or lowers people's spirits, listening attentively, reminiscence, memory boxes and coping with loss amongst other topics.

In the *North of Scotland* three workshops have been arranged in Inverness, Aberdeen and Skye for staff from care homes in which there has been good attendance and interest. These workshops have considered people's own experience of ageing; what is successful ageing; and meeting the spiritual needs of older people in residential care settings.

BOOK REVIEW

Writing Your Self - John Killick and Myra Schneider

(Published by Continuum International Publishing Group 2010 (ISBN 978-1-8470-6252-9 paperback).

The introduction to the book states: "We wrote this book because of our conviction that everyone has people, events, thoughts, feelings 'buried inside' and that there are ways of bringing these to the surface so that they can be examined, shaped and perhaps offered to others. In 'Writing Your Self' we explore this concept in depth with a wide variety of examples from known and unknown writers illustrating the achievements possible in this area."

There is a chapter on 'Spirituality' and John Burnside, Poet and Reader in Creative Writing, University of St Andrew's wrote of the book:

"Throughout history, communities and individuals have renewed and preserved their sense of identity and shared riches by telling stories. To tell any story is a spiritual act: to tell our own stories is both liberation and challenge, and, at crucial points in our passage through life, words can either magnify or diminish the soul'.



Artist: "The white horse" by John Killick. Poem: "Horses and me" by George.

2010 CALENDAR

John Killick has just completed an eight-month project as 'Dignity in Care' Poet in Residence for people with dementia in Cambridgeshire. The money came from NHS Eastern Region, and the project was administered by Cambridgeshire Libraries.

He worked one-to-one with persons with dementia in day centres, care homes and hospital wards, writing down what people said and making poems out of their words.

There is now a beautiful calendar featuring twelve of the poems with twelve paintings made by people attending two Alzheimer's Society day centres in the county. It makes a colourful and thought provoking Christmas present.

If you would like to order a copy or copies please send a cheque for £3 per calendar (to include postage) to

John Killick, 5 Slater Bank, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 7DY.

All proceeds go back into the project

WORKSHOP

Making Sense of Later Life

an exploration of the spiritual self through writing

A one-day course
Friday

26th February 2010
in Edinburgh

Venue
to be confirmed.

This course will approach in some depth issues raised by ageing by means of creative writing.

As well as opportunities to write, the day will include the examination of how others have embarked on a similar quest through fiction, poetry, autobiography and journaling.

JOHN KILLICK has many years' experience of writing, publishing and running courses, and is co-author of 'Writing Your Self' (Continuum International 2009)

to reserve a place
Please email:
info@fiop.org.uk

Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group

The First of October was 'International Day for Older Persons' so it seemed appropriate that the Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group should invite Mary Moffett and Maureen O'Neill from FiOP to talk to its members at their October meeting. The theme was 'How to Value Older People in our Faith Communities'. The presentations were inspiring leading into a conversation amongst this circle of women which clarified the necessity for us all to be much more attentive to the variety of needs of older people within our faith communities but also in society in general.

One of the questions which provoked considerable response was "What are the issues, spiritual and practical, which really matter to older people in your faith communities in older age and how do you feel they are addressed?" Amongst the responses were: re-ordering our priorities to choose to make more time and space for being with older people; the importance of ritual to older people; treating older people with respect as well nurturing their own self respect; and perhaps most importantly, honoring their dignity and seeing within them a wealth of wisdom.

The short time together went too quickly, so we are hoping that we might organise a longer workshop with FiOP in the New Year to take some of these ideas forward.

Nancy Adams

The Older People's Assembly

The Scottish Older People's Assembly was held in the Scottish Parliament on 2nd October 2009, to coincide with UK National Older People's Day (1 October). The Assembly was organised by members of the Older People's Consultative Forum, facilitated by Age Concern and Help the Aged in Scotland. The event was attended by 300 older people and those involved in services from all over Scotland. The keynote speaker was the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Nicola Sturgeon.

It was an important milestone in bringing together older people to debate matters of specific interest to them and to acknowledge the importance of the older generations by hosting the meeting in the Scottish Parliament. It is hoped that there will be future Assemblies.

A Report on the day will be available shortly

'Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland: Policy and Action Plan 2009-2011'

This publication has a particular emphasis on mental health in later life. This is being carried out by NHS Health Scotland which will produce an action plan by 2010 in response to the Scottish Government's strategy 'All our Futures' and 'The UK Inquiry into mental health in later life'.

Priority is being given to the treatment and care of those with dementia and support for their carers and there is a strong emphasis on awareness-raising in relation to dementia to encourage early diagnosis.

Producing a Strategy for Dementia in Scotland

Dementia is a priority for the Scottish Government which has made a commitment to produce a Dementia Strategy for Scotland by April 2010. This work is being carried out in five work streams:

- Treatment and Managing Behaviour
- Assessment, Diagnosis and Patient Pathways
- Improving the general service response to dementia
- Rights, Dignity and Personalisation
- Health Improvement, Public Attitudes and Stigma.

Dementia Rights

Alzheimer's Scotland has produced a Charter of Rights for People with Dementia and their Carers in Scotland.

To obtain a copy and to register your support visit www.alzscot.org

'Down, but not out'

This campaign report explores the experiences of older people with depression and seeks to improve their quality of life.

To obtain a copy of the report visit www.ageconcern.org.uk

THE NEED FOR THE 'OUTDOOR ROOM'



We are told that the number of people with dementia will increase enormously over the next 20 years, and yet many care homes and hospitals do not provide access to usable and / or appropriate outdoor space. In fact, many people with dementia become virtual prisoners once they are in 'care' for their disability.

Although the benefits of both access to outdoor space and the physical activity in gardening are generally appreciated, still these are all too often denied – maybe due to the needs for savings in a building project or concerns over 'health and safety' in undertaking what are after all the activities of normal living. I feel passionately that all people and in particular older people and those with dementia should have the freedom of access to the outdoors, to feel sunlight, breezes, rain and to enjoy pottering or gardening at their leisure.

Having been sponsored by the Dementia Services Development Centre at the University of Stirling to go on a course in the design of healing gardens held at the Chicago Botanic Gardens, I am contributing to and editing a book to be written by the DSDC team of experts on the benefits of easily accessible outdoor space.

We aim to cover best practice for all outdoor areas including balconies (extracts from Mary Marshall's book), terraces, courtyards, and larger scale gardens.

[see article in FiOP's last newsletter]



Courtyards in particular are much used in larger scale developments as they provide safe, supervised open space as well as daylight to buildings with a large footprint, yet I suspect that many are far too small to be useful for activities or to provide sufficient sunlight.

To help us with this task, we would appreciate any feedback from your readers

on good or bad examples of outdoor space generally and in particular on courtyard size and design.

Annie Pollock
Architect and Landscape Architect

My contact email is
annie@arterre.co.uk

see also website:
<http://www.arterre.co.uk>



'Its still ME, Lord

A DVD exploring
**Spirituality and
Dementia** - produced by
Caritas Social Action
Network.

Copies of the DVD can be
ordered from
www.csan.org.uk

Training Manual for Care Homes

For the holistic care of
Older People by
Gaynor Hammond
*on behalf of Faith in
Elderly People Leeds, in
association with Christian
Council on Ageing.*

This is aimed at assisting
staff understand the nature
of spiritual needs and how
to meet them.

It arises out of extensive
work in the care of older
people, including people
with dementia.

Good quality care takes into
account the physical,
emotional and spiritual
dimensions of health. While
most caregivers are familiar
with recognising,
implementing and
evaluating physical and
emotional care, the spiritual
aspect is more difficult to
identify and assess.

This guidance given in this
booklet is about cultivating
an approach to providing
care, which weaves spiritual
care throughout the whole
of care giving.

This is one of a series of
excellent booklets available
from Faith in Elderly People
Leeds c/o Gaynor
Hammond, 29 Silverdale
Ave, GUISELEY LS20 8BD

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



An example of weaving in process– Dovecot Studios.

God the Weaver by Alfred Wooler

My life is but a weaving between my God and me;
I may choose the colours, He knows what they should be;

For He can view the pattern upon the upper side,
While I can see it only on this the underside.

Sometimes He weaveth sorrow, which seemeth strange to me;
But I will trust His judgment, and work on faithfully.

'Tis He who fills the shuttle, He knows just what is best,
So I shall weave in earnest and leave with Him the rest.

At last, when life is ended, with Him I shall abide,
Then I may view the pattern upon the upper side.

Then I shall know the reason why pain, with joy entwined,
Was woven in the fabric of life that God designed.

Faith in Older People
Director
Maureen O'Neill
Training Officer
Mary Moffett
Administrator
Jean Myers



*The reverse of the Cosmic Spiral tapestry
(barely messy enough to suit the needs of the poem!)*

We are very grateful for donations from congregations. Can you help?