



GRAND NEWS

A newsletter for all Grandparents in the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton

No. 4 - Advent 2025



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

GRANDPARENTS AS A SIGN OF HOPE

A message from our Marriage & Family Life Adviser, Dcn Simon South

Is it me, or does time seem to be going by quicker? It feels like only yesterday that we were packing the Christmas decorations away and taking our first intrepid steps into 2025 - I hope that you have had a wonderful and hope-filled 2025, in the midst of all the chaos and fun of family life.

The message of hope has been at the forefront this year, with the Church celebrating the Jubilee Year, with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope". Many millions of people around the world have journeyed on pilgrimage to holy doors, taken their anxieties to Confession, and embraced the miraculous and unending gift that is God's love and forgiveness for us all.

Hope is a powerful feeling. It helps us to believe that good things are coming, even when times are tough. Regardless of age, nationality or circumstances, we all need to believe that no

matter what happens, God is always with us; trusting in His promises and staying resolute in faith.

As grandparents, we can help our children and grandchildren to encounter this grace-filled reality. Hope helps our children face challenges with a positive attitude. It gives them the strength to keep going when things are hard. Hope in God, reminds us that there is always something better ahead, and that God has a plan for each and every one of us.

In this context, the Bible Society shared some very encouraging news earlier this year, publishing a report called "[The Quiet Revival](#)". The report explains that the number of people going to church has risen by 50% over the last six years (to 2024), with the largest increase in the 18-34 age group - younger generations are actively looking for a deeper meaning and purpose for their lives, outside of the worldly.

As younger generations search, they are in turn, seeking to hear the faith witness of those they trust and respect - their grandparents - and are hoping to understand the role Christ has played in

our lives, the strength received in challenging times, the joy in good times and the affirmation in those moments of uncertainty.

The Holy Spirit is bringing these special moments of connection through our grandchildren to us, so we can encourage, explain and affirm the love God has for us, and our families.

The role of grandparents in the transmission of faith, is a special family treasure of incalculable worth. Throughout history, from biblical times to the present, grandparents¹ have been a fundamental pillar in the spiritual education of younger generations. Our witness of faith, patience, love and hope can be a genuine source of inspiration and guidance in a world that desperately needs solid, consistent spiritual role models.

This message of hope, both for our families and for ourselves, was firmly at the heart of Pope Leo XIV's message to grandparents for the **5th World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly** earlier in the year.

I "hope" you enjoy reflecting on Pope Leo's words of encouragement, and that 2026 is a truly blessed and joy filled year for each and every one of our grandparent communities across the Diocese. May your example of faith continue to be a light that guides your families in the years ahead.

God bless you all,

Deacon Simon

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The rise in regular churchgoing

Percentage of age group population who describe themselves as Christian and go to church at least once a month



Question: Apart from weddings, baptisms/christenings, and funerals how often, if at all, did you go to a church service in the last year?

Base: Whole population

(Source: biblesociety.org.uk)



POPE LEO'S MESSAGE FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY

Blessed are those who have not lost hope
(cf. Sir 14:2)

Dear brothers and sisters,

[The Jubilee](#) we are now celebrating helps us to realize that hope is a constant source of joy, whatever our age. When that hope has also been tempered by fire over the course of a long life, it proves a source of deep happiness.

Sacred Scripture offers us many examples of men and women whom the Lord called late in life to play a part in His saving plan. We can think of Abraham and Sarah, who, advanced in years, found it hard to believe when God promised them a child. Their childlessness seemed to prevent them from any hope for the future.

The elderly as signs of hope

In the Bible, God repeatedly demonstrates His providential care by turning to people in their later years. This was the case not only with Abraham, Sarah, Zechariah and Elizabeth, but also with Moses, who was called to set his people free when he was already eighty years old (cf. Ex 7:7). God thus teaches us that, in His eyes, old age is a time of blessing and grace, and that the elderly are, for Him, the first witnesses of hope. Augustine asks, "What do we mean by old age?" He tells us that God himself answers the question: "Let your strength fail, so that my strength may abide within you, and you can say with the Apostle, 'When I am weak, then I am strong'" (Ps. 70,11). The increasing number of elderly people is a sign of the times that we are called to

discern, in order to interpret properly this moment of history.

The life of the Church and the world can only be understood in light of the passage of generations. Embracing the elderly helps us to understand that life is more than just the present moment and should not be wasted in superficial encounters and fleeting relationships. Instead, life is constantly pointing us toward the future. In the book of Genesis, we find the moving episode of the blessing given by the aged Jacob to his grandchildren, the sons of Joseph; his words are an appeal to look to the future with hope, as the time when God's promises will be fulfilled (cf. Gen 48:8-20). If it is true that the weakness of the elderly needs the strength of the young, it is equally true that the inexperience of the young needs the witness of the elderly in order to build the future with wisdom. How often our grandparents have been for us examples of faith and devotion, civic virtue and social commitment, memory and perseverance amid trials! The precious legacy that they have handed down to us with hope and love will always be a source of gratitude and a summons to perseverance.

Signs of hope for the elderly

From biblical times, the Jubilee has been understood as a time of liberation. Slaves were freed, debts were forgiven and land was returned to its original owners. The Jubilee was a time when the social order willed by God was restored, and inequalities and injustices accumulated over the years were remedied. Jesus evoked those moments of liberation when, in the synagogue of Nazareth, He proclaimed good news to

the poor, sight to the blind and freedom for prisoners and the oppressed (Lk 4:16-21).

Looking at the elderly in the spirit of this Jubilee, we are called to help them experience liberation, especially from loneliness and abandonment. This year is a fitting time to do so. God's fidelity to his promises teaches us that there is a blessedness in old age, an authentic evangelical joy inspiring us to break through the barriers of indifference in which the elderly often find themselves enclosed. Our societies, everywhere in the world, are growing all too accustomed to letting this significant and enriching part of their life be marginalized and forgotten.

As elderly persons, we can hope

The Book of Sirach calls blessed those who have not lost hope (cf. 14:2). Perhaps, especially if our lives are long, we may be tempted to look not to the future but to the past. Yet, as Pope Francis wrote during his last hospitalisation, "our bodies are weak, but even so, nothing can prevent us from loving, praying,

giving ourselves, being there for one another, in faith, as shining signs of hope" ([Angelus](#), 16 March 2025). We possess a freedom that no difficulty can rob us of: it is the freedom to love and to pray. Everyone, always, can love and pray.

Our affection for our loved ones – for the wife or husband with whom we have spent so much of our lives, for our children, for our grandchildren who brighten our days – does not fade when our strength wanes. Indeed, their own affection often revives our energy and brings us hope and comfort.

Especially as we grow older, let us press forward with confidence in the Lord. May we be renewed each day by our encounter with Him in prayer and in Holy Mass. Let us lovingly pass on the faith we have lived for so many years, in our families and in our daily encounter with others. May we always praise God for his goodness, cultivate unity with our loved ones, open our hearts to those who are far away and, in particular, to all those in need. In this way, we will be signs of hope, whatever our age.

DATES FOR 2026



Wednesday 17 June: Our annual Grandparent Pilgrimage at The Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation, West Grinstead.

Planning for our **2026 Formation Day** is underway with further details to follow.

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HORSHAM “GRANDPARENT GROUP HAPPENINGS”

Our Grandparent Group in Horsham continues to be blessed by enthusiastic members and embraces the wider church community when we have speakers on subjects of general interest - including members of the “Big Parish”, through the church communities of Worth, Billingshurst, and Crawley.

A group of us met after the summer break to discuss ideas and make plans for the meetings ahead - with lunch enjoyed together in a member’s garden.

As any group with older members, we have times which are particularly poignant, when the strength of prayer, care, and sharing are even more important; our September meeting was one of those. At the suggestion of a group member, we watched an episode from a course called: [*Beloved Disciples. The Autumn of Life*](#) presented by David Wells.

Hearing laughter, seeing nods of agreement and smiles, we felt so thankful, and highly recommend the programme to groups, if you have “techy resources” or your parish can help.

A book, [*The Reluctant Disciple*](#) written by David Wells in his inimitable, self-effacing and wise style offers a gentle reflection on life, with its “ups and downs”, helping the reader to see God in a range of situations - it’s a good book to leave around for family members to hopefully pick up.

Another recommendation from our meeting which is also excellent, is *How to Pray, A Simple Guide for Normal People* by Pete Greig.

Parishioners, including members of our group have, for years, been supporting **Hope in Action**, a charity taking blankets and children’s clothing to Ukraine, knitted by parishioners from several churches in our soon-to-be new parish of Crawley. We are delighted that a parishioner from Henfield - who helps to organise this project - spoke at our November meeting.

We are also really pleased to be welcoming a speaker from [*St Catherine’s Hospice*](#), Pease Pottage, soon, a place which is very close to all our hearts. Any donations given when it’s our group’s turn to do the Sunday Coffee Rota at church, go there.

We only have two rules in our group; confidentiality - I heard from a member recently, who said it means a lot to people that we can open up to one another in trust, and saying *The Grandparents Prayer* at every meeting.

Mike and Christine Evans

EASTBOURNE GRANDPARENTS CHRISTMAS LUNCH



Huge thanks to Mary Barlow for sharing this picture of Eastbourne’s Christmas gathering with us - an enjoyable time was had by all, with friendship and fraternity much in evidence!

If you have Grandparent Group events or celebrations coming up, do send us a photograph with a few words, so that we can share your good news stories across the wider grandparent network;

E: simon.south@abdiocese.org.uk

Please make sure that everyone in your photo understands that it may be included in the newsletter and (our E-Bulletin newsletter) and shared by the Diocese online and in print.

USEFUL RESOURCES

The Catholic Grandparents Association

The Catholic Grandparents Association offer a range of interesting and stimulating resources and online discussions that your group may find helpful, including a regular online Faith Cafés. Visit their website to find out more:

www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.org

Parenting/Grandparenting for Faith

Our 2024 Grandparent's Formation Day speaker was Becky Sedgewick from *Parenting for Faith*. The organisation's website includes great articles and videos for parents and grandparents to encourage and help us share the faith with our grandchildren:

www.parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk

Celebrate Trust

CELEBRATE Trust is a Catholic organisation that inspires and equips people of all ages to live an authentic Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit, in support of the family, to form the next generation and encourage local community. Their website includes practical and helpful ideas for sharing the faith with young children, with regular gatherings and events to bring Catholic Families together in faith:

www.celebratetrust.org

The Diocesan Website

To find out more about Marriage & Family life in our diocese visit:

www.abdiocese.org.uk/formation/family-life

To sign up to events taking place across the diocese, visit the diocesan Events page:

www.abdiocese.org.uk/diocese/events



GRANDPARENTS' GROUPS ACROSS THE DIOCESE

Are grandparents in your parish looking for something new?

Why do people choose to join Grandparent Groups? The answer, in many cases, is the joy found through a common purpose, with groups offering opportunities to pray together and strengthen resolve in the midst of life's ups and downs.

Grandparent Groups exist for many reasons; one group might offer opportunities for members to be with like-minded people whose company they enjoy, another group might focus on members giving and receiving support, understanding, and empathy.

The common denominator across the wider network is faith, and the fervent desire that our grandchildren will share in the joy which our faith gives us. All Grandparent Group members come together to pray, deepen their faith, socialise, and to support one other, sharing their experiences in trust and confidence.

The network's mission is to pass on the faith to our grandchildren; in many family situations this is not easy. We are aware that we "preach without words" - our grandchildren pick up how we live our lives and see that our faith gives us hope, strength and love of life.

We strengthen and feed our faith by listening to Grandparent Group speakers, watching religious videos, and sharing reflections, opening us up to a deeper understanding of our faith, and enhancing our ability to pass this on to our grandchildren.

You can contact Christine Evans by email;
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Christine Evans
Diocesan Grandparents' Groups Co-ordinator



For more information on Grandparents' Groups and Marriage and Family Life matters in the Diocese, contact:

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THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON

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