



GRAND NEWS

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

No. 1 - Summer 2024



Hello grandparents

Welcome to the new edition of "Grand News", a dedicated newsletter exclusively for you.

As we progress on the remarkable journey of grandparenting, our aim is to uplift your spirits and keep you in touch with all the wonderful things that happen in the Diocese.

This newsletter aims to serve as a beacon of support, offering articles, reflections, and shared experiences to enrich your grandparenting adventure. May it be a source of inspiration and encouragement, reminding you of the meaningful role you play in the lives of your grandchildren and the broader community.

Katherine Bergin

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton Marriage and Family Life Adviser

E: katherine.bergin@abdiocese.org.uk

We look forward to seeing you at our forthcoming events...

Grandparents' Pilgrimage to West Grinstead Wednesday 26 June, 11am-3pm

An annual highlight, held at the welcoming and delightful Shrine of Our Lady of Consolation and St Francis. It will be a day of sharing and prayer with other grandparents, led by Bishop Richard, and including Mass, Benediction, Rosary, tours of the secret chapel and lots of chat.

"I always leave feeling restored and supported."

Arrival from 10.30am, for refreshments.

"Thank you, very much, to you and to all who made our wonderful day at West Grinstead another day of great joy for us all. No wonder numbers are growing!"

Grandparents' Day

The Catholic Church celebrates the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly each year on the Sunday closest to the Feast of St Joachim and St Anne, Jesus' grandparents. This year it will be celebrated on **Sunday 28 July**. The Pope has chosen the theme: "Do not cast me off in my old age" and said it is "meant to call attention to the fact that loneliness is the bitter lot in life of many elderly persons, so often the victims of the throw-away culture."¹ In response, we will be encouraging parishes to create groups where people might find a source of support and comfort. We already have several of these groups established in the Diocese and they share some news below.

Celebrating the Feast of St Joachim and St Anne – Saturday 20 July, 3pm

As a diocese, we will be celebrating Mass in honour of the day, with Bishop Richard at Arundel Cathedral. We are inviting families – natural or parish – to bring their elderly and grandparents as a mark of gratitude for all they have given to their families.

Refreshments will be served afterwards in the Cathedral Centre, with an opportunity to catch up with old friends and to make new ones.



Grandparents' Formation Day Wednesday 6 November

Come along to the St Philip Howard Centre in Crawley, for a day with Becky Sedgwick, author of the inspiring [Grandparenting for Faith](#) book.

You can book events hosted by the Diocese through the diocesan website events calendar at **W: abdiocese.org.uk/diocese/events**



1. [Press Release of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life: Theme of the Fourth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly \(vatican.va\)](#)

GRANDPARENTS' GROUPS ACROSS THE DIOCESE:

Having been asked to write about Diocesan Grandparents groups, I was thinking "Why do people choose to come together in groups?" The answer was that they have a common purpose and being together strengthens resolve. One group may exist purely so the members can be with like-minded people whose company they enjoy, but another group may come together so members can give and receive support, understanding and empathy. Grandparents' groups exist for all these reasons. Our common denominators are our faith and our fervent desire that our grandchildren will share in all the joys which our faith gives us. We come together to pray, to deepen our faith, to socialise, to support each other and to share our experiences; all in trust and confidence.

Our mission is to pass on our faith to our grandchildren; in many family situations this is not easy, but we are aware that we "preach without words". Our grandchildren pick up on how we live our lives, seeing that our faith gives us hope, strength, love of life. To strengthen this faith, we feed ourselves in our group times: listening to speakers, watching religious videos or sharing reflections, opening us to deeper understanding of our faith and a better ability to pass this on to our grandchildren.

Groups exist in Hastings and St Leonards; Eastbourne; Horsham; Thames Ditton; Woking; Henfield; Effingham and Fetcham, and Camberley. Groups vary enormously in numbers, activities, and formats. Most meet monthly, often after Mass. Meetings usually start with coffee and cake and then open with a prayer, often followed by intercessory prayers, then announcements, perhaps of plans made for a forthcoming trip, an event the group is planning in the parish or a discussion of subjects for future meetings. This is followed by the focus of the meeting; for example, listening to an invited speaker such as a catechist explaining

how the team relates to young people, a priest talking about his ministry overseas, or a local community organisation explaining their outreach to refugees and how we might help. The meetings end with the Grandparents' Prayer, composed for us by Pope Benedict.

If you do not have a Grandparents' Group in your Parish, why not start one, with help from the diocesan Formation Team in Crawley?

Christine Evans

Diocesan Grandparents' Groups Co-ordinator

Horsham Grandparents' Group

We are a large parish and have a large group. We meet on the third Tuesday of each month after Mass, starting with coffee and chat. After prayers we make plans and have our focus, for example, leading up to Pentecost, we are watching a YouTube talk by [Bishop Barron](#) on the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, reading reflections on the Holy Spirit by Cardinal Fernandez and then sharing in small group about times in our lives when we have known the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We really want our meetings to be inclusive and encourage Honorary Grandparents to be with us... godparents, aunts, uncles, parishioners who care about the spiritual lives of children. We intersperse our more confidence-sharing meetings, with more general talks, to which we invite all parishioners. We are quite strict on timings, as sitting too long makes us wriggly and we always use a microphone as ears might not be the sharpest. No apologies for absence are needed. We come as and when works for us. Grandparents are busy people.

We have two 'rules': we always speak in confidence and we always say the Grandparents' Prayer.

A few years ago, we asked members why they come to meetings, and their answers perhaps describe our time together most clearly:

"Being a grandparent of seven grandchildren is one of the most important parts of my life. I want to do everything I can, learning more, listening to others and being together in prayer, to help them."

"Sharing the joys and problems of faith brings everyone together. Many grandparents these days feel isolated from family, not just physically but by not being able to share the beliefs they hold dear. We have all gained so much from each other."

"Companionship and people to talk to about problems who understand and will not talk outside the group."

"I go because I am glad of the support, inspiration, and friendship of other grandparents as we strive to live our lives with the joys and frustrations of our vocations as grandparents, encouraged by the example of Joachim and Anne."

"We are like another extended family."

"We have fun and lots of laughter together."

Horsham Group held a Christmas, fish & chip lunch – a tradition started during Covid restrictions when they couldn't share or prepare food.

Fr Xavier Amirdasamy, Parish Priest of Horsham, gave an interesting, illustrated talk about his ministry in Tamil Nadu.



Effingham and Fetcham group



Christmas lunch in Horsham



Fr Xavier's talk to the group

Effingham and Fetcham

Nearly 30 turned up at our last meeting, on a Monday afternoon. It started with an update and then some grandparent jokes were read out, and we passed round old photos of the last ten years, including two photos of Fr Stephen Ortiger RIP and Grandparents' Days. We compiled our FHC prayer candidate letters – we are sending nineteen this year – ate homemade cakes, drank tea and finished with a Lenten Service.

The latter included a wonderful description of 'Fasting', read alternately by a granny and grandad. The Do and Raise group, which is made up of parish grandmothers, sold the rest of their 'goods' and £500 went to a local homeless charity."

Hastings and St Leonards

The parishes of St Mary Star of the Sea, Hastings, and The Good Shepherd, St Leonards, have a joint grandparents' and older persons' group which meets every third Wednesday after the 10am Mass at St Mary's.

After welcoming everyone and some light refreshments, we light a candle and open with prayers. The importance and power of prayer at the start and end of every meeting is emphasised, as children and grandchildren face so many challenges in their lives. We feel that prayer helps them to develop deep inner constructs as they journey through life's ups and downs.

Usually we have a speaker, often from our group, as we find that people like to have more developmental and experiential learning.

To date the group's programme has included:

- The spirituality of young children – by Fr Eamonn Monson, Parish Priest of Hastings.
- Communicating with primary school children – by a retired primary head.

- Small group discussions on topics for future gatherings, from a brief questionnaire.
- Challenges faced by parents in the developing world – by a group member.
- Problems faced by people with disabilities around town and in general – by a group member.
- A celebratory two-course meal at our local Age Concern.
- The role of grandparents in conflict resolution – by a group member. This topic is ongoing, with much work to be done in creating relevant scenarios.
- Video and discussion on The Shroud of Turin as an aid to faith – by a group member.

Our parish priest, Fr Eamonn Monson, has kindly donated a television and DVD player so we can show DVDs relevant to our faith. We are trying to build a supportive, caring and generously sharing group centred on our faith.



SHARING GOD'S GREATNESS



Before we can effectively share God's greatness with our grandchildren, we need to be able to see and savour God's greatness for ourselves. How does this work? We can see God's greatness all around us in creation. The greatness of his character and works can be seen all around us. His wonders are endless. However, it is through the Bible that we can see all of God's wonderful characteristics. Secondly, we need to savour God. Taste and see that God is good. Savouring the greatness of God is about enjoying and delighting in God and his greatness. It moves us away from just head knowledge about God to being captivated by His love. Savouring takes time, delighting and treasuring.

Sharing God's greatness with our grandchildren is the natural overflow of seeing and savouring God's greatness. When we see something incredible, we want to begin looking for someone to share it with. We naturally talk about what we love and enjoy.

Here are 4 ways of sharing God's greatness with our grandchildren:

- Through stories: share Bible stories and your own faith journey. Make God's word come alive that resonate with your grandchildren.
- Through prayer: pray with and for your grandchildren. Let them see your faith in action trusting that God hears and answers our prayers.
- Through time together: spend quality time with your grandchildren, engaging in activities that allow you to chat about God.
- Through your example: be a living example of God's greatness through your actions, kindness, and love for others.

Strengthening Relationships

How do we strengthen and build our family relationships to help us share God's love with our family?

Strengthening relationships as Christian grandparents involves reflecting Christ-like virtues.

Love is the cornerstone, expressed through intentional acts of kindness and genuine care.

Humility opens doors for mutual understanding and growth, fostering an environment where both grandparents and grandchildren can learn from one another.

Patience, a fruit of the Spirit, is essential in navigating generational differences and challenges.

Embracing forgiveness ensures that grace abounds, allowing relationships to flourish despite inevitable imperfections.

Pursuing peace making actively resolves conflicts, promoting harmony within the family. In weaving these qualities into our interactions, we not only reflect the teachings of Christ but also create a nurturing space where the love of God is tangibly felt, strengthening the bonds between Christian grandparents, their grandchildren and their grandchildren's parents.

Agreeing clear boundaries as grandparents, in agreement with parents, is important for creating consistent and harmonious relationships.

Regarding **food**, maintaining agreed-upon dietary guidelines ensures a unified approach to promoting health.

Consistent bedtime routines support healthy sleep patterns and align with the parents' structure.

Coordinating on screen time and content choices emphasises shared values, guiding grandchildren towards wholesome entertainment.

Respecting and adhering to these boundaries not only contributes to a cohesive family environment but also reinforces shared parenting goals.

This **collaborative approach** strengthens family bonds and provides a unified foundation for the grandchildren's upbringing.

Praying for our Grandchildren

One of the greatest things we can do for our grandchildren is to pray for them. Praying scriptures or turning scriptures into prayers for our grandchildren (and ourselves as grandparents) is one of the most powerful and effective ways to pray.

There are two passages from the Bible, in particular, that help us know what we should be praying, for ourselves and our grandchildren.

Luke 2:52 "And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and people." If it was important for Jesus to grow in wisdom and favour, then it is important that we pray for these for our grandchildren.

1 Timothy 4:12 "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity."

Over time we need to be praying for these seven essential characteristics/qualities into the lives of our grandchildren.



A Prayer for your Grandchildren

Heavenly Father, I lift up my grandchildren before you, speaking their names with love and intention, knowing that You have woven the tapestry of their lives with purpose and promise.

I pray that (name your grandchildren) may walk in Your light, guided by Your wisdom and grace. May they know the gift of your salvation personally. May they grow in strength, character, and faith, becoming beacons of Your love in this world.

Lord, bless my grandchildren with good health, joy, and a heart filled with compassion. May they always feel the warmth of our love and support as they navigate life's journey. I ask that You surround them with a community of your people, teachers, and friends who will encourage and nurture their spiritual growth and faith.

In times of joy, may they celebrate Your blessings with hearts full of gratitude. In times of challenge, may they find solace in Your presence and draw strength from Your unfailing love.

May they come to know You intimately, embracing Your love and grace with open hearts. May their lives be a testament to Your goodness, and may they, in turn, be a source of joy and inspiration to all they encounter.

I entrust my precious grandchildren into Your loving care, knowing that Your plans for them are filled with hope and purpose. May they walk in the path of righteousness, guided by Your loving hand.

As a Christian grandparent, I commit to continue praying for, supporting, and loving my grandchildren with all my heart. May my legacy of faith and love be a blessing for generations to come.

In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

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

Katherine Bergin
Diocese of Arundel & Brighton
Marriage and Family Life Adviser

E: katherine.bergin@abdiocese.org.uk



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