

## FAITH & SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT in later life

### 1. Harry Moody - *Dimensions of spiritual well-being in later life*

Moody suggests there are six dimensions or indicators of spiritual well-being that can be aimed for in later life. They don't necessarily need to be pursued in a religious context but are for all on the spiritual journey:

- *Self-determined wisdom* – the result of realising and valuing one's life experience.
- *Self-transcendence* – the drive that is felt in later life to rise above one's own individual needs, concerns and circumstances and link in with a wider purpose or project or higher power.
- *Discovery of meaning in ageing* – more than an acceptance; a positive stance on later life and a valuing of maturity.
- *Acceptance of the totality of life* – seeing oneself in a life-time context, in the flow of time, with others ahead and behind on the road.
- *A revival of spirituality and the inner journey* – especially if lapsed or under-developed.
- *Preparation for death* – not necessarily imminently, but in the life-planning sense.

### 2. Elizabeth MacKinlay - *Challenges of later life spirituality*

MacKinlay suggests that there are four major challenges to face and resolve in later life; to be worked out in relationship with others and with God. Older people should be supported as they struggle with these challenges.

They are to develop:

- Self-sufficiency rather than vulnerability
- Wisdom rather than provisional understanding
- Relationship rather than isolation
- Hope rather than fear

There are four related tasks involved in these challenges. They are to:

- Transcend various difficulties (disabilities, losses) even if these cannot be avoided - diminishment and finitude are part of life
- Search for final meanings (life's big questions)
- Find (greater) intimacy with God
- Find grounds for hope

MacKinlay's approach underlines the value of faith communities and pastoral work, as well as continued learning. Her definition of spirituality: "An inner resource that drives and animates a person and brings together the meanings and relationships that have been worked out with others and with God."

See Harry Moody and Elizabeth MacKinlay publications on the reading list.

### 3. James Fowler's faith stages model (adult stages)

Fowler's Stages of Faith	
Stage three: <i>Synthetic – Conventional</i>  'Accepted faith'	Most people move to this stage as teenagers, when their life has grown to include several different circles of value and influence and there is a need to pull it all together. When this happens, a person usually adopts an all-encompassing belief system; faith can be strongly experienced and believed, and life changing. However, at this stage, people tend not to see outside their box and don't recognise that they are 'inside' a belief system. At this stage, authority is usually vested in individuals or groups that represent one's beliefs.
Stage four: <i>Individuative – Reflective</i>  'Examined faith'	This is a tough stage, often begun in young adulthood, when people start seeing outside the box and realising that there are other 'boxes'. They begin to critically examine their beliefs and may become disillusioned with faith propositions formerly accepted. Ironically, Stage 4 people are perceived by some as 'backsliders' when they have actually moved forward to a more critical appreciation of their faith in relation to other faith systems. Their wrestling with belief results in a more explicit and personal responsibility and commitment to faith, enabling witness, mission and full participation in faith community life.
Stage five: <i>Conjunctive</i>  'Complex faith'	It is rare for people to reach this stage before mid-life. This is the point when the 'reasonableness' of faith, developed in the previous stage, begins to run out and people start to accept the paradoxes in life. They increasingly appreciate that life contains greater complexity and mystery, and often return to sacred stories and symbols, but this time without being restricted to one theological box - allowing symbols and other stories to speak by being open to the Spirit. The hallmarks of this stage are living self-consciously and creatively with ambiguity and provisional understanding.

### 4. Jung's seven tasks of ageing

Face reality of ageing and death	Review and reflect – sum up one's life
Rediscover God in one's 'self'	Overcome ego
Preserve and select time and energy- concentrate on what's important	Find meaning – through memory and inner journeying
Be creative and playful	

Two key ideas from Jung about the 'second half' of life:

- There is qualitative difference between life's 'morning' and its 'afternoon'
- The ageing person has a duty to him/herself to develop spiritually

**5. Fisher and Simmons' *Journey of Aging***, involving four tasks to be addressed over alternating periods of stability and change, from mid-life onwards:

Discovering purpose; building relationships; balancing autonomy with (inter)dependence; facing loss and addressing change.

### 6. Other thoughts about 'second half' living:

- Life review and story-telling is essential to explain our lives. We need to talk to understand ourselves and to 're-member'
- the spiritual task is to embrace the blessings and shoulder the burdens (Joan Chittister)
- Falling down (dealing with failure and life's trials) is essential for growing upwards (Richard Rohr)
- The spiritual task is to 'grow on and grow up', and in 'the charitable acceptance of ourselves and others' (Melanie Klein)