

## [Resource Sheet on the Dignity and Wisdom of older people](#)

**1. Brainstorm on the words “old person.”**

**2. A letter from Nancy Stewart. (Followed by questions)**

**3. YouTube clip- interviews with older people.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qo0Q975u\\_WQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qo0Q975u_WQ)

**4. Pope Francis’ advise on reaching out to the elderly. (followed by suggested questions for group work)**

1. Brainstorm the words “old person”. Write any words that come to mind on the board. You could get two students up to write on the board as suggestions come in.

Summarise all the suggestions that are on the board and introduce the letter.

2. One of Ireland's oldest residents has written a public letter of hope, ahead of her 107th birthday, urging people to take care of each other during the current pandemic.



Louise Coghlan, granddaughter of Nancy Stewart on her 106th birthday with the medals she received from the President every year since turning 100. (Photo: Seamus Farrelly)

[Read Nancy’s full letter here:](#)

*(Editor, Meath Chronicle)*

*Dear sir - My name is Nancy Stewart and I was born on the 16th of October 1913. This weekend I turn 107 years of age.*

*Imagine turning 107 in a world pandemic. This is something very unusual even for me and all I have been through. I live in Clonard in County Meath and have lived in my home for over 83 years.*

*I lost my husband in a car crash in 1989 and lost my twin daughters Margaret in 2007 to motor neurone and Anne in 2010 to utter heartbreak of losing her sister. I've lost all my friends throughout the years which comes with living so long on this earth.*

*I'm very lucky to still have three daughters Kathleen, Mary and Olive and one son Finian and I have 84 grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren. I have faced many heart-breaking moments and have seen many hard times in our country witnessing world wars, division in our people and numerous sad times for our nation.*

*I write to you today to send you my love and to offer you my prayers. We are in a very difficult time at the moment in our country, in our lives and in our world. But I reach out to you in this letter to offer you hope, faith and belief that everything will be ok in the end.*

*We are in another stage of this battle against the virus, but we will get through this. Like everything I've been through since the day I was born in 1913, no matter how bad things have got, I'm the living proof that we can survive and in years to come, this will just be a distant memory.*

*I have a great faith and it has helped me keep positive throughout the struggles I've met. I thank you for keeping your faith and for keeping your resilience strong, through this hard time. Sadly, for the moment, we can no longer stretch out to a friend and embrace them nor can we call to each other's houses.*

*But I'm here to share my story. I have been in lockdown in my house since March, alongside my granddaughter Louise and even though it has been a tough time, we have got through it together. We drink tea. We say prayers. We bake. We laugh. We make phone calls. I can even video call lots of my family and friends and am making new friends every day that God gives me on this earth.*

*And that's a very important thing to say. If you are feeling low, make sure to try call someone or even go for a walk. I also ask God to help me if I'm feeling low. This is a hard time for everyone but please make sure you keep yourself well and wear your mask. If you keep healthy, your mind will stay healthy too.*

*Keep talking to one another. All my life I have always believed in chatting and drinking tea and saying a prayer or a decade of the rosary and it has got me through. This is our moment to keep our faith and to keep believing that everything will turn out ok.*

*We must try to make sure we leave nobody behind and that we don't lose sight of each other. This is a moment for humanity to step forward to take care of the other. We must mind ourselves, but we must also mind all those around us. Look up and smile even if you have your mask on.*

*Your eyes will smile and that might be all someone needs to keep going. No good deed ever goes unnoticed so try your best to keep being good. We are not here to live for ourselves but to live for each other.*

*I can't believe I've made it to this age, I only feel like I'm 50 but now that I'm here, all I can say is please God I'll be here for my next birthday. We must always look forward. I can't believe I'm the oldest person in Ireland living in my own home, I don't feel that old.*

*When God wants me, he will come take me but for now I will keep enjoying my life, I'll keep loving my family and I'll keep saying my prayers day by day.....oh and not to forget eating lots of good wholesome food is my tip. Good food and lots of tea is my secret to a long life as well as keeping positive as best we can. We must always look forward and hope for the best.*

*Thank you for thinking of me in your prayers and your thoughts and I promise I will think of you in my many rosaries I say every day.*

*Thank you so much for reading my letter also and I hope I have, in even a little way, helped you feel less alone in this moment. There is always hope and once we keep talking to one another, no day will seem empty and we can get through this together. It only takes a small candle to take away the dark and in each of us, we can be that light in the world.*

*This hard time will indeed pass like all the rest and all that matters is that we helped each other through.*

*Many blessings and much love,*

*Granny Nancy x*

*Clonard*

*Co Meath.*



(Nancy Stewart, Clonard celebrates her 107th birthday on October 16<sup>th</sup>  
Photo: Seamus Farrelly)

**Activity:** Ask the students to choose one thing that Nancy has said in the letter that struck them and to write in in their copy.

Choose a few students to share with the class what they have chosen.

Introduce the following short YouTube clip.

### [2. Life advice from the elderly. - YouTube clip \(2 mins\)](#)

A group of older people were asked what advice they would give to their 16 year- old self

Watch below:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qo0Q975u\\_WQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qo0Q975u_WQ)

**Activity:** Write down the one thing that you found interesting after watching this short clip.

### [3. Here's Pope Francis most recent advice on reaching out to the elderly](#)



Angelus address, in which he urged young people to show grandparents and the elderly tenderness. (CNS photo/IPA)

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis called on young people to reach out to their grandparents or the elderly who may be lonely or on their own.

“Do not leave them by themselves,” he said after praying the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter’s Square July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020

“Use the inventiveness of love, make phone calls, video calls, send messages, listen to them and, where possible, in compliance with health care regulations, go to visit them, too. Send them a hug,” he said before leading visitors in giving a big round of applause for all grandparents.

The pope made his remarks on the memorial of Sts. Joachim and Anne -- Mary’s parents, Jesus’ grandparents and the patron saints of grandparents.

Pope Francis said he wanted to mark the day by inviting all young people to make a concrete “gesture of tenderness toward the elderly, especially the loneliest, in their homes and residences, those who have not seen their loved ones for many months” because of rules in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

In part, because of such regulations in place, he asked young people to be creative and inventive in finding ways to show they care while respecting current directives.

Grandparents and the elderly are “your roots” and having a strong bond or connection with one’s roots is important, he said, because “an uprooted tree cannot grow, it does not blossom or bear fruit.”

Inspired by the pope’s words after the Angelus, the dicastery decided “to launch a campaign called, ‘The elderly are your grandparents,’” which encourages young people around the world “to do something that shows kindness and affection for older people who may feel lonely.”

It said it has been hearing about the many ways people have been finding creative ways to draw the church community closer to those who are older and lonely, including serenading residents in retirement homes.

It asked people continue to share their efforts and ideas on social media with the hashtag #sendyourhug and the dicastery would repost some of them on their platforms @laityfamilylife.

“Our invitation to young people is to reach out to the loneliest elderly people in their neighbourhood or parish and send them a hug, according to the request of the pope, by means of a phone call, a video call or by sending an image. Wherever possible or whenever the health emergency will allow it, we invite young people to make the embrace even more concrete by visiting the elderly in person,” it said.

**Activity:** Ask students to write down one point they found interesting about this article.

Ask students to go in pairs/small groups.

Students will now have 3 sentences each to share and compare within the group.

**Reflection:** Finally, ask students to look at the board with all the words that were brainstormed. Would they change any of the words now?

Give students a few minutes to reflect on this and ask one member of the class to give feedback to the rest of the class.

Hilda Campbell (D.A. Kildare and Leighlin)