

Worship for people with dementia

Why provide worship?

The ritual associated with organised religion can be particularly important where there is memory loss.

This leaflet provides suggestions for Christians to aid the development of a sensitive worship service for people living with dementia.

Model of Worship for people with dementia

The repetitive nature of ritual gives familiarity and reliability and will act as a cue to the person's spirituality. Religious ritual also offers the benefit of companionship and a sense of belonging.

People with dementia are all different; they are of any denomination, or faith, or none. Even people from the same religious tradition may be at a different point along their journey through dementia, or indeed at a different point in their faith life.

However, when planning worship for people with dementia you have to start somewhere, so here are some things to consider - some ground rules:

- Plan the worship in advance although you may have to learn to be flexible if the congregation deviates from your plan
- Keep the service short (15 - 25 minutes)
- Use familiar and well-loved hymns and readings (some people recommend using the Authorised Version of the Bible)
- Many people consider it essential to include the confession.
- Some consider the confession is covered implicitly by the Lord's Prayer
- NO SERMON but perhaps a short address/thought for the day that confirms God's unconditional love and presence
- Make appropriate use of symbols
- Use appropriate physical contact
- Try to give a personalised blessing
- Include the Lord's Prayer.

These are just some hints to help put together a service. People need to reflect upon what works and what is good. Modify the style of the service in the light of your experience.

Now follows a tried and tested order of service, as used at Westbury Dementia Care Home, Newport Pagnell.

Westbury Sunday Service

Leader: My name is..... and we have come together today, (date), at (place), to worship God.

Leader: O give thanks to the Lord for he is good:

All: His mercy endures for ever

HYMN

Leader: In the beginning when it was very dark God said, "Let there be light."

All: And there was light

The sign of light, a lighted candle, is placed on the empty table

Leader: In the beginning when it was very quiet, The word was with God.

All: And the word was God

The sign of the Word, the Bible, is opened and placed on the table

Leader: When the time was right God sent His Son.

All: He came among us, and was one of us.

The sign of the Son, a cross, is placed on the table

Leader: Eternal God,
creator of all things, giver of life,
we praise you and we worship you. We thank you that you have
always loved the world you have made: and that however far we stray
from you, your love is always there to welcome us home.

Let us confess our sin:

**All: God, our Father,
we have sinned against you
and against one another,
in thought, word and deed;
we have not loved you with all our heart;
we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.
But you have kept faith with us.**

**Have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and restore us to newness of life:
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

Leader: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners to all who turn to Him
He says: "Your sins are forgiven."

All: Thanks be to God

Leader: Let us say together The Lord's Prayer

All: (say the Lord's Prayer)

HYMN

Reading

HYMN

Talk

Prayers: Thanksgiving Intercessions with the response:

Leader: Lord in Your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer

Leader: Lord, when You shared our humanity
You knew the sorrows of our race:
You sensed the clouds of a threatening future.
To our times of darkness and fear bring
the consolation of Your healing presence:
Lord in Your mercy

All: Hear our prayer

Leader: We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

HYMN

**All: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all now and for evermore, Amen.**

Slowly remove the symbols of worship: blow out the candle, close the Bible
Suggestions for hymns and readings to include in your service

Hymns

The old rugged cross
Great is thy faithfulness
Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Rock of ages
What a friend we have in Jesus
Trust and obey
Abide with me
When I survey the wondrous cross
Tell me the stories of Jesus
All things bright and beautiful
Give me joy in my heart
The Lord's my shepherd
Tell me the old, old story
O love that wilt not let me go
Most carols

Scripture Readings

Genesis 1:1-4
Exodus 20:2-17
Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Psalms of trust, praise and confession:
23, 27, 40, 50, 62, 63, 67, 84, 91, 95, 100, 117, 121, 139, 146.
Psalms reflecting our confusion or distress:
42, 55, 69, 71, 86, 88, 131, 142.
Matthew 5:3-12 (Beatitudes)
Luke 1:46-48; 2:29-32; 10:30-37; 15:3-7; 15:8-10; 15:11-24
John 1:1-5; 10:7-11; 14:1-6.

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