

**DEMENTIA**  
**FRIENDLY CHURCH**  
**Resource Pack**

**LOVE YOUR  
NEIGHBOUR**



**PramaFOUNDATION**  
Dignity in later life

# THE DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CHURCH

## Resource Pack

### Introduction

Improving our understanding of dementia and making some small changes can make a real difference for those with dementia and their carers. If we are to love and support someone with dementia a little bit of understanding and some tools can make a huge difference to their life. The purpose of this pack is to provide you with some tools and information that can really help you understand what dementia is and how to make some changes that can really help. The tools aren't prescriptive i.e. "you do them and you're dementia friendly" but rather designed to help you form a dementia friendly church which fits within your particular context.



This pack has been put together as part of a strategic approach to help develop Dementia Friendly Churches across the UK by the PramaFOUNDATION, a leading Christian Charity working with older people and those with dementia, tackling loneliness and isolation. It has been compiled following a period of research to gather some of the best tools and information available, using our experience of working with people with dementia and their carers, input from the leaders of the memory lane groups we run and our care support workers and with input from both our Dementia Friends and Dementia Champions. As the tools were developed we began a pilot within local churches across Dorset to refine and develop the tools to ensure that they are deliverable in every denomination and church context.

#### WHY DO WE NEED DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CHURCH?

"There are 850,000 people with dementia in the UK, with numbers set to rise to over 1 million by 2025. This is expected to soar to 2 million by 2051.

225,000 will develop dementia this year, that's one person every three minutes.

1 in 6 people over the age of 80 have dementia.

70 per cent of people in care homes have dementia or severe memory problems.

This means that the Church, whatever its context or denomination, is going to see more and more cases of people in their congregations developing this illness. As vicars/pastors/ministers/leaders/pastoral care teams you will come into contact with those with dementia in your congregations or as you visit local care homes. We want to ensure that you have the tools and knowledge to continue to support and love those with Dementia. This will ensure that the church can provide a safe haven and ensure that the person with Dementia does not feel increasingly lonely or isolated from their faith community. We want to ensure that every church is prepared, has the understanding and the tools to continue to share the love of God with those with dementia.

# THE DEMENTIA FRIENDLY CHURCH

## Resource Pack cont.

PramaFOUNDATION know that there have been numerous local examples across the UK where churches have developed innovative and compassionate approaches to tackling some of the issues and supporting people living with dementia. Many projects have begun to look at becoming Dementia Friendly but the approaches have varied and the tools delivered differ. Additionally there has not been any ongoing monitoring or support for these initiatives and therefore no measure to ensure that where good works were initially started that they have carried on.

This pack has been developed through researching of existing tools in use across churches where some dementia friendly work has been carried out, participating in a research project with Bournemouth University, when looking at environments, developing with permission some leading work carried out for Alzheimer's Australia by a team led by Professor Richard Fleming and Kirsty A. Bennett and a team of people from the University of Wollongong, people with dementia, their carers, town planners, architects, graphics designers, psychologist, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and community development officers.

Our aim is to provide some recognised quality tools that can be used alongside good practices that may already be happening in local churches to significantly improve the varied experiences that people with dementia and their carers encounter when attending the local church.

As you read this Resource Pack through why don't you:

### REFLECT

How would a person with Dementia find your church. Welcoming, Supportive, Loving, Accommodating?

### REVIEW

What do you currently do for people with dementia. Those in your congregation or those you visit in local care homes or community. Have you thought about whether what you are doing is relevant? Are you excluding anyone as the result of their illness?

### EXPLORE

Is there more you could do? Are there people in your congregation who have a passion for the elderly who could take this forward? Do you have a vision for the elderly or those who have dementia? Why not get some Dementia Friends trained in your congregation?

### DEVELOP

Plans to improve what you do and changes you can make to your services, buildings and groups so that they are more accessible to the person with Dementia. Could you set up Dementia Friendly Services or work with other churches in your area to deliver a Dementia Friendly church network.

# Dementia Friendly Church

The church has many roles in a person's life but most of all it is the place where a person with dementia should feel welcome, loved, supported and still be able to come to connect with God and the family of God. We think that in order to achieve a Dementia Friendly Church that there are four key areas that need to be equally focussed on.

- **The Person with Dementia**
- **The Carer's Support**
- **The Church Building Environment**
- **The Services, Groups and Pastoral Care in the Church**

Disabilities are often catered for in church through adapting buildings, but being Dementia Friendly means that the focus has to be much broader. Capability expectations need to be changed and how a person with Dementia is approached and dealt with can have a real impact on them, their families and carers.

Dementia is sometimes a long journey but it is important that those who develop this disease can still feel part of the church community for as long as is possible. Often a person's value is built on their involvement and position within their church family and to take this away can be like taking away part of a person's life.

A person with Dementia cannot always do it for themselves, but with support, love and understanding there is no reason why a person with Dementia cannot continue to be a real part of your church community.

A Dementia Friendly Church is about how you support a person with dementia and help them to worship in spite of any cognitive impairments they have.

## WHAT IS DEMENTIA

“The word ‘dementia’ describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. These changes are often small to start with, but for someone with dementia they have become severe enough to affect daily life. A person with dementia may also experience changes in their mood or behaviour.

Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease or a series of strokes. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, but not the only one.

The specific symptoms that someone with dementia experiences will depend on the parts of the brain that are damaged and the disease that is causing the dementia.”

*Alzheimers Society*



*A Dementia Friendly Church will always be open to what people with dementia have to offer, look at their strengths and abilities, then find ways to support and encourage the use of these gifts so that they can still participate in the community that is the body of Christ.*

## AUDREY'S STORY

(this is a true story used with the permission of Audrey's family)

Audrey had served her local church for over 40 years. Throughout her career at a large computer company she was an active member of the church; she was for a time the Treasurer, helped to raise funds for the buildings development and improvement and after she retired she helped more practically. Audrey loved to cook and she was always found in the kitchen. On a Sunday she would make cakes to go with coffee after the service every week, she set up a midweek coffee group and Sunday lunches for the lonely and homeless. Audrey loved her church family and worked tirelessly to support it and help it to reach out. In 2015 she started to get a bit more forgetful and it was not long afterwards that she was diagnosed with early onset of Dementia. This has rapidly progressed. Unfortunately the church Audrey attended did not understand Dementia and quite rapidly began to remove her from the kitchen duties she loved and eventually even excluded her from the coffee mornings she set up as they thought it would be too much for her or too distracting for others; they said:-

*"It was time for Audrey to receive from the church rather than give"*

So often actions done with good intentions in mind result in hurt, isolation and the taking away of one of the few things that in Audrey's case were still giving her value as a person.

Eventually Audrey could not attend the church due to her illness and slowly the Clergy visits and Pastoral care stopped. Audrey and her family were devastated, the very place where Audrey found her value and had her friends had been taken from her.



### This needn't have happened!

With a little bit of training and knowledge Audrey could have been supported far longer in her church family. She could have stayed helping on coffees and in the kitchen with assistance and understanding. Eventually Audrey had a full time carer so could still have attended the coffee mornings and the Sunday lunches she had set up and loved with minimal adjustment. With a little flexibility she could have attended on Sundays for far longer and with some basic training her pastoral care and support could still have been there today and she could have continued to be connected into her church family.

Dementia Friendly Church is about loving and supporting people like Audrey.

# So What is Dementia Friendly?

## Definition

“Dementia-friendly communities are geographic areas where people with dementia are understood, respected and supported, and confident they can contribute to community life. In a dementia-friendly community people are aware of and understand dementia, and people with dementia feel included and involved, and have choice and control over their day-to-day lives. A dementia-friendly community is made up of individuals, businesses, organizations, services, and faith communities that support the needs of people with dementia.

The aim of dementia-friendly communities is to improve the quality of life for people with dementia wherever they live. In local communities, it is evident that small changes are making a real difference“

*PAS 1365:2015 BSI / Alzheimer's Society*

The tools that the PramaFOUNDATION have developed look at helping churches to work toward recognition by the Alzheimer's Society as Dementia-Friendly Communities by providing training, awareness, action planning and support that has been specifically developed for use within a church context.

Always Remember that a person with Dementia is a vulnerable adult and if you have any concerns always discuss this with your Church Safeguarding Officer

## The foundation criteria for dementia-friendly communities' recognition process

The Alzheimer's Society has developed a national recognition process for dementia-friendly communities to show that the community in question has committed to becoming dementia-friendly. Once a community has registered with the process, they may demonstrate how they meet the foundation criteria for 'working to become dementia-friendly' by:

- 1) ensuring the right local structure is in place to maintain a sustainable dementia-friendly community.
- 2) identifying a person to take responsibility for driving forward the work to support a community to become dementia-friendly.
- 3) having a plan in place to raise awareness about dementia in key organizations and businesses within the community that support people with dementia.
- 4) developing a strong voice for people with dementia living in communities.
- 5) raising the profile of the work to increase reach and awareness to different groups in the community.
- 6) focusing plans on a number of key areas that have been identified locally; and having in place a plan or system to update the progress of your community.

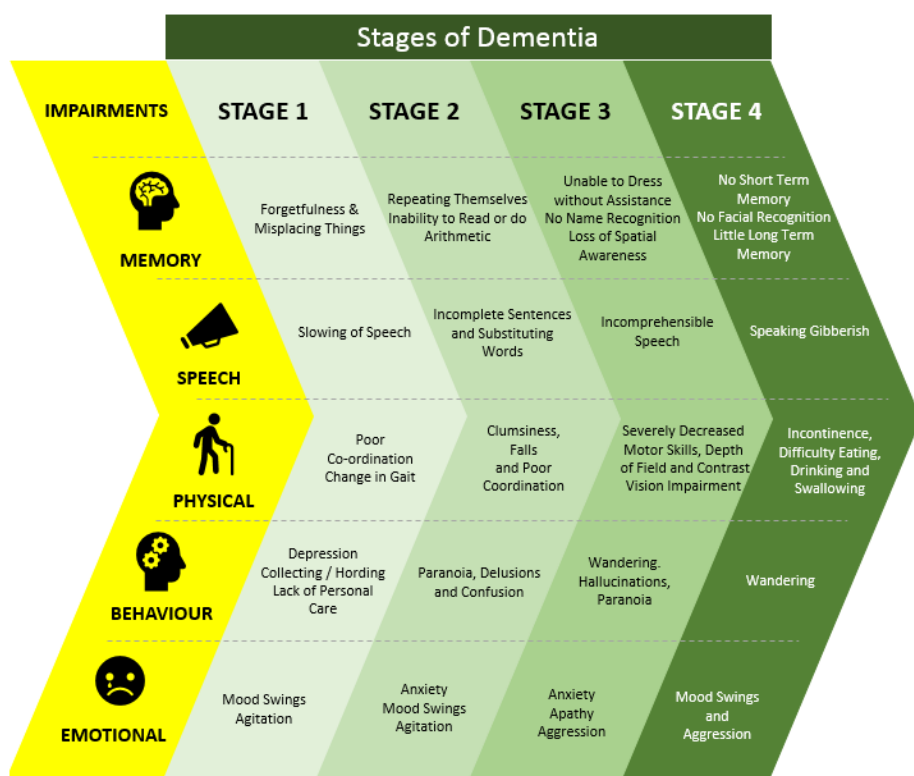
*PAS 1365:2015 BSI / Alzheimer's Society*

# What do I need to know about Dementia?

There are different types of dementia and they tend to affect people differently, especially in the early stages. Most importantly though for a church leader to know is that how people respond to the person with dementia and their environment has a massive impact on them and regardless of whether or not they remember **what** you do, they will know **how** they felt.

A person with dementia will have cognitive symptoms (to do with thinking or memory) and these are often seen with problems in the following ways:

- day-to-day memory – for example, difficulty recalling events that happened recently,
- concentrating, planning or organising – for example, difficulties making decisions, solving problems or carrying out a sequence of tasks (such as cooking a meal),
- Language - for example, difficulties following a conversation or finding the right word for something,
- visuospatial skills – for example, problems judging distances (such as on stairs) and seeing objects in three dimensions,
- orientation – for example, losing track of the day or date, or becoming confused about where they are
- changes in their mood - for example, they may become frustrated or irritable, apathetic or withdrawn, anxious, easily upset or unusually sad.



- visual hallucinations or strongly believing things that are not true (delusions).

People with dementia are likely to have other sensory impairments (such as sight or hearing problems) this can make it harder to communicate with them. If someone is not able to express themselves properly, they can lose confidence, feel anxious, depressed or withdrawn. They may also behave in ways others find odd,

because they are trying to communicate what they can no longer say with words.

Often a sign that a person's language is being affected would be that they can't find the right words. They may use a related word (e.g. 'book' for 'newspaper'), use substitutes for words

# Communicating with someone with dementia

## Advice from the Alzheimer's Society

### Before you speak

- Make sure you're in a good place to talk - quiet, with good lighting and without too many distractions (e.g. no radio or TV on in the background).
- Get the person's full attention before you start.
- Position yourself where the person can see you as clearly as possible (e.g. with your face well-lit) and try to be on the same level as the person, rather than standing over them.
- Sit close to the person (although not so close you are in their personal space) and make eye contact.
- Make sure your body language is open and relaxed.
- Have enough time to spend with the person. If you feel rushed or stressed, take some time to calm down.
- Think about what you are going to talk about. It may be useful to have an idea for a particular topic ready. You can also use the person's environment to stimulate topics.

**TIP—Make sure any of the person's other needs are met before you start (e.g. they're not hungry, thirsty, need the bathroom or in pain).**



### How to speak

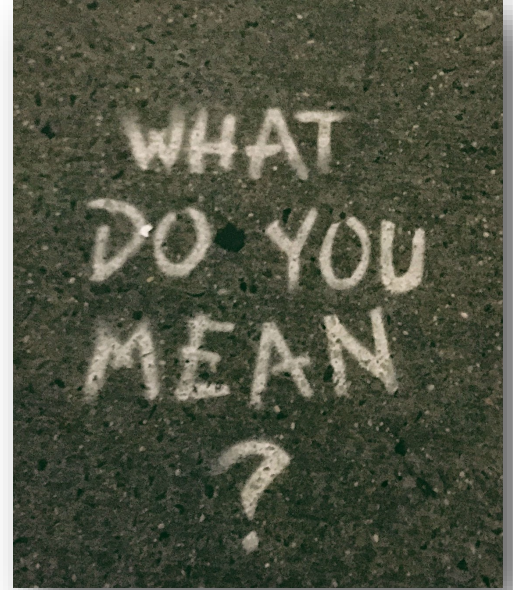
- Speak clearly and calmly.
- Speak at a slightly slower pace, and allow time between sentences for the person to process the information and respond. This might seem like an uncomfortable pause to you, but it is important for helping the person to communicate.
- Avoid speaking sharply or raising your voice.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- Try to communicate with the person in a conversational way, not question after question (it can feel like an interrogation).
- Don't talk about the person as if they are not there or talk to them as you would to a young child - be patient and have respect for them.
- Try to laugh together about misunderstandings and mistakes - it can help. Humour can help to bring you closer together, and may relieve the pressure. However, be sensitive to the person and don't laugh at them.



# Communicating with someone with dementia cont.

## WHAT TO SAY

- Try to avoid asking too many questions, or complicated questions. People with dementia can become frustrated or withdrawn if they can't find the answer.
- Try to stick to one idea at a time. Giving someone a choice is important, but too many options can be confusing and frustrating.
- If the person is finding it hard to understand, consider breaking down what you're saying into smaller chunks so that it is more manageable.
- Ask questions one at a time, and phrase them in a way that allows for a 'yes' or 'no' answer (e.g. rather than asking someone what they would like to do, ask if they would like to go for a walk) or in a way that gives the person a choice (e.g. 'would you like tea or coffee?').
- Rephrase rather than repeat, if the person doesn't understand what you're saying. Use non-verbal communication to help (e.g. pointing at a picture of someone you are talking about).



If the person becomes tired easily, it may be better to opt for short, regular conversations. As dementia progresses, the person may become confused about what is true and not true. If the person says something you know is not true, try to find ways of steering the conversation around the subject and look for the meaning behind what they are saying, rather than contradicting them directly. For example, if they are saying they need to go to work is it because they want to feel useful, or find a way of being involved and contributing? Could it be that they are not stimulated enough?

## LISTENING

- Listen carefully to what the person is saying, and offer encouragement.
- If you haven't understood fully, rephrase what you have understood and check to see if you are right. The person's reaction and body language can be a good indicator of what they've understood and how they feel.
- If the person with dementia has difficulty finding the right word or finishing a sentence, ask them to explain it in a different way. Listen out for clues. Also pay attention to their body language. The expression on their face and the way they hold themselves can give you clear signals about how they are feeling.



**TIP-** If a person is feeling sad, let them express their feelings. Do not dismiss a person's worries - sometimes the best thing to do is just listen, and show that you're there.

# Communicating with someone with dementia cont.

## BODY LANGUAGE AND PHYSICAL CONTACT

- Non-verbal communication is very important for people with dementia, and as their condition progresses it will become one of the main ways the person communicates. You should learn to recognise what a person is communicating through their body language and support them to remain engaged and contribute to their quality of life.
- A person with dementia will be able to read your body language. Sudden movements or a tense facial expression may cause upset or distress, and can make communication more difficult.
- Make sure that your body language and facial expression match what you are saying.
- Never stand too close to someone or stand over them to communicate - it can feel

### Always Remember

Be Gentle

Be Patient

Be Kind

Treat the person with Dementia as a member of your family and if you have to repeat yourself don't worry about it.



*Don't underestimate the reassurance you can give by holding the person's hand or putting your arm around them, if it feels appropriate.*



# Communication Tips

## Be Empathetic

The important thing to remember when you are talking to someone with dementia is that whatever they say, whether you think it is true or not, that to them it is their reality. Listen to their story with compassion and respect, don't try and correct them. Stay present in what is real at that moment for the person. We must enter their reality, and by truly listening, we might learn something from their vast storehouse of experiences.

## Be Affirming

We each have a story to tell and this is what makes us who we are. There are people who have influenced us, we have families, friends, and various people we have met throughout our lives.

Each life has its own personal history of joys or trials, love, hurts or sorrows. We have or had work lives, lived in different places. We have all had that special person or achieved that unique thing that brings value to our lives. There are sounds, smells, tastes, sights textures that all bring forth memories.

***All of these things mould us into who we are and give us a unique story to tell.***



As dementia progresses some of these memories begin to disappear and the very things that make that person who they are get lost or forgotten.

It is really important that you remember that you're with an individual who has had a full life and at times those things may come back or become their present reality.

The more you know about the person the more affirming you can be and really connect with them, helping to bring a feeling of value, love, acceptance and reassurance to them.

# Spiritual Support

## DEMENTIA FRIEND VOLUNTEER PASTORAL TEAM

This is by far the best way to support a person with dementia in your church. If you have a small team of people who know the person with dementia and understand what dementia is and how to work with them, the person is far more likely to feel loved, engaged and supported. It is important to stress though that for a church to be truly dementia friendly it is everybody's responsibility to help to support the person with dementia so that they feel confident in any church event. If people across the community are loving and understanding this also has a massively positive impact on their carer.

The Dementia Friend volunteers should be DBS checked in line with your current Safeguarding policies.

This team could help by taking some of the responsibility for supporting the person with dementia from the moment they arrive and during the service. This really helps the carer relinquish some of their responsibilities for a while and help them also to find some space for their own spiritual journey and worship. The sole carer is often really impacted and if we can support them to at least get some space to worship this is the church's love in action.

The Dementia Friend volunteers could be ready to take the person with dementia out of the service to a quieter area if everything is getting too much, be someone the carer can share their concerns with and a real support to both carer and person with dementia. The person with dementia may only be able to engage a little but it is important that they are given the opportunity to worship.



*Dementia should not become a barrier to worshipping God.*

## Build Spiritual Life

Often when a Christian first receives a diagnosis of dementia one of their worries will I remember God? We can reassure them that regardless of whether or not they remember God, He will always remember and love them. However, there are a number of practical things that we can do to help them remember Him for as long as is possible. This does take an investment in time and if you develop a **Dementia Friend Volunteer Pastoral Team** (more information on the next page) this is a great opportunity to share the load and add real value and acceptance to the person with dementia's life.

First and foremost encouraging and supporting the person in their personal prayer life and Bible study is essential. This goes beyond just relying on existing House Groups or Older Peoples Groups. You want to really help the individual to spend some time in God's presence and due to the nature of dementia impacting cognitive ability and often lower attention span this can mean that you may have to find some innovative ways to keep them engaged.

Depending on the type of dementia that they have and the stage that it is at you may have to try various things to find something that they can connect and engage with.

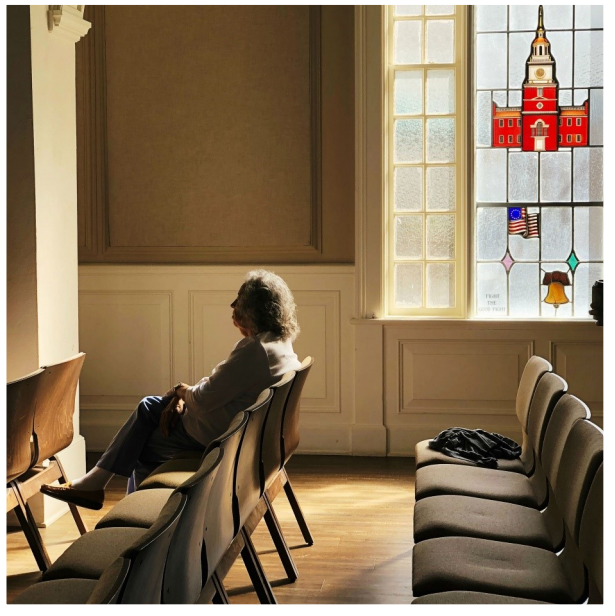
On the next page we have some suggestions that you may find helpful and some which are adapted from our work in Memory Lane Cafés:

Whatever happens **keep in touch.**

Someone needs to visit them, preferably someone who has known them for a long time, who is trusted and the person feels at ease with.

There is a very real danger that a person with dementia eventually becomes very lonely and isolated.

# Spiritual Support



Spend some time helping the person to put together a memory box with things that will remind them of their faith, perhaps through favourite Bible stories or hymns. You could try telling the story of why the item is there as the object is placed in or unpacked from the box.

Put a book together of their favourite songs and hymns and regularly sing them.

Even those in late stage dementia can surprise us with their prayers, but they need to be given the opportunity. Maybe when visiting them record their prayers on a smart phone and play them in your services. You could even video them if you have the technology to play it back in your service. This can help to keep them in peoples thoughts and prayers at church and let them feel still connected with their church family.

If you record your services maybe take an edited shortened version and play it to them at home.

You can also help them maintain links with worship when they are no longer able to come to church by having a simple service in their home (see some suggestions later in this pack), or perhaps just by singing a favourite hymn.

Use materials like 'Being with God' from the Scripture Union.

## Practical Things You Can Do to Prevent Isolation

Make a room available in the church where the person with dementia can go if they become restless during a service or a meeting. Have in this room some books, photographs, items of memorabilia that might capture their interest. Maybe have a way of playing hymns or music, recorded Bible stories, a cross or a candle, reminders of their faith and belief. The person could be supported in this room by a Dementia Friend volunteer or their carer.

Support the person with a Volunteer Dementia Friend who can set a regular time each week to visit and encourage prayer and bible study. Maybe follow a simple devotional. Recognising that this will become harder but if you start the process you can begin to write together some set prayers that you can learn together and note some favourite bible stories that you can continue to use even as it becomes more difficult. Even if you just say the Lords prayer together.

# Spiritual Support

## START A NEW MINISTRY

A Dementia Friendly church is already doing something new. It is putting the person with dementia at the centre in some of its thinking and bringing the support and love of God to people who often become marginalised, lonely and isolated. This can be a real witness to the families and carers of those who have dementia. We will cover Dementia Friendly Services later.

Why not take this a stage further and start specific groups to help support those with dementia maybe:

### Memory Cafe

A group run weekly for people with dementia and their carers. Starts with tea, coffee and biscuits, after which the carers can move into another room or area to talk and share experiences and problems.

Meanwhile those with dementia can stay together in a facilitated environment where they can enjoy a couple of hours reminiscing and sharing stories of life in years gone by, often with much laughter.

This can be run by an external charity or you could set a group up yourself. A Memory Lane Café is lead by a facilitator who will have planned these sessions to look back at things like holidays, Easter, winter, childhood, gardening, events, jobs, colours etc. They will have created some memory box items—so if its gardening maybe have a trowel, some gardening gloves, some herbs which smell to pass around, maybe even get them to plant some seeds in pots. There maybe drawing or colouring activities, catch games or other things to stimulate senses and generate discussion. The idea is to make the session fun, interactive, reminiscent and to use as many senses as you can.

PramaFOUNDATION would be happy to help give you guidance and training if you would like to set up a Memory Lane Café at your church.



# Dementia Friendly Church Buildings

## Introduction

When a lot of people think church they think church building. We know that this is not the true definition of church, as church is the people of God. However, where the church meet is a building and we need to make sure that these are as accessible as possible, for all people. Our Building Assessment Tool has been developed using a world class tool which enables us to not only look at the building, develop and Action Plan to improve it but also to benchmark your building against similar ones.

These days a church building can vary from a Cathedral, Grade 1/2 Listed building to a School Hall or even a Theatre. It is absolutely essential if we are to welcome people with Dementia that these buildings are safe and accessible.

We have developed a building Environment Assessment tool with permission, using a tool that Professor Richard Fleming and Kirsty A. Bennett originally developed under the auspices of Alzheimer's Australia. The original tool was put together by a team of people from the University of Wollongong, Kiama Council, individuals living with dementia and their carers. The testing and refinement of the original tool was supported by a grant from the *Dementia Collaborative Research Centre - Assessment and Better Care* based in the University of New South Wales. This tool has been tailored for church environments.

More information about a building audit and this tool can be found in our:

Dementia Friendly Church Environment Assessment Tool booklet.

*“It has been argued that designing an environment for people with dementia will result in a well designed environment for all”*

*Marshall 2001*

## How buildings can help

As the main dementia symptoms begin to affect cognitive abilities there are some really simple things that you can do within your buildings to make them more accessible. From ensuring they are well lit, well sign posted to thinking about the contrast of floor coverings and colours.

A full building assessment looks at eight different areas from the perspective of the person with dementia:

- Safety
- Seeing and Being Seen
- Familiarity
- Size of Spaces
- Variety of Spaces
- Movement and Engagement
- Stimulus Reduction and
- Stimulus Enhancement

Without going into full detail the following pointers are some of the key areas to think about when looking at your building.

# Dementia Friendly Church

## Buildings cont.

### KEY THINGS TO BE AWARE OF

#### Vision

As we age our eyes degenerate. What this means is that our vision may become hazy, we may develop trouble reading, colours could appear less vivid leading to perception, depth of field or definition problems, we may have problems recognising people's faces, and as the front of our eyes start to become less clear they begin to yellow. Older people therefore need much more light.

For people with dementia, this problem is exaggerated, 3D perception can be impacted and as some of the natural brain processes that help us compensate may be impacted. This means that where a person with dementia may already be a bit unsure or confused, poor visibility has a far greater impact on their life. Where someone without dementia may switch on a light, move to a brighter spot, or put on some glasses. With dementia their cognitive function may cause them to sit still, feel anxious and distressed because they just can't see. Ensuring that your buildings are well lit helps to negate some of these problems.

Large print hymn books, song sheets and Bibles will help and it may be appropriate to consider having a reading lamp near where the person with dementia is going to sit.

Painting walls white or bright neutral colours helps to reflect light.

Make sure that if windows have curtains that they can be pushed right back to let in as much light as possible.

Keep windows clear and unobstructed

Put in light bulbs that are as bright as your fittings will allow.



#### Mobility

Often a person with dementia has a number of mobility issues as their motor skills are impacted by the disease. In fact one of the most common reasons for a person with dementia being admitted to hospital is falling over. We need to, wherever possible, ensure that access to our buildings is level and that surface changes are clearly defined. It is recognised that in many churches changing floor surfaces or levels is not an option or not easily changed. However, if you are able to make changes, make the floor surfaces smooth, level, or a low gradient when building access ramps, and matt coloured.

All the advice that is available to you on disabled access should be followed, but in addition you need to pay close attention to contrasting colours between rooms, and contrasting threshold strips, and patterns on vinyl that may be misinterpreted by a person with depth perception problems.

Additionally a person with dementia may see a swirly patterned carpet as containing snakes, black door mats as holes or shiny surfaces as water.



# Dementia Friendly Church Buildings cont.

## Toilets / Signage

Wayfinding in a church building can be a real problem for a person with Dementia. It is really important that you review the signage in your building. How easy is it to get to the main worship space, any hall where refreshments are served after a service, the exit and really importantly the toilets?

As with some older people some with dementia do suffer from incontinence. This problem can be exaggerated if they have difficulty in finding the toilet in time. It is really important that wherever you are in your church building it is easy to see a sign that points you towards a toilet.

Make these signs bold and unambiguous. Boldly write the word "toilet" on the door. Best practice also suggests that the signage should be pictorial showing a clear image of a toilet.

The location of the signs should also be at a height that an older person will see. As a guideline signs should be below shoulder height as an older person tends not to look up as much as a younger person and their peripheral vision may not be as good.

Some studies have suggested that when a person with Dementia navigates a building they do so looking for signpost/landmarks particularly at decision point in their journey. Therefore, think about signage at these points especially. As a person with dementia becomes familiar with a building they may navigate at a T-junction corridor by thinking of heading towards the 'Big Yellow Cross on the wall' rather than the Stained glass window'. If we place landmark items visible at decision points in a journey this may help people with Dementia. Often in Care Homes they use memory boxes on the walls (boxes with historical things of interest (old postcards of the seafront, stick of rock) or they use big colourful pictures of things like sunflowers.

Ideally make the door a bright contrasting colour so it can be easily found. The locks on the door should be able to be opened from the outside in case of falls.

Choose traditional cross head taps, and familiar classic toilet furnishings that people remember from earlier days. People with dementia will be better able to take care of their own needs if everything looks familiar. Make sure there are grab rails in contrasting colours, and if you think people are using the toilet roll dispenser for support when they are getting up, remove it and place a grab rail in its place. If the toilet is big enough for a carer to go in to assist, that can help.



**PrimaFOUNDATION can arrange to carry out a full detailed building audit which will cover all of these aspects and provide you with a report and action plan on your building and benchmark your building against similar church buildings.**

# Dementia Friendly Services

## Making a Service Dementia Friendly

Keep the service short, maybe a maximum of twenty minutes and choose familiar hymns and prayers.

It might even be possible to hold this service before the usual service or as a separate midweek service. This is not to say that someone with dementia is not welcome at the main services, in fact that would be wrong, but rather that there is a service option if someone with dementia really struggles with the normal service.

There is no reason why the service theme does not track with the main service and this should help reduce the amount of preparation for the service leader.

When preparing for the service it may help those attending if you produce service sheets which have the order of service in, the hymns all in large print. It also may help if there is some pictorial content to guide participation.



Hymn — All Things Bright and Beautiful

Remember to Print Words in a large font



Prayer



Sermon—The Love of God

Reading—1 Corinthians 13:4-8



Coffee in the Church Lounge

If possible always try and follow the service with a time of fellowship run by a small team of Dementia Friends trained volunteers where the carers could build their own support groups and friendships.

If you use a set liturgical style stick with this. The goal is to keep the services feel familiar but shorter.

You will see in the suggested structure that hymns play quite a large part in the suggested structure. This is because current thinking is that singing is good for the brain.

*“The power of music, especially singing, to unlock memories and kickstart the grey matter is an increasingly key feature of dementia care. It seems to reach parts of the damaged brain in ways other forms of communication cannot.*

*‘We tend to remain contactable as musical beings on some level right up to the very end of life,’ says Professor Paul Robertson, a concert violinist and academic who has made a study of music in dementia care“ AgeUK*

# Dementia Friendly Services cont.

## Inclusion in Normal Services

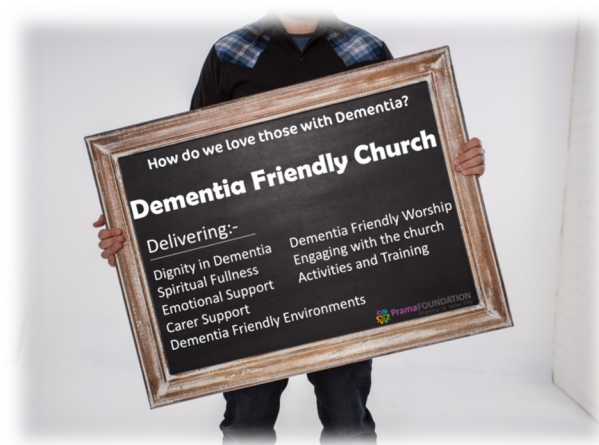
There are a number of things that you need to keep in mind when someone with Dementia is in one of your services. They may get agitated easily, may have a tendency to want to get up and wander around, may be vocal.

By far the best way to ensure that someone with Dementia and their carer feels welcome is to ensure that you have a structure in place to support this. A small pastoral team of Dementia Friend-trained people who are easily identified, even if just by them wearing the Dementia Friend badge, will really help. If there is some disruption don't make a big thing of it but indicate if necessary for someone who is Dementia Friend trained to go and help. This will help support the carer making them feel welcome and help the person with Dementia too. It is also worth thinking about having a quiet space where someone with Dementia can go if they are beginning to feel overwhelmed and encourage someone from the Dementia Friend Pastoral Team to help. Make sure that the church is well lit and that there are large print service sheets and hymn books available.

## Preparing for a Specific Dementia Friendly Service

### Before you start

Welcome people with a handshake and smile as they arrive. A good welcome is really important as people with Dementia will often remember how you made them feel afterwards even if they can't remember the service. Look them in the eyes, use their name if you know it, and say something like, "Hello John, it's Jeannette, the vicar/pastor".



**Make sure carers know you understand Dementia and that if anything unusual happens you will work around any unusual sounds, interruptions, or wandering.**

People with dementia are often more spontaneous. This means that they may seem disruptive and may not wait to ask a question or make a comment. Agree with the emotion expressed – don't correct them. Politely thank them, acknowledge what they have said and continue.

If the person is there with their carer encourage them to sit together, if not maybe support them with a

Dementia Friend from your congregation to help guide them through the service. If you kneel, sit or stand, it's likely they'll follow your lead.

Make sure the venue is well lit and safe. People with dementia may have visual, balance and mobility difficulties that often go unrecognised.

# Dementia Friendly Services cont.

## Structuring a Service

### Start with a clear welcome

- which says good morning/afternoon/evening.
- where you are (e.g. St XYZ Church, Southgate).
- who you are : “I’m Jenny/Mike or Father Mike, Pastor Jenny, Reverend Jenny/Mike” (how you would normally like to be referred to in your church).
- Why you’ve gathered.
- A familiar opening response maybe used if that is contextually relevant or a verse of scripture.



**Opening Prayer of Thanksgiving** - Introduce this clearly that you are about to pray maybe with the words “shall we bow our heads in prayer” so that those present know it’s a time of prayer.

**Suitable Hymn** - Introduce this and give clear direction if you want people to stand and sing. This needs to be a traditional and familiar hymn (see suggested hymns). If it is a hymn with a chorus it maybe just enough to do one verse and repeat the chorus. If it can be matched to the theme of the service that would also be good.

**A Short Prayer of Intercession** - Again introduce this clearly, saying that you are about to pray. Keep this short and simple, maybe thanks for bringing you all together, for family etc. or maybe if it is relevant in your church context the Collect for the day.

**Followed by The Lords Prayer** - it may be worth saying this in its traditional form as this is likely to be more familiar.

**Hymn**—Introduce this.

**Reading from Scripture** - Try and keep to just one reading relevant to the service theme as multiple readings jumping around the bible could be confusing to a person with dementia.

**A Short Message /Thought/Word** - Try and keep this to no longer than about 5-7 minutes. Keep the message to a single clear point. Reflection with memories (a holiday to the beach). Use sensory illustrations (herbs that smell, sand that’s rough, water, candles for light etc.).

**Finish with a Prayer**

**Last Hymn**

**Simple Dismissal** “a blessing or the Grace”.

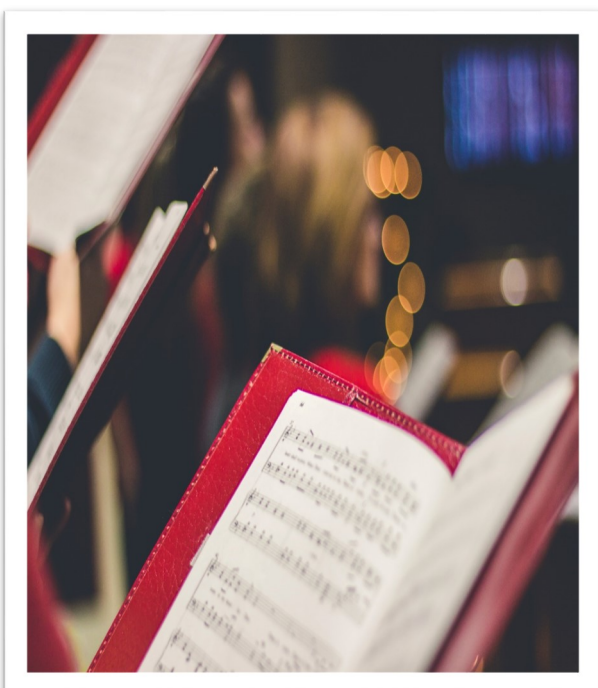
At the end reach out to any carers present and ask people for feedback. Try and have a short time of fellowship over coffee.

# Dementia Friendly Services cont.

## Suggested Hymns

Obviously there are many hymns and songs that you can use. The only real guiding point is to think about who will be singing them. Make them familiar hymns with well known tunes. As mentioned earlier in this guide a person with Dementia often really enjoys singing and if the tune is well known they may participate in this part of the service even if they don't seem to be engaging with the rest.

Abide with me  
All things bright and beautiful  
Amazing Grace  
And can it be  
At the Name of Jesus  
Be Thou My Vision  
Blessed assurance  
Dear Lord and Father of mankind  
Give me joy in my heart  
Great is thy faithfulness  
Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer  
Here I Am, Lord (I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky)  
How great thou art  
Immortal, Invisible, God only wise  
Jerusalem  
Just as I am  
Lord of the dance



Love divine, all loves excelling  
Morning has broken  
Now thank we all our God  
O God, our help in ages past  
O love that wilt not let me go  
O when the saints  
Praise my soul the King of heaven  
Rock of ages  
Tell out my soul  
The Lord's my shepherd  
The old rugged cross  
There is a green hill  
Thine be the glory  
We plough the fields and scatter  
What a friend we have in Jesus  
When I survey the wondrous cross  
Ye servants of God

# Dementia Friendly Church

## Notes



Remember that to develop a Dementia Friendly Service you are attempting to deliver a style of worship service that those with dementia can engage with, and even take part in. As you do this you need to take into account that the person with dementia may have difficulty processing verbal communication, will have short term memory loss, low concentration spans, and anything that is too wordy or too long they are likely to struggle with.

A Dementia Friendly Service does not have to take place in your church building. They could be held in local Care Homes, Day Centres or in the Church Hall. The only thing to note if you are holding a service in an unfamiliar building is that it may be worth trying to set up something that is familiar in the room. A table set up as the Lord's Table, with a white cloth on, a cross and maybe the elements if you are planning to celebrate communion, is always a good idea. This can help to denote in the mind of the person with dementia "church".



Work out what works in your context and with the people that you draw to your services. This may be a trial and error process and you will want to try and create a standard service pattern that is familiar to your denomination. This may seem challenging at first but when you get this right it is very rewarding for both you, the person with dementia and their carer.

**Remember it doesn't matter if the person with dementia forgets everything you say, who you are, or you need to repeat something several times this is a service to give them an opportunity to come before God and to know that they are welcome, accepted and loved.**

# About Prama Foundation

## *Dignity in Later Life*

The Prama Foundation is a leading Christian charitable foundation located in the South West of England. Formed in 1982, Prama came about thanks to the late Dr. Chris Moran who launched Pramacare in 1982, initially to offer help and support to recently discharged hospital patients. Help was provided at that time from a handful of local church volunteers. Since then our volunteer family has grown, and we now employ nearly 300 staff and, whilst we still deliver domiciliary care across Dorset, we now do so much more:

- We act as a voice for issues impacting older people and we stand up for the Human Rights of Older people
- We are helping to deliver Dementia Friendly Communities and Dementia Friendly Churches
- We run Memory Lane groups for those with Dementia or who are struggling with their memory
- We offer many clubs tackling loneliness and isolation for older people
- We deliver a Brain Injury support service

### **Our Vision**

***A world where no-one is unfairly disadvantaged or excluded, because of age or infirmity, and where every person can enjoy life as they age***

### **Our Mission**

**As a Christian Charity we enable those who live with vulnerability**

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