

Dementia Friendly Prayer and Liturgy

Some tips:

- As dementia advances we live very much in the present moment – we find it difficult to deal with complicated thoughts.
- Worship becomes tactile – use things to touch and hold.
- Symbols are particularly important - take care to make the table, etc look special with a white cloth, flowers, large Crucifix, etc. I like to have a service round a table.
- Silence can sometimes be helpful in setting a calming atmosphere.
- Don't persuade someone to come if they are reluctant.
- Make allowances for people who may want to come and go as the service progresses
- As dementia advances, people still retain their memory for familiar prayers and hymns. Even at the end of life when the power of speech is lost, a person may still respond to prayer as well as other prompts.
- Carers have their spiritual needs as well – is there a way in which they can be involved as well ?

A possible structure for a 20 minute service, perhaps in a residential home

- **Introductions and Personal Greetings:** How might we introduce ourselves and participants. Perhaps as we go round the participants we might light a candle to provide 'identity' for each participant. Symbols are very important, particularly as dementia advances.
- **A theme to which we can relate visually:** for example Good Shepherd Sunday. Perhaps a short reading about the Good Shepherd, followed by a suitable hymn. (Tip: consider the use of Powerpoint slides linked to a projector to show suitable images, or the use of an ipad (using a You Tube clip ?) linked to a TV in the room. What might we use for participants to touch and hold ?
- **What are our thoughts and prayers today:** Perhaps ourselves or our families, or something happening in the outside world – this brings us into touch with reality. Affirm and validate each prayer – then perhaps an Our Father and/or Hail Mary followed by a closing prayer.
- **A familiar hymn,** in this case 'The Lords My Shepherd' ? Words can be projected onto a screen if possible
- **And a suitable ending ?** Include particular intentions and perhaps coming events in the week...

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