

## Top ten tips for... *worship services*

Dementia Friendly Churches are inclusive, accessible and community focused. These tips help you create engaging worship services that reflect just one part of church life. Dementia friendly worship celebrates the meaningful and intentional relationships we have with God and the people around us.

### 1. Find the right venue

Traditional church buildings help people with dementia know they are in a worship service, though dementia friendly services can take place anywhere. Find a place that is clean, warm and with accessible toilets. Take time also to prepare the place, thinking about seating and creating a comfortable atmosphere.

### 2. Welcome everybody

People with dementia need to feel they are accepted and are a part of the church they are visiting. Say hello to people with dementia even if you think they cannot remember you. If they seem confused don't be afraid of reminding them who you are. A handshake can also help them feel welcome.

### 3. Keep services short and simple

Shorter services of 30 minutes or less can help people with dementia feel more engaged and avoids loss of concentration. Lots of new information can be confusing so try making the service as simple as possible.

### 4. Have structure with a clear beginning and end

Let people know when the service is starting and ending. It would be helpful to provide an order of service. Try starting the service with a welcome, and ending it with a prayer and dismissal.

### 5. Make it multi-sensory

Appealing to a range of senses such as sight, hearing, touch and smell can help people with dementia participate more fully in the service. Try using visual stimuli such as candles and crosses. Encourage people to use their own creativity through arts including music and painting.

### 6. Use traditional songs

People with dementia usually remember things that occurred earlier in their life. It is a good idea to include some traditional songs and older hymns during the service. You could ask them to name their favourites perhaps by helping them listen to few on CD.

### 7. Use common prayers and liturgy

Commonly used prayers like the Lord's Prayer and the use of liturgy may help people with dementia to follow what is happening and act as a familiar feature during the service.

### 8. Accept different types of behaviour and be flexible

People with dementia may forget where they are and behave in a way that others consider inappropriate such as talking, shouting or walking around during the service. Be accepting and patient with people who have dementia. Encourage them to stay in the service but be flexible and let them to go to a quiet space or leave if they want to.

### 9. Develop key contacts

Identify members of the church who have a heart for people with dementia and can be a point of contact during the service. Key contacts in the church are useful for enabling people with dementia to build relationships and contribute to the church's wider mission.

### 10. Make worship participative and inclusive of all

People with dementia are more likely to benefit from the service if they can actively take part in it. Choose worship activities where people can talk and engage with others, and with God.

## Ten top tips for... *prayer*

Dementia Friendly Churches are inclusive, accessible and community focused. These tips guide you in how to pray with and for people with dementia and their carers. Dementia friendly prayer is attentive and faith filled, enabling everyone to actively participate in the prayer life of the church.

### 1. Pray in a quiet and safe place

A calm and peaceful setting can help people with dementia focus on prayer. Also be aware of the church's safeguarding policy. This is to ensure that people with dementia are kept safe, treated with respect and not put in a situation that would be a risk.

### 2. Keep the prayers short and simple

Make prayers easy to follow by using short sentences and simple language.

### 3. Use common prayers like the Lord's Prayer

People with dementia are more likely to remember things from their past and childhood, so try to use common prayers that are more likely to be familiar.

### 4. Explain to the person what you are doing

People with dementia may find it helpful to have someone pray with them. Introduce yourself and ask the person what they would like to pray about. Then, tell the person when you start and finish praying with them.

### 5. Offer people with dementia time for individual prayer

People with dementia may feel more comfortable at a time of one-to-one prayer after a church service. People may not feel confident or able to come to the front for prayer, if you are offering prayer at the end of the service you may want to approach people instead.

### 6. Write or use set prayers about having dementia

Writing may help people with dementia express their thoughts and feelings. Encourage people with dementia to write down their own prayers or read ones that have already been written.

### 7. Include people with dementia in congregational prayer times

Take the opportunity to ask people with dementia to pray during prayer meetings or church services. They may want to pray specifically for people with dementia or other issues in the church and community.

### 8. Remember to pray for and with carers

Carers play an important part in the lives of people with dementia and may like the opportunity to pray about the challenges they are facing. Remember to offer prayer to carers during times of individual or congregational prayer.

### 9. Regularly pray for people with dementia

Identify a particular day for the church to pray for people with dementia or have dementia as a regular prayer point in church services or prayer meetings. You could also include a person with dementia on a prayer list or in a prayer diary.

### 10. Pray for dementia support services

Support agencies can provide an important resource for people with dementia. Remember to pray for paid for carers and support agencies including day centres, residential homes and dementia care units.

## Ten top tips for... *communication*

Dementia Friendly Churches are inclusive, accessible and community focused. These tips offer simple advice about how to talk and listen to people with dementia. Dementia friendly communication is the basis for the intentional relationships that create the sense of belonging we all need as part of a church community.

### 1. Focus on the person

Remember there is more to a person than the dementia, when talking try to empathise with the person's views and experience, remembering that sincere listening helps to dignify someone.

### 2. Get the person's full attention

Before starting a conversation gain the person's attention and wait until it is directed towards you before talking to them.

### 3. Listen carefully

Don't dismiss what a person with dementia is saying. Take the time to listen carefully so you can better understand how the person is feeling and what they are trying to say.

### 4. Ask simple questions

Asking questions show that you are taking an interest in what someone is saying. Try not to ask too many questions as this might be confusing. Ask one question at a time and wait for the person to answer before going to the next.

### 5. Speak clearly and write simply

Think about what you are going to say. Don't rush the conversation as it can be difficult for people with dementia to follow what is being said. Ensure written communications are of a reasonable print size and avoid inappropriately complex language, maximising the use of images.

### 6. Check if you do not understand

If you cannot understand what someone is saying, just ask the person to repeat it and perhaps seek clarification. You can do this by summarising what the person has said and reflect this back to them.

### 7. Keep calm

Be yourself and don't worry if something goes wrong. Stay calm and try to end the conversation in a relaxed manner. What counts most is your sincere interest in them as a person.

### 8. Read body language

Often people with dementia will use their body to make others know what they are saying. Look closely at their hands and face when they are talking.

### 9. Keep eye contact

Look and direct what you are saying to the person with dementia. When communicating, try to stay on the same physical level for example, if the person is sitting down sit down as well.

### 10. Respect personal space

Try not to stand too close to someone or stand over a person with dementia as this may make them feel uncomfortable.

## Ten top tips for... *buildings*

Dementia Friendly Churches are inclusive, accessible and community focused. These tips combine some of the legal requirements for disability access to buildings along with simple advice about creating an environment that people with dementia can easily navigate.

### 1. Make sure church buildings are well lit

We all make better sense of situations and are less confused when we can see what is happening. This may also help prevent falls or other accidents for people with dementia.

### 2. Make areas comfortable

Keep areas in the building at a warm temperature and provide comfortable seating to create a relaxed environment. Ask people with dementia whether they feel comfortable and what they would like changing.

### 3. Keep toilets clean and accessible

Make sure toilets are clean and accessible for people with dementia. Also have clear directions to the toilets available.

### 4. Have enough space to walk around

In the worship area and others rooms make sure there is enough space for people with dementia to get up and walk around if they become restless.

### 5. Install an induction loop

People with dementia are easily distracted by different sights and sounds. Ensure the building has an induction loop and if people have hearing aids encourage them to switch it to the loop setting. Also make sure the worship leader, pastor or whoever is talking during a service uses a microphone.

### 6. Use notice boards

Include visual information as well as text about the building and church community, you may also want to add photographs of leaders or staff from the church to help with familiarity.

### 7. Clear signage

Use simple images or colour coded signs to indicate different spaces to help a person with dementia find their way through the building, contrasting colours can really help.

### 8. Access to outside space or garden

People find gardens a place to unwind and relax. Find a place that can be made into a garden. Gardening might also be a good activity for people with dementia to do and enjoy.

### 9. Create a space for personal conversations

People with dementia and their carers may want to talk in private, so create space for this.

### 10. Have inclusive spaces

So that people with dementia can feel fully included in the building, avoid separate spaces which prevent exclusion.

## Ten top tips for... *dementia friendly communities*

Dementia Friendly Churches are inclusive, accessible and community focused. These tips offer suggestions about how your whole church can reach beyond its doors to support people with dementia and their carers. Dementia friendly communities are partnerships within the local community committed to improving the quality of life for people with dementia.

### 1. Become Dementia Friends

Encourage as many people as possible in your church to become Dementia Friends by contacting the local Alzheimer's Society to lead a one hour training workshop. The workshop gives an introduction and basic understanding about dementia.

### 2. Join dementia campaigns

Add your voice to local, regional and national campaigns about dementia, this may involve signing petitions, putting up posters or distributing information to the church congregation and community. Join the Alzheimer's Society and local dementia friendly projects that will enable your locality become dementia friendly.

### 3. Recognise and support carers

Often relatives give a lot of support and care to people with dementia. This can sometimes be difficult and challenging. As a church think about what you could do to help to encourage and support carers.

### 4. Develop listeners

Everyone feels better when they are listened to. People with dementia often like to talk and have many stories to share. Taking the time to listen helps people with dementia feel valued. Take a 'listening course' that will help members of the church and community listen to people with dementia.

### 5. Contribute to public meetings and events

A Christian voice can offer a unique perspective on what it means to be dementia friendly. By participating in public meetings and local events the church can lead on promoting access, inclusion and building partnerships in the community.

### 6. Volunteer for dementia friendly activities

Find out if local community organisations that support people with dementia and their carers have volunteer opportunities available. Day centres, care homes or the local Alzheimer's Society or Age UK can benefit from church members giving a few hours a week to help out.

### 7. Organise a memory café

A memory café is a safe and informal space where people with dementia and their carers can spend time together and talk to experienced volunteers about dementia. Consider hosting a memory café at your church and contact local dementia groups to get involved.

### 8. Have a 'Dementia Sunday'

Make one Sunday a special church service that is focused around people with dementia and their carers; this could coincide with National Dementia Awareness week in May. At a main service, there could be a sermon that links the Christian message with dementia and gives an opportunity for people with dementia and their carers to tell their story. The church could also give a special collection to a dementia charity.

### 9. Register with the Dementia Action Alliance

The Dementia Action Alliance is a network of community groups and organisations that aim to bring a positive society wide response to dementia. Join the Dementia Action Alliance and develop an action plan about how your church can become dementia friendly.

### 10. Make your church a dementia friendly community

There is a lot that your church can offer to the local community. Carry out a review of your church to find out what you can do to be more dementia friendly. Livability would love to help you with this or any of the other points above.



For more information about how your church can become more dementia friendly, including access to training and resources visit [www.dementiafriendlychurches.com](http://www.dementiafriendlychurches.com). Call us on 020 7452 2018 or email [joinin@livability.org.uk](mailto:joinin@livability.org.uk). Follow us [@liveitlocally](https://www.instagram.com/liveitlocally)