

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.