

Alzheimer's and Dementia Toolkit

Aging, Dementia, and the Faith Community Continuing the Journey of Friendship

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tinyurl.com/2s3n3c4

Alzheimer's Caring: How Faith Communities Can Serve People with Dementia and Their Families

People are afraid of Alzheimer's. According to surveys, Americans are more afraid of getting Alzheimer's than we are of dying. So we deny it and we avoid it for as long as possible. It's only when Alzheimer's knocks at our own door, it seems, that we seek information, support, and healing.

By Jude C. Angelica, Contributor
Artrex, Merit, Spiritual Director, Cincin - offering Alzheimer's inspiration for individuals and groups. Hoping to make a difference!

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"The churches have failed their people," says ethicist and expert on aging, Stephen Sapp.

"Specifically in the area of support for persons with Alzheimer's and their caregivers."

Over twenty years ago, when Dr. Sapp first became active in the field of Alzheimer's care, he held workshops to educate religious leaders in his geographic area. Very few attended. Based on my own experience and feedback from others in the field, this hasn't changed. At dementia care conferences and workshops, faith communities are largely unrepresented.



tinyurl.com/3muu2a95

CREATING DEMENTIA FRIENDLY FAITH COMMUNITIES

Fostering spiritual connection and meaningful engagement for those living with dementia and support for families, as we work together to stop Alzheimer's disease.

Know your congregation members

Keep track and keep in touch. Taking note of attendance is a critically important basic step in developing connections to families who may be facing dementia.

Educate congregation members and your community about dementia

Education empowers and prepares community members to serve the needs of those living with dementia and their families. It increases awareness and increases awareness about cognitive health.

- Invite a person living with dementia to speak about his or her personal experience.
- Speak and share materials about Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.
- Share BrainGuide by U.S. Alzheimer's, a tool for faith communities offering private memory questionnaires, tailored brain health resources and education in English and Spanish.

• Become a Dementia Friend at dementiafriendsusa.org.

Wear name tags.

Provide a quiet area where the person with dementia may go during the service as needed.

- Adapt worship services to be welcoming and supportive of people living with dementia. For guidance on designing and delivering services refer to Dementia-Friendly Religious Services Handbook for Chaplains, Clergy and Faith Communities.

• Arrange worship at home or in care facilities if a member can no longer attend in person.

Encourage members with dementia to participate within your faith community
Enable members living with dementia to continue engaging in roles allowing them to serve God and others. As their dementia progresses, consider new ways to engage and involve them in the life or ministry of your community.

Encourage participation in community service projects or faith-based opportunities



2022 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures



Between 2000

It kills more than

2022 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures



tinyurl.com/2tcj64uh

Creating Dementia Friendly Faith Communities



tinyurl.com/mkyuh4zj

10 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ALZHEIMER'S

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Challenges in planning or solving problems
- Difficulty completing familiar tasks
- Confusion with time or place
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood and personality



Source: Alzheimer's Association

AdvocateAuroraHealth



English:
tinyurl.com/yck5h4te



Spanish:
tinyurl.com/6edhncwt

Websites and Books about Dementia-Friendly Faith Communities

Courtesy: Susan H. McFadden, Ph.D.

Fox Valley Memory Project (www.foxvalleymemoryproject.org)

WEBSITES

Dementia Friendly America: Faith Communities

<https://www.dfamerica.org/sector-guides>

The Dementia Friendly America organization publishes a number of "sector guides." Scroll down on this page for the one on faith communities. It lists concrete steps for faith communities to become more welcoming for people with dementia.

Dementia-Friendly Faith Communities

<https://www.actonalz.org/faith-communities>

The Dementia Friendly America organization began in Minnesota. This website from "ACTOnALZ" includes many links to helpful information.

Respite for All Foundation

<https://www.respiteforall.org/>

This organization is reaching congregations of many faith traditions around the country to help people develop respite programs for people living with dementia. Their training and follow-up support is being enthusiastically embraced by volunteers and people needing respite.

Age-Friendly Congregations

<https://www.chhsm.org/news/uccs-age-friendly-congregations-curriculum-helps-churches-minister-effectively-ages/>

This excellent resource from the Council for Health & Human Services Ministries (CHHSM) of the United Church of Christ contains information about a wide range of topics, some of which address congregational support and inclusion for people living with dementia.

BOOKS

Carder, K. L. (2019). *Ministry with the forgotten: Dementia through a spiritual lens*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

After his wife was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia, this Bishop in the United Methodist Church and Professor at the Duke Divinity School retired and became her full-time care partner. The book is a valuable resource for pastors and laypeople alike as it weaves together theology and stories of Carder's dementia journey with his wife. Carder is also a leader in the Respite for All Foundation.

Friedman, D. A. (2015). *Jewish wisdom for growing older: Finding your grit and grace beyond midlife*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.

This is a book to savor slowly and to read and reread. Rabbi Friedman offers blessings at the end of every chapter but actually, the whole book is a blessing. One chapter is titled "Making sense of dementia's brokenness."

Mast, B. (2014). *Second forgetting: Remember the power of the Gospel during Alzheimer's disease*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The author's brief biography is a good introduction to this book. He's Associate Professor in Psychological and Brain Sciences, and Associate Clinical Professor in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Louisville, as well as being an elder at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY. The book is grounded in evangelical Christianity and psychological research on memory and dementia. It's very accessible and would work well in congregational discussion groups.

McFadden, S. H., & McFadden, J. T. (2011). *Aging together: Dementia, friendship, and flourishing communities*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

A book about how nurturing relationships with friends journeying into progressive forgetfulness. It argues that faith communities have many resources to support these relationships, not the least of which are the beliefs that bind them together. It includes discussion questions for each chapter.

McFadden, S. H. (2021). *Dementia-friendly communities: Why we need them and how we can create them*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

We need dementia-friendly communities because of the increasing numbers of persons living with dementia (and this includes their care partners) and also because these folks are asking for more programs and services that enable them to remain connected to their communities. The book offers suggestions on creating these inclusive communities and has a chapter on spiritual connections.

Post, S. G. (2022). *Dignity for deeply forgetful people: How caregivers can meet the challenges of Alzheimer's disease*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Written by a well-known ethicist, this book offers hope along with useful information. The author poses and answers seventeen questions often on the minds of caregivers ranging from the time of diagnosis to the time of dying. The book offers concrete suggestions that enable caregivers to see the dignity in the person with dementia and thus sustain their love.

Ramsey, J. L. (2018). *Dignity and grace: Wisdom for caregivers and those living with dementia*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

If you are going to purchase one book on dementia and dementia caregiving to make available in church libraries and/or for congregational book groups, this is one to consider. Each chapter concludes with a meditation on a Psalm that helps readers reflect on the chapter's themes. Beautifully written, accessible, and wise, this book offers what the author calls "tough hope" about living well with dementia.

Swinton, J. (2012). *Dementia: Living in the memories of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Stanley Hauerwas calls Swinton the "premier pastoral theologian of our time." A former psychiatric nurse and hospital chaplain, Swinton now teaches theology at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. He describes his book as being not only a "challenge to medicine and medical approaches to dementia; it is also a challenge to theology."