

Workshop: Dementia Friendly Worship: Some Practical Responses

Thinking of you: the spiritual care of people with dementia¹

The call to be peacemakers:

Cosmic 'shalom', and with it the offer of personal existential 'shalom' for every human being. *The bottom line is that we can be at peace.* The core principle of gospel-based spiritual care is to be peacemakers for those for whom we care. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matt. 5.9)*

3-fold approach to spiritual care

1/ The message of the incarnation is 'it's ok – I'm here'.

- **SOLIDARITY:** We can be peacemakers by showing solidarity through being present

2/ Jesus embodied a challenge to the status quo. He was different and made a difference. He demonstrated that things could look at differently and so actually be different.

- **HOPE:** We can be peacemakers in situations that are troubling and painful by offering hope by meaning-making, or by making new meaning

3/ Jesus was present in a distinctive way – he made demands on people i.e. 'Get up'. He sees potential and dignifies them. Stretching, stimulating and enabling people at an appropriate level. The identity of the individual is 'extended' into the community that then holds onto the story.

- **IDENTITY:** We can affirm identity by intentionally re-memembering the person

¹ Joanna Collicutt, *Thinking of You: a resource for the spiritual care of people with dementia*. BRF, 2017

A word about dementia...²

...The sacrament of **the present moment**... being fully present to another enables deep connection and spiritual conversation. This 'Right Now' focus is key you being with anyone, but *especially with people with dementia*- whether their 'present moment' is full of joy or despair and confusion.

...When we are **listening well**, God's creative energy flows through us into the situation we meet, giving us ideas and guiding our ministry.

...All of us have the chance to be **guided by the Spirit**. Listening for the 'still small voice' which we learn to recognise is coming from all that is good, and holy, and loving, and just – from God. It is the responsibility of all who follow Christ.

...**Befriending silence**. 'there's no need to talk unless you want to,' The freedom to be silent can be a relief.

...**Singing**. Humans naturally sing to comfort those who are restless, to soothe babies into sleep and serenade loved ones with voices and loving...singing releases pent up or unrecognised emotions and brings our spirit comfort and strength.

...**holding**. A holding cross (or something tangible) is a valuable aid to prayer. Not a talisman, or a lucky charm,, it is a way of being linked to Jesus: a person can symbolically hold onto him, to God and know s/he is safe no matter what s/he faces.

For your notes:

² Sue Pickering, *Creative Ideas for Ministry with the Aged*, Canterbury Press, 2014

Exercise:

You are members of the church worship group and you have agreed to lead a 20 minute service at the local residential home. Recently you attended a dementia awareness day and you're aware that the congregants at the service include Grace, who has dementia due to a severe stroke, and her husband, Ken, who visits her daily.

The set text for the day is Psalm 23. The theme for the day is 'The Lord is my Shepherd'.

Using the following outline

- Welcome
- Call to worship
- Hymn/song
- Opening prayer & The Lord's Prayer
- Bible Reading
- Multisensory message
- Prayer of Intercession
- Blessing

Question: How will you ensure that both Grace and Ken are able to worship?

Group 1: Environment and hospitality

Group 2: Music (incidental and sung)

Group 3: Reading and presenting the bible passage

Group 4: Opening prayer and intercessions