

# **LIGHTING THE WAY**

## **Spiritual and Religious Care for those with Dementia**



**Patricia Higgins and Richard Allen**

LEVESON PAPER NUMBER SIXTEEN

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**Patricia Higgins and Richard Allen**

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## Foreword

The project that is 'The Candlelight Group' has been an exercise in creative collaboration from the moment of its conception, through its development and into its present form. Much has been gained by listening to and discussing the issues involved with colleagues from a variety of professional disciplines. Reflecting this collaborative culture, the authors would like to acknowledge the parts played by a number of individuals and groups.

Between September 2001 and February 2003, Hatta Hodson provided chaplaincy services to the Chiltern Wing of Sutton Hospital in Surrey. It was her imaginative response to a request by Patricia Higgins that set The Candlelight Group running. Indeed, the principles that underpinned her original ideas remain intact, for they were based on a deep understanding of the part that a vibrant expression of spirituality and religious practice can play in the overall care of older people. Although Hatta has now moved on, the Group remains as her legacy.

Alix Morgan, a volunteer in the Department of Spiritual and Pastoral Care, was a consistent figure in the Group's story from the outset until her retirement in 2006. Alix's pastoral skills found particular expression each Wednesday afternoon when the Group gathered together for its act of worship. Without her commitment to carrying forward Hatta's vision, together with her willingness to explore new avenues of expression, the Group could not have continued, let alone develop.

Both Hatta and Alix are Pastoral Auxiliaries within the Anglican Diocese of Southwark. This authorised lay ministry, specialising in pastoral care, is perhaps not as widely recognised in church circles as it might be. The authors are therefore particularly pleased to formally acknowledge that its special ethos has found a practical home in The Candlelight Group.

The encouragement that the authors received from representatives of the Queen's Nursing Institute and the Alzheimer's Society saw the Group develop in new directions and acquire many resources that now enhance the quality of spiritual and religious care of the clients of Downs Day Hospital. And, of course, none of this work would be possible without the stewardship of South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust, under whose management the day hospital in Sutton falls.

Finally, the authors are very grateful to the Leveson Centre for the Study of Ageing, Spirituality and Social Policy for its willingness to publish the second edition of this booklet.

Patricia Higgins, Memory Service Nurse, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

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# Introduction

In April 2004, the authors, together with Alix Morgan, received the annual Award for Excellence and Innovation in Dementia Care, sponsored jointly by the Queen's Nursing Institute and the Alzheimer's Society. This was given for their work in connection with the provision of spiritual and religious care to hospital day patients with dementia, through what is known as 'The Candlelight Group'. In the discussions that preceded the judges' assessment, a commitment was given that a significant part of any financial aspect of the prize would be used to share the Group's experiences and pass on some of the reflections since its inception. In this way, both the authors and the representatives of the sponsoring bodies hope that spiritual and religious considerations can become an integral part of the holistic care afforded to those living with dementia.

The booklet is divided into two main sections.

The first part, entitled 'Reflections', briefly charts the history of The Candlelight Group, describing its specific context, why and how the group was initially set up, the nature of the collaboration that has led to its development and some of the practicalities that need to be

borne in mind when providing spiritual and religious care for those with dementia.

The second part, entitled 'Resources', provides a suggested form of weekly services, built around the primary festivals of the Christian year, together with a thematic approach to the many weeks of 'Ordinary Time' that run from late Spring through to Autumn. Suggestions for appropriate hymns and songs, together with Bible readings and ideas for times of reflection, offer a ready-made liturgical framework.

However, this booklet is not intended primarily to be a last-gasp source of ideas when all else has failed, although no doubt it may be used in this way from time to time. Rather it is hoped that, by exploring some of the principles on which The Candlelight Group has been formed, it will give confidence to others to develop principles appropriate to their own location, and from these principles to develop a pattern of spiritual and religious care that is appropriate for use in their particular care setting. After all, no two places of faith are identical in their culture or practice. So why should it be assumed that a 'one size fits all' approach will suffice for those who live with dementia and can no longer access their often much-valued church or chapel?

# Reflections

## What is dementia?

The term 'dementia' is something of a blanket word used to describe a number of disorders associated with the loss of brain functions that are progressive and, to date, irreversible. Over a period of time, the brain's structure and chemistry become increasingly damaged. Medical opinion does not consider there to be a single cause of dementia, citing age, lifestyle and genetics as possibly contributory factors. Currently, the Alzheimer's Society estimates that there are something in excess of 750,000 people in the UK who live with one or more of over one hundred types of dementia.

Because it is a condition that is invariably associated with older age, early symptoms tend to be attributed to the ageing process, or confused with stress or depression. However, the progressive nature of dementia means that the cognitive functions associated with memory, understanding, reasoning and communication gradually decline, although the rate of diminution varies enormously from person to person.

Despite the common prevalence of these indications, it is important to reiterate that those with dementia experience their symptoms uniquely. Just because the memory is impaired, it does not follow that the whole of one's individual life history remains inaccessible. Similarly, although the use of language becomes less effective, this does not imply that communication becomes impossible. As with many other aspects of life, when one thing is removed something else invariably steps into the void to compensate for the loss.

Thus, whilst the events of the previous week may become increasingly demanding to access, an exploration of events earlier in life can be far more fruitful and pleasurable. If verbalising thoughts and emotions has become difficult, communication may be easier by means of sharing touch and facial expressions.

At the heart of present health-care practice is the principle that each person remains an individual from birth to death and is entitled to a plan of care that is tailored to suit their specific needs. This resonates with the theological axiom of Christianity, and many other faiths, that every person is created uniquely and in the image of God. It therefore ill behoves any person who holds such a tenet of faith to fail to see those who live with dementia as anything other than the person whom God created, albeit living life in ways not hitherto experienced.

## Pastoral, spiritual and religious care

Definitions are notorious hostages to fortune but, without some attempt to clarify the terms that are the subject of this section of the booklet, their continued use will be open to the possibility of misunderstanding.

### Pastoral care

Large quantities of erudite words have been written in an attempt to pin down the essence of pastoral care. For many practitioners it is a concept that is perhaps best understood instinctively, in the doing rather than the thinking about. In his 1985 book *Paid to Care?* (published by SPCK), Alistair V Campbell suggests that pastoral care is primarily concerned with the experience of love, both received and given. Since the term 'pastoral' originates in the action of shepherds caring for their flock (and is a widely used Christian metaphor for the relationship between God and his creation), Campbell's suggestion instinctively feels like it has some validity.

Moreover, observation of the manner in which many care givers (be they doctors, nurses, health care assistants, family members and friends, even chaplains) interact with those living with dementia, Campbell's emphasis on an encounter of mutual love would seem to be a demonstrably accurate and useful starting point.



## Spiritual care

If much energy has been expended over the years in defining pastoral care, the last decade has seen a burgeoning in spiritualities at the expense of religion, certainly of the organised kind. The term 'spirituality' has been appropriated by almost every individual or group that perceives itself to be involved in the search for the meaning of life. Within the context of health care in this Trust, the chaplains understand spiritual care primarily to be concerned with searching for an answer to the question:

In my current state of health, just who am I?

Buried in this apparently simple question lie notions of identity, some awareness of a relationship with God or a life force, the context of one's own and other people's environments, and a feeling that life ought to have both meaning and purpose. Experience suggests that perceptions of individual identities depend on many factors and vary throughout life. So the question is particularly relevant for those who live with dementia, in view of the very considerable life changes that are being experienced.

## Religious care

This is perhaps the easiest of the three terms on which to gain a general level of consensus. The very word 'religious' establishes boundaries and presupposes a degree of faith, albeit without identifying any particular group affiliation. Thus, for the sake of this publication and the wider context of residential and day care facilities, religious care is defined as

the provision of formal and informal opportunities that enable patients, users, carers and staff to express their faith and practise their religion.

## Living with dementia

For people with dementia, enhancing their feeling of well-being, at a time of great change, is perhaps the most important goal. High quality clinical care can only be achieved when each individual is viewed as a whole person,

valued for who they are and not primarily what they are capable of doing. Identifying individual needs in all aspects of life is thus of paramount importance.

Pastoral care is primarily expressed through meeting physical and emotional needs and is the starting point of Campbell's continuing dialogue of love. However, identifying spiritual and religious needs, still more facilitating their expression as an integral part of holistic care, is often overlooked.

Ordinarily, most people meet their spiritual and religious needs by belonging to a particular faith group and meeting periodically or regularly for ritual acts of religious expression. Those over 70 years of age come from a generation for whom regular attendance at church, synagogue, temple or mosque was a far more common part of everyday life than it is for the present generation. For many from within a Christian context, religious education at school and attendance at Sunday School would have been formative experiences in equipping them for a life that carried a faith dimension.

But for many of this generation, particularly those who live with dementia, participation in the faith groups to which they have belonged for many years becomes increasingly difficult, if not impossible. The expression of faith, for so long an integral part of their lives, is thus denied to them. So, for the patients who attend Downs Day Hospital who are not able to go to church, church must come to them, in the form of The Candlelight Group.

## Downs Day Hospital

Downs Day Hospital is situated in the psychiatric section of Sutton Hospital and is managed by South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust. It is part of the 'Older People's Services' which includes acute and long-term inpatient wards, as well as community residential homes.

Within the day hospital, there are places for up to 35 people each day who have been referred by the Community Psychiatric Nursing Teams.



Because of the effects of dementia, in all its stages, clients who are referred to this specialist service could not ordinarily be cared for in a 'day centre' setting. They are often experiencing difficulties in communication and making sense of their local environment. This can be distressing for them and, at times, may result in behaviour that requires the intervention of staff skilled in the area of dementia care.

The day hospital staff aim to provide a stimulating environment for their clients through a variety of therapeutic activities, which include pastimes such as crosswords and quizzes to stimulate cognitive faculties, exercise groups to maintain physical capabilities, art therapy for those who find verbal expression difficult and individual relaxation within a dedicated multi-sensory room. Entertainment is provided by a variety of media, live musical performances being particularly popular by drawing on a wealth of lyrical memories.

The focus is on person-centred care which promotes independence, utilising and maintaining existing skills. Because dementia has an isolating dimension, the social aspect of attending the day hospital is of paramount importance. Through the maintenance of social contact, many friendships are formed, especially among those who attend daily. In this respect, the day hospital has a club-like atmosphere, fostering a sense of belonging as an antidote to disconnection.

For a number of years, as part of the programme of religious care, the day hospital had been holding acts of worship at Christmas, Easter and Harvest to which clients had responded well. Irrespective of religious affiliation, most people appeared engaged and participated in some way. In the absence of any other similar activity, this suggested that the area of religious care was not being sufficiently acknowledged or addressed. Based on this experience, thoughts turned to the idea that some clients would welcome the opportunity to participate in a formal act of worship on a regular basis and thus The Candlelight Group was conceived.

## **Worshipping with those with dementia**

It used to be the case that one could walk into any Christian church or chapel and hazard a realistic guess at its denomination merely by observing the shape and style of the worship. This is probably no longer the case. The 20th century liturgical movement has brought about many changes. Not the least of these is a conscious integration of the ministry of pastoral care with one of the principles of the movement – that the activity of worship is 'the work of the people' and not something mysterious that is the exclusive tenure of the clergy.

From the Christian perspective, within any care setting, pastoral, spiritual and religious care come together when individuals meet to express their faith in formal or informal ways. This may take the form of impromptu prayer, a blessing, an anointing or a formal act of worship. Sensitive and effective pastoral ministry can only play its vital part at this juncture if the nature of the encounter is both appropriate to the needs of the individuals (which may in practice be very diverse) and facilitates an encounter with the realm of the 'Other'.

One of the advantages that a chaplain has over a parish visitor (in each case the lay or ordained status is immaterial) lies in the regular contact that he or she has with those to whom they are ministering. The more regular the contact, the greater the understanding of the pastoral, spiritual and religious needs is likely to be. However, one of the pits into which a chaplain can unconsciously fall is to assume that she or he can assess an individual's needs without first getting to know the setting or even meeting the individual concerned. The people who know the patients or clients most intimately will be those who care for them – family, friends, nurses, carers. So in the preparation of any programme of spiritual and religious care, the starting point for 'the work of the people' lies with this group.

In the case of The Candlelight Group, such collaboration was a natural adjunct to the nature of the regular pastoral work at the day

hospital. At the outset of the project, identifying the needs of the group, defining the objectives of the project and establishing a means of measuring its effectiveness were seen as essential principles. The subsequent conversations between the chaplain and the Nursing Team Leader, prior to designing the act of worship, for the most part avoided false starts and the necessity for major changes or revisions in the liturgy over the 4½ years that the Group has run.

### **Identifying the needs of the group**

The onset and development of dementia brings with it changes in circumstances that move those who are affected from lives of normal social contact and relationship into ones where verbal communication becomes increasingly difficult. Responses to everyday situations can appear illogical and the social pressure to withdraw, to save the embarrassment of oneself and others, is often too strong to resist. Increasing isolation is thus almost inevitable, accompanied by emotions of frustration, bewilderment and anger, implicitly seeking answers to questions such as ‘Why is this happening to me?’ and ‘Where is this leading?’ One of the challenges presented to carers by such circumstances is to locate the thread that starts with the provision of pastoral care, moves into areas of spiritual care where such existential questions can begin to be addressed and ultimately finds religious expression in the ritual activity that can shape some answers.

It has long been recognised that day centres and day hospitals, as well as the recreational and therapeutic activities in residential facilities, help to keep at bay the tendency towards isolation. But, by their very definition, group encounters only enable limited participation from each member. Whilst recognising the time constraints, there is no substitute for individual conversation, a time when love can be given and received. Such meetings provide an opportunity to establish something of the depth of personality of a life that is becoming more difficult to access each day. The information that is revealed in these conversations is crucial in formulating any notion of the needs of the patient or user. Each comment carries with it

the potential for understanding who this person is, at a time when the much trusted tools of understanding are slipping beyond one’s grasp.

Individual histories, the narratives of our lives, move us into a spiritual dimension where the ‘who’, ‘why’ and ‘where’ questions can be addressed. For those with dementia, answers to such questions are perhaps more urgent than ever before. In the early stages, there will be a realisation that limited time is available to deal with these issues. But the development of dementia does not mean that there can no longer be any self-understanding or capacity to frame the answers. It is perhaps just that new tools are necessary.

The practice of religion, with its extensive use of ritual, symbol and non-verbal forms of communication such as silence and music, coupled with the experience of community when meeting together, offers a range of such tools. Those who might be considered likely to benefit from regular religious activity will be identified from the pastoral conversations. In turn, if the pastoral carers (the health care staff) are communicative and the religious care givers (ordained or lay) are attentive, appropriate forms of spiritual and religious care can be moulded to meet the needs of both individuals and the group.

### **Defining the objectives of the project**

Currently throughout the NHS, the concept of ‘evidence based practice’ is being used to assess outcomes against previously defined aims, as a means of driving up standards. This is not a procedure that is widely utilised within the local church context, perhaps because there is an understandable aversion to the application of techniques that originate in models of organisational management to matters of God. Nonetheless, it must surely be appropriate in any religious activity, whether human or divine or a combination of the two, for there to be a means of asking whether an enterprise is of value to the participants and of worth to God.

The objectives of one spiritual or religious activity will not be the same as any other. There

may well be common factors, but varieties in location, context, personnel and so on will make each set of aims unique. The three that were considered most important to The Candlelight Group (though not necessarily pre-eminent in all contexts) were as follows.

#### **a Coming together as a group**

During the course of any week, a variety of groups will be available to service users. The very act of gathering together is a way of maintaining social contact. Although encounters with the realm of the divine can of course occur at any time, in most faith traditions formal acts of corporate worship require a gathering of more than one. By naming the group, it was hoped that those who attended regularly would develop a sense of identity associated with the group, in a similar way to that engendered by association with or membership of a particular church.

#### **b Worshipping as a community**

To those involved in the original discussions, a distinction was drawn between the activity of worship and the nature and aims of therapeutic or occupational groups. Worshipping as a group may have an ameliorative aspect but this is not its primary aim. Rather, it was hoped that those who were identified as possessing a faith would meet, not so much as a 'group' but more as a 'community', displaying and developing common values, interests and a culture through the regularity and consistency of contact.

#### **c Thinking beyond the immediate**

A reduction in the accessible timescale is one of the most readily identifiable characteristics of dementia. Short-term memory loss (albeit sometimes accompanied by a fragmented remembrance of events and personalities from much earlier periods in life), together with a reduced sense of meaning of the future, lead to a life that is increasingly lived in the here and now. By replicating each week the rhythm of the Christian year, re-telling the Christian story and sharing well known elements of Christian worship, it was hoped that narrow perspectives

of time might broaden, and a deeper sense of the individual's place in a wider universe might gradually be re-experienced.

### **Measuring effectiveness**

Measuring outcomes against the original aims can be undertaken in many ways – observation of the time together, talking with the participants, reflecting on one's own feelings – all will offer the opportunity to assess the value of the religious encounter. Experience of The Candlelight Group suggests that the following techniques provide ways of understanding some of the psychological and religious dynamics within the group and the ways in which these might be received and understood by the participants. By understanding these, a realistic attempt can be made to evaluate the effectiveness of the encounters against the original aims.

#### **a Identifying the regularity of attendance**

Living with dementia does not mean relinquishing all autonomy. Throughout the life of The Candlelight Group, clients who attend the day hospital have always been asked if they wish to attend the Group's act of worship. Some have declined from the outset, others have welcomed weekly invitations; some have begun to attend and subsequently dropped off, citing a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons belie deeper motives, which may need to be teased out in further conversation, but the refusal of any invitation has always been respected.

#### **b Conducting interviews**

Immediately after the end of a service, it is possible to conduct a short interview with members of the participating group, exploring their cognitive and emotional reactions to the time spent together in worship. Because of the relatively stable nature of the group, it is also possible to carry out such interviews on a periodic basis, separated perhaps by some months, thus affording the opportunity to assess whether there have been changes in the experience. Because of the nature of dementia, most interviewees are only able to comment on

the immediate encounter, making it important that the same questions are addressed each time to enable any nuances of response to be assessed on a like-for-like basis.

### **c Observation**

Because of the difficulties in verbal expression that accompany dementia, there may be a limitation on the value of personal interviews. To develop a broader picture, close observation of the group and its participants during their time together can often be very useful. However, this must be carried out in an unobtrusive manner. If the observations can be recorded by a regular leader, any rise in anxiety can be contained. Changes in the usual patterns of behaviour, brought about by the observation, must be taken into account when assessing the evidence that is obtained.

Videoring the service, which requires prior negotiation with and the consent of each member of the group, affords an opportunity to check and re-check observations which themselves are subject to the limitations of attention and the vagaries of one's memory. As with individual observation, the same issues of intrusion and consistency apply.

### **d Leadership reflection**

Because the emotions of individuals and groups are frequently transferred onto leaders, it is invariably worthwhile for those who conduct the act of worship to talk with those who are responsible for the care of the participants, both before and after the service. Examining one's own feelings once the service is over may tease out depths of feelings generated both by one's own experience and also projected from others. Living with dementia does not imply that emotions disappear or cannot be felt, merely that they are more easily expressed sensually and spiritually than verbally.

## **Principles from The Candlelight Group Service**

As is the case with journeys into unknown territory, the initial discussions between the

nursing staff and the chaplains began rather gingerly, as if feeling the way forward and erring on the side of caution, mindful of the vulnerable nature of the potential participants. Yet these difficult conversations, covering challenging areas, proved invaluable. The health care staff were able to identify those whom they felt would benefit from specific religious care; the chaplain was then able to construct an act of worship that might reasonably be expected to engage likely attendees, given the context in which the service was to be set. From the outset, certain principles that underpinned the worship were adopted:

### **a Simplicity**

Simplicity does not imply a patronising attitude to those with dementia, although the loss of some cognitive functions and modes of verbal expression need to be acknowledged. Often, though, the simpler the act of worship, the more effective it is. Convoluted words, obscure imagery and complicated symbolism frequently fail to engage the worshipper ... and probably God as well! Primarily, it was agreed that simplicity was to be reflected in a straightforward liturgical form, the use of plain language and a powerful symbol – the candle.

### **b Non-Eucharistic form**

For many Christians, regular attendance at Holy Communion is the central expression of their faith. There is undoubtedly a place for this practice to be continued when it is difficult or even impossible for attendance within a faith community to be maintained; hence the widespread practice of bringing the Reserved Sacrament to home or ward. However, because of differences in theological understanding between Christian denominations, Holy Communion can turn out to be divisive and excluding. Roman Catholics may feel unable to take communion from Anglican clergy; Roman Catholics priests may not be able to offer it to non-Catholics; and Non-conformists may feel uncomfortable with sharing a common cup.

Thus it was felt that, if group identification and unity was to be achieved and valued, a non-Eucharistic form of worship ought to be



adopted as the norm. Such a decision had the added advantage that the service could be led by lay or ordained persons and could therefore be a regular fixture in the life of the day hospital, irrespective of the availability of the clergy. Indeed, with a little training and a sensitive understanding of and approach to worship, it was felt that certain health care staff would also be equipped to lead the group.

### **c Short duration**

Because the concentration and attention span of the attendees were anticipated to be of limited duration, it was initially decided that the act of worship should be kept to a maximum of 20 minutes. However, as time has gone by, this has been found not to be so vital a consideration. Careful observation has revealed that, once the group is comfortable with the liturgy, they are able to engage either with individual sections or with the whole order of service. Much will depend on their own spiritual and religious needs, their emotional state at the time of the service and their general position on the spectrum of dementia, but the first two of these criteria might easily apply to all of us. As a result, the service now lasts about 30 minutes with few instances of disruption by or discomfort for the participants.

### **d Familiarity**

From the outset the format of The Candlelight Group's liturgy has been replicated each week. Even when the lead chaplain changed, the service continued in its original format. In particular, the opening hymn is always the same; the Lord's Prayer, in its traditional version, has a central position; the ritual lighting of candles and their use as votive symbols plus an ending with the Grace all reinforce familiarity and enable participation. As a result, after an initial period during which recognition of these elements becomes embedded, even those who have poor recollection began to recognise them and participate in the act of worship in ways that are appropriate to them personally.

Although the four principles that have just been articulated apply to The Candlelight Group in

particular, it is likely that they will resonate with other settings. Discussions with primary care givers and those invited to provide spiritual and religious care may draw out other criteria that will act as foundations on which to construct the liturgical vehicle for religious encounters. But once the principles have been established, the core theology has been undertaken and the groundwork laid, the invitation to provide spiritual and religious care to those with dementia in the local residential home, day centre or hospital can be accepted. Theoretical considerations must now become practical reality.

## **Practical Considerations**

This section of the booklet provides a baker's dozen's worth of tips, identifying some of the pitfalls that have been encountered (including some ideas on how to avoid them) and pointing to some areas where a little time spent beforehand will produce much fruit on the day.

These practicalities presuppose a level of cognition and verbal expression that enable there to be a degree of effective and mutually understandable communication. This will not always be the case. Those with significant reductions in these functions will respond to a shorter, simpler, less verbal liturgy, involving familiar symbolism. Indeed, words may play little or no part, whereas music may stimulate far more recognition. Yet, whatever the extent of the dementia, there is no theological or pastoral reason for avoiding the provision of spiritual and religious care.

### **The Space**

#### **a Space for gathering together**

Within most care settings, it is extremely unlikely that a room can be set aside solely for religious purposes. So the choice of the room or space in which to gather for a service has to be made quite carefully. First, identify the likely numbers of participants and keep to this general number unless you have a choice of rooms.

If possible, negotiate the use of a space that is in a quiet location in the building. Battling against

the exercise class is not conducive to worship! Paradoxically, a space that is very visible can often prompt those who pass it to drop their voices and respect the act of worship.

The space should be

- small enough to retain a sense of intimacy;
- large enough for any who are disabled to manoeuvre safely;
- capable of housing armchairs to place participants at their ease.

Before selecting the room, work out the layout of the furniture, check the provision of sockets for any tape or CD player, work out the ease of access to a piano or keyboard if you wish to use one, and so on. In addition, think through any possible liturgical movements and make sure you are able to achieve these without tripping over feet or falling into participants' laps!

### **b Sharing the room**

Do not be concerned about sharing space that is used for another purpose.

If you are presented with a large day room, find screens or perhaps arrange some dining chairs to delineate the space you wish to use but move them back when you have finished so as not to inconvenience the staff.

If there are available walls, see if you are allowed to remove a picture and hang an appropriate religious symbol in its place for the duration of the service. If this is not possible, create the focal point by means of a low table, or a symbol placed on the floor, that conveys a sense of the sacred.

### **c Access to and from the space**

Ensure there is sufficient width of access for wheelchairs and that there are few if any awkward thresholds to navigate. Modern buildings should avoid these problems and hazards; older, converted buildings may still contain them.

Always ensure that a trained member of staff is responsible for guiding disabled patients to and from the room and into and out of chairs. They are the experts in health care; you are the experts in spiritual care. Recognise the difference!

## **The Liturgy**

### **a Service sheets**

In addition to the effects of dementia, older age invariably brings with it eyesight difficulties, so

- produce service sheets in large print (14 or 16 pt should suffice) in a clear font (try Tahoma, Montreal, Gill Sans or Arial);
- provide clear headings for each section – it will aid following the service and re-finding positions if they are lost;
- introduce symbols or pictures to amplify the purpose of the text (for example hands together for prayers, musical notes for songs).

If the service is to be used on a regular basis, laminate the service sheets for easy cleaning.

### **b Beginning and ending**

Whatever form the act of worship takes, always begin and end clearly. Avoid the tendency to slide into and out of the service. It only creates uncertainty, particularly at the start, if no-one is quite sure whether proceedings have commenced.

Perhaps begin with an action, such as lighting a candle or with words such as 'We meet in the name of the Living God'.

End with a blessing, or by saying the Grace together. If you started by lighting a candle, why not end by extinguishing it?

### **c Scripture**

Select passages of the Bible that are focused and keep them short. Long passages from Paul's writings or detailed lists of dietary rules from Leviticus will be difficult to follow and

impossible to remember for any length of time. If there is a choice between gospel accounts of the same events, select the simplest (Mark's gospel is often helpful here).

If you wish to print out the reading for participants to follow

- use large print and a clear font;
- incorporate a symbol (for example an open Bible) at the top of the page;
- print on coloured paper (but avoid black words on red, which are very difficult to read).

#### **d Hymns and songs**

Hymns that were popular in the decades on either side of the Second World War are those most likely to be known by those in the group. Sunday School, or its equivalent, may also be a fruitful source for songs. However, do not overlook more modern popular hymns and songs, since members of the group, from whatever tradition, might well have sung these regularly in the last 25 years.

Whatever you choose

- keep to those with strict rhythms and regular verse patterns, so as to reduce uncertainty and hold everyone together;
- if you are singing to a CD or tape, check the recording first for introductions, descants and the general speed;
- print out the words of hymns or songs in large print and a clear font on coloured paper (but one that is different to the Bible reading), with an appropriate suitable symbol at the head of the page;
- check that the words on the sheet tally with those sung on the CD or tape; alternatively, use a music only CD.

#### **e Prayer**

The time of prayer offers one of the most important opportunities to explore spiritual

questions around personal identity and the individual participant's relationship to God. It provides space for an expression of deep emotional and religious feelings. It is also a democratising opportunity, when those who are less able to verbalise their feelings can express them through gesture and symbol.

Many prayer options are available – intercessory and thanksgiving forms, litanies, biddings and silence and many more. Consider using symbols that can be held by or attributed to each participant – for example candles, pebbles, small crosses – but take great care to ensure that small symbols do not find their way into a mouth!

Do not underestimate the capacity of participants to name either the subjects or objects of their prayers and concerns out loud, or to pick up on the theme from the Scriptures, hymns or reflections used earlier in the service.

When participants remember those who have died in war, the silence will be broken only by the sound of restrained sobbing at memories of past experiences or loved ones who never came back.

### **Communication**

#### **a Liturgical colours**

One of the ways of marking the passage of time throughout the church's year is by varying the coloured cloths, which can be placed over any table that is used for liturgical purposes:

- purple for Advent and Lent, the penitential periods, the times of waiting;
- white for Christmas, Epiphany and Easter, when the mood is one of celebration;
- red for the fire of Pentecost and the blood of those saints who were martyred;
- green for growth during 'Ordinary Time', between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday and Pentecost and Advent.

Once participants have absorbed the meaning of the symbolism (which can be observed and noted



right at the beginning of each service), it acts as an aid to recognition of the time in the liturgical year, which itself reflects the secular calendar.

However, ensure that, whilst the cloths are long enough to cover the table generously, they are not so long as to trail on the floor where they will pose a safety hazard.

## **b Symbols**

Symbols are an excellent way of signifying something important without the necessity for words. But choose them carefully.

Crosses are a universal Christian symbol but those of low churchmanship may be offended by the use of crucifixes.

Icons are from a specific tradition, but offer a meditative way into the major events and characters of the Christian narrative.

Candles are very popular, but

- place them in such a way that they cannot be touched inadvertently;
- do not allow participants to hold them or place their service sheets on top of them;
- extinguish them before participants move around the room.

## **c Interaction**

Within some traditions of Christian worship, direct interaction between the leader and the participants can be rare. Usually, boundaries are clear; leaders lead and congregations follow. We sit or kneel for prayer and stand up and sing when hymns or songs are announced. We listen attentively when Scripture is being read, concentrate hard when the sermon is preached (don't we?) and repeat credal statements together as a unifying act. It is not exactly Pavlovian, but if someone says 'Let us pray', do we not automatically drop to our knees or sit down?

One of the liberating things about dementia is that these well-erected and pretty firm

boundaries become very much more pliable. Comments are sometimes made at moments that appear inappropriate or disconnected and questions are asked when something is not clear. Because the conventions of worship, established for the sake of good order, are more lightly held, interaction becomes not only a reality, but often the life blood of the religious encounter.

Within the encounter, it is important to speak clearly and distinctly. Age tends to reduce the quality of hearing and the effects of dementia adversely affect the memory, so the understanding of verbal instructions (such as requests for prayer) or the impact of Scripture readings is dependent on the ability of the participants to identify and hold key words and phrases. It is therefore important to speak clearly and distinctly and to frame phrases or questions in a straightforward manner.

Where music is concerned, keep the volume up fairly loud, so as to give a firm lead.

However, do not be afraid of silence. It may be interrupted, but if you have signalled it by instruction, symbol or a clear liturgical gesture, there is little reason to suppose that it will not be observed. Indeed, at times such as the National Remembrance or All Souls-tide, the silence is invariably total and very moving.

If there are blind or visually impaired participants present, do not forget to address them directly and describe any symbols or actions as you proceed through the service.

## **d Changing direction**

One of the consequences of interaction that is most frequently encountered is the challenge to be prepared to change direction from that which was lovingly thought out and prepared beforehand. The 'Encounter and Reflection' section of The Candlelight Group service is deliberately loosely framed to encourage interaction. Whoever leads it has a sense of the direction in which it is intended to go and the point at which it should conclude.

But the flexibility of the boundaries is deliberately intended to allow the direction of the encounter to be varied according to participants' contributions. Sometimes, an interjection may not appear to have any connection with that which immediately precedes it. But to disregard it is to make a value judgement about the validity of one's own thought processes against those of another. At the very least, the contribution must be acknowledged and taken seriously. At best, it will offer a new path of exploration that may lead the group rather unexpectedly into the heart of God.

### **e Working in pairs**

Engaging in pastoral, spiritual and religious care with those with dementia presents a wonderful opportunity to empower others. There are so many people in faith communities, of all ages, who possess the compassion and latent skills to engage in this form of care. Yet they are often reticent to come forward and are thus frequently overlooked. Similarly, nursing staff and care assistants invariably shy away from getting involved in what is seen as the chaplain's area of expertise.

Working in pairs in delivering these forms of care has great advantages. At the point of gathering, a doorkeeper can act as a welcomer, whilst another can help participants to find a seat. During the service, one can deal with any issues of discomfort or distress, leaving the worship leader free to hold things together for the benefit of the rest of the group.

However, during a period of reflection, both can participate, each picking up on the flow of conversation and the individual comments that are made. The more personal experiences that can be utilised in this part of the service, the more effective it will be as a vehicle for a spiritual encounter with the divine.

And at the end, there is the opportunity of sharing the experience and personal observations of time spent together in the presence of God and each other.

## **Applications to other faiths**

The Candlelight Group was developed to provide an act of worship for Christians and this short publication is unapologetically applicable to this faith group. Yet behind it, particularly in the NHS, lies a multi-faith agenda. In many of the major towns of the UK, an ethnically diverse population almost inevitably implies that facilities such as residential care homes, psychiatric wards and day hospitals for older people will contain a culturally diverse mix of persons. This is both a daunting challenge and a rich resource.

It is a thoroughgoing mistake to assume that what works for Christians is transferable to the context of other faiths. Pastoral, spiritual and religious care is interpreted in very different ways by other faith groups. Theology, culture and ethnicity all ask questions around spiritual and religious care that will lead to fundamentally different answers depending on the faith concerned. Yet to assume that multi-faith religious care is an impossibility is to give up before the first hurdle.

Just as Christianity is not a monolithic religion, neither are other faiths. It is perhaps as true to say that conservative evangelical Christians have little common theological language with their Anglo-Catholic counterparts as it is to say that Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims will find complete religious unanimity with each other. The roots of the tree may be the same, but the subsequent branch patterns are invariably very different.

Multi-faith engagement in the UK often tends to be reductionist in content. The liturgical elements of multi-faith gatherings are primarily designed not to offend, rather than affirm. They invariably seek the lowest common denominator on which different groups can agree, rather than celebrating difference within a theological framework of exploration. The validity of either approach needs to be considered carefully and critically with authorised representatives of other faiths before embarking on any multi-faith project.

Some faith groups, such as the Jewish community, already have in place effective programmes of religious care, since there is a long-standing culture of general health care for older people within the faith. Dialogue with those responsible for the delivery of such programmes provides an effective starting

point. Whatever the perceived call for spiritual and religious care of those with dementia might be across the spectrum of cultures, the majority faith must be very careful to avoid any charge of religious imperialism. A dialogue of equals, exploring differences in approach would seem to be a fruitful starting point.

# Resources

## How to use this section

After all the definitions, the theory and principles, the practical issues of space, liturgy and communication, there is the small matter of content. The fifty-two service ideas, which are set out on pages 21–31, cover one complete year; the four additional ones on pages 31–32 offer options and additions to deal with a number of special or specific occasions.

These suggestions are intended to be understood in the context of The Candlelight Group service, the details of which are shown on pages 33. Three short liturgies celebrating Christmas, Easter and Harvest are set out on pages 34–36. Even if your particular group meets on a monthly rather than weekly basis, there should be plenty of ideas that can be effectively adapted.

Each weekly resource has five elements:

- a heading identifying the exact position of the week in the church's liturgical year;
- a synopsis of the theme of the week;
- a suggestion for a biblical reading appropriate to the week in question;
- a hymn or song that picks up on the theme;
- ideas for a time of reflection and engagement with the theme.

## The weekly heading

These should be recognisable by many Christian denominations that follow the pattern of the liturgical year. Inevitably, because Easter is not a fixed date, the number of weeks between Christmas and Ash Wednesday varies from year to year. An additional week in the Epiphany season is included on page 31.

## The synopsis

The short summary, shown in italics, is intended to offer a simple résumé of the week's theme. If

you do not feel this is appropriate for your group in its particular context, you need read no further but move onto another week or develop your own ideas.

## Bible readings

An appropriate bible passage is suggested. As far as possible, where readings are following those in our churches and chapels, the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) has been used. Since this runs over a three-year cycle, there has inevitably been a need to fuse disparate themes or select one at the expense of others. Where there has been a choice between the RCL and the Church of England's variations, for ecumenical reasons the RCL has always been selected.

## Hymns and songs

A possible hymn, appropriate for the time of year or the theme of the day, is offered. The suggested hymns tend to be rather traditional but, hopefully, they have ecumenical appeal. The experience of The Candlelight Group would suggest that these hymns are known by most participants and thus serve as an important unifying element. However, this may not apply to other groups and choices will need to be made according to the group's make-up and participants' backgrounds.

## The time of reflection

Ideas for a time of reflection and engagement are indicated. These are based on ideas tried out with The Candlelight Group. Inevitably, some have worked better than others, but that will be true of any activity that is trying to connect with the mystery of God. It isn't our success that God wants, for that can start to become idolatrous; it is our constant efforts to approach him, hesitating though they may be. So if you find that something does not work, do not worry. Drop it or adjust it by all means, but soldier on.

## Some health warnings

Do not use this resource slavishly unless you are satisfied that your particular context has similar characteristics to that of The Candlelight Group. If it does not, these ideas will not necessarily work for you.

The themes of Advent are but one interpretation of this time of preparation and waiting for Christmas. Others might be the traditional 'The Patriarchs', 'The Prophets', 'John the Baptist' and 'The Virgin Mary' or the rather apocalyptic 'death', 'judgement', 'heaven' and 'hell'. Whatever you do, select the themes that you are comfortable with and which will suit your group.

The long weeks of fallow time that form the period from Trinity to Christ the King (the week before Advent) offer considerable flexibility for a thematic approach rather than a lectionary-based one. The Candlelight Group has taken the three universal faith-inspired themes of 'God's creation', 'our experience of that creation' and 'our response to it'. These may not be to everyone's liking but offer a variety of approaches involving all the senses.

If you have a group of participants from traditional 'Catholic' backgrounds, regular celebrations of the lives of saints may be welcomed. A general approach to saints' days is offered on page 31.

The annual Remembrance period and All Souls-tide are times at the beginning of November

when there can be particular poignancy for older participants. Many will have memories of the Second World War; all will have lost relatives over the years. Offering a space to remember and grieve is vitally important, particularly if, as is likely, these memories in the long-term bank are clear and accessible. Whatever happens, do not stifle tears. Being in touch with a sense of loss, even after decades, can be very cathartic and entirely appropriate. Just sit with the participants concerned or, alternatively, let others touch and comfort from the position of personal empathy.

Finally, be clear about what you are doing. A group meeting for worship is engaging in just that – a religious activity. It is likely to be underpinned by pastoral theology, the understanding of God as a shepherd, caring for his vulnerable creatures, with the leader as the practical expression of that.

Singing 'Jesus bids us shine', as The Candlelight Group does each week, may be theologically irritating to those who lead the group; the images of heaven as 'up there' and humans as occupying dark corners as rather naughty children does little for many of us. But it is beloved of all the participants, who sing it with great feeling or beat out the rhythm with their hands and feet.

So, in the end, we need to ask ourselves at each turn, 'How does my theology sit with this opportunity for a pastoral encounter with God?' Our answer will determine the nature of the spiritual and religious care that we can offer.

## ADVENT 1

Isaiah 2:1–5

Come thou long-expected Jesus

*The first of the selected Advent themes is that of 'hope'.*

In place of, or in addition to, the usual bowl and candles, an Advent ring would be appropriate for the next four weeks. As an alternative, try a Jesse Tree on which to hang symbols representing each week's theme.

## ADVENT 2

John 3:16–17

Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes

*The second theme is that of 'love'.*

It's important that once the symbols have been selected, they are built on week by week. Perhaps look for cards that portray, say, the crucifixion and discuss the extent one can go to express love.

## ADVENT 3

Mark 1:4–8

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

*'Joy' features as the theme this week.*

Perhaps look for contemporary pictures that express joy – for example faces of smiling children, family members meeting after a long separation – and wonder how much joy those who heard about the Messiah must have felt.

## ADVENT 4

Luke 1:26–28, 30–31, 34–35

Hark! a herald voice is calling

*Finally, in anticipation of Christmas, we reach the theme of 'peace'.*

Symbols for the Jesse Tree might include the dove or a pair of open hands. Try reflecting on the places in the world that have found peace during the year and explore how that compares with the peace that Christ offered.

## CHRISTMAS

See appendix

See appendix

*At some point before the 25th, a Carol Service is appropriate.*

One simple idea to engage (and hopefully hold) interest is to start with a bare table and, as the service progresses, to build up the stable scene, perhaps encircling it with votive candles to complete a ring of Christ-lights.

## THE NAMING OF JESUS

Luke 2:21

To the name of our salvation, verses 1, 2 and 6

*Traditionally, the naming of Jesus is placed between Christmas and Epiphany.*

Obtain some of the popular forename cards with explanations of the meanings and explore them with the group. There may be some surprises! End with the meaning of Jesus' name as 'salvation'.

## EPIPHANY

Matthew 2:1–5a, 7–11

We three kings of Orient are

*The Wise Men's gifts to the Christ child offer plenty of scope for reflection.*

Examples of gold, frankincense and myrrh are fairly easily available with a little searching. An aroma diffuser might offer the smell of myrrh. Their symbolic meaning can be woven in with an experience of each.

## THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

Mark 1:9–11

Thou whose almighty word

*Christ's baptism is full of powerful symbolism to link with participants' own experiences.*

Bring in some symbols used in contemporary baptismal rites – oil, a baptismal candle, card and certificate. Hopefully, these will stir personal memories of baptisms, which can be linked to the biblical account.

## CONVERSION OF ST PAUL

Acts 9:3–6, 10–11, 17–19a

Amazing grace

*Saul's conversion stands as a dramatic story in its own right.*

Explore what it is like to become very vulnerable after years of being strong – an experience probably shared by all the participants (some may be able to express it in one way or another) and Saul.

## CANDLEMAS

Luke 2:22, 25–28, 36–38

Faithful vigil ended

*The heart-warming story that formally ends the Christmas period.*

Pass round pictures of Simeon and Anna and a picture of Jesus' face as a child (downloaded from the net). Wonder what it was that made them realise this child was special. Observe that we're never too old to experience God!



## 2nd BEFORE LENT

Matthew 6:25–29

All my hope on God is founded

*Natural human anxieties about how we survive in life anticipate the onset of Lent ...*

If possible, bring in items associated with austerity – ration cards, pictures of foods from the War and so on – and ask what it was like when there wasn't much to go round. Did it bring worry? If not, why not?

## LAST BEFORE LENT

Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and 11:18–21

Through the night of doubt and sorrow

*... but this week reminds us of the words of God that sustained the people of God.*

Find examples or pictures of the objects that are referred to in this story – tefillin and a mezuzah – and marvel at how Jews have been sustained through their long history. Wonder how the group will be sustained through Lent.

## START OF LENT

John 8:1–11

Lord teach us how to pray aright

*A weekday encounter offers the opportunity to observe Ash Wednesday.*

To those of the Christian faith, Ash Wednesday is a significant day. Talk about its origins and the symbolism of sackcloth and ashes. For those who are willing to receive, mark a cross of ash on the back of their hand.

## LENT 1

Matthew 4:1–4

Forty days and forty nights

*The first three weeks of Lent offer space to examine Jesus' time in the desert.*

Find a picture of a desert scene that displays its bleakness. Some cobbles and small bread rolls will provide objects to help wonder what it is like to go for long periods without food in a very lonely place.

## LENT 2

Matthew 4:5–7

Lead us heavenly father, lead us

*A human desire to check out God courses through this second temptation ...*

As the biblical account identifies, this temptation is about testing God. Explore if anyone has ever made a pact with God – for example, 'If you do so and so for me, I won't ever do such and such again.' How does that feel?

### LENT 3

*... just as the equally human desire for power lies behind the third one.*

Matthew 4:8–11

O love how deep, how broad, how high

Compare pictures of cities where huge wealth finds expression in the built environment, and views across mountain ranges such as the Himalayas. Wonder with the participants where the real power lies.

### LENT 4

*As in any context, Mothering Sunday has to be treated with care, so as not to exclude.*

Exodus 2:1–10 or 1 Samuel 1:20–28

O Jesus I have promised

Help the group to make the traditional posies during the service. Once completed, everyone gives their posy to their neighbour to illustrate how, during the course of the last year of the Group, we have all ‘mothered’ each other.

### LENT 5

*The mood of Lent has now changed and our faces turn towards Jerusalem.*

Matthew 20:17–19

Breathe on me breath of God

There is much to be said for just walking these last two or three weeks of Lent in the footsteps of Christ. Wonder how Jesus and his disciples might be feeling, knowing that there was danger in Jerusalem.

### PALM SUNDAY

*Although unlikely to be meeting on Palm Sunday, the events are too crucial to ignore.*

Matthew 21:1–11

Ride on, ride on, in majesty

As with the previous week, the story is too good and well known to embellish. Assign each person a character (it doesn’t always work) and imagine how they felt as the story unfolds. At the end, distribute palm crosses.

### EASTER

*During Holy Week, a service that completes the Easter story is appropriate.*

See appendix

See appendix

Because the Easter Service might be for a wider constituency than the normal group, trace the story from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday in symbol, word and song, building up the images as the story unfolds.

## EASTER 2

John 20:24–29

Crown him with many crowns

*Traditionally, this is when Thomas enters the post-Resurrection story.*

Thomas' story examines the difference between faith and evidence-based certainty. This becomes more pertinent as we age, so encourage participants to tell something of their own journeys of faith.

## EASTER 3

Luke 24:13–20 and 28–31

The day of resurrection

*The encounter with the 'stranger' on the road to Emmaus.*

If you didn't finish last week's faith journeys, return to them this week. Perhaps wonder why the travellers failed to spot that their companion was Jesus and ask how participants recognised Christ in their lives.

## EASTER 4

John 10:11–16 or Luke 15:1–7

The king of love my shepherd is

*In the run-up to Ascension, we move to some of Jesus' names for himself.*

One way of considering this most well-known story anew involves wondering how it might feel if one of our family went missing. What would we do? How would we feel? Some surprising stories might emerge.

## EASTER 5

John 14:1–6

Thou art the Way: by thee alone

*The week before Jesus' ascension, he tells his friends that they cannot come with him.*

After they'd just lost him to death, this was hard for Jesus to have to say to his disciples. Ask the group if they can remember how they felt when friends or family moved away. Photos from one's own family will help.

## ASCENSION

Acts 1:6–11

Hail the day that sees him rise (selected verses)

*The Easter story's completion is celebrated, even if not on the actual day itself.*

Follow on from last week by trying to touch the feelings at the point of farewell. The closest we might get to this is at the death of a close relative. Do not fear the subject of death and allow deep emotions to be touched.

## ROGATION DAY

Mark 11:22–24

Lord teach us how to pray aright

*This day is traditionally used to ask for God's blessing on the growing crops.*

This day will probably resonate with an older generation. Make up some bowls of compost and sow appropriate indoor seeds before praying for their well being. Watch them grow as the weeks go by ... hopefully!

## PENTECOST

Acts 2:1–6

Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost

*The dramatic events of Pentecost bring the Easter season to a close.*

Say 'hello' in several foreign languages and ask anyone if they recognise the words. Then explore what else might have enabled those at the first Pentecost to understand each other – a smile, holding hands, an embrace?

## TRINITY 1

Genesis 1:1–5

All creatures of our God and King, verses 1 and 7

*The theme of creation begins with the formation of day and night.*

Seven weeks devoted to a single theme offers the opportunity to build up a collage of the world. Begin by preparing a suitable blank 'drawing' board, perhaps like God began, and think how to represent the dark and light.

## TRINITY 2

Genesis 1:6–8

For the beauty of the earth, verses 1 and 5

*The second day of creation saw God create the great dome that he called the sky.*

One way of being able to reflect light and dark, night and day, the sun and the moon is by forming the sky with light and dark blue felt around a circle of green felt as the earth. Some white clouds would signify the areas of day.

## TRINITY 3

Genesis 1:9–13

All creatures of our God and King, verses 4 and 7

*On the third day, God formed the sea and the land and introduced plants and trees.*

Onto the green felt might go some patches of light blue to represent the seas and some yellow for the deserts. Blue wool might signify rivers and varying shapes and shades of green and brown the vegetation.

#### TRINITY 4

*The fourth day saw the creation of the lights in the sky – the sun, moon and stars.*

Genesis 1:14–19

For the beauty of the earth, verses 2 and 5

Back to the sky with a bright sun in the day, perhaps a crescent moon in the night and a sprinkling of proprietary star shapes on the night sky (as a tip, mounting spray can be very useful here).

#### TRINITY 5

*And into the sea and sky God put all the fish and birds.*

Genesis 1:20–23

All creatures of our God and King, verses 1, 3 and 7

To represent the fish and birds, cut out pictures of such creatures from magazines, second-hand books and so on and get the group to select their favourite, perhaps explaining why, before sticking them onto the collage.

#### TRINITY 6

*On the sixth day, God was very busy, creating both the land animals and humanity.*

Genesis 1:24–31

For the beauty of the earth, verses 3 and 5

As with the previous week, cut-outs of land creatures and humans provide the raw material for the completion of the picture. A variety of human images, rich and poor, black and white and so on would be appropriate.

#### TRINITY 7

*And finally God rested ... and so should we!*

Genesis 2:1–3

Dear Lord and Father of mankind

And so we might rest too. Consider the activity of the previous six weeks, talk about the aspects that were liked best and least and just wonder at the richness of God's creation that is the world we occupy.

#### TRINITY 8

*Creation leads into a five week theme of how we experience God's created world.*

Mark 10:46–52 (or Luke or Matthew's account)

At even, ere the sun was set, verses 1 and 3–5

We start by thinking what it might mean to be without sight. Blindfold volunteers and ask them to describe what it feels like. Give them something to hold and ask them to describe it. What other senses are they using?

## TRINITY 9

Mark 7:31–37

*From sight on to hearing.  
Would things be lost if we  
couldn't hear God's creation?*

At even, ere the sun was set, verses 1 and 2, 6 and 7

Place some hi-fi headphones over other volunteers. Say something to them; observe the reaction. Ask them to describe their feelings. What other senses might we use to communicate with someone who cannot hear?

## TRINITY 10

Genesis 27:1a, 5–10, 14–17, 21–27a

*On to touch, which we've  
begun to see can step in when  
other senses fail.*

Now thank we all our God, verse 1

Jacob's deceit in defrauding his brother of his rightful blessing is due to what the blind Isaac thought he was touching. So touch can be deceptive. Invite the group to close its eyes and identify some materials by touch alone.

## TRANSFIGURATION

Luke 9:28–36

*Around this time (on 6 August)  
the church celebrates the Feast  
of the Transfiguration.*

O thou who camest from above

As the Transfiguration is shrouded in mystery, it is an ideal subject for wondering. Wonder if the group has ever seen someone's face change to radiate beauty or joy and how impossible it is to contain this fleeting gift.

## THE VIRGIN MARY

Luke 1:46–55 or The Magnificat

*Similarly, 15 August is usually  
the Feast of the Blessed Virgin  
Mary.*

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord

Examine Mary as a mother – teenager, out of wedlock, overawed and ultimately distraught – through the use of icons, rosary beads, crib figures, statues and so on – but most of all, through conversation and reflection.

## TRINITY 13

John 12:1–3

*The fourth sense that enables  
us to enjoy God's creation is  
that of smell.*

Now thank we all our God, verses 1 and 2

An aromatherapy vaporiser is a helpful device with which to consider the sense of smell. But without one, take perfumed flowers and see if they are identifiable. Wonder how much we would miss without a sense of smell.

## TRINITY 14

Matthew 5:1, 2 and 13

Now thank we all our God, verses 1–3

*And finally in this theme of senses, we come to taste.*

Put some sugar and salt into two small pots and offer it to each participant, to see they can tell the difference. Wonder what it might be like if we couldn't tell the difference. Tea with salt and potatoes with sugar?

## TRINITY 15

Matthew 5:1–3 and 5

Take up thy cross, the Saviour said

*The third and final theme during the Trinity period is taken from the Beatitudes.*

'Poor in spirit' and 'meek' both have meanings of extreme poverty. Wonder how everyone would cope without a valuable possession; or alternatively build up a collage over the weeks with images of those of whom Jesus is talking.

## TRINITY 16

Matthew 5:1–2, 4 and 6

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

*Mourning and fasting are the privations for which blessing is promised.*

Probity is what links these two sayings; 'mourning' for its absence and 'fasting' as a prayer for it to return. Use a newspaper headline or two to illustrate where such a quality might be missing in today's world.

## MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS

Genesis 28:10–17

Angel voices ever singing *or* Ye holy angels bright

*This day will be important for those from faith traditions where angels are central.*

The story of Jacob's ladder is just one of many ways into the subject of angels, which can be illustrated through classical art. It is likely that there will be as many beliefs and experiences of angels as participants!

## HARVEST FESTIVAL

See appendix

See appendix

*Giving thanks in autumn for the harvest is usual among Christian churches.*

Depending on the geographical location, it might be appropriate to interpret 'harvest' in a local or contemporary way; but, in the main with older people, 'traditional' symbols and hymns should form the framework.



## TRINITY 19

*Returning to the Beatitudes, we look at those who are merciful in their dealings.*

Matthew 5:1–2 and 7

Jesus, where'er thy people meet

The parable of the unjust servant (Matthew 18:21–35) is a story of the use and absence of human mercy. Nelson Mandela is a fine example of one who extended mercy to his oppressors. Ask the group to think of others.

## TRINITY 20

*Penultimately, we consider the virtues of peacemaking and purity of heart.*

Matthew 5:1–2, 8–9

Blest are the pure in heart

Purity of heart is the travelling companion of peacemaking. The Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi, and the Christian, Martin Luther King Junior, both exemplified these characteristics. Use them, or others, to consider these links.

## TRINITY 21

*And so, finally, we look at those who are vilified for their Christian faith.*

Matthew 5:1–2 and 10

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

Being able to stand up for one's faith, whilst being oppressed and even imprisoned calls for great courage. At the end of this series of reflections, the group might wonder what it would be like not to be able to meet so freely.

## ALL SOULS

*A time to touch emotions of loss via memories of loved ones who have died.*

John 14:1–6

Abide with me

Make a list of those closest to each group member who have died (perhaps do this the previous week), display it in a frame and use it as the focus for prayer time. Light a special candle to represent an eternal flame of love.

## REMEMBRANCE

*This time of year is poignant for an older generation and should not go unmarked.*

Micah 4:1–4 or Romans 8:35–39

O God our help in ages past

Pictures of war, medals, a dove of peace and so on might all be used to stimulate memories. Instead of the usual bowl of water and floating candles, replace the water with sand and place poppies in it at prayer time.

## 2nd BEFORE ADVENT

Mark 13:1–8

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

*As the church's year draws to a close, its thoughts turn to the end of this world.*

Following last week's memories of suffering in war, this week there is talk of false prophets and destruction. Consider with the group what qualities they consider reveal sincerity. Whom have they known in this category?

## CHRIST THE KING

John 18:33b–37

Immortal, invisible, God only wise

*The church's year ends by thinking about the qualities of Christ as King.*

This can be a quiet reflection on either the nature of heaven or what might be different if Christ ruled humanity on earth. Find examples from art that show the various aspects of the kingship of Christ.

## EPIPHANY 3

Mark 1:16–20

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult

*Depending on the timing of Easter, there may be an extra week in the Epiphany season.*

The biblical accounts of the disciples' calling suggest that those singled out literally dropped everything and followed Jesus. Ask the participants how it might feel if you asked them to drop everything and follow you!

## A SAINT'S DAY

Use the Lectionary reading that is set

Failing a specific hymn, use 'For all the saints'

*Saints are popular with those from certain traditions. A Lectionary gives their feast days.*

Icons will show stylised images of many saints – for example Luke is invariably seated with books at a desk and John is usually bearded and balding. Books on the lives of the saints provide much material that can be used for reflection.

## AFTER A TRAUMA

Psalm 23

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want

*Occasionally, it may be necessary to respond to a tragedy or major incident.*

The reflection will almost certainly lead itself. The aftermath of trauma is not a time to give answers but a space in which emotions can come to the surface. Encourage this and live with the grief and tears.

**SPECIAL OCCASION**

Psalm 100

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven

*Just as trauma may need to be marked, so too do celebrations.*

Celebrating, say, a participant's golden wedding or 80th birthday in the context of faith will be important for the group. A little preparation may unearth pictures and reminiscences for which God can be thanked.

# Appendix

## The Candlelight Group Service

*Chairs are arranged in a circle around a small, low table, with a cloth of the appropriate liturgical colour. In the centre of the table a bowl filled with water contains a lump of rough-hewn granite that takes a votive candle. If this is not possible, a tall flat-bottomed candle would do just as well. Around the perimeter of the table are arranged votive candles, one for each of the participants including the leaders. The circle of candles is completed with a cross.*

*Leader* We light this candle to represent our saviour, Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

*The candle in the centre of the bowl is lit.*

*Leader* Let us welcome each other, by sharing in the light.

*We welcome and name each other by lighting a candle for each one of us from the centre candle and placing it back on the table in the circle round the bowl.*

### Opening Song

Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light,  
like a little candle burning in the night.  
In this world is darkness, so let us shine,  
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine, first of all for him:  
well he sees and knows it if our light grows dim.  
He looks down from heaven to see us shine,  
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine there for all around.  
Many kinds of darkness in the world are found,  
sin and want and sorrow – so we must shine,  
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light,  
like a little candle burning in the night.  
In this world is darkness, so let us shine,  
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

## Encounter and Reflection

*We listen to a reading from Scripture or another appropriate source. Using one or more of our senses, we seek to encounter the God who loves and cares for us, after which we reflect together on what we have experienced.*

### Our Prayers

*We take the candles that were lit at the start of our time together and use each as a symbol of the thoughts and prayers that are on our hearts. Each candle is then placed in the bowl to circle the central candle, the light of Christ.*

*Leader* Let us collect all our prayers into one by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

*All* Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### Closing Hymn

*We sing our closing hymn which is on the large green sheet of paper.*

### The Grace

*We end our time together by blessing each other with the words of the Grace.*

*All* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, evermore. Amen.

## **Christmas Carol Service 'God's gift to his world'**

*This is a service for the whole day hospital.  
Chairs are arranged in a semi circle around a  
large, bare uncovered dining table.*

### **The Bidding**

*Leader* Almighty God, we have come together to rejoice in the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, to us as the light of hope in a world that is sometimes very dark. Be with us as we hear again, in word and song, the story of his birth and the salvation of the world.

*All* Amen.

### **First Reading** Luke 2:1-5

*We create the stable in which our story happens by forming a ring of votive candles.*

### **Carol**

O little town of Bethlehem

### **Second Reading** Luke 2:6-7

*We place Mary and Joseph, the babe and the animals in our stable.*

### **Carol**

Away in a manger

### **Third Reading** Luke 2:8-14

*We place the angels near the crib scene.*

### **Carol**

Hark! the herald angels sing

### **Fourth Reading** Luke 2:15-20

*We place the shepherds in the stable.*

### **Carol**

While shepherds watched their flocks by night

*The votive candles around the scene are lit.*

## **Our Prayers**

*Leader* Father of lights,  
from whom comes every good gift:  
keep us in the light of Christ,  
that most perfect of gifts,  
to shine in your world  
that all may believe in you.

*All* Amen.

*Leader* Let us offer all our prayers and praises to God this Christmas, in the words that the adult Christ taught us.

*All* Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### **Carol**

Silent night, holy night

### **Dismissal**

*All* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, evermore. Amen.

## An Easter Service 'The Final Journey'

*As with the Christmas service, this is for the whole day hospital and chairs are arranged in a semi circle around a large, bare uncovered dining table.*

### Greeting

*Leader* We are gathered here together to follow Jesus on his final journey to the cross and beyond; heavenly Father, give each of us the strength to walk with your Son, today and the rest of our lives.

*All* Amen.

### First Reading Mark 1:9–13

*On the table we place a bowl of sand to symbolise Jesus' time in the wilderness and the time of waiting during Lent.*

### Hymn

Forty days and forty nights

### Second Reading John 12:12–15

*On the table we place a palm branch to remind us of Jesus' entry on the donkey into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.*

### Hymn

Ride on, ride on in majesty

### Third Reading Luke 23:32–33; 44–46

*On the table we place a cross to remember the way that Jesus died for us all on Good Friday.*

### Hymn

When I survey the wondrous cross

### Fourth Reading Matthew 28:1–6a

*On the table we place a lighted candle that shows us that, in rising from the dead, Jesus shines for us as an everlasting light in a world of darkness.*

## Our Prayers

*Leader* We thank you, O God our Father, for in your great love for us all, you have given us new life through the resurrection from the dead of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

*All* Amen.

*Leader* In thanksgiving for the Resurrection, let us pray the Lord's Prayer together.

*All* Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Hymn

Jesus Christ is risen today

### Dismissal

*All* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

## Harvest Festival 'All good gifts around us'

*As with the Christmas and Easter services, this is for the whole day hospital and chairs are arranged in a semi circle around a large, bare uncovered dining table.*

### Welcome

Leader The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it. We are gathered here today to thank God for the beauty of his world, for all the good things it provides for our use, and for his love to us in providing these gifts. Let us praise the Lord.

### Hymn

All things bright and beautiful

**First Reading** 'Thanksgiving' by Kate McIlhagga<sup>1</sup>

*On the table we place some flowers and a bowl of fruit, to represent the many gifts that God has given us and for which we give him thanks today.*

### Hymn

We plough the fields

**Second Reading** Luke 12:22–24 and 27

*On the table we place a loaf of bread and a basket of vegetables, some of the gifts that God gives us from the land to feed and sustain us.*

### Our Prayers

Leader God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,  
God of seedtime and harvest,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
bless us and strengthen us  
to live and blossom and bear good fruit  
to your praise and glory.

All Amen.

Leader In thanksgiving we pray the Lord's Prayer together.

All Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

**Third Reading** 'Where apples are exotic fruit'  
by Christian Aid<sup>2</sup>

*We place on the table a small dish and a handful of coins as a symbol of hope for those who have far less than we do.*

### Hymn

Now thank we all our God

### Dismissal

All The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, evermore. Amen.

1 This poem can be found on page 259 of *Harvest for the World: a worship anthology on sharing the work of creation*, compiled by Geoffrey Duncan for Christian Aid, published by Canterbury Press, 2002.

2 This short prose item can be found on page 203 of *Harvest for the World: a worship anthology on sharing the work of creation*, compiled by Geoffrey Duncan for Christian Aid, published by Canterbury Press, 2002.



## Epilogue

It is probably the case that most Christian denominations tend to focus their energies on the younger age groups within their membership. Within the Church of England for example, most dioceses and even some parishes have dedicated children and youth advisers and workers as salaried staff. Very few, if any, have corresponding resources for older people, still less for those living with dementia. In an organisation that still tends to define its effectiveness in terms of numbers of members or worshippers, such people are not seen as areas of potential growth.

Yet it is invariably the case that the stories of the many persons of faith who find themselves living with dementia contain chapters of faithful service to family, friends, community and

church that are all too easily forgotten. Out of sight, out of mind, so to speak.

For those of us who espouse a faith and do not live with dementia, especially leaders of faith communities, there is surely a challenge in our reading of the sacred texts and in our understanding of the nature of God to celebrate such lives. Those who live with dementia still contain something of the divine; God surely does not remove it from us when our memories start to fade. So dementia throws down a gauntlet to us to help those who live with dementia in seeking new ways of encountering the God who never forgets them, even if we frequently do.

In picking up the gauntlet, this modest booklet is a small contribution to that search.



## Leveson Centre Publications

***Working with Older People: A Resource Directory for Churches***, details of over 100 church-related organisations working with older people (published in collaboration with MHA Care Group), 2004, £7.50 (in plastic wallet), £15.00 (in A4 binder)

- Paper 1 ***Understanding the Needs of Older People***, Alison M Johnson and Helen Hickman Morris, 2001, £4.00
- Paper 2 ***Valuing Age? An Agenda for Society and the Church***, Mark Santer, first Leveson Lecture, 2001, £4.00
- Paper 3 ***Committed to the Asylum? The Long Term Care of Older People***, Malcolm Johnson, second Leveson Lecture, 2002, £4.00
- Paper 4 ***A Good Death***, papers presented at a Leveson seminar, 2003, £5.00
- Paper 5 ***The Policy Challenges of Population Ageing***, Kenneth Howse, 2003, £7.50
- Paper 6 ***Dementia: Improving Quality of Life***, papers presented at a Leveson seminar, 2003, £5.00
- Paper 7 ***Older People, Faith and Dementia: twenty-four practical talks for use in care homes***, Chris Crosskey (published in partnership with Church Army), 2004, £6.00
- Paper 8 ***Seeing the Person beyond the Dementia***, papers presented at a Leveson seminar, 2004, £5.00
- Paper 9 ***Is Religion the Friend of Ageing?*** Peter G Coleman, third Leveson Lecture, 2004, £5.00
- Paper 10 ***Journeying through Old Age and Illness***, Leo Missinne, 2004, £5.00
- Paper 11 ***The Experience of Ageing: A Challenge to Christian Belief***, Helen Oppenheimer, fourth Leveson Lecture, 2005, £4.00
- Paper 12 ***Palliative Care for People with Dementia***, based on papers presented at a Leveson seminar, 2005, £5.00
- Paper 13 ***Befriending Illness***, James Woodward, 2006, £4.00
- Paper 14 ***A Good Funeral***, papers presented at a Leveson seminar, 2006, £5.00
- Paper 15 ***Thinking the Unthinkable Ten Years On***, The Rt Hon Frank Field MP, fifth Leveson Lecture, 2006, £4.00

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