



# **OLDER PEOPLE, FAITH AND DEMENTIA**

Twenty-four practical talks  
for use in care homes

LEVESON PAPER NUMBER SEVEN

Chris Crosskey

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# **Older People, Faith and Dementia**

**Twenty-four practical talks for use in care homes**

Chris Crosskey

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## Foreword

Donald Coggan a former Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in the foreword to *Chariots of the Gospel: the centenary history of the Church Army* (Walter 1982):

[The purpose of Church Army] is to proclaim the Good News by word and action, to bring wholeness to those who are damaged by sin and want, to train and deploy evangelists within the Church's ministry, and to help Christians to express their faith intelligently and winsomely.

Among the many evangelistic activities of its ministry, Church Army has worked with older people for over 120 years. In the early days of its history it provided Christian care homes, once known as Sunset Homes for women and Anchorage Homes for men. It was also an early provider of sheltered housing for those older people capable of looking after themselves given the right kind of accommodation. Houses were purchased and converted to what became known as Churchill Flats, Sir Winston Churchill giving his name to the scheme.

Today Church Army deploys evangelists working with older people in the community and continues to pioneer new ways of reaching older people with the gospel. Chris Crosskey is one such person. A qualified social worker, trained as a Church Army evangelist, Chris has a special passion for meeting the spiritual needs of those living with dementia. Over the past few years, he has been conducting acts of worship and trying out different ideas for short talks in order to discover those things that work well and seem to connect with those living with dementia. His observations and the notes he has made have resulted in this piece of work, which is probably the only resource of its type currently available. Although Chris would not use some of the language used by Donald Coggan above, it certainly is a document designed to promote wholeness for those living with dementia and to help Christians and other church leaders to express their faith intelligently.

May I, on behalf of Church Army, acknowledge our grateful thanks to the Leveson Centre for the interest it has shown in this document and for agreeing to format and publish it. Church Army resources the church with trained evangelists and is not a publisher as such.

This is an excellent piece of work. I hope it will be widely used and stimulate the development of other practical ideas to enable ordinary Christians to share their faith with those living with dementia.

*Captain Michael Collyer CA*  
*Convenor, Focus Group for Older People*

## Introduction

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My ministry is principally with older people and over the years it has been a great joy and privilege to witness God working in the lives of such people. God never ceases to amaze me with his desire to touch each person uniquely, to share his love in abundance and be in a relationship with us – none more so than people who are living with dementia. This includes people with Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia and other dementias that inhibit concentration and cause loss of short-term memory and reasoning ability. These identifiable illnesses, which fall under the common term of 'dementia', present a number of difficulties for the individual – notably deterioration in the ability to reason and communicate effectively, progressive disorientation, confusion in time and place and personality and behavioural changes.

A special aspect of my ministry is to serve people living with dementia, especially by establishing and maintaining opportunities for worship. It is quite conceivable that people living with dementia, who may or may not have been regular worshippers living in our community, are denied worship once the illness has taken hold and progressed. There could be a number of reasons for this:

- withdrawal from church worship due to embarrassment and awkwardness as the illness advances
- lack of support or understanding of the illness by church members and leaders with the result that carers withdraw their loved one from the public domain
- familiar church worship and liturgy becomes ineffectual as communication and orientation becomes a barrier
- the person living with dementia may feel abandoned by God as their worship, ritual, devotions, prayer and spiritual life fades and eventually stops.

Church communities do have a responsibility to offer people living with dementia a sense of fellowship, belonging and spiritual nurture during their illness. It can be a daunting task at first to step into a home caring for such people and offer pastoral care and a regular act of worship but perseverance and faith must play their part. You may be surprised by the welcome you receive and how many people actually have a faith as you form friendships and relationships.

The short talks featured in this booklet have been recorded to assist in ministering to people living with dementia. They are based on the conviction that all personhood is given by God, because human life is God's gift. The psalmist said, 'For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works.' (Psalm 139:13–14) Our whole person or being is made in the image of God and as such nothing can take that away. For a person who has dementia, their personhood hasn't ceased or mysteriously disappeared because

of the disease's influences upon them. Personhood under God, as it is given by grace, holds high honour and respect, as he wants to be in relationship with us.

All the talks have been tried and tested over several years within various services in which I have officiated at a range of residential and nursing homes. The services have a standard format – usually a scripture reading but occasionally a poem or reflection, a prayer, preparation for the talk, delivery of the talk, concluding prayer and five communication tips. All bible references have been taken from the New Revised Standard Version, except where noted. However, scripture readings may be taken from other translations of your choice. The communication tips given at the end of each talk are not specific to that talk but provide general advice and useful ways to communicate meaningfully.

The key is to use one's imagination in presenting talks of this kind. The talks in this booklet are a guide as well as a tool for effective delivery and communication to people living with dementia. Remember that throughout the talk and worship generally you are communicating to people to help them recall memories, be in touch with their feelings and help them create a sense of spiritual awareness and affirmation. It may not be obvious on all occasions that people have absorbed or have made any obvious responses to your talk. There is no way of measuring the spiritual well-being of individuals who have varying degrees of confusion. But in my experience it is rare that individuals don't respond in some way. It may be the obvious vibrant singing of familiar hymns, or the togetherness and familiar words of the Lord's Prayer, the communal laughter and sharing of emotions or the gentle tapping of well-known tunes, the raising of a finger or hand, a smile of joy, the holding of hands. These and many more give a sense of spiritual dimension and involvement, which give glory to God and add a real sense of value to the worship.

Talks need to reflect the personality of the leader and I recommend that you prepare well in advance. They need only be five or six minutes long. The selection in this booklet uses a range of visual aids, objects, symbols, music, crafts, dance and movement to make links with people and include them wherever possible. Non-verbal communication on your part and the use of appropriate body language may communicate far more effectively than words. Pauses and silences are also valuable tools to enable spaces of reality or orientation. The communication tips on the talks will cover the above mentioned as well as offering advice on dealing with the behavioural changes of the person living with dementia.

I hope you will be encouraged as well as challenged in your ministry with those living with dementia as you develop your talks and become more confident in expressing your ideas by using your imagination and skills in acts of worship.

*Chris Crosskey*  
*September 2003*

## General Themes

### Theme: Love

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#### Scripture: Romans 8:38–39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### Prayer

Lord God, may the presence of your Son, Jesus Christ, show us your love in all aspects of our life. Let nothing inhibit your love from entering our hearts and may we always love our neighbour as ourselves, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### Preparation

Have the following items ready. A large card with the word 'LOVE' written on it in bold letters. A large Valentine's card and some Valentine's poems (if using this theme near Valentine's day). A fresh bunch of roses (or any flowers); these can be artificial. However, if fresh, people can smell the fragrance. A wedding ring. A box of chocolates. A Bible. A Helen Steiner Rice poem called 'He Loves You'. (You can get this from the internet by typing "Helen Steiner Rice" "He Loves You" into a search engine)

#### Delivery

- 1 Share that the theme is 'Love' and show everyone the large card with 'LOVE' written on it. Ask people what the word says. Many will be able to read. Sensitively walk around the room showing people the card.
- 2 Share a couple of short sentences that many of us fall in love. Our heart beats fast when we are in love for the first time (place your hand on your heart). We hold hands with our loved one (hold someone's hand, making sure you know the person so he or she is comfortable with this). Ask the people if they remember when they first fell in love. Not everyone will respond but some may recall. Some of the staff may help you with this.
- 3 Hold up your large Valentine's card (the larger the better). This will bring a smile or two. Ask whether they remember receiving Valentine cards. Remind everyone once again what the theme is and show them the card with 'LOVE' written on it (do this a couple of times throughout the talk as a reminder). For a few moments read some short amusing Valentine poems and verses. Generally people will remember some of the well-known ones and join in. If

it is appropriate, ask one of the congregation you know well to read a poem or verse.

- 4 Show the fresh bunch of roses, flowers or artificial flowers. If they are fresh go around slowly and show the flowers and ask if people would like to smell the fragrance. Most people love to see and smell fresh flowers and you'll receive some lovely comments. When you are going around describe the colours, the type of flowers and say that a bunch of flowers can demonstrate love between people.
- 5 Raise your left hand and ask what you have on your finger. Many will say a wedding ring. Go to a few people and allow them to touch your wedding ring. This can raise some conversation and it may bring some people to recall memories. Don't be alarmed if one or two have a few tears. Generally staff are present and they'll offer some comfort and support. Share that a wedding ring is a symbol of love between two people.
- 6 Show a box of chocolates. This always gets people's attention and raises a few smiles. Mention that chocolates given to a loved one is a sign of affection. You can check with the staff of the home whether you can go around and give a chocolate to people or leave them for distribution after the service. Ask if people like chocolates. I think you'll know what their answer will be.
- 7 Share the scripture from Romans once again and/or read the poem from Helen Steiner Rice. You may have your own favourite love poem you can read. In your own words share a few sentences about the scripture reading and show the theme card again of 'LOVE'. Reassure everyone that God loves them very much and that nothing can separate them from his love.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, thank you that you love each one of us, that you gave us your Son, Jesus Christ, to teach us to love one another. Help us today to continue to show that love by caring and comforting each other. May we always know your presence in our lives and that special love you have for us. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Always identify yourself at the beginning of the act of worship.
- 2 A smile goes along way when you talk and address people.
- 3 Set a pace throughout the service which is unhurried and relaxed.
- 4 Always speak clearly and confidently.
- 5 Demonstrate your interest in those around by having good eye contact.

## Theme: 'Senses'

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### Scripture: John 20:24–29

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.' A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

### Prayer

Almighty God, help us to believe without seeing, and give us a greater understanding of our faith to believe in you and never doubt your presence. We say our prayer through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Preparation

Have the following items ready for the five senses. Smell – pot pourri. Touch – cuddly toy. Hearing – a piece of music. Taste – fruit. Seeing – candle and picture of Jesus Christ. A large card with the word 'SENSES' written in bold. Have five cards and write in bold on each of them the five senses.

### Delivery

- 1 Share that the theme is 'Senses' and show everyone the large card with 'SENSES' written on it. Ask the people what the word says. Then ask them to read each card one at a time SMELL, TOUCH, HEARING, TASTE, SEEING. Ensure that all are able to see the cards.
- 2 Show the card with 'SMELL' written on it. Ask everyone to say the word and ask what their favourite smell is. Give them some examples such as fresh bread, flowers, fruit. Show them the pot pourri and ask some people to have a smell of the fragrance. You'll get some interesting reactions.
- 3 Show the card with 'TOUCH' written on it. Ask everyone to say the word and ask what kind of things we like to touch. Give them some examples such as stroking a dog or cat, a book, a soft towel. Go around and show them the cuddly toy. Have a reasonably large teddy bear, or a furry dog or cat, something they can touch and stroke. This always gets people smiling and chatting.

- 4 Show the card with 'HEARING' written on it. Again ask everyone to say the word. Mention how important it is to hear and put on a favourite piece of music such as a sing-along song, hymn, choral. Maybe select an old time favourite and encourage them to join in.
- 5 Show the card with 'TASTE' written on it. Ask everyone what the word says and ask what their favourite foods are. Show everyone a nice bowl of fruit; include a variety of fruits and colours. People love to see apples, oranges, pears, bananas, grapes and so on. Again you'll have some lovely remarks and comments.
- 6 Show the card with 'SEEING' written on it. Mention how valuable our eyes are to us. From your altar, pick up a candle and explain the significance of what a lighted candle means. Show a large picture of Jesus Christ and ask people who the image is and what it may mean to them?
- 7 Share briefly an overview of the scripture from John 20:24–29. Say that Thomas wanted to touch, see and hear his Lord, or he wouldn't believe he had risen. Share that God wants us to enjoy all our senses and that he created us to value and use them for his glory.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, thank you for the gifts of smell, touch, hearing, taste and sight. Thank you that you created us in your image and that you gave us life to use our senses. Bless those of us who are losing some of our senses due to frailty and ill health. Make us ever mindful of your presence and love towards us. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Use short and simple sentences.
- 2 Avoid any theological jargon.
- 3 Let your manner be always one which is friendly and welcoming.
- 4 When showing large cards with words written on them, allow people time to focus upon this visual aid in an unhurried way.
- 5 Encourage people to touch, taste and smell objects but do this sensitively.

## **Theme: What's God Like?**

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### **Scripture: Psalm 8**

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beast of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

### **Prayer**

Father, thank you that you value us so much in all your creation. What a privilege it is to be honoured in such a way that you give us stewardship and dominion over so much. How majestic is your name in all the earth. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. A large piece of card with bold writing 'WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?' You require the following items: a rucksack, policeman's helmet, hot water bottle, teddy bear, Bible and a large picture of Jesus Christ.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Show the card with the words written on it 'WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?' Ask everyone to read the card and listen to any responses. It's a difficult question so don't be surprised if you get little feedback.
- 2 Quote John 1. 'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.' Ask the question, 'Would you like to see God?' Listen to any answers; some may be interesting.
- 3 Share that it is easier to understand something or someone by seeing it. Put the rucksack on your back and slowly walk up and down as if you are a hiker. Ask everyone, 'What is on my back and what was I doing?' Put on the policeman's helmet and act as if you are a policeman on the beat. Ask everyone who they think you are. You may get some amusing comments. Bring out the hot water bottle and ask them what this object is. Have a brief conversation about how warm a hot water bottle is on a cold night. Show everyone your lovely teddy bear. Allow a few people to hold it and make

comments. Mention that we know and understand these objects because we know their purpose and we can see and touch them.

- 4 Say to everyone, 'Where can God be found?' Give some examples where God can be found such as creation and the beauty of the earth, in people like you and me, reading the Bible (show the Bible, mention some examples) and in our prayers.
- 5 Show the large picture of Jesus Christ. Allow people to see this image and share their thoughts for a few moments. Explain after a while who is the person in the picture and share that Jesus was God. He was God's Son made in his image. Keep your sentences short.
- 6 Show your card 'WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE?' once again. Say he's like Jesus Christ who came to live among us and gave us salvation.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, we thank you for your greatness as it is seen in all the world. Thank you that Jesus Christ was your Son and that we have a glimpse of your divine nature living among us. Through Jesus we pray. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Never worry if you get minimal response from the congregation. The Holy Spirit is with you all. Never underestimate or devalue the richness and integrity of the service you are delivering to everyone.
- 2 When you begin the service make sure there are no distractions from a lounge radio or television. Generally residents and staff will co-operate and turn these off during the duration of the worship.
- 3 Don't be afraid to be a fool for Christ. Share your natural humour and display your love and enjoyment in what you are doing.
- 4 At times you will need to repeat what you have just said. This is important as it gives more time for people to gather their thoughts.
- 5 Allow people enough time to respond to questions, visual aids and body language.

## **Theme: Closeness of God**

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### **Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1 and 4–10**

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, thank you that you called Samuel for your service. Open our hearts also to hear your calling for our lives. May we be witnesses of your gospel joy and love to everyone. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. Obtain some old record album covers of popular recording artists of the 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s. Make sure that on the front cover it shows a clear and reasonably large photograph of the singer. Select for yourself approximately six or seven artists such as Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, Val Doonican, Harry Secombe, Dean Martin, Vera Lynn or Jim Reeves. Place a piece of paper to cover the name of the artist on the album cover (stick the paper with some blu-tack). Also obtain a large picture of Jesus Christ, one which you believe people will recognise. Have a large card prepared with the following words written in bold: 'HOW DOES GOD REVEAL HIMSELF TO US?'

### **Delivery**

- 1 Briefly recap on the story of Samuel and Eli, explaining how easy it is for us not to hear God's voice and consequently not respond to his call.
- 2 Show everyone the card with the words written on 'HOW DOES GOD REVEAL HIMSELF TO US?' Ask people to say the words and see what kind of responses you get. Encourage people by suggesting some examples such as prayers, Bible, creation, Holy Spirit.

- 3 Explain how easy it is to recognise people by photographs and for a few minutes enjoy a guessing game of singing stars from bygone years. One at a time show people the album cover, making sure you go around everyone. Encourage people to have a guess and then reveal the name by taking away the piece of paper on the cover.
- 4 Repeat this exercise with all the album covers. It creates quite an interest among people as they attempt to have a guess. You will get some funny answers and again this creates a good atmosphere with all concerned. Congratulate everyone for taking part.
- 5 Conclude by showing the picture of Jesus Christ and see how many recognise this image. Take it round everyone and encourage people to have an attempt at answering. Affirm that God is always close to us and that he hears all our prayers, the singing of our hymns and is aware of all our daily actions and good deeds towards others. Like Samuel, may we always be aware that God wishes to communicate to us in our daily lives.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, when we are lacking in faith or feel far away from your presence, help us to know that you care for us. Encourage us to listen to you through prayer, Bible reading and in the many other ways you speak to us. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Wherever possible use secular sources to enhance the worship such as recording artists, poetry, literature, drama or dance.
- 2 Never assume a person living with dementia does not understand. We are all children of God and made in His image.
- 3 Always ask one short question or give one direction at a time.
- 4 When moving around the room, always remember never to startle, shout or surprise people.
- 5 Always remember to observe feelings and emotions.

## **Theme: Rewards**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 10:40–42**

‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.’

### **Prayer**

Father, touch us with a right spirit which cares and loves those around us. By the example of your Son, Jesus Christ, make us worthy to receive blessings, which give glory to your name. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. Make yourself a gold medal on a ribbon. You could use a chocolate gold coin, which is around at Christmas and Easter. Try to obtain some old school sports certificates and a trophy (shield or cup) of some description.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Ask simply ‘Who liked sports days at school?’ See what kind of response you get, a mixture I would imagine. Encourage those who remember to share which sports they liked.
- 2 Share that you won some certificates when you were younger and you’ve brought them along to show everyone. Hold them up one at a time and share what they say. Say how proud you were and the feeling and emotions in winning them. Ask whether anyone won any school sports certificates.
- 3 Show them your gold medal and place it around your neck. Say, ‘I wish I’d won a gold medal like this, but I wasn’t quite an Olympian!’ Share with everyone your trophy or cup; maybe it was one you won at some point. If this is the case share your story briefly. Ask whether anyone ever won a trophy or cup.
- 4 Allow people to touch the objects and exchange chatter about school sports days.
- 5 Share from the passage from Matthew the way in which Jesus welcomes everyone to know him and that because of his many blessings we are rewarded with his love. By his example Jesus teaches us to become better people, more faithful, caring and welcoming to others.

- 6 Suggest that our rewards from Jesus Christ for being faithful Christians will not be certificates or sports trophies but will be much more abundant and plentiful. One day we will meet our Lord in heaven and what greater reward can we receive?

### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for the many rewards you bestow upon us. Your rewards are so plentiful and we are grateful. Bless us this day in the name of your dear son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 A good way to commence an Act of Worship is to say the day, time and where you are. Comment on the weather, the time of year and welcome everyone to the service.
- 2 Move in the direction of the altar (a table with a cloth, cross, candles, Bible on it) to suggest that we are meeting for a church service.
- 3 Be aware of those with hearing difficulties and those who may be visually impaired. Adapt your delivery to suit such people.
- 4 Use symbols, visual aids, resources and so on which fit the generation you are dealing with.
- 5 Allow for silences within your service. These are not necessarily unproductive spaces but moments of constructive concentration for the listener.

## Theme: Peace

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### Reflection

With the Lord as your shepherd, you have all that you need,  
For if you follow in his footsteps wherever he may lead,  
He will guard and guide and keep you in his loving, watchful care,  
And when travelling in dark valleys, your shepherd will be there.  
His goodness is unfailing; his kindness knows no end,  
For the Lord is a good shepherd on whom you can depend.  
So, when your heart is troubled, you'll find quiet peace and calm  
If you open up the Bible and just read this treasured Psalm.

Helen Steiner Rice, *Someone Loves You*, 1983 (based on Psalm 23)

### Prayer

Jesus we thank you that you are our shepherd leading us through the ups and downs of life. Grant us strength and courage in all our trials and tribulations and give us a sense of your peace and calm. Amen.

### Preparation

Have the following items ready. A cassette or CD of the song 'Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here.' A book which you enjoy reading. A favourite family photograph or a picture of nature, creation or animals, anything that shows peace and tranquillity. A nice bunch of fresh flowers. A lit candle. Your favourite prayer. A large card with the word 'PEACE' written on it.

### Delivery

- 1 Show everyone the card with the word 'PEACE' written on it. Ask what the word says and see what responses you get. Share briefly that our world is far from peaceful (offer some current news of unrest around the world).
- 2 Share some examples where we can find peace today. Show your favourite book and say that in reading its words it brings contentment and relaxation. Show a photograph of your family or a picture that depicts peace and beauty. Describe the picture and share how important it is to you.
- 3 Hold up your fresh bunch of flowers and share how lovely it is to receive flowers and how beautiful they are in the garden or in a vase. Allow as many people as possible to smell the fragrance and touch the flowers, and as you walk around look at their faces and smiles.
- 4 Show everyone how a lit candle can also be a symbol of peace. Share briefly why we have candles on the altar (front table) for the act of worship.

- 5 Read your prayer to everyone and share why it is special to you.
- 6 Play the cassette or CD of the song 'Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.' If you have the words allow people to sing along.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord, you brought peace to our world and you ask us to live in harmony with each other. Make this day a peaceful one and may we love our neighbour as we love ourselves. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Always try to remember names. Ask the staff beforehand to introduce you to the residents. During the service when approaching an individual simply ask them their name and depending upon the severity of the dementia you will receive a reply.
- 2 Prior to an act of worship, if at all possible, arrange the furniture within the room to suit the style of service you wish to deliver. You will get to know those who like a front seat and appreciate the service by being closer to the front. Others may feel more comfortable elsewhere, so respect individual wishes.
- 3 Never rush a service. Arrive if at all possible 10–15 minutes before the service starts. This gives you time to meet people and to set up the service.
- 4 At the end of a service, again take your time, and go around thanking people for participating and making the service so special.
- 5 Select hymns that you believe are popular and personal favourites. Large print is desirable, and lightweight booklets or individual sheets are recommended.

## **Theme: God our Protector**

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**Scripture: Genesis 6:17–19, 21, 7:17, 9:16**

God said to Noah, ‘For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them.’ The flood continued for forty days on the earth; and the waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. God said, ‘When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’

### **Prayer**

Father, your favour is with all believing people and all creatures living on the earth. Thank you for the obedience of Noah and his belief to trust in you. May we trust in your promises throughout our lives. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. A large map of the world or a world globe. A model of the ark (small and large models exist) or some large A4 children’s Bible stories have pop-up images of Noah’s Ark. Design a colourful rainbow as big as possible. Create a shoe box cross. This can be eight boxes high with two boxes either side to form a cross. Seal with strong parcel tape. Cover with white or colourful paper of your choosing and again seal with clear sellotape for extra strength (this cross can be used on other occasions). You can of course use any cross if you don’t have time to make the shoebox cross.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Briefly remind everyone of the story of Noah. Ask people what kind of animals may have been saved in the ark. Affirm their answers and encourage them in their responses.
- 2 Show them your map or globe of the world. Point to the large blue oceans and share a little about the vastness of the sea. Move around the room engaging as many people as you can.
- 3 Show everyone your ark or open your pop-up book revealing Noah’s boat. Listen to the various comments and allow people to touch and see these items.

- 4 Once again, remind everyone about the length of time Noah, his family and the animals were in the vessel. Even ask the question 'How many days and nights was Noah in the ark?' Some people do like to have a go at answering, especially those who are Christians and have a church background.
- 5 Say a few words about rainbows and how impressive they are in the sky. Ask, 'Has anyone seen a rainbow?' Listen to the responses and ask other short questions if applicable. Show everyone your rainbow and inform people of the colours within it. Share about God's covenant that when he sees a rainbow it reminds him of his promise between himself and every living creature that he will never flood the earth again.
- 6 Let everyone see the cross and inform everyone that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and salvation. Jesus brought a new promise of God's love to us and a way of remembering that love at Holy Communion.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Almighty God, thank you for your promises to us, for your steadfast and merciful love to all mankind. Thank you for all living creatures on land and in the sea. May we always remember the beauty of your creation and the splendour of your earth. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Forming relationships and friendships is more important than evoking conversation.
- 2 If during a service you recall or trigger memories, permit people to share what their feelings are.
- 3 Be aware of people who depend upon assistance for their mobility. Be careful not to become involved in any lifting or handling of residents unless you are trained and permitted to do so. Keep in touch with staff members for any information you require on new residents.
- 4 It is okay to hold someone's hand to offer reassurance and support. But again get to know the residents over a period of time before you jump in too quickly.
- 5 Pay attention to those who continually cry for help or assistance. In many cases those who are unsettled or restless may be new to the home and are afraid of their unfamiliar surroundings. Others may be seeking help to go to another room or to the toilet. Some will be concerned as they wish to be collected and go home as their short-term memory has failed. In all these circumstances and more give comfort and hope that all is okay. Listen and be truthful in saying where they are and help is at hand. The person's feelings are real and this deserves respect and genuine love and concern.

## **Theme: Gifts**

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### **Scripture: Ephesians 2:8–10**

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

### **Prayer**

Father, you have bestowed upon us many wonderful gifts, both temporal and spiritual. May these gifts be used for your glory now and forever. Amen.

### **Preparation**

This talk may be best used if you can utilise the gifts of the residents. This may be done by using their talents from an activity session recently done within the home and sharing them at this service. For example, some homes have regular therapeutic or activity sessions whereby residents can be creative in making various things such as cards, drawing and art work, special themes around Easter, Christmas, Harvest or knitting, embroidery, puzzle-making, communal singing and so on. With a bit of planning you can coincide this service with the sharing of their gifts and skills. Organise the service around the items they have made or incorporate their skills within the service. Arrange all the items around the room or display them on some tables. Send out invitations to family and friends.

### **Delivery**

- 1 As an introduction share what an amazing sight it is to see the variety of skills and talent people have within the home. Thank all the residents for their hard work and especially thank all staff and volunteers for their support and help in creating this wonderful display.
- 2 If there is a range of different items within the service, briefly share what they are by going around the room or pointing them out on the table.
- 3 Some residents may well have what they have made nearby them, so go and appreciate what they have made, asking questions with simple 'yes' or 'no' responses. Others may well be able to share more detail about the item and how much they have enjoyed making it.
- 4 If a group of people have done something jointly, for example a puzzle, picture, embroidery or communal singing, share this with everyone and allow people to express their involvement and pleasure.

- 5 Generally people like to have their photograph taken. At this service it might be appropriate to take some photographs for display and memories afterwards.
- 6 Share briefly that God gives each and every one of us special gifts both physical and spiritual. Every person has something to offer and give. Today is a fine example of this and it is to God that we dedicate all of our gifts.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, you enrich us with so many gifts for life. Thank you that today we are able to share these with one another. May we continue to grow in our confidence, faith and love for each other, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Everyone has something to offer no matter how insignificant or how large. Involve every resident within the service in some way, especially when you have themes that involve corporate gifts.
- 2 Do not be discouraged if family or staff tell you that a particular person does not understand or cannot grasp any reality of what you are doing. You will be amazed at times how an act of worship can really move someone's heart such as the closing of hands or eyes when praying, a particular hymn arousing feelings, singing and tapping of the hand or feet, people shouting out in praise of God, moments of deep silence and reflection or a burst of energy and spirit.
- 3 Learn from the staff at the home and ask whether you can contribute to in-house training.
- 4 Try to accept and love people unconditionally – this can offer comfort and healing to the person with memory loss.
- 5 Throughout your regular acts of worship try to remember those elements, which appeared useful, beneficial and valuable to the resident. Although every service may be unpredictable, be encouraged to include new ideas and ways of presenting them.

## **Theme: The Lord's Prayer**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 6:9–15**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

### **Prayer**

Jesus, thank you that you taught us how to pray. Encourage us never to give up praying for the needs of the world and for our families and communities. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. A large picture of Jesus praying. This can be from a book or one painted or drawn by a church member. A Beanie Toy Bear praying or any cuddly toy adopting a prayerful stance. A shoe box cross made from shoe boxes covered in white paper and glue. This can stand about 4 feet high (see page 18 for further details). Alternatively, a large cross made from soft wood about 3 feet high and 18 inches wide. Ten cards 6x4 inches with the following words written on them in bold ink: **POVERTY, FAMINE, WAR, HATRED, STEALING, CARING, KINDNESS, LOVE, PEACE, GENTLENESS**. Pins or blu-tack. A rosary.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Begin by briefly sharing that Jesus Christ taught us to pray by giving us the Lord's Prayer. It's a prayer that has everything in it that we need to say and it's the most well known prayer for Christian people.
- 2 Show the picture of Jesus praying. Share the picture with everyone and ask people what they see and whether they recognise the person in the picture. Listen and encourage people and affirm what they tell you.
- 3 Hold up your Beanie Bear who is on his knees praying or show everyone your cuddly toy that is praying. Share that this Beanie Bear is by your child's or your own bedside to remind you to pray. Then go around the room so that people can touch and see the cuddly toy. You'll get a lot of smiles and stories of their own favourite cuddly toys.
- 4 Place your cross in a position that everyone can see. Mix up your ten cards and one by one show them to everyone and ask what they think. Ask if it's a good or bad word. One by one pin or blu-tack the cards on the cross. Suggest that it is to the cross that we can bring all our needs and concerns to God.

- 5 Show the rosary and share how the beads and cross are another way of praying for some Christians. Some people may recognise the rosary immediately.
- 6 Ask everyone to say the traditional Lord's Prayer together:

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that 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.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Thank you heavenly Father, that you listen to all our prayers. Remind us daily to pray to you and help us remember to say the prayer Jesus taught us. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Within your congregation you may well find you have believers from different Christian denominations. Wherever possible be sensitive to this and include aspects of their faith by using traditional and popular prayers, symbols and icons from their denomination or tradition.
- 2 Affirm every confused person as an individual and special in the sight of God.
- 3 Wherever possible give people hope and assurance that they are loved and cared for.
- 4 Remember that regular rituals and routines can aid a person's memory to reflect and find a sense of temporary purpose and validity.
- 5 Encouraging people to use their imagination and interact during worship helps them to utilise their spiritual faith and evokes them to share emotions.

## **Theme: Gardening**

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### **Scripture: Genesis 1:11–12**

Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for your creation, for vegetables, plants and trees of every kind. Thank you for the food we eat given to us from the land, our gardens and orchards. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. A tray with some soil. A packet of seeds. A small watering can. A trowel. A pair of wellingtons, gardening gloves and a hat. Make a large yellow bright 'sun' from a piece of card. Write 'GARDENING' on a large card.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Share the theme with everyone by showing the large card with 'GARDENING' written on it. Hopefully a good number of people will say what's on the card. Listen to any comments people make. Some may share some amusing moments about their gardening exploits. Also, don't forget to listen to staff and family stories about gardening.
- 2 Share that you love pottering in the garden and being creative in the garden shed (if you are not happy with this because you are not a keen gardener, invite a friend who really does enjoy gardening to contribute at this point). Suggest that a good gardener has all the equipment and dresses appropriately. Get out your wellies, garden gloves and hat and put them on. This will create some laughter and with your own special humour you can really get into the part.
- 3 Show everyone the tray, soil and packet of seeds. Ask if anyone would like to come forward to help you plant some seed. If someone comes forward to assist you, you may find they know more about planting than you do! Offer the trowel and attempt to make some small lines or holes in the soil, ready to sow the seeds.
- 4 With help, or by yourself, sow the seeds and try and show this to as many people as you can. If your helper is still with you, cover the seeds over with soil and sprinkle with some water from your watering can. You might wish

to leave the tray at the home and, with a bit of tender loving care, see the seeds grow and develop.

- 5 Thank the person who has been helping you and give a round of applause.
- 6 Use your watering can and large 'sun' to demonstrate that during the coming weeks and months seeds require both water and sunshine to help them grow. At this stage you are welcome to take off your gardening attire.
- 7 Share that God made all the vegetation, plants and trees when he created the earth. And we are stewards of the land to keep it in good order. Encourage those who like gardening within the home to keep on sowing seed and planting bulbs in the garden.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, you are the Creator of the earth and were pleased with what you made. Help us to appreciate the land and all its produce. Encourage those who love gardening to continue to enjoy their pastime. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Wherever possible encourage people to assist you. This can have beneficial effects and encourages togetherness.
- 2 Humour and laughter is important but is sensitive; use it appropriately.
- 3 Allow people to touch objects. Give people time to grasp what they are and to share their thoughts about what they see and remember.
- 4 Remember those who have the later stages of dementia will not be aware of a great deal around them. However, continue to offer the same level and quality of respect, love and care in all your presentations.
- 5 God is always with us when we honour and praise his name. Even if the worship falls apart because of disruption or aggravated behaviour, thank God for his abundant love and grace. Worship in these circumstances is still a blessing and never a failure. Don't be discouraged and keep on praying and loving your dear friends compassionately.

## **Theme: God's Creatures**

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### **Scriptures: Genesis 1:24–25**

God commanded, 'Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life: domestic and wild, large and small' – and it was done. So God made them all, and he was pleased with what he saw. (Good News Bible)

### **Prayer**

Father, we thank you for the presence of domestic and wild animals in our world, for their beauty, magnificence and splendour. We ask your blessing today upon this service of thanksgiving for your creatures. Amen.

### **Preparation**

If at all possible and with the approval of the home, try to include some actual domestic pets. This could be done by having the service in the home's garden or courtyard. Staff, families and volunteers may wish to bring their pets in for the short service. Alternatively, invite local children to bring their pets to the service.

If any of the above is not possible, you can still have an effective service by producing large pictures of domestic and wild animals. These can often be obtained from calendars or books. Also have a range of suitable cuddly toys such as bear, dog, cat, sheep, owl, fox or pig. These can be displayed throughout the service and referred to at certain stages. Within the service you could incorporate a special prayer and invite the animals up for a blessing.

### **Delivery**

- 1 If you have pets at the service, begin by going around the room or garden and ask the names of the pets. Share the names with everyone and inform people of the variety of animals at the service.
- 2 If you are using large pictures, show the pictures one by one and ask what the animals are. This will provoke interest and recall memories, particularly if they are domestic animals. Move around the room allowing people to see the pictures. Listen to their comments and feelings.
- 3 Use the pictures and cuddly toys to demonstrate that God created all animal life, domestic and wild and he was very pleased. Share how important animals are to us for food, clothing, companionship and livelihood.
- 4 You could include a special prayer at this point, for example:

O God, Lord of all creation,  
help us to treat with compassion

the animals entrusted to our protection and care;  
and grant that in caring for them we may find  
a deeper understanding of your love for all creatures,  
great and small; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

- 5 Some animals, notably dogs, are able to perform tricks or demonstrate their obedience in several ways. If you have someone who has brought a dog to the service and both dog and owner are willing to show some examples of tricks or obedience, then invite them up.
- 6 At the end you could incorporate a time for the blessing of animals and say a simple prayer. If you are able to do so, place your hand gently over or upon the animal and these words may be used:

Bless, O God, this thy creature (name)  
and this its human protector and friend.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Almighty God, who loves all creatures everywhere, may we who have responsibility over them always be considerate, caring and loving to their needs. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 If animals are involved in services of this kind, be aware of those residents who may be frightened, dislike or may be allergic to specific animals.
- 2 Be aware of any restlessness and wandering of people. Always offer a sense of security, friendship and affirmation as to where they are.
- 3 Make sure that your act of worship is at the right time of day. You may have no control over this. Ideally, some time in the late morning is the best. Late afternoon or early evening can present obvious problems.
- 4 Use orientation skills to help convey what you are saying. For example 'Today is Sunday. It is 11.00 o'clock and the sun is shining,' or 'Welcome to our church service and we are together in the lounge at this home.'
- 5 Always be aware of your own body language and learn to interpret the body language of others.

## Festival Themes

### Theme: Advent

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#### Scripture: Luke 1:76–79

‘And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.’

#### Prayer

Dear God, we are called to be people of hope, people of community and people to proclaim Jesus as Lord. Encourage us to lead the way so that others may come to know Christ as their Saviour. Amen.

#### Preparation

Have the following items ready. Large candle and matches. A large piece of card with the words ‘COME, LORD JESUS’ written on it. An overhead projector and screen. ‘The Promise – A Journey of Faith and a Dream Fulfilled’ by Sieger Koder (St Paul Multimedia Productions, 2000), six inspirational slides and meditation booklet.

#### Delivery

- 1 Share briefly that we are now in Advent, a time of preparation and readiness for Christmas.
- 2 Light the candle as a symbol of this preparation. Explain that Jesus is to become the light of the world and because of this light it can give us renewed hope, a fresh purpose and peace in our hearts.
- 3 Explain that together we are going to share in a prayerful reflection written by Christian Aid called ‘Come, Lord Jesus’. When the card is held up encourage everyone to say the words ‘COME, LORD JESUS’. Have a practice and make sure everyone can see the card if possible.
- 4 The leader says: In our watching and our waiting  
All: (show card) COME, LORD JESUS  
The leader says: In our hopes and in our fears  
All: (show card) COME, LORD JESUS  
The leader says: In our homes and in our world  
All: (show card) COME, LORD JESUS  
The leader says: COME, LORD JESUS. Bless us and surprise us  
as we look forward to your birthday. Amen.

- 5 In using the overhead projector, ideally turn the lights to dim so everyone can see the images on the screen. Say some short words relevant to each slide from the booklet. Show slide one titled 'The Covenant' and say: 'Empty hands. The past behind, there is no going back. A present stretching out in loneliness, a future full of uncertainty. Where can such faith and hope and courage be found? Faith the size of a mustard seed can even become a fruit-bearing tree. A future full of blessing and hope. Open hands and open heart, naked and vulnerable. Come, walk with me.'
- 6 Show slide two titled 'Vision' and say: 'A lonely traveller, a dream ladder between heaven and earth. Hands reach upward in entreaty, downward in compassion. Blessed are those who know their need of God! A whispered assurance: "I am here beside you in the dark – open your eyes, open your heart." Our search for meaning, God's answer in loving presence, in good times and in bad.'
- 7 Show slide four titled 'Jubilation' and say: 'Joy and dancing in the streets, letting your hair down. God is Lord of the Dance! God delights in us. Our God is a playful God, delighting in the weird and wonderful. Wisdom at play in all creation.'
- 8 Show slide five titled 'Magnificat' and say: 'Two women meet and cling to one another for comfort and reassurance. Hope springs to life, God is truly with us. Rejoice, most highly favoured, the Lord is with you!'
- 9 Show slide six titled 'God with us' and say: 'At the dead of night, a light in the darkness – a child is born. The promise at last becomes flesh and blood, spirit and truth. The true light comes into the world! A light shining in the darkness – a light the darkness cannot overcome.'

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, always be our light in a world full of darkness and despair. Bring us hope in our troubles and peace in all we do. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 When using pictures or slides, encourage staff and families to direct the residents' attention to the images as you deliver what you are saying.
- 2 Do not be discouraged if residents are distracted – simply keep on going.
- 3 Silences can be a valuable space and time for reflection.
- 4 Sometimes showing pictures without words can be very powerful.
- 5 Questions ideally should be answered by 'yes', 'no' or a gesture (use your discretion).

## **Theme: The Christmas Tree**

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### **Poem: 'Christmas Tree Star Over All'**

Eye of the night  
Stand on my tree  
Magical sight  
Green under frost  
Green under snow  
Green under tinsel  
Glitter and glow  
Appled with baubles  
Silver and gold  
Spangled with fire  
Warm over cold.

Laurence Smith, *The Oxford Book of Christmas Poems*, 1983.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, thank you for the Christmas season, for the sight of Christmas lights and Christmas trees, for the giving and receiving of presents, for fun, laughter and joy. Remind us that Jesus was born at Christmas to be the light and hope of the world. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. A small artificial Christmas tree about 4 feet high or one that can stand on a low table. A selection of gold or silver baubles, some colourful stars, a few wrapped Christmas presents to hang from the tree, some strips of tinsel, a few small crackers, a few sweets with colourful ribbon around them and a star for the top of the tree. Generally use a variety of attractive and colourful objects of your choice for the tree. Background sing-along Christmas music from a cassette or CD.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Briefly explain that Christmas is a wonderful and merry time for many people. Putting up the Christmas tree is also an exciting time. Ask people if they ever did this and whether they enjoyed it.
- 2 Place your Christmas tree in the right position so everyone can see. Explain simply that together we are going to decorate this Christmas tree and that you need help.
- 3 If the Christmas tree can be placed on a tea trolley, you can transport it around the room, so involving as many people as possible to help decorate.

Begin by selecting any of the tree decorations and ask for assistance. Make sure that people can easily place the item on the tree. Give them help if needed. As you are doing this quietly put on some sing-along Christmas music.

- 4 One by one, place all the decorations on the tree and it should look an amazing sight. Finally, place the star on the top of the tree. See what reactions you receive.
- 5 Briefly explain that at one time Christmas trees were often lit with candles symbolising Christ as the 'Light of the World'. For safety today you can purchase coloured electric candles, which look very good and are much safer. Leave your tree at the home over Christmas, particularly if it goes appropriately in a corner somewhere.
- 6 Conclude by saying Christmas trees are a lovely sight to see but so is the birth of the baby Jesus who was born on Christmas day. Jesus came to be the 'Light of the World' (point to the star on the top of the tree) and it is due to Jesus that Christmas is so special.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, Christmas is a special time, one so lost in materialism and celebrated for the wrong reasons. Help us at this time to remember the birth of your son, Jesus Christ, and why he came into our needy world. Give us joy and hope in our hearts. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Reminiscing reminds people of their past. Helping to decorate the Christmas tree can help them recall this activity.
- 2 Recalling memories, like decorating the Christmas tree, can help people share their story with others and encourage others to listen.
- 3 People can maintain their sense of identity through recalling memories, both good and not so good.
- 4 Sharing a group activity, like decorating the Christmas tree, allows people to interact and communicate together.
- 5 Verbal, sensual and gesture communication can enable people who are confused to be part of a group and a living community.

## **Theme: Christmas Joy**

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### **Scripture: Luke 1:28–32a**

And the angel Gabriel came to Mary and said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High.’

### **Prayer**

Son of the living God, we welcome you into our world. Your birth has given us great hope and fresh direction. May we come to know you personally at this special time of year. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. A large nativity set – the bigger the better. The cassette or CD titled ‘Carols for the Christmas Season – Christmas Star’ by the Cambridge Singers and Orchestra directed by John Rutter, or any other Christmas collection that includes ‘Joy to the world’.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Share some thoughts briefly on ‘Christmas Joy’ such as Christmas decorations, the Christmas tree, presents, Christmas lights, Christmas lunch and parties, being with friends and family. Ask a few people what is special about Christmas.
- 2 Share briefly that Christmas time can also revive memories, which can be painful as we remember loved ones who have died, and friendships which are no more.
- 3 Show everyone your nativity scene without the figures, asking everyone what this image represents. Not everyone will know at this stage that it is a manger. Begin by placing some animal figures in the stable. Encourage people to come forward or take the manger to where the person is sitting to place these figures into the manger if at all possible.
- 4 Do this until all the figures are in the manger including Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. Then, if the manger is portable and not too heavy, place it where everyone can see it. If the manger is not valuable or expensive and items cannot be broken, ask the home whether you can leave this over the Christmas period. Ideally use wooden or plastic figures.

- 5 Play the cassette or CD of 'Joy to the world'. People love listening to choral music. Ask at the end what they thought of the song.
- 6 Read the reflection by Helen Steiner Rice, 'A Christmas Thought'.

If there had never been a Christmas  
or the Holy Christ Child's birth,  
Or the angels singing in the sky  
of promised peace on earth –  
What would the world be like today  
with no eternal goal,  
What would the temporal body be  
without a living soul?  
Just what would give us courage  
to push on when hope is dead,  
Except the Christmas message  
and the words our Father said –  
'In love I send my only Son  
to live and die for you,  
And through his resurrection  
You will gain a new life, too.'

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, and for the true meaning of Christmas. May we turn all our thoughts of gratitude and love to you. May our faith grow strong and our belief be anchored in you at all times. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Remember to keep your sentences short and brief.
- 2 Wherever possible engage and include people in your act of worship.
- 3 Assume the capacity of insight and welcome any interaction.
- 4 Many people will be aware that this is an act of worship, so respect their ways of worship such as body language, spiritual and prayerful activity, singing and vocal responses.
- 5 Remember that the service will help nurture people's spirit and strengthen their soul.

## **Theme: The Birth of the Christ Child**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 1:18–21**

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

### **Prayer**

Lord God, thank you for giving us your son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Thank you for the faith of Mary and Joseph and may we also believe in you today. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following ready. Ask the Sunday school or children's group from your church to paint or draw some large pictures of the nativity scene. Four or five pictures would be satisfactory. Invite the children to the service to share their pictures. Ask the children and family members to come along and sing some carols or special Christmas songs. Alternatively, use your own large pictures of the nativity scene. These can be obtained by purchasing an A3 picture book of Christmas from Christian bookshops. If children are not available to sing, invite adults to perform in the festive singing.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Welcome everyone to this special Christmas service. Most lounges or rooms within the home would be decorated with Christmas trimmings so invite people to look around to see the colour of the decorations and the Christmas tree. Listen to what people say and encourage them to share their thoughts.
- 2 Invite the children (or adults) to the front to sing their Christmas song.
- 3 Begin to share simply the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. You may be able to ask questions like 'Who was born in the manger in Bethlehem?' 'Who came to visit the baby Jesus in the stable?' You'll find that staff and family members of the residents will help in this. Continue asking short questions if appropriate.

- 4 One by one invite the children up to share their pictures. Share the children's names and ask them what the picture is all about. Go round and allow everyone to see the picture. Many people like to comment and inform the young person how good the picture is. Notice the smiles and body language of people. Children in the midst of older people are always special to see.
- 5 Continue until all the pictures have been seen by everyone. If it is possible, leave the pictures on display at the home over the Christmas period.
- 6 Invite the children (or adults) to come up front and sing once again.
- 7 Finish off by sharing that the birth of Jesus Christ was an amazing story and that you wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord Jesus, especially touch us this Christmas with your love and hope for the world. You are the light in places of darkness and joy where there is despair and pain. Bless us this Christmas time and give us peace in our hearts. We say this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 When sharing visual aids around the room, allow time for people to digest what is in front of them.
- 2 Allow people to express their feelings whether this be of joy, happiness, laughter or tears, adverse comment or ambivalence to what's going on.
- 3 Always remember people respond to how they feel more than to what we say to them.
- 4 Always minister with calmness, patience and gentleness.
- 5 Do not take anger against you personally. Those with memory loss may soon forget their anger and respond in different, less alarming ways within moments.

## **Theme: Epiphany**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 2:1–12**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ‘Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.’ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’ When they had heard the King, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. We give thanks to the wise men for travelling so far to give homage and worship to the Saviour of the world. May we continue to give our gifts of love and service as Christian people. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. A large picture of the wise men. Make a large star from cardboard and paint it colourfully. A manger (the larger the better). A Christmas card with the baby Jesus on it. Design a crown to represent a gift the wise men brought to Jesus. Within the crown place sparkling bubbles/shining beads and so on, to create an image of an expensive gift.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Show the picture of the wise men and ask if people know who these interesting characters are. Briefly inform everyone about their journey to see the baby Jesus.

- 2 Hold up the hand-made star demonstrating why it is above the manger. Place the manger on a table or cabinet so everyone can see. Briefly share why the star was important to the wise men.
- 3 Show the picture of the baby Jesus (ideally as large as you can get) to everyone. Explain briefly his birth, where he was and the visitors about to come.
- 4 Show everyone your wonderful crown. Walk around the room showing everyone its magnificence and splendour. Allow people to touch it and feel the baubles and beads. You'll be surprised how interested people will be regarding this.
- 5 Ask people if they remember what gifts the wise men brought to baby Jesus. Provide encouragement by giving clues if necessary.
- 6 Sum up by sharing that the wise men brought riches worthy for a King but all of us are precious in the sight of God. Jesus doesn't want any gifts from us, only our hearts and lives.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, your Son is truly a great gift for us and we give thanks. May we dedicate our lives to you now and always. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 When speaking or listening to a person do so at their level by sitting, kneeling, standing or crouching.
- 2 Be aware that dementia is an illness so never jump to conclusions about what is meant.
- 3 If you are unsure what is being said to you, sensitively say, 'I'm sorry I don't understand, tell me again.' or echo what they have just said.
- 4 Don't be afraid to touch a person's arm or hand. This can give reassurance and comfort but do it without rushing or to startle.
- 5 Wear a name badge. This is useful for many people living with dementia. Many people can still read and they love to know your name.

## **Theme: Lenten Journey**

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### **Scripture: Mark 1:14b–15**

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

### **Prayer**

Lord God, your Son called us to penitential living through the acknowledgment of our sins. May we examine our lives by prayer, steadfast living and faith in Christ that we may share the good news of our Lord. Amen.

### **Preparation**

This short address will take us on a journey through the forty days before Easter (Lent) by sharing and showing objects and symbols to remind people of the Lenten experience. Select your own content but to help you as a guide you could include ashes, Lenten prayer, large palm leaves (made by the Sunday school children) and palm crosses, selected pictures or wood carvings of the stations of the cross, a towel and bowl for feet washing, a crucifix and a picture of the risen Lord Jesus. A large card with the word 'LENTEN JOURNEY' written on it.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Begin by showing the card with 'LENTEN JOURNEY' on it. Ask everyone to read the card. You will receive a mixture of responses but briefly explain the journey from Lent to Easter you'll now be making.
- 2 Share that Lent is associated with abstinence and fasting by many people. For example, maybe we like to lose a bit of weight by giving up chocolates, cakes, biscuits and other sweet things. Humorously remark that the residents' puddings, cakes and other goodies will still be on the menu!
- 3 Without a great deal of explanation show everyone the ashes, which are prepared on Ash Wednesday as Lent commences. These are traditionally placed on the foreheads of Christians as a sign of penance. Invite a volunteer forward so you can show this procedure. This may recall memories for some people.
- 4 You could include a Lenten prayer at this point. Show everyone your palm leaves made by the children. If possible invite the children to the service so they can take them around the residents and introduce themselves. Show the couple of palm crosses and ask whether they know what they are. If you have several crosses share them out to those who would like one.

5. Select a few pictures of the stations of the cross journey or if you have wood carved symbols, again show these to everyone. Explain about this last journey Jesus Christ made before being condemned to his death on the cross.
- 6 The washing of feet can be shown by a volunteer coming forward. Explain that Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a gesture of servanthood and love for people. This is acted out on Maundy Thursday in many Christian churches around the world.
- 7 Show everyone your large crucifix, or use a picture, to share what happened on Good Friday and share that Jesus died to save us from our sins and that he brought us salvation. Finally, you could include a picture or symbol to show that Christ rose from the dead on Easter Sunday to finish on a joyful note. At this point you could introduce a hymn that speaks of our Lord being risen.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, our Lord and God, thank you for the remarkable journey which your Son, Jesus Christ made for us. May we learn from this experience to love you more deeply and share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. We say our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Your addresses may appear at times to be simple, humble and even childlike. This is truly acceptable in the sight of God. What is important is the integrity and love in which they are shared with everyone.
- 2 Your ministry with people who are confused is a great calling and one which honours our Lord. Always prepare well and pray before you commence the service, handing it over for God's glory.
- 3 You will notice from time to time those people who are very silent and far away from your reality. Sensitively sit by their side and in the silence pray for them.
- 4 Expect from time to time that people may feel uncomfortable during the church service. This may be for a number of reasons. Don't assume it's because they don't like you or what you are doing. Always present and deliver the service as God intended you to do so.
- 5 On your visits to the home, introduce yourself to family members and get to know them. These people may well become part of the church fellowship of the home and may come to know Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

## **Theme: Palm Sunday**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 21:6–11**

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?' The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, your Son triumphantly entered Jerusalem to bring people salvation and hope. May we shout 'Hosanna in the highest heaven' as our faith grows to love you more deeply now and for evermore. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. Make a large cross, about 3 feet high and about 18 inches across. This can be of plywood or a soft wood. Make sure it can stand upright with some appropriate support. Paint it white or any colour you like. Alternatively, you could make a shoe box cross (see page 18). It should be able to stand by itself without falling over. Write on some cards about 6x4 inches the following words in bold print: WAR, POVERTY, DISEASE, FAMINE, HATRED, GREED, LOVE, PEACE, HOPE, HAPPINESS, JOY, LAUGHTER (make as many as you feel you need, reflecting some bad things in the world and some good things). Have a picture of Jesus Christ to be placed in the centre of the cross (approximately 8 inches by 6 inches) and some sticky tape ready.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Explain briefly that in our world today there are good and bad things happening all the time. Mix up your cards so that you have a mixture of both good and bad examples. Place your large cross on a table top so everyone can see. Share that Jesus Christ who died on the cross came to save everyone from their sins, but still today good and bad exists everywhere.
- 2 Begin to show a card at a time. Ask what it says. Then ask whether this is a good thing or a bad thing in our world. In nearly all cases everyone understands whether it's good or bad. Then stick the card on one side of the cross. You may need someone to help you with this as you continue.
- 3 Continue to share the good and bad examples on the cards, and in every case ask the people to say whether they are good or bad. Place them one at a time

on the same side of the cross. When you feel you have enough examples on the cross simply recap on the words and reiterate what they say.

- 4 Turn the cross around and you'll have a blank side. This side could be already painted a little more colourfully or have some designs printed on. Whatever you do, make this side interesting and pleasing to the eye.
- 5 Now show the large picture of Jesus Christ and ask everyone who this might be. Go around the room and get opinions. Help those who struggle with eyesight problems and give them some more clues. Share a few sentences about what Jesus Christ did in his ministry and how he came to help people and to show his love and compassion. Ask people in what kind of ways Jesus helped others. Then stick the picture in the centre of the cross.
- 6 Conclude by sharing the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem and why people were praising his name. Link the story to the cross and why Jesus had to die for us. Point to your cross on the table so people can relate. Finish by saying how much Jesus loves us and how much the cross is central to our faith.

### **Concluding Prayer**

We thank you that Jesus Christ died for us and that he sacrificed himself on the cross for the whole world. Forgive us our sins and all the wrongs we commit and in so doing redeem us that may we strive to become better people. Through our Lord Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Encourage others to help you in a service by reading, saying prayers and contributing to the address. As well as including other adults, don't forget to include young people.
- 2 A short piece of drama or an appropriate sketch is always of value.
- 3 When speaking to an individual in the congregation, call that person by his or her name.
- 4 Be aware of any signs of restlessness and withdrawal from a person.
- 5 Welcome staff members to the service whenever possible as they will be helpful at times if people wander and when any behavioural difficulties arise

## **Theme: Stations of the Cross**

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### **Scripture: John 19:16b–19**

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.'

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, because of your dear son, Jesus Christ, we have forgiveness for our sins. Thank you that he died for us, taking on the burdens of all people everywhere and because of the cross, we now have life, hope and salvation. Amen.

### **Preparation**

This address will focus upon pictures of Jesus' last journey to the cross. Have the following items ready. Make a selection of those stations which you personally would like to share with the congregation. Stations of the cross pictures are now available in several different forms and colourful images. If you are unable to purchase a set, ask at your nearest Diocesan Resource Centre if they will loan you the pictures. I recommend about eight pictures as you tell the story.

### **Delivery**

In all cases display the pictures so everyone can see them, say a few words on each, and if you are able go around the room showing the images one by one.

- 1 Picture – Jesus stands before Pilate. Jesus is condemned to death. Jesus didn't do anything wrong yet the people and rulers said, 'Crucify him.'
- 2 Picture – Jesus receiving the cross. The cross was made of wood and it was very heavy. In those days two thousand years ago it was the lowest and poorest of people who were condemned to die on the cross. Jesus was deemed to be the lowest in the eyes of the people.
- 3 Picture – Jesus falling with the cross. Jesus fell three times on his journey to Calvary. He could scarcely walk and he had lost a great deal of blood. He was also struck violently by the soldiers.
- 4 Picture – Jesus meets his mother. You can imagine how Mary felt for her son. She must have felt extremely distressed and hardly recognised her own beloved son. Her heart must have been completely broken with tears and grief.

- 5 Picture – Veronica wipes Jesus’ face. Jesus bathed in sweat and blood was met by Veronica who showed compassion and kindness as she wiped Christ’s face.
- 6 Picture – Jesus nailed to the cross. Jesus arrives at Calvary and is nailed to the cross. He sacrificed his life for you and me. His death brought salvation, hope and peace to a world in desperate need.
- 7 Picture – Jesus dies on the cross. Jesus who died on the cross depended completely upon his Father. Jesus said just before he died, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit’ and he died for you and me.
- 8 Picture – Jesus taken to the tomb. Jesus is taken to the tomb where he laid for three days before he rose from the dead. His resurrection and ascension showed the world that he loved us so much and one day he will return and take those who believe in him to the kingdom of heaven.

NOTE: These pictures are very dramatic and powerful. Be sensitive when you show the pictures around the room as some will struggle to comprehend the full meaning and implications of the journey. In all cases offer reassurance to any one who needs it.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Jesus, thank you for dying for me. Thank you for making that final journey. I am a sinner and I do wrong in your sight. Through your death you gave me salvation and hope. Encourage and sustain my faith now and always. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Don’t exaggerate your gestures. Make them meaningful and appropriate.
- 2 If at all possible wear a cassock, stole, scarf, cross or clergy collar to represent who you are. If you are a lay person and don’t feel comfortable wearing any church attire, have a cross around your neck or hold a Bible in your hand. These things are quite important and make immediate connections.
- 3 If you are fairly new to the home, don’t be afraid to ask the staff for some essential information of those who have visual or hearing impairments, an awareness of those who may have behaviour difficulties and any person who simply does not like any links with a church representative.
- 4 Allow time for people to share their thoughts and feelings if you are showing them any visual aids.
- 5 Use facial expressions to convey your feelings and emotions.

## **Theme: Easter**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 28:5–10**

The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come; see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

### **Prayer**

The Lord is risen. Alleluia! We praise your name, as you are Lord of all life and power. Through your resurrection we are dead to sin and alive in you, Jesus Christ, along with the Holy Spirit, both now and forever. Amen.

### **Preparation**

For this service it would be best to prepare a few days earlier. If you are able to have access to the home during Easter week you could organise an activity session or two with the residents to get a few things prepared such as Easter bonnets, Easter tree, Easter garden and any other appropriate Easter activity which you would like to bring to the service. You may wish to include a shoe box cross (see page 18).

### **Delivery**

- 1 Recall the scripture story that you have just read. Explain the excitement of the women who saw the tomb empty, spoke with the angel and saw Jesus alive and ran to inform the disciples.
- 2 Share the items that have been made during Easter week. Begin with the Easter garden. Depending on the size and where it is situated, allow people to come and look, touch and smell any flowers you may have planted. Try and transport it around the room if at all possible.
- 3 The Easter tree may be a little harder to manoeuvre but try and allow as many people to see it. Some of the older people may recall making Easter trees and remark how wonderful and colourful they look. If the residents have made any other items such as cards, drawings or crafts, share these and thank everyone for all their efforts.
- 4 If Easter bonnets have been made ask people to wear them and if they are willing to parade the bonnets, encourage them to do this. Offer lots of encouragement and give everyone applause for their marvellous efforts.

- 5 Share your colourful shoe box cross; because it is quite large and prominent you'll find people will make comments. Explain briefly that this symbolises the cross of Jesus Christ and because this is Easter Day Jesus promises to be with us always.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you that Jesus your Son died to save us and rose to set us free. May we today come to know you more deeply and trust in your ways. May your Holy Spirit be upon us now and always. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Some church festivals such as Easter, Christmas and Harvest will help people recall memories. Encourage and affirm those who engage and contribute to these services.
- 2 People who have memory loss, however advanced the illness is, love to see a genuine smile.
- 3 Be flexible in the way you introduce yourself to a person. You may wish to greet them by your name. You may wish to sit quietly next to someone in silence for a while then start to introduce yourself. On the other hand you may find yourself engaged in the reality of the person and sensitively deal with that first.
- 4 Remember that the person living with dementia or any degree of confusion will largely depend upon others to initiate relationships and build friendships.
- 5 Be aware of the concerns and frustrations that carers and family may have. Their viewpoint and management of their loved one should be respected and listened to. The act of worship can be a real source of joy, encouragement and peace for carers and family.

## **Theme: Christian Aid**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 13:31–32**

He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.’

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we place our trust and faith in you that in the wonder of the small mustard seed this can symbolise the greatness of your kingdom. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. Two large cards, on one of which is written in bold ‘CHRISTIAN AID WEEK’ and on the other ‘MUSTARD SEEDS’. Obtain a large world globe. Purchase a packet of mustard seeds. Have some mustard cress grown in a small box (seed and water these in readiness for the service). Select a piece of music and invite some youngsters to arrange a dance or movement to it.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Share the theme of Christian Aid Week by displaying the large card. Ask people to say the words. Explain very briefly how Christian Aid helps finance worthy projects all over the world. Show everyone the world globe by taking it around the room. Slowly and sensitively ask people what they see. Show people the vast blue areas representing the oceans and the five continents. Listen to their responses and share where Christian Aid projects are situated.
- 2 Show the card with ‘MUSTARD SEEDS’ written on it. Again ask everyone what it says. Place some of the seeds in your hand and show them to people. Allow them to touch the seed and listen to their comments. All the time explain what they are and how small they are. Then show the grown mustard cress so people can see the seed becomes a plant.
- 3 Share that Jesus was comparing these small mustard seeds to that of the kingdom of heaven. They may start initially very small but Christ’s message of love and compassion will grow strong and reach across the whole world. Everyone has the chance to accept this love and compassion but must be aware that the sins of the world can and will entrap us. We need God’s direction and the promise of his love and refuge.
- 4 Invite the young people up to perform. Introduce them by name and explain what they are going to do for a couple of minutes. Allow them the

space to dance and move without too much disruption of furniture. The song and dance embraces God's love, growth and joy for the world. A recommended song is from the band Iona titled 'Chi-Rho' (first few minutes) from a cassette called 'The Book of Kells'. You can use coloured ribbons to show artistically the beauty of the song and compose your own choreography.

NOTE: Older people love to see younger people contribute within services. Dance and movement is a smashing way to engage with people. After the dance ask people what they thought and allow them to applaud and make their own comments. Prepare the young people prior to the service as to what reactions they may have due to their presence in the service. If you are unable to include any young people in the dance and movement then invite any adult(s) willing to serve God in this way.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, you are all powerful and majestic. You embrace and love our creativity. Your kingdom holds no bounds as it welcomes all into new life and new growth. We say our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Remind everyone in the service that all of us have gifts to share. When it is appropriate listen to people's stories, life histories and observe their talents.
- 2 Attempt to make people feel at ease in your presence. You do not need to have answers to their questions but simply respect what they share and acknowledge feelings and body language.
- 3 If someone is angry with you, remember it is the illness. They will have soon forgotten their outburst. Make sure you hold no resentment or harbour any misgivings against them.
- 4 Don't assume that those who have loss of memory don't know what you are saying. Your feelings, expressions and body language give out many signals to convey what you are saying.
- 5 Remember that laughter and smiles can draw people together and improve relationships. It also can ease tensions and quell anxiety.

## Theme: Harvest

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### Scripture: Matthew 14:16–21

Jesus said to the disciples, 'They need not go away; you give them something to eat.' They replied, 'We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.' And he said, 'Bring them here to me.' Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

### Prayer

Dear God, we thank you for your plentiful harvest. We are sorry that the world doesn't distribute your gifts evenly around the world. Give us a greater understanding of sharing and loving our neighbour. Amen.

### Preparation

Have the following items ready. A display of fruit and vegetables (and/or tinned produce). An amusing or humorous grace for a meal or some traditional ones. A large card with the word written in bold 'HARVEST'. An umbrella and a good selection of dry autumn leaves. A colourful scarf, hat and coat. A bunch of flowers (fresh or artificial). Sunglasses, handkerchief and sun cream.

### Delivery

- 1 Hold the card up with the word 'HARVEST' written on it. Ask everyone to say what is on the card. Briefly share that today we celebrate harvest and point to the table with all the produce displayed on it.
- 2 Share that when Jesus fed the five thousand he would have given thanks and blessed the food. Ask whether people still say grace before a meal. See what people say. Suggest a couple of examples of graces such as 'O Lord who fed the multitudes with five barley loaves, bless what we are about to eat.'  
(Egyptian Arabic grace) 'Thank you, Father, for food, family, friends and for all your blessings, in Jesus' name.'
- 3 Talk about the seasons and how we rely upon autumn, winter, spring and summer. All these seasons are part of God's creation and harvest for the world.
- 4 Autumn – Put up your umbrella and suggest that in autumn it can rain a great deal. Walk around a little bit and make some amusing comments about the rain. Then suggest that autumn also brings leaves falling from the trees.

Hold your dry leaves in the air (stand on a chair if possible), throw the leaves into the air and let the leaves fall onto the floor. When you do this be careful not to frighten any one. People will comment favourably on this lovely sight and some will quite simply say, 'You've made a mess on the floor!'

- 5 Winter – Say that it's getting a little nippy in here (rub your hands and blow on them) and put on your scarf, hat and coat. Create a feeling of warmth and suggest this is what we wear during the cold winter months. Take all the items off.
- 6 Spring – Say that in the springtime we have lovely flowers blooming, lighter mornings and sunshine. Show your flowers to everyone. If they are fresh allow several people touch them and smell their fragrance.
- 7 Summer – Say that's it's very hot and the sun is shining. Put on a little sun cream lotion and then your sunglasses (the funnier the better) and put your knotted handkerchief on your head. You will get quite a few comments.
- 8 Conclude by saying that God's harvest doesn't just include food produce but it also includes his whole creation and this includes the changing seasons. Our spiritual lives are also a rich harvest by sharing our gifts, skills and friendships.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, we are so grateful for your gift of such a bountiful earth and our responsibility as stewards looking after it. Enable us to preserve it now and for future generations to come. Give us all a harvest in our hearts of love, peace, joy and hope till we meet with you in heaven. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Don't be afraid to be bold and adventurous in your delivery. The more creative you are the more rewarding they can become to everyone.
- 2 Be aware of those who may not speak English in the congregation. By using appropriate gestures and directing them to the symbols and visual aids they can be included in the worship experience.
- 3 Keep your services to a maximum of 20–25 minutes duration.
- 4 Give yourself time after the service to have a cup of tea if it is offered.
- 5 Thank all the staff personally for their interest in the service and for their assistance.

## **Theme: The Harvest is Plentiful**

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### **Scripture: Matthew 9:36–38**

When Jesus saw the crowds; he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’

### **Prayer**

Lord God, help us to see that our Christian mission is to help with the harvest. Encourage us to share the gospel message to those who do not yet know the good news. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. You may wish to visit the home prior to the actual service to get a few things prepared in advance. If you are regularly visiting the residents, you could incorporate a special activity session to plan for the service. Gather as many residents as you can and a few willing helpers. You need to gather materials to make a long and strong paper chain. The paper chain would be linked together so that it has names, prayers, situations and any item written on it for the harvest service. Link the chain with sellotape and if possible make the chain as colourful as you can. This then will be presented at the service as an offering to God. Have a large card with the word ‘HARVEST’ written on it. Encourage staff, family and friends to provide food items for the harvest service. This could be done by promoting this special service on the home notice board and in its newsletter. Before the service starts, place some of the food items where the residents are sitting, so that they can bring them up during the address.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Show everyone the card with the word ‘HARVEST’ written on it. Allow people to absorb what it says and ask them to say the word. Ask the residents one by one to come forward and offer their gifts to God by placing them on the table or altar at the front. Staff and helpers will assist with this. Depending upon the degree of confusion, you’ll find that in some homes the more independent and aware people are the more they’ll enjoy and value this section of the service. However, still encourage others to come forward if they are willing, regardless of their state of awareness, to offer their gifts.
- 2 Say a short prayer to ask God’s blessing over this food. For example;

Merciful God, who created all good things,  
we celebrate today the joy of harvest.

Thank you for providing the food we eat.  
We pray for those who have little food  
and other basic necessities of life.  
We ask that the world will learn to share  
its plentiful resources with everyone.  
We say this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

- 3 Briefly share the message from Matthew 9:36–38 in a few short sentences. Explain that the harvest also concerns itself about people. All people everywhere require a shepherd and that shepherd is Jesus Christ, as he can guide us and sustain us with love, peace, joy and contentment in life but only if we choose to follow him.
- 4 Share that many people have been very busy making a paper chain recently. Invite staff, family and volunteers to place the chain around the room, ideally with everyone holding a section. If this is not possible, then ask your helpers to hold the chain up in a large circle. This is quite a sight, even if you only succeeded in making a small chain.
- 5 Say that the chain represents names, places and situations close to our hearts and it is a symbol of our love and unity for prayer this harvest time. Give everyone a clap for all their hard work. If you can, leave the chain on display for a while in the home.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, you give us so much in our lives, food, homes, family, love and care. May we also give our lives in return to your Son, Jesus Christ, who died for us and set us free from our sins. Encourage us to share in the harvest and bring people to know you personally. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Your Christian witness to others is a wonderful act of love and an honest reflection of you, valuing the uniqueness of individuals who have memory loss.
- 2 May your compassion and concern for those living with dementia never dwell on pity but on respect, dignity and love of your fellow human beings.
- 3 Remember to repeat your questions or short sentences occasionally. Make allowance for silences and for people to respond.
- 4 Many older people will wish to shake your hand as a sign of respect. Do this as often as you can in your greeting.
- 5 Always maintain good eye contact as a measure of your concern and interest.

## **Theme: Remembrance**

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### **Scripture: Psalm 27:1, 3–4, 13**

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident. One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, you care for those who love you and those who wish to serve you in faith. Look graciously upon those who do wrong, hurt others and are evil in your sight. May we remain steadfast and obedient in your service. Amen.

### **Preparation**

Have the following items ready. Have on your altar (or table at the front) an arrangement of poppies or a small wreath. Obtain either a cassette or CD of Vera Lynn's record 'We'll meet again'. Include in the service the National Anthem. A large card with the words 'REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY' written on it.

### **Delivery**

- 1 Begin by showing everyone the card with the words 'REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY' on it. Ask everyone to read the words and for a few seconds allow them to digest what they see and hear. Briefly explain why we remember those who laid down their lives during the many conflicts. Share the importance of freedom and how grateful we are to those who fought in the wars around the world.
- 2 Share that even the psalmist was deeply troubled and afraid when he was in battle or surrounded by his enemies. It is at times like these that we need God's helping hand and strength. Ask the congregation, 'Have you ever been afraid or feared for your lives in some way?' If their response is limited ask, 'What feelings and emotions do you think soldiers, sailors, airmen and those in conflict may have?' In any group of people you will get some response and usually staff or family will contribute.
- 3 Show the poppies or wreath to everyone as a reminder that today is Remembrance Sunday. Again simply remind everyone we are commemorating those who died in search of freedom and liberation for our country.

- 4 Read the poem 'In Flanders Fields' by John McRae written in 1918.

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row  
That marks our place. And in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders Fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe.  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders Fields.

- 5 Immediately after reading the poem go straight ahead and play Vera Lynn's song 'We'll meet again.' A good number of people will remember the words and several others will enjoy listening to a well liked and remembered song of the second World War.

NOTE: I have found that this service is very poignant to many, whilst others may appear aloof or even slightly uncomfortable. Whatever the circumstance, be sensitive and aware of everyone's point of view and feelings wherever possible.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we pray for peace in our time and for all conflict and war to cease. We thank those who gave their lives for peace and freedom in this land and elsewhere. We remember them today. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Be aware that some aspects of the service may provoke people to cry and sob.
- 2 Allow God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit to dwell with you.
- 3 Give reassurance or affirmation when you receive responses.
- 4 People will approach you when you are delivering the service so be sensitive, warm and gently guide them in the direction they wish to go.
- 5 Don't be frightened if you have verbal abuse directed at you. Carry on with the service gracefully and gently.

## **Theme: Songs of Praise**

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**Scripture: Psalm 40:3, Psalm 100:2, Isaiah 42:10**

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.  
Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.  
Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth!

### **Prayer**

Lord God, we thank you for our voices and the many songs in which we praise you in our worship. Today, bless our worship as we celebrate our songs of praise to your glory. Amen.

### **Preparation**

If you are familiar with a particular home and you know the residents well, you may have recognised the hymns they love to sing. On the other hand, you may have discovered inconsistency in the way people respond to singing, and no obvious favourite hymns spring to mind. In your preparation for this special service don't be afraid to visit the home before the service and ask some residents their favourite hymns as you talk with them. On your visit show those you know who may respond to a hymn booklet (large print) and see what hymns they refer to. Ask staff and family members what hymns they like as well.

Write on a large card 'SONGS OF PRAISE'. Obtain if at all possible the theme tune to the television programme Songs of Praise. Invite a local church or school singing group and/or some musicians to participate in the service.

Christian Council on Ageing has a large print hymn book of 74 favourites titles 'Hymns that LIVE'. This was produced in 2002 and can be obtained through Fairway Folio (Christian Publishing Services) Alsager, Cheshire. But there are other large print alternatives on the market.

Kevin Mayhew now has a range of hymns on CD titled 'No organist? No Problem!' This offers 200 traditional and popular hymns. This is particularly useful when you don't have someone to accompany you on the piano or organ.

### **Delivery**

NOTE. For this special service arrange the format as you so wish. There is no specific address.

- 1 Show your large card with the words 'SONGS OF PRAISE' written on it. Ask everyone to say the words. Listen to what people say. Play the theme tune from the television programme Songs of Praise and again see if you get any responses.

- 2 Share briefly how the psalmist loved to sing in praise to God and that our singing today gives praise and glory to the Lord.
- 3 In your selection of hymns, particularly if you have someone to accompany you on the piano or organ, you may find that repeating the first verse or chorus a couple of times has far greater benefit than singing verses 2, 3 or 4 which they may not know so well. You will have to use your own judgement on this. However, if you are using a CD or a cassette this may not be possible.
- 4 There may be times when you are unable to stop people from singing. When this happens allow them the opportunity to continue singing for a while, as long as it doesn't irritate other residents.
- 5 Before you start a new hymn make sure that everyone has the correct hymn number. With staff members go around the room helping the residents to find the next hymn. Take your time with this and don't hurry people.
- 6 You may find it appropriate to ask people if they have a favourite hymn. Providing it's in the hymn book and it's on the CD then go ahead and enjoy the moment.
- 7 Include the singing group and/or musicians at any point you think appropriate.

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, thank you for your presence in our worship today. Thank you for the gift and pleasure of singing and the listening to song and music. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

### **Five Communication Tips**

- 1 Don't forget to create a few spaces for silences to allow people to digest or respond.
- 2 In most acts of worship hymns and songs will be included. Try a range of hymns and don't be afraid to use the well known ones regularly.
- 3 Some people like to look directly at you when singing to show you that they know the words or simply to suggest they are enjoying the service. Affirm this as much as you can by favourable gestures.
- 4 As mentioned above, with some favourite hymns you may find that people know off by heart the first verse and chorus but do not know the other verses. Simply repeat the first verse and chorus several times.
- 5 In services such as Songs of Praise use your imagination to inspire the musical theme.