



# Dementia

## Dementia is a growing problem, but the church is equipped to help

Dementia affects 800,000 people in the UK. This will almost double by 2050. 1 in 1400 are under 65 years old. The chances are that you know several people with dementia, but do you know much more than that?

The term 'dementia' is used to describe the symptoms that occur when the brain is affected by specific diseases and conditions. Symptoms of dementia include loss of memory, confusion and problems with speech and understanding. 62% is caused by Alzheimer's disease, 17% by mini-strokes [vascular dementia] and there are a number of less common causes.

The church has an important role in supporting people at all stages of dementia. In the early stages, this can be as simple as making sure things are written down for those who struggle to remember notices given from the front. In the later stages, people may find it hard to attend church, but the church community still needs to include them – and this may need to be in imaginative ways. People with dementia can still have an active spirituality, the key is working out how to connect to them. For example, they may respond if old well-known hymns are played as memories for things long ago are the last to fade.

Some churches have developed special mission-groups with care-homes and nursing-homes as their focus. It is important to make sure that this still includes all ages of the church, and not just left to other older people. There will be people in nursing homes near you who cannot attend church – can you go to them? Use some of the links below to get ideas.

### ⇒ Helpful links:

10 tips for creating dementia friendly churches

⇒ <https://tinyurl.com/10-tips-for-dementia-friendly>

What is a dementia friendly church?

⇒ <https://tinyurl.com/what-is-a-dementia-friendly>