

SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICES

Suggested Format for a Christian Worship Service for Residents with Dementia

Rev. Jonathan Currier

I. HYMN

One verse from a well-known hymn old enough to have been sung by an 80 year-old in her youth.

II. PRAYER

A short prayer or collect, addressing themes of concern to elderly patients losing their memory (e.g. family, aging, fear, loneliness, identity).

III. SCRIPTURE

A single lesson that touches upon the pain of Alzheimer patients or that offers hope and encouragement. If possible, use the King James Version (it is more familiar to the elderly.)

IV. HOMILY

A 3-5 minute homily touching upon the themes of your Scripture selection. Do not be afraid to tell stories, especially stories rooted in your experience. Narrative will often touch a cord that exposition leaves cold. Keep in mind always that Alzheimer patients are desperately looking for ways to reconnect with other human beings. Focus on relationships, rather than abstractions. Kindle hope.

V. THE LORD'S PRAYER

A prayer so well known and learned so early that most patients will be able to recite it, at least in part.

VI. BLESSING

A blessing that offers peace and encourages the congregation to hold fast to the loving memory they still possess.

A PARTIAL LIST OF LITURGICAL RESOURCES

Rev. Jonathan Currier

Prayers

The Shema (Deut. 6:4-9)

The Priestly Blessing (Num. 6:24-26)

The Lord's Prayer

The Blessing of St. Patrick

The Prayer of St. Francis

The Serenity Prayer

The Benedictus

The Magnificat

The Song of Simeon

The Prayer for the Troubled (Book of Common Prayer, p. 831)

The Peace Blessing (Book of Common Prayer, p. 339)

The Prayer for Families (Book of Common Prayer, p. 828)

The Prayer for the Aged (Book of Common Prayer, p. 830)

General Thanksgiving (Book of Common Prayer, pp. 58, 101, 836)

The Litany of Thanksgiving (Book of Common Prayer, p. 837)

Psalms

Ps. 22 "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Ps. 23 "The Lord is my shepherd..."

Ps. 42 "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks..."

Ps. 46 "God is our refuge and strength..."

Ps. 51 "Have mercy upon me, O God..."

Ps. 95 "O come, let us sing unto the Lord..."

Ps. 100 "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord..."

Ps. 121 "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills..."

Ps. 139 "O Lord, thou hast searched me..."

Scripture

II Kgs. 20:1-5 "I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears..."

Job 19:21-27 "I know that my Redeemer liveth..."

Eccl. 3:1-22 "To every thing there is a season..."

Eccl. 7:1-12 "Sorrow is better than laughter..."

S. of S. 8:5-7 "Love is strong as death..."

Isa. 12:2-6 "Behold, God is my salvation..."

Isa. 25:6-9 "He will swallow up death in victory..."

Isa. 55:6-11 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts..."

Isa. 61:1-3 "He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted..."

Jer. 31:31-34 "I will put my law on their inward parts..."

Lam. 3:22-33 "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him..."

Hab. 3:17-19 "And he will make my feet like hind's feet..."

Matt. 11:25-30 "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden..."

Lk. 17:11-19 "Thy faith hath made thee whole..."

Jn. 5:24-27 "He that believeth hath everlasting life..."

Jn. 10:11-16 "I am the good shepherd..."

Jn. 11:21-27 "I am the resurrection and the life..."

Rom. 8:18-25 "The whole of creation...travaileth is pain together until now..."

Rom. 8:31-39 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

II Cor. 1:3-5 "God...who comforteth us in all our tribulation..."

Js. 5:13-16 "The prayer of faith shall save the sick..."

Rev. 7:9-17 "God shall wipe away all tears..."

Rev. 21:2-7 "Behold, I make all things new..."

Hymns

We Gather Together

All Things Bright and Beautiful

God Be in My Head

Thou Hidden Love of God

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

O Worship the King

Amazing Grace

How Great Thou Art

Lead, Kindly Light

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

There is a Balm in Gilead
Rock of Ages
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty
All Creatures That on Earth Do Dwell

N.B.: Italics indicate that the selection is appropriate for interfaith services. Some of the remaining material may be made appropriate with careful editing.

A PARTIAL LISTING OF RESOURCES FOR JEWISH SERVICES

Rabbi Linda Motzkin

Some initial considerations: There are different "movements" within Judaism, somewhat analogous of different denominations in Christianity. Therefore, what feels familiar and comfortable to someone from, say, a Reform Jewish background, may be unfamiliar and strange to someone from an Orthodox Jewish background. There *are* Hebrew prayers that are common to all the Jewish movements, but in some congregations these prayers might be read, in other congregations chanted (to varying tunes!) and in others perhaps read or chanted in English translation. It would be helpful for the worship leader to know the religious background of those attending the service.

Examples of Jewish Service:

The following service outline lists Hebrew songs and prayers that would be familiar to most synagogue-attending Jews and can be found in almost any Hebrew prayer book.

1. Introductory song: Depending upon the time of the service, this could be "Mah Tov" (for a morning service) or "Shalom Aleichem" or "Lecha Dodi" (for a Sabbath evening service). This could even be a non-liturgical Hebrew song such as:

Hi-nei mah tov u-ma na-yim she-vet a-chim gam ya-chad

Behold how good it is, how pleasant, when brothers and sisters come together

2. Barechu (the public call to worship)

3. Shema

4. An abridged version of the Amidah, perhaps beginning by chanting the Avot together, continuing with silent prayer, and concluding by singing "Oseh Shalom."

5. A familiar concluding song, such as "Adon Olam" or "Ein Keloheinu."

Other Readings, Prayers and Psalms:

This outline could be supplemented by readings in English (psalms or prayers for strength and healing). Such English readings (unlike the Hebrew songs and prayers) might not be familiar to Alzheimer patients, but could be meaningful to those family members and caretakers who would be accompanying the patients to the service.

MUSIC SECTION

Rev. Nicholas TeBordo

In many Alzheimer patients, amidst the surface conditions of chaos and confusion, there is a place of clarity and calm that can be reached. Picture if you will, a mountain of brambles and thorns that must be climbed to arrive on a beautiful mountain lake of clear water. That place cannot be approached through strictly rational channels which seek to engage the mind. It must be approached through the senses and emotions to a level below consciousness where deep indeed calls to deep. I would liken that place of clarity to a trip on country roads

instead of a trip on a super highway. If we can just force ourselves to slow down a bit, the journey on the country road can be worthwhile even through it takes longer.

Music is uniquely able to touch not only the mind, but the heart and soul as well. For thousands of years this has been recognized in seeking to offer hope and comfort to people who are depressed. When King Saul of Israel was sinking into a depression, he would call upon David, the shepherd boy, to play his harp. Years later, when David was king, he wrote the psalms, literally the hymn book of the bible. The psalms that David sang were a way that he offered God praise and dealt with his own emotions.

In the Alzheimer patient, when strictly rational approaches are no longer effective in offering the patient comfort and a degree of hope, patients and family alike can draw strength from their faith by using the music that they have been accustomed to hearing since childhood. That music is now inextricably entwined with the spiritual truth that they had once given assent to with their mind. Music offers a new passageway for the hope that faith offers to be activated in the person with Alzheimer's. Loved ones, frustrated by the confusion, and grieving the loss of the person they knew, have a new way of connecting with the Alzheimer's patient that allows them to deal with their sense of loss and grief.

For the Jew, it may begin with the sound of the Shofar and the cantor singing the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One.

For the Roman Catholic, it might be the sound of the Gregorian chant coupled with the smell of incense.

For the Protestant, it will likely be the strains of the familiar hymn or perhaps a Scripture memorized from youth such as Psalm 23 or John 3:16.

For resident and caregiver alike, faith sharing through music is vital to their coping with Alzheimer's Disease.

THE FOLLOWING PRAYERS CAN BE USED IN ANY FAITH SERVICE FOR CAREGIVERS, STAFF AND RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA:

CAREGIVER'S PRAYER

O God, grant us the wisdom and serenity to be good care givers to our residents, families and friends. Help us to see clearly what would help, when it would help, and how best to give help.

Teach us patience, that we will bring love to the task. Guide us away from our panic, and toward our compassion, that we may continue to build happy memories with our residents, staff and families.

Help us to be creative, caring and faithful to Your guidance. Forgive us when we lose our patience, and grant us strength and peace.

PATIENT/RESIDENT'S PRAYER

O God, the trouble with having a memory problem is the frustration and fear I feel every day. I can never be quite sure that I have done and said the right things. I have memories--happy memories of my family and my youth, of beautiful days with my loved ones, of my education and of my faith. Help me to preserve those.

The two things I want never to forget are gratitude and love; I am grateful to those who love and help me -- my family, my caregivers, and you, my God.