

Websites and Books about Dementia-Friendly Faith Communities
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WEBSITES

Dementia Friendly America: Faith Communities

<https://www.dfamerica.org/sector-guides>

The Dementia Friendly America organization publishes a number of “sector guides.” Scroll down on this page for the one on faith communities. It lists concrete steps for faith communities to become more welcoming for people with dementia.

Dementia-Friendly Faith Communities

<https://www.actonalz.org/faith-communities>

The Dementia Friendly America organization began in Minnesota. This website from “ACTonALZ” includes many links to helpful information.

Age-Friendly Congregations

<https://www.chhsm.org/news/uccs-age-friendly-congregations-curriculum-helps-churches-minister-effectively-ages/>

This excellent resource from the Council for Health & Human Services Ministries (CHHSM) of the United Church of Christ contains information about a wide range of topics, some of which address congregational support and inclusion for people living with dementia.

BOOKS

Carder, K. L. (2019). *Ministry with the forgotten: Dementia through a spiritual lens*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

After his wife was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia, this Bishop in the United Methodist Church and Professor at the Duke Divinity School retired and became her full-time care partner. The book is a valuable resource for pastors and laypeople alike as it weaves together theology and stories of Carder’s dementia journey with his wife. Carder is also a leader in the Respite for All Foundation.

Friedman, D. A. (2015). *Jewish wisdom for growing older: Finding your grit and grace beyond midlife*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing.

This is a book to savor slowly and to read and reread. Rabbi Friedman offers blessings at the end of every chapter but actually, the whole book is a blessing. One chapter is titled “Making sense of dementia’s brokenness.”

Johnston, D. (2020). *Reclaiming joy together: Building a volunteer community of real hope for those with dementia*. Montgomery, AL: Respite for All Foundation.

Daphne Johnston is executive director of the Respite for All Foundation (<https://www.respiteforall.org/>) which provides resources and training for faith communities to

establish volunteer-run respite programs. Persons with dementia attend for 4 hours a day and enjoy socializing, physical exercise, music and art, eating lunch together, doing service projects, etc. Daphne is currently working with Wisconsin Dementia Care Specialists to help faith communities in Wisconsin establish these much-needed respite programs.

Keltner, D. (2023). *Awe: The new science of everyday wonder and how it can transform your life*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.

This new book is getting a lot of attention. Keltner has been researching awe for many years and his work inspires us to consider how too many older adults are deprived of experiencing this “everyday wonder.” See Chapter 9 for the way he describes “how spiritual life grows out of awe.”

Mast, B. (2014). *Second forgetting: Remember the power of the Gospel during Alzheimer’s disease*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

The author’s brief biography is a good introduction to this book. He’s Associate Professor in Psychological and Brain Sciences, and Associate Clinical Professor in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Louisville, as well as being an elder at Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, KY. The book is grounded in evangelical Christianity and psychological research on memory and dementia. It’s very accessible and would work well in congregational discussion groups.

McFadden, S. H., & McFadden, J. T. (2011). *Aging together: Dementia, friendship, and flourishing communities*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

A book about how nurturing relationships with friends journeying into progressive forgetfulness. It argues that faith communities have many resources to support these relationships, not the least of which are the beliefs that bind them together. It includes discussion questions for each chapter.

McFadden, S. H. (2021). *Dementia-friendly communities: Why we need them and how we can create them*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

We need dementia-friendly communities because of the increasing numbers of persons living with dementia (and this includes their care partners) and also because these folks are asking for more programs and services that enable them to remain connected to their communities. The book offers suggestions on creating these inclusive communities and has a chapter on spiritual connections.

Post, S. G. (2022). *Dignity for deeply forgetful people: How caregivers can meet the challenges of Alzheimer’s disease*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Written by a well-known ethicist, this book offers hope along with useful information. The author poses and answers seventeen questions often on the minds of caregivers ranging from the time of diagnosis to the time of dying. The book offers concrete suggestions that enable caregivers to see the dignity in the person with dementia and thus sustain their love.

Ramsey, J. L. (2018). *Dignity and grace: Wisdom for caregivers and those living with dementia*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

If you are going to purchase one book on dementia and dementia caregiving to make available in church libraries and/or for congregational book groups, this is one to consider. Each chapter concludes with a meditation on a Psalm that helps readers reflect on the chapter's themes. Beautifully written, accessible, and wise, this book offers what the author calls "tough hope" about living well with dementia.

Swinton, J. (2012). *Dementia: Living in the memories of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Stanley Hauerwas calls Swinton the "premier pastoral theologian of our time." A former psychiatric nurse and hospital chaplain, Swinton now teaches theology at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. He describes his book as being not only a "challenge to medicine and medical approaches to dementia; it is also a challenge to theology."