

Books with Practical Information about Ministries With People Living with Dementia

This is but a sample of the increasing number of resources that recognize the importance of attending to the spiritual needs of elders living with dementia. That group includes persons with a particular dementia diagnosis, those who sense significant changes in their memory and cognitive abilities like way-finding and problem solving but have no specific diagnosis, and the family members and friends who love these people. *Compiled by Dr. Susan McFadden*

Cail, M. M. (2023). *Dementia and the church: Memory, care, and inclusion*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

In a chapter on “programs that work,” Cail describes her book as a “toolkit of information, materials, suggestions, and ideas” (p. 136). The six programs she describes are respite, caregiver support, social cafés, adapted worship services, comfort rooms, and practical help.

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.

Everman, L., & Wendorf, D. (Eds.) (2019). *Dementia friendly worship: A multifaith handbook for chaplains, clergy, and faith communities*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Everman and Wendorf have been longtime leaders in efforts to inspire faith communities to support and nurture people living with dementia and those who love and care for them. Their book offers practical advice from 45 authors regarding ways of making group worship meaningful and sensitive to where individuals are in the dementia journey.

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](#) 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.

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.

Steller, B. (2023). *Meditation for older people: A how-to guide for mindfulness meditation groups*. Victoria, British Columbia: Tellwell Publishing.

Rooted in the ancient tradition of Christian meditation but also incorporating wisdom from other faiths, this is a practical guide for establishing meditation groups for older people. It can be used in residential care communities as well as faith communities and could be helpful for care partners and people living with dementia. It is available as a free downloadable PDF; hard copies can also be ordered from [the author's website](#).