

Dementia Care

Just as it is easy to fall into the trap of regarding older people as almost a different species from those who are younger, so it is easy to marginalise people with dementia. The truth is that we are all human beings with basic needs that remain throughout our lives and whatever our circumstances: to love and to be loved, to hope, to trust, to find purpose, to worship. As we grow older the fulfilment of these needs often becomes more difficult, but the yearnings remain. Memory and cognitive impairment and communication problems make things even more difficult for those with dementia.

During the past 20 years there has arisen a healthy emphasis upon person-centred care which respects the unique personhood of each individual. This is especially pertinent in the case of those with dementia who may retain only a precarious hold on their personal identity. More recently this has been developed to emphasise relationship-centred care (we are not isolated individuals), dementia-friendly communities and dementia-friendly churches. We all have a significant part to play in the care of those with dementia!

Medical and social care emphasise the importance of a holistic approach: human beings are physical, mental, emotional and spiritual beings. All too often, however, practitioners fight shy of that last category (spiritual) and prefer to leave it for others to provide. This gives a two-fold opportunity to churches and other faith communities: first, to provide pastoral care and opportunities for worship to those in hospitals and care homes (sometimes through chaplains) and, second, to encourage care providers and workers not to be so hesitant themselves. **Christians on Ageing** and other agencies have produced excellent resources to facilitate this. One of the most useful is the basic series of free pamphlets published jointly by **Christians on Ageing** and MHA: *Spiritual Care and People with Dementia*, *Growing Dementia-Friendly Churches*, *Visiting People with Dementia* and *Worship and People with Dementia*.

Christians on Ageing engages with issues about dementia primarily through its **Dementia Network** which brings together people with an interest in the issues outlined in this article. You will find more information about the Network and, if you are interested, how to join, by emailing Rev. Dr Albert Jewell ajj633@btinternet.com

You might also like to look at our **Publications** section where you will find details about the booklets we have produced.