



## A MINISTRY FOR THOSE IN THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE BY THE KENTUCKY CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### TEN WAYS TO MINISTER TO THOSE WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR FAMILIES

Individuals living with dementia are among the most marginalized of all people, says retired Bishop Ken Carder. He believes “that God comes to us primarily in the vulnerable and the marginalized.” On a regular basis, he has experienced God’s loving presence in his work among individuals living with dementia, whose diminished capacity to remember and reason often leaves them separated and isolated from their former lives and communities of support.

“Ministry with people with dementia is a wonderful opportunity to experience the presence of God in a unique way,” Carder says. “We tend to underestimate people with dementia, approaching them in terms of their deficits and, therefore, missing their gifts. One of their gifts”, Carder says, “is that people with dementia live in the moment. They don’t lose their sense of time; they lose their tense of time,” he says. “When you are with them they are present in the moment; celebrate that moment. They may not remember you were there but they will remember the emotion of the moment.”

#### **10 Ways Churches can support people with dementia and their families:**

1. Identify and be present with those in the congregation affected by dementia as patients, family members, and/or caregivers.
2. Provide education about dementia and help remove its stigma.
3. Include people with dementia in the life of the congregation, including worship services that connect with those with cognitive impairment.
4. Provide support groups for people with dementia and for caregivers.
5. Help preserve memories of, and for, those whose memories have faded.
6. Proclaim in word and deed that human identity and worth are held by God and do not lie in capacities, including cognition and language skills.
7. Advocate for healthcare policies that provide dignity and resources for those with dementia.
8. Create adult day care/Respite ministries that provide stimulation and community for people with dementia and respite opportunities for caregivers.
9. Visit regularly in the homes, provide occasional meals and transportation, and give caregivers a break.
10. Give special support during times of transition, especially when a member is being admitted to a care facility.