



Diocese of Leeds

Can a loving parish community be dementia *unfriendly*?

Mavis's Story.



For years Mavis had enjoyed being on tea and coffee making duty after Mass. She used to bake delicious cakes to eat with the refreshments, so everyone was pleased when it was her turn on the rota. However, things changed: she developed dementia and no longer baked her lovely cakes. In fact most of the time she even forgot to bring milk and biscuits. The catering team had a meeting and because they cared so much for Mavis and knew it distressed her when she forgot things, they decided that it would be best if they 'retired' her from the duties.

They presented her with a bouquet of flowers as a thank you and explained to her that she had been doing it faithfully for so many years and now it was time to come off the rota and to be 'waited on'. This decision was taken out of a genuine care for Mavis, the assumption being that she had done her bit; it was time now for others to serve her.

But for Mavis, it just exacerbated her feelings of no longer being useful and she became very depressed now her role was ended.

The parish acted with the best intentions, doing their best to show they cared. But Mavis needed people to look at her strengths, abilities and what she could still do, then supported and encouraged to use these gifts to still participate and feel useful. By creating a team who could be 'her memory' she could have continued without the burden of responsibility and still enjoyed serving others.

Mavis's Story is an excerpt adapted from Revd Gaynor Hammond's Growing Dementia-Friendly Churches available at £5 from www.fiep.org.uk or email faithinelderlypeople@yahoo.co.uk

Prayer for those living with Dementia

Pour your grace, O loving God,
upon all living with dementia.
It is frustrating
not to find a word;
it is fearful
to lose one's memories.
Bless them with patience,
a loving and supporting family,
and days of hope and accomplishment.
In Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

Adapted from "Prayers of Our Hearts" ©
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