Holiday at Home

Holiday sessions for older people and those living with dementia

Getting started

There is a great delight in working with and serving people in their later life, and yet for many churches it is incidental and historical, rather than intentional and dynamic. If you are planning to adapt the holiday club material for your older people and those living with dementia, then they and you will be richly blessed.

Taking time to consider the adaptations needed is valuable. Considering the practicalities alongside the spiritual needs is essential to ensure smooth running, spiritual nourishment and everyone's wellbeing.

In this appendix, you will find a mixture of practical hints to help in your planning. This list is not exhaustive, merely a starting point for your planning. There are also suggested additions of memory/sensory tables and adaptations of crafts for each day's theme. At the end is a resources list, where additional information and resouces can be found.

The needs of your people will govern your choices and planning. Have ready ears to hear what they share about personal interests and needs. Have open eyes to see where joy is found or struggles shared. Have open hearts to God's leading in this vibrant, meaningful and rewarding area of ministry, that blesses participants and planners, hosts and visitors alike.

Daily, weekly, monthly?

The decision of frequency for this material is yours to make and depends primarily on a balance between volunteer availability and your participants. Clear discussions that realistically explore people's practical availability are vital. A weekly summer session for older people who may find their usual activities have ceased for summer may be appreciated if volunteers can be found. An intense 'holiday at home' week may be more suitable if participants and volunteers have the energy for five afternoons in a row. Alternatively, this ready to use material could be used to theme a number of monthly sessions over the summer months when some volunteers may be on holiday or have other responsibilities. Asking the participants their views and opinions in creative ways is helpful in gauging energy levels and availability.

Practical hints

In no particular order:

Space

Ramps, access and facilities all need clear signage and volunteers to ensure safety. Trip hazards need identifying as well as ensuring passageways are free of mobility aids. A full risk assessment

for your access and space for use by older people is required, along with safeguarding assessment for vulnerable adults. Appropriate signing in and out, security on external doors, dietary requirements and a next of kin contact in case of emergencies should all be planned for.

Volunteers
Specific people with specific roles ensures smooth running of a session. Clear roles dividing responsibilities, plus 'listeners' and 'chatters' to mingle, are beneficial. Some older people may wish to be volunteers too and recognising that some cross the participant/helper boundary is a blessing, as long as the essential ratios are already covered.

Time
Older people move at a different pace. Be prepared to slow the pace, have people join mid activity and retain an attitude of 'no rush, take your time, we're just glad you made it.' Taking time to chat, listen, hear and tease out a story is a blessing and a delight.

Pastoral care

Asking older people to remember and reminisce can be both a blessing and painful, the same can be said regarding asking about the future. Some may hold painful memories alongside joyful recollections; others may feel they are of little use anymore due to declining health or mobility. Be aware of responses and languages used so that people feel at ease to share stories in ways they are comfortable with. Ensure there is a co-ordinating leader identified who can be told if someone has become upset or concerns are raised.

Dexterity
There can be no assumptions as to people's abilities and manual dexterity. Some may require help and others would be offended with the offer. Visual impairments, cognitive ability, fine motor skills and co-ordination are all affected by age and dementia. Asking, watching, gently offering and listening to responses enable a happy balance and encouragement when needed.

Achievement
People are people, and a sense of achievement at a task completed may feature strongly for some. Enabling participation and taking the time, if they wish, to complete a task whilst the programme moves on is important. Taking things home as well as having things that can be passed on to others can be valuable.

Movement
During the session consider whether it is best to encourage participants to move or to bring activities to tables where they remain seated. A combination of the two may be appropriate, depending on your participants' abilities and wishes and should be part of your risk assessment and daily review.

A quiet room
If the event is being run as an intergenerational event, rather than just for older people, a quieter space or room may enable anyone feeling overwhelmed by sights and sounds to find a moment of calm. A memory box could be place there, or have some gentle music playing. Be ready to guide and accompany people to this space as needed – reminders that is it there may be necessary. Be aware of whether someone is safe to be left alone and use good safeguarding practices.

Gender stereotypical activities
Be mindful of the activities offered and whether they appear typically to appeal to one gender or cross the boundaries, particularly considering generational differences. Providing a balance and variety ensures all will find a point of access and relatability.

Worship
Consider where you will gather for worship. How do you plan to seat people to ensure they can participate as they wish? Familiar hymns, readings and prayers may be appropriate to share and repetition over a number of days can be helpful for those who appreciate routine. Some people may enjoy singing in parts and do so automatically. Consider loop systems for hearing, font size for any printed words and how anything projected can be participated in as fully as possible. Inviting people to choose hymns, share their stories and recollections of specific events, stories and biblical characters.

Refreshments
Many older people will eat alone everyday. Fellowship over afternoon tea, light buffet or soup and roll may be a highlight for them. Some may need practical help, others may wish to contribute, giving them a reason to bake. As you consider your participants and volunteers, be aware of dietary requirements, serving practicalities and the time needed to not be rushed. Treats to take home are often appreciated.

Adapting Sparks and Stories Holiday Club

Many of the scripts and suggestions could be presented if volunteers are available to deliver them. Consider the amount of content and whether one script plus the song is enough. Be aware of the needs of those with sight and hearing impairments in the delivery. Be accepting of noises, shout outs and loud voices and accept that participants are not children; they can be invited to focus together but some may be unable to and that is okay.

The suggestions below are specifically focused on engaging those in later life and those living with dementia.

Activities for the whole week
Familiarity and comfort helps ensure people feel at ease. These activities could remain present through the week for those who wish to visit and enjoy them. Consider leaving the tables/stations physically in the same place to aid this familiarity. Volunteers could encourage those who struggle to participate in group activities to engage in a 1-1 card game as a way into more interaction and involvement.

Props/pictures table
Props and pictures that represent the stage of Jesus' story or the daily parable could be displayed. For example:
1 : vintage baby toys or adverts
2: christening memorabilia
3: vintage postcards about valentines through the ages
4: local maps and compass
5: world map and postcards.

Jigsaw table
Simply a jigsaw space to chat and be, hosted by a volunteer as needed.

Games table
Vintage games like dominos, snakes and ladders, cluedo, scrabble etc. Participants may wish to bring games from home they can share with others.

Paper activities
Each day printed pages of word searches, mazes, code cracking, colouring linked to the characters and theme of the day. These are readily available searching online and provide a talking point if needed.

Daily activities
These are specific to each day of the theme and change each day. Using tables placed in the same place each day ensures familiarity and can encourage confidence if the decision is for participants to move between tables.

Day one – Starting small

Arrivals
If you know your group well, consider getting baby pictures of your volunteers and creating a game sheet of 'Match the Volunteer'. Alternatively, search Google for baby pictures of famous people from across the years and encourage the group to chat and decide together as they arrive.

Stories and questions
For those who'd appreciate a chat table, one could be set up with prompt questions printed out for discussion starters. For others, moving straight to activities may be more appropriate.

Activities
Growing green trees as in the main resource would be an excellent activity for older people, or consider a gardening activity such as cress, as a follow on from the mustard seed reading. This will evoke memories of past growing and enable them to enjoy an egg and cress sandwich later in the week. Using a paper towel would work or make more creative cress heads using tights, googly eyes and pipe cleaners. This encourages creativity, dexterity and conversation.

Finding Jesus
Consider purchasing a book such as *Finding Jesus* by Winston Rowntree. This is similar to a *Where's Wally* book and provides a number of settings where you have to locate Jesus in the mix of a scene of people. Alternatively, use a small cross or statue of Jesus and place it in a drawstring bag with other items and shapes, then challenge the participants to put their hand in and find Jesus.

Day two – Shining bright

Arrivals
Consider some quiz sheets with silhouettes of familiar items on. These are available by searching the internet using search terms such as silhouette quiz sheet.

Stories and questions
Older songs such as *This little Light of Mine* will be familiar to many. Talk of family and friends' christenings can evoke fond memories but also evoke challenging memories. Consider a facilitator for the conversation table who can shape and guide.

Activities
As well as the spinners in the main resource, CD's could also be used as mobiles, reflecting the light spectrum as they hang in windows or act as coasters. Consider what would be most practical to make for your group and source relevant resources. In addition, the STEM activity would be practical for sharing around tables with different images to consider.

Pictures of varied types of lights could be gathered and shared. Sunrises, sunsets, yesteryear domestic light fittings, chandeliers from famous houses, oil lamps, the latest gadget with thousands of lumins etc, to prompt discussion. Or consider a table based quiz based on light questions.

For those living with the effects of dementia, you may wish to consider creating a light show within a darkened room using LED changing light bulb, Christmas lights or small disco ball. This could then be placed in a resource library for others to use.

Day three – Love God, love others

Arrivals
Find and print a number of images of the Good Samaritan story from the internet, then cut them into jigsaws for participants to do together. Consider images from around the world, famous paintings and also abstract portrayals to ensure they are suitable for all abilities.

Stories and questions
Many older people will have had to learn how to accept help from others after a lifetime of being the helper. If appropriate, this could be explored within a wider conversation about times when participants have been the giver, or receiver, of a helping, caring hand. There may be participants who would like to imagine how the different characters within the story might have felt or consider gathering some stories of modern-day good Samaritans that can be read and appreciated.

Activities
The woven heart prayers provide a hands-on activity and could be personalised by writing on the weaving strips the names of those people participants thank God for. These could be then used within worship.

Source some images of medical equipment of yesteryear and encourage participants to share stories of when they may have worked in those environments or what changes they have seen over their lifetimes.

Commandments, proverbs and sayings – print out the greatest commandment along with other biblical proverbs and sayings and then encourage participants to add their own wise words and sayings to the list.

Day four – A way back

Arrival
Printed mazes, dot-to-dots, puzzle balls and finger labyrinths could be made available for participants. Finger labyrinths are particularly useful for gently guiding the fingers of those with little motor control. Shops such as the Works sell many versions of mazes and puzzles that could then become a resource to share.

Stories and questions
Sharing the story and creating space for discussion, amongst those able, on the topics of leaving and returning may be appreciated. Alternatively consider a seated retelling where chairs are placed labelled: Father, Son, Brother and as each one is mentioned people imagine how it may feel to be in that role within the story. Participants, or volunteers, could physically sit there, if willing and able, and put themselves into the shoes of the character. The story teller, or facilitator, then teases out gently through questions, such as: how do you think you'd feel? What might you say? What would you do?

Activities
Encourage the dexterous to have a go with the folded paper cross activity from the main resource and provide volunteers, who have already mastered them, to help. Provide pens or paints for decorating the cross and perhaps a backing card, with a pre-printed prayer on it, to stick them all to afterwards for taking home. If these can be laminated, they can become place mats to take away and use at home.

Sourcing yo-yo's will bring back memories and enable participants to re-live past days. Yo-yo's have to come back but sometimes it takes practice and failed attempts to ensure they come back well. Encourage participants to keep trying and, if need be, reduce string length so they can be enjoyed from a sitting position. Relate this to God always welcoming us back, even when it takes us a few attempts to make it.

Day five – Go out and be

Arrivals
Depending on which story you choose, consider colouring pages, puzzle sheets, code breaker bible passages introducing the theme. If considering the banquet passage; invite participants to create their dream menus of favourite dishes and share them with others.

Stories and questions
Invite those who are interested to consider different versions of the chosen passage eg:
The Message, NRSV etc and consider the differences and similarities and whether they shape the story differently.

Activities
Seated balloon and party games that evoke past celebrations may suit your group, as may encouraging participation in traditional card and board games. Discussion could cover how birthday celebrations have changed through their lifetime. Some participants may have received royal garden party invites or been involved in overseas work where celebrations took different forms. Activities could involve napkin folding to create party place settings such as swans or butterflies, themed to signify and prompt discussions of Jesus ascending.

Resources
- Livability – Dementia Inclusive church guide: travelling together. **www.livability.org.uk**
- Bible Reading Fellowship's Messy Vintage – 52 sessions to share Christ-centred fun with the older generation by Katie Norman and Jill Phipps. **www.messychurch.brf.org.uk/messy-vintage**
- Lichfield Diocese – Diocese of Lichfield. Dementia-Friendly Church **http://anglican.org**
- Anna Chaplaincy Anna Chaplaincy – The Bible Reading Fellowship **www.brf.org.uk**
- Pintrest/Messy Vintage – for specific resources. **www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/messy-vintage/**