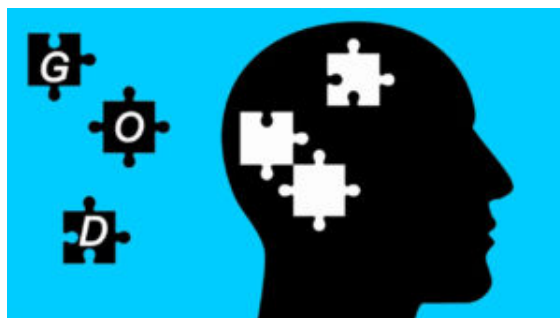


# Dementia and religion: What to do, what not to do

January 18, 2019

WASHINGTON (RNS)—When a congregant has dementia, what can a house of worship do?



RNS photo illustration by Kit Doyle

Although each person is different and advice varies depending on an individual's condition, here are some basic suggestions from experts on how congregations and individuals can help and not hurt.

## Congregations

### Do

- Visit people in homes, at care facilities
  - Offer respite to caregivers
  - Create support group; connect with local ones
  - Hold a hymn sing; recite traditional prayers
  - Use name tags

## Don't

- Exclude—instead, make accommodations
  - Offer traditional service in home setting
  - Give weekend sermon at weekday nursing home visit

## Individuals

## Do

- Treat people with respect
  - Reintroduce yourself
  - Sing—make a playlist of favorite hymns and songs
  - Listen and validate feelings
  - Phone caregivers

## Don't

- Ask, “Do you remember me?”
  - Be condescending—treat like adults, not children
  - Try to correct—accept their reality
  - Ask about recent activities

*Sources: Faith United Against Alzheimer's, RNS research*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Another helpful resource in caring for those with dementia is [Creating Moments of Joy: Along the Alzheimer's Journey: A Guide for Families and Caregivers](#) by Jolene Brackey.*

*Read more [here](#).*