

## **Annual report for St Cuthbert's church Ormesby Middlesbrough.**

### **Introduction;**

It is just over a year since our application was accepted by Dementia friendly Middlesbrough to become a Dementia friendly church.

We have moved forward in leaps and bounds, but this is not always evident to us until we sit down and analyse this.

The year started by presenting us with some physical problems in that the church roof was deemed beyond repair and in need of replacement, and a new build we were anticipating to support our community which included supporting our dementia friendly status was greatly delayed.

This has delayed some of our physical changes but not the mindset of the church which is the most important.

### **How have we listened to people living with dementia;**

Initially we had one member of our congregation with a diagnosis that she was living with dementia and her disease process was rapidly declining.

With the support of her family and other significant people in her life, we worked with her to maintain her spirituality and produce a case study to give others ideas of how to give support in the simplest ways.

Our Lead person Lesley Tart & the Reverend Jen agreed on a series of Dementia friend sessions for the congregation, their friends and families. This broadened to include other churches within the diocese and soon became an ecumenical venture. This highlighted the need for DF church even more, and also gave us feedback on what people wanted.

We are integral in a small working group now looking at DF churches from the four main denominations in Middlesbrough and have an agreed plan to move churches towards DF status and learn from each other's experiences.

We read articles and newsletters from other churches and organisations who had become dementia friendly and shared best practice.

We have delivered our second DF Carol service this year and listened to feedback on both occasions to improve this service.

As Revd. Jen leads on this service, she actually practices skills and techniques from these learnings, and along with joint research, transfers the findings to our weekly services which are visual, tactile, short bursts of info and inclusive. This is generally done during the family service where we do have people living with dementia in attendance. The congregation continues to enjoy this blended service and feedback is generally given to us during coffee afterwards.

On revisiting the consultation document and our initial basic plan on the application form, we have improved or added to our provision with regard to toilets, seating and car parking as follows:

## **How will you increase awareness and understanding about dementia amongst appropriate personnel?**

All members of the PCC, ministers, greeters and anyone holding a position such as the leadership team, bell ringers etc. have become Dementia friends. We have our own Dementia champion in Lesley Tart who also keeps up to date with changes and new research. Lesley buddies or finds an appropriate person to keep in touch with our people living with dementia and their family's needs which creates a comfort blanket for them to ask any question or how to find be signposted to formal help.

Seventy percent of the congregation are Dementia friends with new sessions being offered periodically.

The reverend Jen insists that all Ordinands undergo friends training as well as any other key personnel before taking up their role.

Dementia Friendly church is an agenda item at our PCC meetings.

Our links with other churches in our awareness sessions delivered, advice/signposting role as an 'enabler' (see accepted plan DFC) allows us to keep the momentum going.

We receive the liability newsletter now which shares best practice and offers further training.

We observe and contribute to the Diocese's input in Dementia awareness.

We are represented on the DF Middlesbrough working group where we are actively involved in supporting and listening to the views of people living with Dementia.

## **How will you make the physical environment of your organisation more accessible to people living with dementia?**

The long front access to the church has hand rails and a good surface for wheelchairs and people who can walk both aided and unaided, however it does have an incline which can be challenging.

People with the ability to walk can park in the adjoining Ormesby Hall car park where the walk to church has no incline and yet there is no increase in distance. It is a leafy and calming walk.

We now have a seated area outside near the memorial stone overlooking the cemetery and wooded area and beck. This too is a peaceful and calming area.

Wheelchair access has always been easy with a portable ramp at the church entrance.

Listening to our people with dementia and observing them, we have created a dementia friendly area with a 'memory box', 'twiddle muff', warm soft blankets and seating to allow quiet and calm when needed yet still holds a view of the main symbols within the church i.e. the font, alter pulpit, organ etc. This allows people attending services to maintain comfort, identity attachment and inclusion through meaningful activity.

Our carpeting is a deep red and our people living with dementia say this is not distorted or perceived as anything other than a carpet. We do keep this free of obstacles and stains to prevent this happening. (note, due to water damage from the roof, this is due to be replaced like for like).

We have destination points within the body of the church such as cafe area children's area, prayer station, altar, font, pulpit themed stained glass windows, bell tower, historical artefacts and a memory box for people living with dementia.

We have a quiet area with warm blankets and seats designated for people wishing to use them.

Due to our problems with the fabric of the building, or progress is basic however, we are working closely with the architect to improve lighting, heating and seating within the church and with the design of the new build re dementia friendliness.

Notice boards are managed and easily read. All information is current, good contrast to the background with Trebuchet font which our people tell us is easiest to read.

The external notice board is colour coordinated in background to the liturgical calendar, and the contrast of the notices make them clear to read. Spaces between notices stop confusion or visual distortion. Font is as above. We are currently awaiting the existing external notice board to be re positioned in a place near the entrance to the church which will catch the eye, but also give shelter whilst reading.

We have ordered a second preprinted external notice board which has a good contrast in colour, clear font and no overcrowding therefore easy to read. This gives basic information regarding services and contact numbers only,

External lighting will be reviewed during the new build.

Access and egress, parking and seating have been improved this year too and will be re considered during the new build.

### **What will you organisation do to make your literature, publicity material and other information more accessible to people living with dementia.**

We have a Dementia page to our web site which is continually reviewed and up dated.

This has links to DF Middlesbrough, Alzheimer's society, liability and together Middlesbrough which are all important to our people living with dementia and their families.

We have a corner designated to DFC which has our dementia church journey in print and picture form.

It includes writings from Lesley Tart about the environment, the people or living church, memory boxes, destination points and case study, along with information on where to get support.

This is in a seated area so people can sit and read or take info away.

We have dementia friendly literature and resources from the Alzheimer's Society at the rear of the church in this designated area.

We use the building to hold public awareness sessions and use the Alzheimer's web site and 'Streetlife' to advertise this.

The reverend Jen always discusses any new literature to see if it is dementia friendly. She consults our expert and/or our people living with dementia within our church family to see that it is appropriate.

**Is there anything else that your organisation will do to improve the lives of people living with dementia in Middlesbrough.**

We are about to start our own dementia cafe and singing for the brain session having fund raised to start them in the Thorntree area in/next to our parish. It is envisaged that a second session of each will be housed in our new build when completed in 1-2 years' time.

We have supported funding and given assistance with SFTB of which we were heavily involved in its setting up at St Mary's at Acklam.

Our weekly family service is dementia friendly in many aspects, something we will continue to improve upon.

We have a group from church who go into two local care homes to support a service and social group singing and chatting. Both are for people living with dementia and both are well received as the service is tailored to the needs of each group.

Our activity in the working group for dementia friendly services allows us to support and promote churches in our deanery and within the diocese to become Dementia friendly.

Once we have encouraged several churches across the four main denominations to do this, we may then be able to house weekly DF services on a rotational basis.

Lesley Tart Dementia Champion and Enabler.