

A service of celebration and thanksgiving for caregivers

Planning the service

What are the aims?

There are likely to be several aims: acknowledging and celebrating the vocation of people who give care; educating the church and wider community about the largely invisible contribution of caregivers; setting aside a dedicated time for caregivers to worship unencumbered by their usual duties; offering a time of refreshment to caregivers, building informal support networks in the church and wider communities.

Who is it for?

You may want to have a service at which both the caregiver and cared-for feel comfortable. Alternatively (and this is easier) you might focus exclusively on the caregivers. However, even in this sort of service, the reciprocal nature of the caregiving relationship should be acknowledged. Carers often talk of the unexpected gifts they receive back through the caregiving process (though for some it can feel largely thankless, and the diversity of experience should also be recognised).

The service may primarily be for carers and/or cared-for. But if one of the aims is wider recognition of the people and issues involved, then a big service to which community representatives are invited is also a possibility, or the service might take the place of the usual main Sunday service.

Will it focus on a particular age group or condition?

You may want to have a general celebration of all forms of caregiving. Alternatively, you may wish to focus on a particular group of caregivers – young carers, older carers, or on a particular health condition such as dementia.

When is the best time to hold it?

This will depend on the needs of your group. For instance, if many of the cared-for attend day care or education centres, then a service that fits in with drop-off and pick-up times would work well. This is likely to be mid week between 11.00 and 2.00.

Every year there is a National Carers Week. In 2016 this is 6th-12th June www.carersweek.org You may wish to make use of some of their materials and link your service with their activities.

What support and resources are needed?

Full time caregivers can have great difficulty in leaving home to attend any sort of community activity. They will need sufficient notice to make arrangements for cover. They should also be offered the opportunity to bring the cared-for person with them if appropriate. This will often have implications for transport. The service should be held in a building that is wheelchair accessible and with accessible toilets (this may rule out some churches). It is also important to have a place for individuals to sit if they are not taking part in the service, and enough helpers to spend time with them.

A social time – tea, coffee, lunch – after the service will require more human resources, but is likely to be an integral part of the event.

Having literature available from a range of organizations (for a list see page 4) is also a good idea.

Who should be invited?

Much caregiving is invisible. In addition to the usual way of advertising services, it is worth contacting the family members who reside with people in your parish who receive regular home communion, and leaving invitations in GP surgeries. (GPs have a responsibility to identify informal carers as part of the government's carers' strategy.¹) Professional carers employed by local agencies or residential care facilities may also appreciate an invitation.

How might it be followed up?

Holding a one-off service may be the beginning of offering a more regular event for caregivers such as a coffee morning or lunch club: ask the participants what they would like. Cards could be made available for those who would like a home visit from clergy or a member of the pastoral team can leave their details.

¹ *Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the Carers Strategy* (2010). Department of Health. http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_122077



Basic Service Outline

Within this framework it is possible to be very flexible, including, music, poetry, personal stories etc.

PREPARATION

Welcome and opening prayer

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Bible reading (s)

Psalm or scriptural song

[If this service is replacing your usual main Sunday service then a sermon or reflection on the reading(s), and a creed or affirmation of faith should also be included.]

PRAYERS

Including a Collect and the Lord's Prayer

[If this service is replacing your usual main Sunday service then Prayers of Penitence should also be included.]

ACTION

An act of commissioning
or Symbol of thanksgiving (giving a gift or card, lighting a candle,...)
or Anointing [which should be administered only by a minister authorized for this ministry]
may take place at this point.

CONCLUSION

Blessing or peace or grace, and dismissal



An example of a simple weekday service in celebration of older caregivers

PREPARATION

Welcome and opening prayer

*God of Love and Care who chose Abraham and Sarah to care for Isaac, and Zachariah and Elizabeth to care for John in their old age, whose servants Simeon and Anna watched for the fulfillment of your Kingdom and called down blessings on your son, we give you thanks for the tender love and service of all older people who give care. This is so often a quiet and private ministry but nothing is unseen by you. Give your church the eyes to see it, a heart to celebrate it, and hands ready to help. We ask this in the name of him who gave his life for us, your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen***

Hymn or song

The Collect for the day

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First reading Isaiah 46:3,4

Second reading 2 Corinthians 1:1-5

Psalm 23 (Psalms 71 is also very appropriate)

Third reading 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

PRAYERS

These use the refrain

May we bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ

Father, forgive our blindness to the courage and wisdom of those among us who give care to their loved ones. Forgive our lack of imagination, forgive our tendency to act as individual organs and not as parts of an interconnected body. Confident in your forgiveness, May we

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ

We give thanks for all who work to support care-givers individually and through national campaigns particularly today thinking of the work of Age UK and Carers UK. May we

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ

We pray for those for whom we care, naming them in the quiet of our hearts.... Help us to entrust them to you. We give thanks for what they are able to give to us. We offer you our worries for the future. Make us ready to ask for help and support and give us grace to receive it. May we

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ

We pray for ourselves, for health and strength – physical, emotional, and spiritual. Help us to lean on you, give us others to share our load. Help us to be kind to ourselves, as you have been kind to us. Above all, keep a flame of hope burning in our hearts. May we

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ

We pray for your body, the Church. Bind us together in love that the fruits of your Spirit may flow through our lives; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ

They conclude with the Lord' Prayer

ANOINTING

Hymn or song

Those who wish, receive anointing on their palms as an act of healing and recognition of their vocation

CONCLUSION

Hymn or song

We say the Grace to each other:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore.
Amen.**