

Scenario 5: Dementia within active worship

JAMES' WIFE, FIONA, HAS DEMENTIA. HE BELIEVES THE CHURCH COMMUNITY IS NOT BEING SUPPORTIVE AND IS TELLING THE VICAR, ALICE, HOW HE FEELS FOLLOWING A DIFFICULT COMMUNION SERVICE.

JAMES: I need to speak to you Alice.

ALICE: What's the matter James, you seem upset.

JAMES: People seem to have changed towards us.

ALICE: In what way?

JAMES: I think some people would prefer it if we didn't come to church anymore.

ALICE: I'm sure that's not true, the church is open to everyone.

JAMES: That's not how it feels. Fiona can't help her behavior. I know she can be disruptive at times and noisy, but she's not being deliberately difficult. She likes coming to church and it's important to us that we both take communion together.

ALICE: She seemed particular upset today.

JAMES: She was. We got quite a few "looks" and were asked to be quiet. I just want people to be more understanding, more accepting.

ALICE: Do you know why Fiona was upset?

JAMES: In truth, I really don't know what's going on, I wish I did. She has her favourite hymns which she enjoys, but beyond that it's hard to say.

ALICE: Is this why you've both stopped coming for a coffee after the service like you used to.

JAMES: Yes. It just seems that people are awkward around us. They may smile & say hello but don't want to stay and chat. Why is everyone so uncomfortable around dementia? They all know Fiona, they all know me, why should it be different just because she's got a disease? It's isolating and it's unkind.

ALICE: I'm sorry you feel this way.

JAMES: The church should welcome everybody, no matter what.

FIONA ENTERS

FIONA: Hello Alice.

ALICE : Did you like the service?

FIONA: Yes, it made me happy.

JAMES: You like coming to church don't you.

FIONA: I like speaking to God.

JAMES: I want you to do something Alice. Fiona's got Alzheimer's, it's a disease and it's nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about. We're supposed to be inclusive. Things need to change.

FORUM WITH AUDIENCE

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