

Spiritual ElderCare (SEC) Worship Services: FAQ and Best Practices

What are [SEC Worship Services](#)?

- Ready-to-use, one-hour worship services for seniors with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias
- Based on general themes (for example, friendship or family) and Christian liturgical-calendar events such as Advent and Easter

What denomination do these services represent?

- SEC worship services are primarily Christian (nondenominational). However, they sometimes include appropriate non-Christian readings or quotes to provide touchstones for people who may not come from a Christian faith.

What do SEC services include?

- More content than you'll probably need! Many services include extra material at the end, which you can swap in for other sections
- Opening and closing prayers
- Unison content: Psalm 23, The Lord's Prayer
- Several unique readings for that day – scripture, stories, and more
- Interactive homily on the day's topic
- Hymn order (paired with [SEC Worship Service Hymnal](#))
- Additional prop ideas, such as a pitcher of water or a blooming plant

What is the Statement of Faith?

SEC services use Psalm 23 as a general statement of faith, because many elders memorized Psalm 23 in their youth; as soon as you start reciting it, they'll join in. You can also use something like the Apostle's Creed. You might want to print out the text (if Psalm 23, use the King James Version) and include it at the beginning of the songbook (if using).

What do I need to know about music?

- Hallelujah! You do not have to be musical to lead a worship service.
- Download this [ready-to-use songbook](#) of public-domain hymns to use with SEC worship services. Simply purchase the (very affordable) [ElderSong CDs](#) online and then use the sequence provided to create a playlist on your iPhone or iPod.
- Make enough hymnal copies for your group and assemble pages in lightweight notebooks (use sheet protectors if possible); or use ring clasps.
- The SEC suggested hymn order mixes up faster, slower, longer, and shorter songs. Songs are short, mostly in the two-minute range (that's why so many songs are included). Naturally, you can rearrange the order however you like, but for seniors with dementia, keep the order consistent from week to week, except for special services like Advent or Easter.
- Create a second playlist of instrumental hymn organ music to play during the 30-minute prelude and after the service.

However ... you may decide to use a completely different musical approach, and that's great! Wonderful and workable options include:

- live piano or guitar music
- an overhead projector or a computer-projection system for hymns and readings

Yikes, I'm not a polished speaker! How do I handle the Interactive Homily?

- You're in luck. In some ways, this is the centerpiece of the SEC worship service because it's when seniors become most involved. The focus isn't content delivery or making a strong point; the focus is encouraging elders by affirming their contributions and conveying God's love through a conversation.
- SEC worship services include a lot of potential questions to ask, and you probably won't need all of them. If a certain question falls flat, try rephrasing it – or skip it and move on.
- As mentioned in [“Why and How to Lead a Memory Care Worship Service,”](#) if the interactive homily (typically 10-12 minutes) takes a different direction and people are engaging with a particular idea, keep going with that and build on it. In other words, wing it if you want!
- Feel free to include your own personal stories as illustrations.
- Be prepared to affirm people by name every chance you get. Validate any contribution as positive one, even if it has nothing to do with the question you just posed. You'll become adept at giving a thumbs-up to any comment and circling it back to your theme.
 - For example, let's say you've just asked about the qualities of a family, and someone says “assurance of salvation!” (Because in church that is always the right answer.) You could say, enthusiastically, “Yes, Marion, ‘assurance of salvation’ is a way we, the family of God, feel the Father's love, isn't it? That's a wonderful insight; thank you.”

Remember: your goal is always that everyone would feel uplifted, encouraged, seen, heard, valued, and touched by the spirit of God.