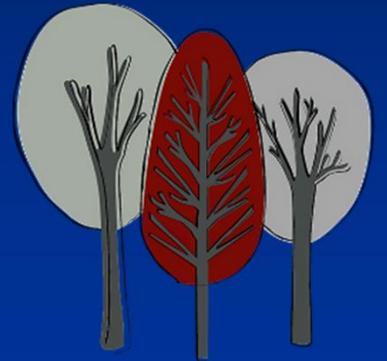


# Dementia Through A Spiritual Lens

- 5. Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood
- 6. Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation



Kenneth L. Carder



Ministry  
*with the*  
Forgotten

Dementia through  
a Spiritual Lens

# Primary Reference

- **Ministry With The Forgotten: Dementia Through A Spiritual Lens**, Kenneth L. Carder. 2019, Abingdon Press, ISBN 978-1-5018-8024-7.





# Kenneth Carder

- Served as a pastor of United Methodist local congregations in Virginia and Tennessee for 35 years.
- **1992 to 2004:** Bishop in the United Methodist Church.
- **2004 to 2009:** Served on the faculty of Duke Divinity School.
- **Nov 2009:** his wife was diagnosed with frontotemporal **dementia**.
- He became his wife's primary caregiver.
- As her disease progressed over the next 10 years, she eventually required institutional care at a memory care facility.
- He served as a chaplain at the memory care facility where his wife lived for 18 months. ■

# Outline

## ■ **November 29:**

- 1. Dementia Through a Medical Lens
- 2. Dementia: Mind, Memory, and God

## ■ **December 6:**

- 3. Dementia and God's Nature and Action
- 4. Dementia and the God Who Is Incarnate

## ■ **December 13:**

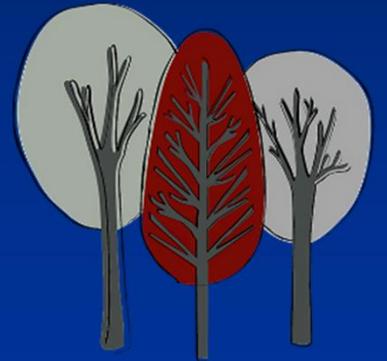
- 5. Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood
- 6. Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation

## ■ **December 20:**

- 7. Dementia and Christian Discipleship
- 8. Dementia, Grieving, and Death ■

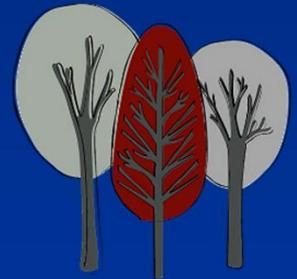
- PowerPoint presentations from the series can be downloaded from:

[www.StJohnAdultEd.Org/dementia.htm](http://www.StJohnAdultEd.Org/dementia.htm)



ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

# Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood



# Introduction

- A nurse practitioner, after announcing that Bishop Carter's wife had scored *zero* on the Mini Mental State Examination (MMSE), remarked “**She's not the person she used to be.**”
- The wife of a friend of Bishop Carter, confined to bed as **dementia** reduced her **capacities** to basic bodily functions, lay in an apparent comatose state. Many who had known her considered her a “vegetable” rather than a **person** and stayed away.
- A former American Baptist pastor with two master's degrees, once an avid reader and an eloquent speaker, now suffering from **dementia** and able to speak only a few words, remarked “**I'm not a person! I'm just stupid!**”

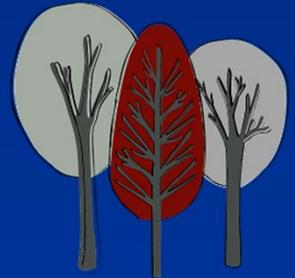
# Introduction

- People with **dementia** confront an **identity** crisis.
- Our society defines human **identity** in terms of individual **capacities** and **autonomy**.
- **Dementia** means *diminished* self and *lost personhood*.
- For those with **dementia**, these cultural views:
  - cause a *loss* of their sense of *worth*,
  - cause a *loss* of their sense of *dignity*,
  - helps explain their *isolation* and *neglect* by society.

# Questions

- Who am I?
- What constitutes the self?
- What does it mean to be a **person**?
- The psalmist's question still echoes across the centuries: **“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?”** (Psalm 8:3-4).
- The Judeo-Christian tradition offers a *wider* lens than human **capacities** and individual **autonomy** to define human **identity**.

# Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood: Dualism and Personhood



# Dualism and Personhood

- **Dualism** is a sophisticated view in the branch of philosophy called **Philosophy of Mind**.
- It argues there are *two* components of human **identity**:
  - the **mind**,
  - the **body**.
- The **body** cannot think in and of itself. It exists in the *physical* realm, the concrete, kick-the-tire world.
- The **mental**, or **mind** exists in a *non-physical* realm, a realm *separate* from the physical realm of **body**.

# Dualism and Personhood

- **Dualism** drives the common religious notion that we are **body** and **soul**:
  - Our **soul** (our **minds** and memories, our *true* self), is immortal, and exists *separate* from **body**.
  - During our life, our **soul** *temporarily* inhabits our **body**.
  - At death, our **soul** (our *true* selves) will finally be freed from the shackles of the **body**.

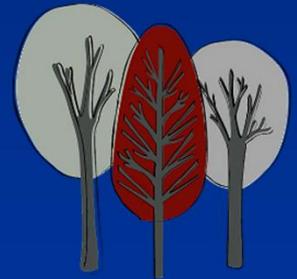
# Distortions of Dualism

- **Dualism** however can be perverted to the detriment of people with **dementia**.
- It can justify the idea that people with **dementia** are **bodies** whose **souls** (their *true* selves) are *no longer* present.
- Leads to:
  - “She’s only a shell of a **person**”
  - “He’s just not there anymore”
  - “I lost her years before she died”
  - “There’s no use visiting her; she’s no longer there.”

# Distortions of Dualism

- This view can also infect the attitude of caregivers.
- The medical caregiver becomes the specialist trying to take care of the **body**,
  - like an auto mechanic approaching a motor vehicle.
- It's the job of someone else (those religious pastor types) to take care of the **soul** part.
- In institutions with overworked, poorly trained, and minimally supported staff, people with **dementia** can be *reduced* to **bodies** with symptoms, **bodies** *without* stories.

# Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood: Capacity-Based Identity



# Capacity-Based Identity

- The idea human **identity** is **capacity**-based is pervasive in *Western* culture.
- **Persons** and their *worth* are *defined* by their **capacities**,
  - *in particular*: their skills in critical thinking and analysis.
- Decline and loss of such **capacities** renders one *less* a **person**, and ultimately a *non-person*:
  - “a shell” of a **person**,
  - a **body** *without* a **mind** / **soul**.

# Capacity-Based Identity

- Such notions of **personhood** have become rationales for:
  - euthanasia,
  - assisted suicide, or
  - simply the isolation and neglect of those with **dementia**.

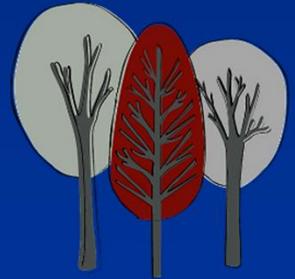
# Capacity-Based Identity

- The British philosopher Anthony Quinton (1925–2010) proposed criteria for **personhood** that starkly reflects the **capacity**-based perspective.
- He listed five entities as *essential* components of a **person**:
  - consciousness of self,
  - rationality,
  - agency,
  - morality,
  - the capacity to form and maintain relationship.

# Capacity-Based Identity

- Dan W. Brock, an American bioethicist and Harvard professor emeritus, also starkly reflects the **capacity**-based perspective: “**Personhood is incompatible with the complete absence of any present and future capacity for purposive agency, social interaction, or conscious experience of any sort whatever. Human beings who have suffered this tragic loss lack even the capacities for pleasure or pain, and for goal-directed action or behavior, of animals that are controversially held to lack the capacities for personhood.**”

# Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood: Individualism and Autonomy



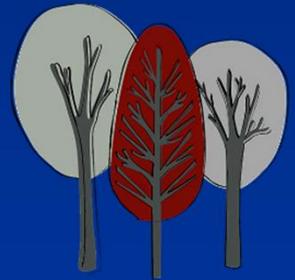
# Individualism and Autonomy

- *Western* culture also *highly* values **individualism** and **autonomy**.
- A **person** is considered an *independent, autonomous* self, with the **capacity** to initiate, act, and control.
- In the words of the poet William Ernest Henley:
  - **It matters not how strait the gate,**
  - **How charged with punishments the scroll,**
  - **I am the master of my fate,**
  - **I am the captain of my soul.**

# Individualism and Autonomy

- **Dementia** however:
  - alters the sense of self,
  - damages the capacity to consciously initiate action,
  - makes a **person** *not* self-reliant, makes them *dependent* on others.
- It seemingly makes them, according to our culture, *less* a **person**, or a **non-person**.

# Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood: Towards a Broader View of Human Identity and Personhood



# Towards a Broader View of Human Identity and Personhood

- Persons with **dementia** are people with inherent *worth*, *longings*, and *spiritual needs*.
- We thus need a *broader* lens than:
  - **dualism**,
  - capacity-based **identity**,
  - autonomy-based **identity**,
- for people with **dementia** to be considered fully human, **persons** with *worth* and *dignity*.

# The Relational Nature of Personhood

- One broader lens on human **identity** and **personhood** is to note the *relational* aspects of **personhood**.
- Part of our **identity** and **personhood** lives in the web of our personal and social *relationships*.
- Thomas Kitwood (1937–98), a psychologist and a pioneer in the field of **dementia** care, defined **personhood** as “**a standing or status bestowed upon one human being by others in the context of particular social relationships and institutional arrangement. It implies recognition, respect and trust.**”
- Part of our **identity** and **personhood** lives in the *respect* and *affection* others hold for us.

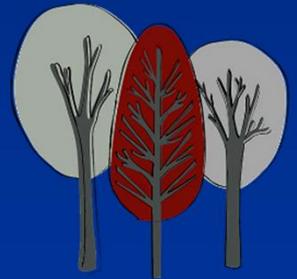
# The Relational Nature of Personhood

- However, such a view suggest *relationships* are *essential* to being a **person**.
- What if *no* such *relationships* exists?
- Theological John Swinton writes: “**The problem is that if it is our relationships that make up our personhood, then presumably if we don’t have such relationships, we are no longer persons.**”

# Toward a Broader View of Human Identity and Personhood

- So we need a *still broader* lens than:
  - **dualism**,
  - capacity-based **identity**,
  - autonomy-based **identity**,
  - relational-based **identity**,
- for people with **dementia** to be considered *fully* human, **persons** with *worth* and *dignity*.

# Dementia and the Meaning of Personhood: Personhood through a Theological Lens



# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- We are more than our **capacities** to think and analyze, to initiate action, to produce, and to relate.
- We are *complex* beings:
  - living in a *web* of interpersonal and social *relationships*,
  - with personal *stories*,
  - stories *part* of even *larger* societal and cultural *stories*.
- But *theologically*, we are even *more*!
  - We are *part* of the transcendent *story* of God's mighty acts of **creation, redemption, and transformation**.
  - We are bearers of the **Image of God**.

# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- As Christians, we affirm the essence of human **identity** is *derived from God*.
- We read in Genesis 1–2, “**Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being**” (2:7)
- God not only gave *life* to these earth-creatures called **Adam** (man) and **Eve** (woman) but also created them in **the divine image**: “**So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**” (Gen 1:27).

# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- *What is, where is the **Image of God** in a human being?*
- One notion in Christian history is that the **Image of God** is lodged in the **soul**, in particular in the **intellect**, in our ability to think, reason, and remember.
- Martin Luther (1483– 1546) rebutted this a notion (but did not convince everyone): “**If these powers (memory, will, and mind) are the image of God, it will also follow that Satan was created according to the image of God, since he surely has natural endowments, such as memory and a very superior intellect and most determined will to a far higher degree than we have them.**”

# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- Theologians agree that the **Image of God**:
  - is *not* something we can self-create or achieve, but is a *gift* bestowed by God;
  - it includes the potential:
    - to *reflect* qualities of God,
    - to *share* in God's life and being.

# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- **Jesus** is the ultimate embodiment of the **Image of God**.
- **Jesus** is the means by which the **Image of God** is restored in us.
- Through the **Incarnation** (= God taking on human form as **Jesus**), God:
  - restored in human beings the **Image of God** tarnished (some say destroyed) by the sin of Adam and Eve,
  - *hallowed* human existence,
  - endowed **personhood** with *sacredness*,
    - even **personhood** in its most *vulnerable, frail, and dependent* condition.

# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- Bishop Carter argues for Thomas Aquinas's view that human beings are "**ensouled bodies**":
  - Our **soul** and **body** are intimately entwined, interwoven,
  - The **Image of God** resides in our entire **ensouled body**.
- Our **identity**, our **personhood** is:
  - *not* based on our **capacities**, our **autonomy**, or the respect and affection others hold for us, but
  - is based on us bearing the **Image of God**.
- Who are we? We are beings, **ensouled bodies**, who carry the **Image of God**.

# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- Physician and theologian Warren Kinghorn writes we are: “**wayfarers on the way to God.**” “...**God invites this body to be drawn into God’s life ... This living, ensouled body is beckoned by desire on a journey toward God, ... Under the conditions of a broken and sinful world ... this body will inevitably encounter internal and external obstacles to the journey, including disease, finitude, and even death. However, God continues to claim and to draw this finite body, even if she bears the particular finitude of **dementia**, into God’s infinite love...** It is always this body who is sacred, this body who is being drawn to God, this body who will be raised and transformed in Christ for eternal life in the presence of God.”
- Who are we? We are beings who carry the **Image of God**, and who are *loved* by God.

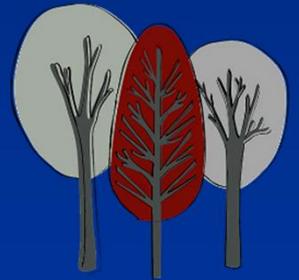
# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- John Swinton writes: “‘I think, therefore I am’ is replaced with ‘We are because God sustains us in God’s memory.’ Our hope lies in the fact that we are living in the memories of God. As long as God remembers us, who we are will remain: ‘I will not forget you. See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands’” (Isa 49:15-16)”
- Who are we? We are beings, who carry the **Image of God**, and who are *loved* and *remembered* by God.

# Personhood through a Theological Lens

- Who are we? We are beings, who carry the **Image of God**, and who are *loved* and *remembered* by God.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in a poem: “**Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine. Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!**”

# Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation



ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

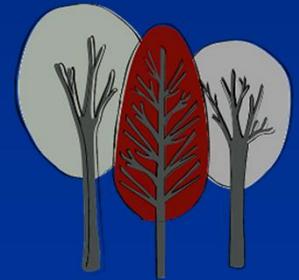
# Introduction

- A daughter concerned about the spiritual well-being of her mother in late stage of frontotemporal **dementia** tells Bishop Carter: **“I don’t know what is happening to Mom! She’s never cursed in her life and now every word is profanity; and she used to be so sweet and kind. Now she is just plain mean and hateful! She has been religious all her life, but it doesn’t seem to mean anything now!”**
- A man diagnosed with Lewy body **dementia** asks: **“Why is this happening to me? It’s not fair. I’ve led a good life and haven’t done anything to deserve this. Where is God, Reverend? I’ve prayed for God to heal me, but I only get worse! I’m not only losing my mind; I’m losing my faith!”**
- A wife who is a member of a faith community that says **salvation** requires conscious intellectual assent to prescribed beliefs grieves over her husband suffering from **dementia**: **“I’m not sure my husband is saved. He has been a good man, but he never made a profession of faith or went to church. Now he doesn’t understand anything I say about God or Jesus. He just stares at me with that blank look on his face.”**

# Questions

- At the core of the Christian faith is **soteriology**, the doctrine(s) of **salvation**.
- What is the relationship between **salvation** and **dementia**?
- What is the *telos*, the overarching goal of “God’s mighty acts of **salvation**”?
- What is the relationship between **health** and **healing**, and **salvation**?
- What is the relationship between *individual* **salvation** and the **community**?

# Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation: What Is Salvation?



# Biblical Terms for Salvation

- The words for **salvation** in the Bible make clear its *comprehensive* nature.
- **Old Testament** (Hebrew words):
  - *ga'al*: “redeem,” “buy back,” “restore,” “deliver,” or “set free”
  - *yasha* or *yesha*: “save,” “help in time of distress,” “rescue,” “deliver,” or “set free”
- **New Testament** (Greek words):
  - verb *sozo*: “save,” “heal,” or “liberate”
  - nouns *soteria*: “salvation”; *soter*: “savior”
  - other terms used in the New Testament to express **salvation** include words for “freedom,” “justification,” “life,” “reconciliation,” “redemption,” and “resurrection.”

# Salvation Across the Centuries

- Christian doctrines on **Salvation** have evolved over the centuries, varying across the theological spectrum.

# Salvation in Western Christianity

- *Western Christianity* has tended to emphasize:
  - human *sinfulness*,
  - God's initiative in *pardoning* **individuals**, *restoring* their proper relationship with God.
    - Through Christ's life, death, and resurrection, God *pardons* and *reconciles* *sinful* humanity.
- We in turn must:
  - *repent* of our *sin*,
  - accept God's **forgiveness**,
  - devote our lives to following Jesus's teaching and example.
    - May include the requirement of a *personal* decision and conscious commitment to Jesus as "Lord and Savior."
- Our goal is "going to heaven."

# Salvation in Western Christianity

- **Individualism** and Personal **Autonomy** plays a significant role in the interpretation of **salvation**, particularly in the *West*.
- The focus is on **individuals** and their *personal* beliefs, decisions, actions, and relationships.
- **Salvation** is something that happens within the **individual's** experience, requiring the **individual's** initiative and agency.

# Salvation in Western Christianity

- **Dualism** – the notion we are separate **body** and **soul** – plus individual **autonomy** has tended to narrow **salvation** to:
  - a task involving *only* the **souls** of *individual* persons;
  - a task of “**saving souls**,” and freeing the **soul** from the **body**.

# Salvation in Eastern Christianity

- *Eastern Christianity has emphasized **healing** as metaphor for **salvation**.*
- The **fall** in Genesis 1–3 is seen *not* as a *loss of original perfection*, but as a *loss of original innocence*, requiring in its aftermath:
  - renewed *growth and maturation*,
  - the **healing** of *brokenness*.
- **Salvation** is *growth* toward the *fullness* of the **Image of God** in which humans are created.
- *Forgiveness* of sin is an important element in the **healing** of the human condition and the *growth* toward the *fullness* of the **Image of God**,
- However, **healing** – **salvation** – is more comprehensive than simply the pardoning of sin.

# Salvation in Eastern Christianity

- **John Wesley**, Anglican priest and founder of Methodism, was influenced by the *Eastern* views on **salvation**, and wrote to a friend in 1778, “**It will be a double blessing if you give yourself up to the Great Physician, that He may heal soul and body together. And unquestionably this is His design. He wants to give you . . . both inward and outward health.**”

# A Comprehensive View of Salvation

- Viewed from the broad perspective of all Christian theological traditions:
  - **Salvation** is the **healing**, reconciliation, restoration, and transformation of **individuals, communities, and the *entire creation***.
  - **Salvation** is **creation** in *all* its forms *flourishing* in accordance with God's *intention*.

# A Comprehensive View of Salvation

- This comprehensive view of **salvation** is described in many memorable biblical images:
  - **The wolf shall live with the lamb,**
  - **the leopard shall lie down with the kid,**
  - **the calf and the lion and the fatling together,**
  - **and a little child shall lead them.**
  - **The cow and the bear shall graze,**
  - **their young shall lie down together;**
  - **and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.**
  - **The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,**
  - **and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as waters cover the sea. (Isa 11:6-9)**

# A Comprehensive View of Salvation

- This comprehensive view of **salvation** is described in many memorable biblical images:
  - **Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens,**
  - **your faithfulness to the clouds.**
  - **Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,**
  - **your judgments are like the great deep;**
  - **you save humans and animals alike, O LORD. (Ps 36:5-6)**

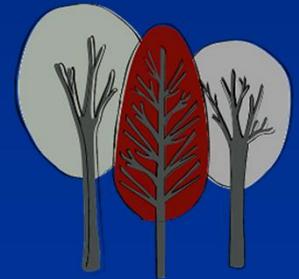
# A Comprehensive View of Salvation

- This comprehensive view of **salvation** is described in many memorable biblical images:
  - See, the home of God is among mortals.
  - He will dwell with them;
  - they will be his peoples,
  - and God himself will be with them;
  - he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
  - Death will be no more;
  - mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
  - for the first things have passed away. (Rev 21:3-4)

# A Comprehensive View of Salvation

- While these passages express an *eschatological* (= end-times) vision of God's **salvation**, they also poetically move us *beyond* the boundaries of what we label as "personal **salvation**."
- They push us to a more *holistic* view of **salvation**, **salvation** as encompassing a person's entire physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and relational well-being.
- This *broader* understanding is especially important when considering people with **dementia**.
- What does such *holistic* **salvation** mean for people with **dementia**?
- Is **salvation** for them only a *futuristic, eschatological* hope; or can people with **dementia** experience reconciliation, healing, and wholeness in the **present**?

# Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation: Salvation and Human Agency



# Salvation and Human Agency

- *Intellectual* assent to prescribed doctrines, and *willful* commitment to a defined set of practices are often deemed *critical* components of **salvation**.
- Yet, **dementia** makes *intellectual* assent and *willful* commitment *impossible*.
- Does that mean those with **dementia** *lose* their **salvation**?

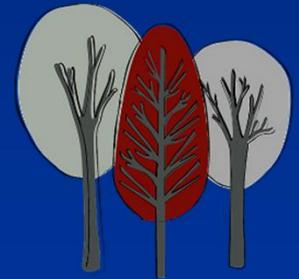
# Salvation and Human Agency

- Christian theology affirms God is the *primary* agent, the *primary* actor in **salvation**,
- But there is also an emphasis on a human “*response*” to God’s “*grace*”.
- **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast”** (Eph 2:8-9).
- Bishop Carter suggests we parse this statement of Paul’s:
  - **“Grace”** is simply theological shorthand for the **presence and power of God**. Wherever God is, there is **grace**!
  - So it is by **God’s presence and power** (“**by grace**”) we have been **saved**, as an undeserved **gift**.
  - And “**faith**” may be viewed as that which that enables a person to *respond* to God’s **gift**.

# Salvation and Human Agency

- Bishop Carter suggests:
  - *Responding to **God's presence and power** isn't limited to, or dependent upon, *intellectual* capacities.*
  - Our hyper-valued emphasis on cognitive **capacities**, and our excessive **individualism** cause us to lodge **salvation** in personal agency and having correct beliefs.
  - However few of our human *responses* actually result from conscious intellectual decisions.
    - Our *responses* emerge from multiple stimuli, most of which are unconscious, shaped by forces beyond our individual, cognitive awareness.
  - We should *not* assume a person with **dementia** *cannot respond* to **God's presence and power** because they *lack* the ability to *respond intellectually*.

# Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation: Communal Salvation



# Communal Salvation

- The dominant emphasis on **individualism** in much of Christianity *minimizes* the **communal** aspect of **salvation**.
- Yet the biblical emphasis is clearly on the wholeness of the **community**.
- God's **salvation** is the creation, reconciliation, and transformation of the nation or the **community**.
- The Bible is the story of God's creation, deliverance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration of "**a people.**"

# Communal Salvation

- It is the **community** that receives and embodies **God's presence and power** to create, reconcile, forgive, and transform.
- It is *in community* that **individuals** are:
  - candidates and recipients of God's **saving** acts,
  - formed and sustained in God's **saving** grace.
- It was through our **baptism** that we were incorporated into God's covenantal **community**. The **community** welcomed us, the newly baptized, into the household of God.

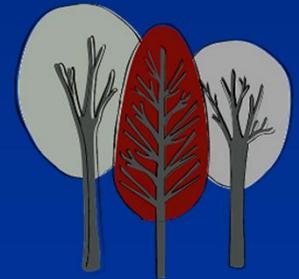
# Communal Salvation

- It follows that:
  - **Individual** wholeness and well-being *cannot* be separated from the wholeness and well-being of the **community**.
  - **Individual **salvation**** is *intimately bound* to the **salvation** of the **community**.

# Communal Salvation

- The **healing** and reconciliation that are part of a holistic view of **salvation** require attentiveness to the *brokenness* within the **community**.
- Much of the suffering of people living with **dementia** results from social stigma, isolation, and lack of knowledge and advocacy by the **community** – including the church.
- The **community** can help people with **dementia** experience reconciliation, **healing**, and wholeness – experience **salvation** – in the **present**.

# Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation: Mediating God's Salvation



# Mediating God's Salvation

- While God is the primary agent in **salvation**, the **community** and **individuals** serve as **mediators**.
- “Self-**salvation**” is not a biblical perspective; deliverance comes through God's action, usually **mediated** through human actors:
  - *Through* Moses, God delivered the Hebrew slaves from Egyptian bondage,
  - *Through* the prophets, God prepared the exiles for restoration,
  - *Through* a “pagan” Persian king Cyrus, God freed the exiles,
  - *Through* Mary, Jesus entered the world,
  - *Through* John the Baptist, God prepared the way of Jesus's ministry,
  - *Through* Ananias of Damascus, God healed and comforted Saul during his blindness following his encounter with the risen Christ.
- Paul refers to the Christian community as “**the body of Christ,**” each part of the **body** contributing to the ministry of the whole (1 Cor 12:27).

# Mediating God's Salvation

- The implications for people with **dementia** are clear.
- The healing, reconciliation, and wholeness of the people living with **dementia** require the **mediation** of the **community**.
- Mediators of God's **salvation** for those with **dementia** include:
  - Skilled and compassionate physicians, nurses, certified nursing assistants, and other professional caregivers
  - Advocacy groups such as the Alzheimer's Association providing prophetic voices on behalf of justice, compassion, and aid for those without voice,
  - Researchers working to find the causes and remedies for **dementia**,
  - Families, neighbors, friends, and congregations.

# Those With Dementia Are Mediators of God's Salvation

- Those with **dementia** are **mediators** of God's **salvation** to us.
- God has *chosen* the weak, the vulnerable, the powerless as *preferential* recipients and means of God's **grace** – means of **God's presence and power**.
- Jean Vanier (1928-2019) Canadian Catholic philosopher and theologian, founder of *L'Arche* (an international federation of communities spread over 37 countries for people with developmental disabilities and those who assist them), wrote:
- **"People who gather to live in the presence of Jesus among people in distress are therefore called not just to do things for them, or to see them as objects of charity, but rather to receive them as a source of life and of communion. These people come together not just to liberate those in need, but also to be liberated by them; not just to heal their wounds, but to be healed by them; not just to evangelize them, but to be evangelized by them."**

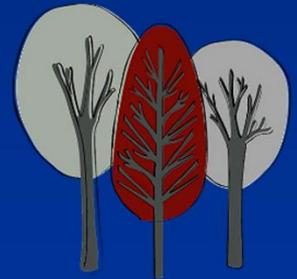
# Those With Dementia Are Mediators of God's Salvation

- A daughter shared with her Orthodox priest her reluctance to care for her frail mother with **dementia**.
- The priest responded, “**But your salvation may depend on your care for her; she may very well be the means to your salvation.**”
- This is *not* to imply that we *earn* our **salvation** by our service to the vulnerable and the powerless.
- Rather, it is the recognition that we *encounter* the *living* God in those with whom God is in solidarity, and *we* are thereby changed.

# Those With Dementia Are Mediators of God's Salvation

- Bishop Carter wrote he could readily affirm that his wife Linda, suffering from severe **dementia**, was a *means* of his own reconciliation, **healing**, and wholeness.
- Through her, the following strengthened and intensified:
  - his ability to love without reciprocity,
  - his patience,
  - his attentiveness in the moment,
  - his ability to celebrate and enjoy simple things,
  - his faith in the indestructibility of love.

# Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation: Salvation Within and Beyond Time



# Salvation Within and Beyond Time

- The **healing**, reconciliation, and transformation of **individuals**, **communities**, and **creation** is a *process*.
- The **creation** is still *incomplete*, and *on-going*.
- **Healing** is *partial* and *limited*.
- Reconciliation is *unfinished*.
- Transformation is *incomplete*.

# Salvation Within and Beyond Time

- We live *between*:
  - The **world** as it is *now*, and God's vision of the *new* heaven and the *new* earth,
  - God's **present reign** brought *near* in Jesus Christ, and God's **final reign** in the *new* heaven and the *new* earth.
- God's **salvation** has the character of *already but not yet*.
- The **healing**, reconciliation, and transformation we experience in the **present** is but an *intimation* of the wholeness and transformation *to come*.

# Salvation Within and Beyond Time

- We are creatures inhabiting space and time.
- We:
  - live in the **past** through our memories,
  - live in the **present** with agency, our ability to act and choose,
  - live in **future** through our hopes and dreams.
- We feel **salvation** through:
  - the *intimations* of **future** wholeness and transformation we note in the **present**, and
  - our *hopes* and *dreams* of their *fulfillment* in the **future**.

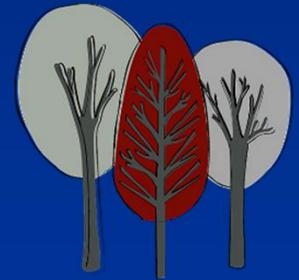
# Salvation Within and Beyond Time

- But people with advanced **dementia** live in the **present** moment, *without* a consciousness of a **past** or a **future**.
- What might **salvation** feel like to those to whom only the **present** time is real?
- John Swinton writes “**Time ... is an aspect of God’s *relationship* with the world, a *gift* from the loving Creator. Time is best conceived as an aspect of God’s *love* for the world. As an aspect of God’s *love*, the *purpose* of time is to facilitate and sustain *love*.”**”
- That is, each moment of time:
  - is a **gift** of God,
  - is occupied with **God’s** timeless **presence** and **God’s power** to create, **heal**, reconcile, and transform (= with God’s **grace**),
  - contains the potential to facilitate and sustain **love** – the ultimate *purpose* of each moment.

# Salvation Within and Beyond Time

- How can we be **mediators** of God's **salvation** to those whom only the **present** is real?
- Jolene Brackey, who leads popular seminars for caregivers, and author of *Creating Moments of Joy*, suggests:
  - concentrating on the experiences that trigger *brief, fleeting* expressions of connection, love, and joy,
  - rather than focusing on joy as a permanently sustained mood.
- Her lectures and book are filled with practical ways of generating such *moments* of joy by being attentive to the stories of people with **dementia**.
- Those *brief, fleeting* moments can have a residual and long-lasting benefit for both the person with **dementia**, and the ones who care for them.

# Dementia and the Meaning and Source of Salvation: Conclusion



# Conclusion

- **Salvation** is *holistic* and includes the **healing**, reconciliation, forgiveness, and transformation of **individuals, communities, nations**, and the **entire cosmos**.
- God is the *primary* agency for **salvation**, *not* human **capacities**, and *not* the human **capacity** for *intellectual* beliefs.
- **Individual** and **communal salvation** are *inseparable*; each **person's** wholeness is tied up in the wholeness of the **community**.
- **Individuals** and **communities** are **mediators** of God's **salvation**.
- **Salvation** is both "*already*" and "*not yet*."
- God's timeless **salvation** is experienced within God's *gift of time*, and the *purpose* of each moment is to facilitate and nurture *love*.
- People with **dementia** are *both* recipients and **mediators** of God's mighty acts of **salvation**.

# Next Week:

- 7. Dementia and Christian Discipleship
- 8. Dementia, Grieving, and Death

