



Section 4:

The Power of Music



In the experience of many people living with dementia, and their families/carers, listening to music is a way of offering comfort and enjoyment. Scientific research also shows that the act of listening together to music is a key to the following:

- reconnecting people with each other
- promoting a close relationship with family members
- supporting the connection between people and the community to which they belong
- bringing together different age groups
- encouraging conversation
- creating an opportunity to share memories
- reawakening familiar and comforting feelings
- supporting a sense of belonging
- providing a calming influence to promote enjoyment
- experiencing and appreciating a shared emotional response to the arts
- reawakening a feeling of identity
- strengthening a feeling of encouragement and promoting enjoyment
- supporting socialising in chapel and the sense of belonging to the chapel society

The power of music is also a way of strengthening faith, the means of grace within the worship, and strengthening and confirming the relationship with God.

In the home

Daily tasks can be linked to a favourite piece of music, enabling the following:

- lightening the burden that may relate to the task
- providing a timetable for the day
- providing structure
- offering an opportunity to relax
- promoting comfort
- easing confusion
- calming a feeling of stress

A pastoral visit can include listening to a piece of music and linking it with sharing a prayer and/or a Biblical reading.

In the chapel

It is possible to hold services or meetings that have a musical element, such as:

- a 'Coffee and Song' gathering with singing together forming part of the socialising
- a 'Happy Hour' session, to include tea, background music and space to dance
- invite young musicians to practice their skills by providing entertainment to members of the chapel or society
- bring various age groups together for an informal singing session
- an informal session of hymn singing relevant to a specific season, e.g. carols during the Advent and the Christmas festival, Easter hymns, Welsh songs around St David's Day
- a service using familiar hymns that are easily remembered, without the need to rely on a hymn book or screen.

Remember that the flexibility of the space helps to create a warm and pleasant atmosphere, so that all those present will feel comfortable. It is good practice to facilitate and support the wish of some individuals to move freely around the space during the meeting, without letting it affect the natural flow of the activity.

Creating a Playlist

One idea that has proved to be successful is to create a playlist of favourite music that holds some significance for those living with dementia and members of the family/carers/chapel members. The process of selecting the pieces of music can in itself be enjoyable and may open the door to sharing happy memories and a positive emotional response.

Having produced the playlist, it will be possible to store the pieces of music/songs on a recording device/tablet/laptop/mobile phone. Remember that the music will be at its most effective if listened to in the company of others.

Consider whether some of the following examples could be helpful when compiling the list:

- songs or nursery rhymes from their childhood
- melodies or themes from favourite television or radio programmes or films
- a piece of music experienced in a special location

- a piece of music connected with a special occasion or a celebration such as a wedding
- favourite hymns (see the list of CDs at the end of this section)
- any music from a particular period or one that brings back happy memories.

Checklist

Ask the questions below to help make a playlist of musical items for an individual or group of people:

- Are there any particular artists/songs/type of music connected with their childhood?
- Do they have a favourite group or singer?
- Are they/were they fond of dancing?
- Were they especially fond of any television programmes?
- Is there a special occasion in their lives that relates to a particular piece of music?
- Is there a song or type of song that is especially dear to them?
- Do they have memories of a specific holiday or favourite location, and is there a genre of music connected with the place?
- Do family members or friends have any suggestions to offer?
- Is the music of any specific season of the year very dear to them, e.g. Christmas carols, Easter or Thanksgiving hymns, songs that celebrate St David's Day, Welshness, etc?
- Remember to revisit the list regularly to add items as necessary.

Good Practice

Having completed the list, it would be a good idea to do the following:

- play the songs/pieces of music as often as possible
- remember that the activity is made more effective by sharing the experience of listening
- remember that different age groups can benefit from listening together – e.g. children and elderly people
- use the listening period as a way of promoting a calm atmosphere
- use the listening period as a way of starting a conversation
- use the listening period as a way of encouraging movement and dance
- remember that the wish to get up and walk around is completely natural for individuals living with dementia

- remember that the absence of an external response does not mean that there is no inner response
- allow up to half an hour listening, knowing that the means of grace will then continue
- when listening, make a note of any song or piece of music that leads to a specific response (favourable or unfavourable) and remember that for the next time
- remember that singing along with the recording will enhance the enjoyment
- remember, if the technology is seen as an obstacle, you can ask young members of the congregation or family members for help
- remember that not every listening period will lead to the same response
- arrange a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere and consider changing the seating arrangements to make the setting more informal and flexible.



Compact Discs of Hymns, Carols and Sacred Songs



Songs of Praise: Much-loved Hymns.

EMI Gold, 2011. [CD]

A compilation of 21 familiar hymns sung by a wide range of artistes including choral societies, cathedral choirs, male voice choirs and a community gospel choir. Amongst the selection of hymns are 'Amazing Grace', 'Abide with me', 'Jerusalem' and 'Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer'.



Songs of Praise: Glorious Easter Hymns.

EMI Gold, 2011. [CD]

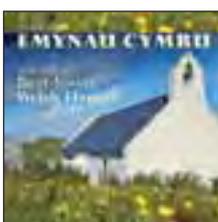
A compilation of well-known hymns and sacred songs by a range of choirs, mainly related to Easter Week. The selection includes familiar hymns and songs such as 'There is a green hill far away', 'When I survey the wondrous cross', 'Jesus Christ is risen today' and 'The old rugged cross'.



Songs of Praise – Celebrating 50 years.

EMI TV, 2011. [CD]

A compilation of 44 traditional hymns, together with more recent hymns and sacred songs presented by a wide range of choirs to celebrate the TV programme's 50th anniversary. The disc includes items such as 'Let all the world in every corner sing,' 'What a friend we have in Jesus' and 'How great thou art'.



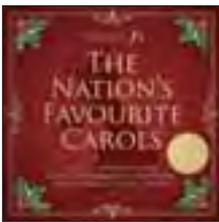
20 Best-loved Welsh Hymns. Sain, 1993. [CD]

This compilation of hymns is the outcome of a survey conducted to discover the twenty most popular Welsh hymns. The items are performed by well-known soloists, chapel congregations and *cymanfaoedd canu* (singing festivals) and include Welsh hymn tunes such as *Cwm Rhondda* and *Pantfedwen*.



Cymanfa Ganu / The Great Hymns of Wales. Sain, 1995. [CD]

A collection of familiar Welsh hymns depicting the fervour and power of the singing festivals. Amongst the 23 hymn tunes included are *Aberystwyth*, *Blaenwern*, *Crimond*, *Hyfrydol*, *Cwm Rhondda* and *Tydi a Roddaist*.



The Nation's Favourite Carols. Decca, 2017. [CD]

A compilation of the most popular Christmas carols chosen by Classic FM listeners. Most are performed by the City of London Choir with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, but there are also contributions by guest soloists including Bryn Terfel and Trystan Llŷr Griffiths. Includes favourites such as 'Once in Royal David's City' and 'Hark! The herald angels sing'.



The Great British Carol Collection, Sony Music Classic, 2014. [CD]

A two-CD compilation of twenty-eight of the best-loved carols performed by the choir of Trinity College, Cambridge. Includes favourites such as 'O come all ye faithful', 'Silent Night', 'Away in a manger' and 'In the bleak mid-winter'.



Christmas Classical Voices, Sony Music Classical, 2014. [CD]

A compilation of 3 CDs, mainly of traditional carols but also including some modern seasonal songs performed by an eclectic range of classical and popular artistes. Amongst the singers are Kathryn Jenkins, Charlotte Church and Rhydian. The 45 items range from 'White Christmas' to Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus', and from 'Ave Maria' to 'I believe in Father Christmas'.