



CLERGY GUIDE



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Welcome!

As a leader in the African American Methodist Episcopal Church, thank you for joining the fight against Alzheimer's.

Currently, more than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, and over 11 million are serving as caregivers. African Americans face additional obstacles — they are at an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's disease, and are less likely to have a diagnosis due to lack of access to insurance and affordable health care, resulting in less time for treatment and planning.

The Alzheimer's Association® is proud to partner with the African Methodist Episcopal Church to raise awareness of Alzheimer's disease among the African American community. By working together, we can provide opportunities for all those affected to access care and support services, engage in research and advance advocacy.

Use this guide to learn about Alzheimer's and other dementia, the importance of early diagnosis and resources for your members, including the Association's free 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900), support groups and more.

To raise awareness in your congregation, you're invited to host a Purple Sunday event. Ask attendees to wear purple and deliver a special service featuring stories from AME members impacted by Alzheimer's, information about the disease, and the Association's care and support resources. To start planning your event, download the Purple Sunday Toolkit at amechealth.org/alz, and contact your **Association chapter** for support.

Thank you to the AMEC Connectional Health Commission Steering Committee for their dedicated leadership in this initiative:

Rev. Francine Brookins, Esq.

Sis. Ouida Collins, M.D.

Sis. Roslyn Thibodeaux Goodall, MBA

Sis. Virginia Harvin

Sis. Sybil Hunter

Bro. Chris Lykes

Bro. James Wilson

Sis. Cynthia Taylor

We would like to give special thanks to Sis. Roslyn Thibodeaux Goodall for her contributions as the chairperson of the AMEC Connectional Purple Sunday event. Her leadership and guidance in the coordination of the event helped more AME members learn about Association resources. Together, we are making a difference in our community and in the fight against Alzheimer's and all other dementia.

Sincerely,

Rev. Miriam Burnett, M.D.

Medical Director, AMEC Connectional Health Commission

Carl V. Hill, Ph.D., MPH

Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, Alzheimer's Association

A Message for Caregivers

Life does not come with a manual, and neither does acting on behalf of a loved one with Alzheimer's or another dementia. As caregivers, we tirelessly and selflessly care for our loved ones, for months and even years on end. We often put aside our needs, wants and plans so we can provide around-the-clock care, including doctor appointments, meal prep, house cleaning and everything in between.

While the caregiving journey is not an easy one, many of us find comfort in our faith and prayers. Others seek pastoral guidance when dealing with such challenges. Another source of support is the Alzheimer's Association, which offers information and resources at alz.org, a free 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900), support groups and education programs. I take comfort in knowing that the Association provides care and support through their Helpline, which offers reliable information and support anytime, day or night, and is available in many languages. Their support groups and education help many caregivers understand memory loss, Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Although some caregivers have been successful in accessing the Association's valuable support and free resources, there are still many others within your congregation and communities who have not. Before we had access to these resources, many caregivers struggled with burnout, depression and hopelessness.

The Association helps us navigate the ups and downs of caregiving. To ensure members of your congregation and community are not alone and feel supported, we ask that you share the information in this Clergy Guide to help make their caregiving journey a little easier.

Thank you for helping to raise awareness within your congregations and communities about Alzheimer's and other dementias and ways to access care and support resources.

Sincerely,

Sis. Roslyn Thibodeaux Goodall

Caregiver and AME Church and Alzheimer's Association Steering Committee member

Alzheimer's and the African American Community

Did you know?

- » African Americans are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease as older White Americans. Variations in health, lifestyle and socioeconomic risk factors likely account for most of the differences in risk of Alzheimer's and other dementia by race.
- » African Americans may be more likely to be diagnosed in the later stages of the disease due to lack of access to insurance and affordable health care — a barrier that has grown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This delay means these individuals are not getting treatments when they are most likely to improve quality of life, including some symptom relief and help maintaining independence longer.
- » Delayed diagnoses means older African Americans may miss the opportunity to make important legal, financial and care plans while they are still capable, and may be unable to communicate their preferences to their families.
- » Currently, African American participation in Alzheimer's clinical trials is less than 10%. It's critical to represent the broader population, including African Americans, in clinical trials to better understand how racial and ethnic differences may affect efficacy and safety.

About Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging — it is a progressive brain disease that causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia, a general term for memory loss and other cognitive abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life. Although there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's, new treatments are on the horizon as a result of accelerating insight into the biology of the disease.

10 Warning Signs

As a leader of your faith community, you may be among the first to see signs of Alzheimer's in a congregation member. The following is a list of warning signs to help identify symptoms that may be related to Alzheimer's or another dementia. It's possible to experience one or more of these signs in varying degrees, and it's not necessary to experience every sign in order to raise concern.

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life.

One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's disease, especially in the early stage, is forgetting recently learned information — for instance, a new pastor's name. Others include forgetting important dates or events, asking for the same questions over and over, and increasingly needing to rely on memory aids (e.g., reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things they used to handle on their own, such as attending a weekly Bible study group.

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

2. Challenges in planning or solving problems.

Some people living with dementia may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

What's a typical age-related change?

Making occasional errors when managing finances or household bills.

3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks.

People with Alzheimer's often find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes they may have trouble driving to church, organizing a grocery list or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

What's a typical age-related change?

Occasionally needing help to use microwave settings or to record a TV show.

4. Confusion with time or place.

People living with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.

What's a typical age-related change?

Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.

For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's. This may lead to difficulty with balance or trouble reading. They may also have problems judging distance and determining color or contrast, causing issues with driving.

What's a typical age-related change?

Vision changes related to cataracts.

6. New problems with words in speaking or writing.

People living with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue or they may repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary, have trouble naming a familiar object or use the wrong name (e.g., calling a "watch" a "hand-clock").

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.

A person living with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. He or she may accuse others of stealing, especially as the disease progresses.

What's a typical age-related change?

Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

8. Decreased or poor judgment.

Individuals may experience changes in judgment or decision-making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money or pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

What's a typical age-related change?

Making a bad decision or mistake once in a while, like neglecting to change the oil in the car.

9. Withdrawal from work or social activities.

A person living with Alzheimer's disease may experience changes in the ability to hold or follow a conversation. As a result, he or she may withdraw from hobbies, social activities or other engagements. They may have trouble keeping up with regular church services or another favorite activity.

What's a typical age-related change?

Sometimes feeling uninterested in family or church obligations.

10. Changes in mood and personality.

Individuals living with Alzheimer's may experience mood and personality changes. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, with friends or when out of their comfort zone.

What's a typical age-related change?

Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

If you're concerned that a congregation member is displaying any of these signs, take action. For tips on how to have a conversation, visit alz.org/memoryconcerns.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Multiple conditions can cause cognitive changes, so it's essential to obtain a full medical evaluation to determine whether symptoms are related to Alzheimer's or something else. If the cause is not Alzheimer's or another dementia, it could be a treatable condition. If it is dementia, there are many benefits to receiving an early and accurate diagnosis, including an opportunity to plan for the future, access support services and explore medication that may address some symptoms for a time.

There is no single diagnostic test that can determine if a person has Alzheimer's disease. However, diagnostic tools and criteria make it possible for physicians to make a diagnosis of Alzheimer's with an accuracy of about 90%. The diagnostic process may involve a thorough medical history, mental status and mood testing, a physical and neurological exam, and tests (such as blood tests and brain imaging) to rule out other causes of dementia-like symptoms. This process may take more than one day or visit.

While there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease or a way to stop or slow its progression, there are drug and non-drug options that may help treat symptoms. Understanding available options can help individuals living with the disease and their caregivers to cope with symptoms and improve quality of life. Visit alz.org for more information on the available treatments.

Progression

Alzheimer's disease typically progresses slowly in three general stages: early, middle and late (sometimes referred to as mild, moderate and severe in a medical context). Since Alzheimer's affects people in different ways, each person may experience symptoms — or progress through the stages — differently. On average, people age 65 and older live four to eight years after diagnosis, while some live with the disease for as long as 20 years. Outside of coexisting health problems such as heart disease or diabetes that can shorten life span, researchers do not know why some people live longer than others.

The thinking, memory, behavioral and functional problems associated with Alzheimer's reflect the areas of the brain affected by the disease. Areas involved with learning and memory are usually affected first. Later, regions involved in planning and carrying out tasks are affected. Ultimately, the brain regions involved in carrying out basic bodily activities such as walking and swallowing are impaired. In general, those diagnosed when problems with thinking and memory are still quite mild are likely to live with the disease for many years.

Those diagnosed when problems are more pronounced, such as when the individual struggles to remember where they are or to dress correctly for the season, are likely to live with the disease for fewer years. Those diagnosed when problems are severe, such as needing help with dressing and eating, generally live for the shortest period. Eventually, the person with Alzheimer's will need round-the-clock care. The disease is ultimately fatal.

Pastoral Resources

Through the years, the AME International Health Commission has served as a resource for health information, and the church has always played a pivotal role in the dissemination of health, community and other pertinent information in African American communities. The International Health Commission helps the church understand health as an integral part of the faith of the Christian church in order to make the AME denomination a healing faith community and promote the health concerns of its members.

As congregations age, churches will face challenges linked to caring for the growing number of older members. The AME Church has a unique opportunity to support families in their times of need with compassionate support and concern. The following scriptures and prayers can provide comfort, hope, peace and support to all those impacted by Alzheimer's or another dementia.

A Psalm For Giving Grateful Praise.

Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before Him with joyful songs.
Know that the Lord is God.
It is He who made us, and we are His;
We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving
and His courts with praise;
Give thanks to Him and praise His name.
For the Lord is good and His love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalm 134

Behold, bless ye the Lord,
all ye servants of the Lord,
which by night stand in the house of the Lord.
Lift up your hands in the sanctuary,
and bless the Lord.
The Lord that made heaven and earth
bless thee out of Zion.

A Psalm of David.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 121

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Psalm 91:1-2

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I can not change;
The courage to change the things I can;
And the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

Taking, as He did, this sinful world
As it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
If I surrender to His Will;

That I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name
Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,
Forever and ever.
Amen.

Access Care and Support

The Association provides care and support to those affected by Alzheimer's and all other dementia. If you know an AME member facing the disease, refer them to the following resources.

- » The Alzheimer's Association free 24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900), staffed by master's-level clinicians and specialists, provides confidential support and information to all those affected in over 200 languages.
- » We conduct support groups and educational programs in communities nationwide, and offer virtual options.
- » We provide a wealth of online caregiver resources at [alz.org/care](https://www.alz.org/care), connecting people to in-depth information and tools. The Alzheimer's Association & AARP Community Resource Finder ([alz.org/CRF](https://www.alz.org/CRF)) is a robust database of dementia and aging-related resources.

Join the Fight

AME members can make a difference in the fight against Alzheimer's. Explore opportunities for your congregation and individual members to get involved with the Association, and contact your **Association chapter** to get started.

- » Volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association by serving as a Faith Outreach Representative. This volunteer role engages locally with key audiences, including personal or neighboring faith communities, to connect people with the Association's care and support resources. Visit [alz.org/volunteer](https://www.alz.org/volunteer) to learn more.
- » Advocate for those affected by Alzheimer's and urge legislators to make the disease a national priority. Visit [alz.org/advocacy](https://www.alz.org/advocacy).
- » Participate in or volunteer for one of our fundraising events to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's disease care, support and research: Walk to End Alzheimer's® ([alz.org/walk](https://www.alz.org/walk)) and The Longest Day® ([alz.org/thelongestday](https://www.alz.org/thelongestday)).
- » Register for Alzheimer's Association TrialMatch® ([alz.org/TrialMatch](https://www.alz.org/TrialMatch)), a free, easy-to-use clinical studies matching service for individuals living with Alzheimer's, caregivers and healthy volunteers that generates customized lists of studies.

Acknowledgement

This clergy guide was developed by the Alzheimer's Association and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) International Health Commission Steering Committee. The first of its kind from this partnership, the guide aims to bridge a gap in the resources available to clergy and help address the needs and concerns of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) community.

The content was informed by a series of community listening sessions held with AME pastors, lay leaders and members on July 14, 2020 and throughout the month of January 2021. These town hall-style meetings provided an opportunity for AME leaders and members to gather and ask questions about the disease, discuss their experiences, learn about resources, and discover opportunities to engage in the cause.

The guide includes scenarios of memory loss — carefully curated selections of pastoral resources that are relevant to faith-based communities. The AMEC International Health Commission Steering Committee contributed to the development of this guide by selecting, reviewing and vetting each scenario and scripture to ensure its relevance and connection to communities of faith. This team of AME collaborators also ensured that the information included in this guide addressed specific needs identified by participating community members.

Many thanks to the following AME Churches, Episcopal Districts and Alzheimer's Association chapters for hosting community listening sessions in their area.

Mt. Moriah AMEC, Swansea, S.C.
Kairos-Ebenezer AMEC, Nashville, Tenn.
Thomas Chapel AMEC, Union, S.C.
St. Luke AMEC, Gallatin, Tenn.
Alzheimer's Association South Carolina Chapter
Canaan AMEC, Columbia, Tenn.
Shreveport-Monroe PE District (8th Episcopal District)
Alexandria Thibodaux PE District (8th Episcopal District)
Alzheimer's Association Tennessee Chapter
Alzheimer's Association Louisiana Chapter
Bethel AMEC of Fontana, Fontana, Calif.
Ninth Episcopal District
South California Conference Lay Organization
Alzheimer's Association Alabama Chapter
Alzheimer's Association California Southland Chapter
Calvary Fellowship AMEC, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Tenth Episcopal District
Alzheimer's Association New York City Chapter
Alzheimer's Association San Antonio & Southeast Texas Chapter
West Mainline District
Alzheimer's Association Delaware Valley Chapter

Hearing the lived experiences of the AME community through participatory engagement and cultural humility has been instrumental in the creation of this clergy guide. Through our ongoing partnership, we look forward to many more opportunities to collaborate with the AME community in our pursuit of health equity for Alzheimer's and all other dementia.