

A good visit: **your guide to** *visiting older people*



“

*The righteous
will flourish
like a palm tree.
They will still
bear fruit in
old age.”*

Psalm 92:12–14

Visiting an older person is a simple but powerful act of love.
It reflects God’s heart for care, dignity, and companionship.



This guide is written to help you confidently enjoy spending time with older people, whether that’s visiting them in their home, in a care home, or in wider community settings.



“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

Matthew 18:20

Preparing yourself

Before you go, take a quiet moment to pray:

“Lord Jesus, fill me with Your love, patience, and gentleness. Help me to listen well and bring peace and encouragement. Amen.”

Don't forget that you are not going to “fix” anything and that your presence matters more than your words. Most importantly, God is already at work in this person's life.

Arriving well

When you get there:

- Greet your friend or relative warmly, with a smile
- Introduce yourself clearly if needed
- Don't stand over them but sit at eye level
- Speak gently and unhurriedly

If your visit is in a care home or group setting, make sure you know when other things are going on such as mealtimes or activities and be aware that staff may need access or time with whoever you are visiting.



Practical tips for...

Hearing loss

- Face them directly
- Speak clearly (not louder, but slower)
- Reduce background noise
- Check understanding gently

Sight loss

- Describe what you're doing
- Use clear contrasts (e.g. dark text on light)
- Don't move items without telling them

Reduced mobility

- Don't rush them
- Allow time to stand or move
- Sit within comfortable reach

“Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

Colossians 3:12

Making *conversation*

It's good to aim for natural, easy conversation and to try to avoid too many memory-testing questions!

Things you could introduce as conversation starters include the usual enquiries about their health and wellbeing and simple daily things such as food and the weather. You could also ask about their interests, friends and family, church, or any hobbies you know they enjoy.

Helpful questions • “How has your day been?” • “What have you enjoyed this week?” • “Is there anything you've been thinking about lately?” • “Would you like me to read something or sit quietly together?”	Avoid: • Rapid questioning • Too many “Do you remember...?” prompts • Correcting small inaccuracies
---	--

It might help to come prepared with things to show them that you think might interest them. This could be a programme from a sporting or musical event you've been to, a postcard from somewhere you've visited recently, or a trinket or small item you think might prompt conversation. If you have a smartphone or tablet, you might have some photos or videos of friends or family you can show, or even short clips from platforms such as YouTube.





Joining *in*

If you are visiting someone in a care setting, you might want to find out what they're getting up to when you're not there and then find a way to join in! If the home offers regular activities such as group singing or visiting entertainment acts, you can plan your visit so that you can enjoy taking part together.

Some care homes run 'knit and natter' groups or invite the Fire Brigade or local vintage car club to come and visit. If you share the interests or skills, you might find that a great way to spend time with your friend or relative is to just join in with what they're doing.

If you are visiting someone in their own home, you could arrange some visits around special social occasions – for example, you could watch the previous day's programme from the Chelsea Flower Show or catch up on Trooping the Colour together!

Nick's story

"I'll look at the activities plan for the week and come when there's an activity I know Mum will enjoy that we can do together. As I visit often, there isn't always a lot to talk about so it's useful to have a focus for the visit. The activity will sometimes trigger a memory in Mum's mind that we can talk about, and it will usually have us smiling about something. Mum will now sometimes go to activities even when I am not visiting – something she was reluctant to do when she first moved in."



Using simple objects for *memory* and comfort



For some, small items can spark comfort or connection. This can be especially true for those living with dementia who may not want or be able to spend much time talking with you. You could bring a cross or prayer card, an old hymn or song book, a scent that is familiar such as a soap or pillow spray, or some soft fabric or a small blanket for them to handle.

Let the person guide the interaction and put them under no pressure to remember.

Don't forget, sometimes the act of just being there is enough. If your friend or relative dozes off while you're there, it's fine to just sit quietly with them for a while – you could take your own book or a bit of personal admin and quietly use the time in a way that suits you.

Supporting *low mood* or loneliness

If your friend or relative seems low when you arrive, try not to worry or feel too bad. They may just need someone to be with them and listen if they want to share how they are feeling.

Your presence may be enough to cheer them up or bring them out of themselves for a while, or they may remain feeling low or sad. It's important to remember that you are unlikely to be able to solve some of their challenges,

A short prayer for comfort

"Lord, bring Your peace and light into this moment. Surround us with Your love. Amen."



especially if much of their mood is impacted by declining physical capability and health, but the time you give them is precious enough.

If they want to talk, acknowledge them by saying something like, "That must be very hard" or you could also say:

- "I'm really glad I came to see you."
- "You matter so much."
- "God has not forgotten you."

Shared spiritual comfort

If you're visiting someone who is a Christian, spend a bit of time intentionally sharing your faith together. It doesn't have to be long or intensive – even simple faith expressions can be deeply meaningful. These kinds of words and practices are often deeply stored in memory, even when other memories fade, so they can be used with those living with dementia.

Short Bible verses or passages to share

- “The Lord is my shepherd” (Psalm 23)
- “I am with you always.” (Matthew 28:20)
- “Nothing... will be able to separate us from the love of God.” (Romans 8:38–39)
- “The Lord bless you and keep you...” (Numbers 6:24–26)

Classic hymns (even just one verse)

You don't have to sing these, just reciting them together can be powerful.

- Amazing Grace
- The Lord's My Shepherd (Psalm 23)
- Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- Abide With Me

Don't forget, lots of these things can be watched or listened to online so you can also use content like that to help add another voice or influence into your visit.



Sharing *faith* with those who are not yet believers

Many older people are not Christians or may feel unsure about faith. A visit can still be a deeply meaningful opportunity to reflect God's love to them, and some older people become more open to spiritual reflection later in life.

You can share your faith naturally, such as by saying “**My faith helps me when things feel uncertain.**” It's good to ask open questions like “**Did you have any connection with church or faith growing up?**” or “**Do you ever think about spiritual things?**”

If it feels appropriate, share simple hopeful truths with them:

- God loves them deeply
- They are not forgotten or alone
- Jesus offers peace, forgiveness, and companionship
- It is never too late to turn to God

Familiar passages like Psalm 23 or the Lord's Prayer can bring peace even to those who were not regular churchgoers, or who stopped attending church as an adult. You could say:

- “Many people find comfort knowing God is close.”
- “Would it help to hear a short Bible verse?”



Leaving *well*

Typically, 20–45 minutes can be enough, and sometimes shorter visits can be more meaningful than long, tiring ones. Watch for signs of fatigue such as yawning, distraction, or restlessness, and try to avoid sudden departures.

Let them know that you are beginning to think about leaving, saying things such as:

- “I’ll need to go in a few minutes.”
- “It’s been so lovely being with you.”

Affirm them and reassure them about the time you’ve spent with them.

- “I really enjoyed our time together.”
- “I’ll be thinking of you.”

If appropriate, tell them that you’ll come back another day.

- “I’ll visit again soon.”

Ending with *prayer*

If it feels right, suggest that you pray with them before you leave. Invite them to pray as well if they would like, without any pressure. If you don’t feel confident or familiar with praying out loud, you could recite the Lord’s Prayer together.

“ Lord, thank You for this time together. Bless [name] with Your peace, comfort, and presence. Stay close to them today and always. Amen.”

Preparing for your *next* visit

Sometimes a visit doesn’t quite go to plan, or the person we are visiting is going through a period of change and needs something different from previous visits. If the visit didn’t go as expected and was harder than you’d hoped it would be, don’t be discouraged! Have another think about things you can do – or not do – next time that might help.

- Does the visit need to be shorter?
- Would a different time of day now be better – for them or for you?
- Could you alternate between a private visit and joining in with shared activities?

Most importantly, don’t forget that nothing is wasted with God!

If you miss a *visit*

Sometimes life gets in the way, and you don’t manage to visit as you had planned. Don’t feel guilty, just try to rearrange or put another visit in your diary for the next week or so.

If you can’t visit for a little while, you can always send a card or note so that your friend or relative knows that you’ve not forgotten and that you will be back. And if they have their own phone, a call is always nice.

Remember
your visit reflects Christ’s love in a tangible way. You don’t need special skills – just kindness, patience, and willingness to be present.



Contact details

Could you or a loved one come to live with us?

Here are the contact details for our homes and housing schemes. If you'd like to find out more, do get in touch. Each location also has its own page on our website:

www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/homes
www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk/housing



Residential care homes

BETHANY HOUSE, PRESTON

☎ 0300 303 1724

✉ bethanypreston@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

BRIDGEMead, BATH

☎ 0300 131 9115

✉ bridgemean@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

EMMAUS HOUSE, HARROGATE

☎ 0300 303 8450

✉ emmaushouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

EMMAUS HOUSE, WHITEHAVEN

☎ 0300 303 1440

✉ emmauscumbria@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

EVINGTON HOME, LEICESTER

☎ 0300 303 1455

✉ evington@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

FINBOROUGH COURT, GREAT FINBOROUGH

☎ 0300 303 1450

✉ finboroughcourt@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

FRAMLAND, WANTAGE

☎ 0300 303 1470

✉ wantage@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

FURZE HILL HOUSE, NORTH WALSHAM

☎ 0300 303 8434

✉ furzehill@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

Koinonia Christian Care Home, WORTHING

☎ 0300 303 8480

✉ koinonia@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

LUFF HOUSE, WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

☎ 0300 303 1495

✉ luffhouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

MIDDLEFIELDS HOUSE, CHIPPENHAM

☎ 0300 303 8470

✉ middlefieldshouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

MILWARD HOUSE, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

☎ 0300 303 1460

✉ milward@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

SHOTTERMILL HOUSE, HASLEMERE

☎ 0300 303 1475

✉ shottermill@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

VILLA ADASTRA, HASSOCKS

☎ 0300 303 8440

✉ villa-adastra@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

Independent living housing schemes

CAREY GARDENS, KIRBY MUXLOE

☎ 0300 303 8455

✉ carey.gardens@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

DOROTHEA COURT, BEDFORD

☎ 0300 303 1490

✉ dorothea@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

FINBOROUGH COURT HOUSING, GREAT FINBOROUGH

☎ 0300 303 1450

✉ housingmanager.finborough@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

HOMESDALE, WANSTEAD, LONDON

☎ 0300 303 8485

✉ homesdale@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

LUFF MEWS & SELHURST COURT, WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

☎ 0300 303 1495

✉ luffhouse@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

MILWARD HOUSE HOUSING, TUNBRIDGE WELLS

☎ 0300 303 1460

✉ milward@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

PILGRIM GARDENS, LEICESTER

☎ 0300 303 8455

✉ andy.harrison@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

ROYD COURT, MIRFIELD

☎ 0300 303 1480

✉ roydcourt@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

STRATHCLYDE HOUSE, SKELMORLIE

☎ 0300 303 8465

✉ strathclyde@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk



About Pilgrims' Friend Society

Rooted in our Christian faith, at Pilgrims' Friend Society we believe that as well as providing secure, comfortable homes and professional care, older people can be supported and encouraged to spend the later part of their lives contributing to the world around them, growing and enjoying fulfilling lives.

We have been supporting older people to flourish for more than 200 years, since a group of Christians concerned about "the aged and infirm Christian poor" established the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society in 1807. We started off by providing pensions and support through volunteer visits before developing housing and care schemes for older Christians.

Today we continue that legacy by running residential care homes and independent living housing schemes around the UK, providing environments in which older people are comfortable and secure, whether they need care or are living independently.

We are committed to developing the work to support fulfilled living in later years through our Growth and Renewal Programme which is working to see brand new state-of-the-art homes being built to support Christian care, and ensuring our existing buildings are continually improved and maintained.

**“ Grey hair is
a crown of glory;
it is gained in a
righteous life.”**

Proverbs 16:31

*Pilgrims' Friend Society is a
Christian charity, rooted in the Bible.*

What we *believe*

We believe that the teachings of the Bible are our sole and final authority.

We believe that there is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The good news of the gospel is that, although men and women are sinners, God has taken the initiative to save people from every tribe, tongue and nation. We believe that God will bring about the redemption of all things.

God sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to be our Saviour. Jesus became fully human and, at the same time, remained fully God.

Jesus came to buy us back from sin and death by living a perfect life, having no sin, and dying in our place on the cross.

But God's grace did not stop there. When Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit was given by God to continue His work on earth.

It is this Holy Spirit who gives us new birth and brings us to repentance and faith in the Son. When the Spirit has begun such a good work in someone, He will bring it to completion.

At the time appointed by God, Jesus will return to earth in glory. He will raise the dead and judge all people. He will banish those not known to Him and He will take His people to be with Him in eternal glory in the new heavens and earth.

*“Even to your old age
and grey hairs I am He,
I am He who will sustain you.”*

Isaiah 46:4



www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

Pilgrims' Friend Society, 175 Tower Bridge Rd, London SE12 2AL

☎ 0300 303 1400 | ✉ info@pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

Follow us on social media: [f](#) [d](#) [in](#) [@](#) [v](#)

Pilgrims' Friend Society is a registered charity and a company registered in England and Wales. Charity No: 1045920 • Company No: 03027071