This year, we meet Irene, one of our residents living with dementia

Irene’s life has been full of love— family holidays by the sea, afternoons spent gardening, and bustling dining room tables filled with friends and neighbours. Her children, Gary and Julie, light up when they talk about her. They recall how their mum created a home where they felt safe, secure, and deeply loved.

But as Irene grew older, life changed. Everyday tasks became harder, and her diagnosis of dementia brought new challenges. It could have been a time of isolation, but Irene’s journey took a different path. At Fitzwarren House, she found not just care but a community. There are challenges, but here’s the remarkable thing: Irene continues to bless those around her.

**The Good Samaritan**
In today’s scripture, a lawyer asks Jesus, “How do I inherit eternal life?” Jesus turns the question back to him: “What does the Torah say?” The lawyer answers, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.”

“You’ve answered well,” Jesus says. “Do this, and you will live.”

It seems like the conversation should end there, but the lawyer presses further: “Who is my neighbour?”

To answer, Jesus tells a story. A man is beaten, robbed, and left for dead. A priest and a Levite pass by without helping. But a Samaritan—an outsider, someone despised in that society—stops. He cares for the man, tends his wounds, and ensures his recovery.

The Samaritan’s actions redefine what it means to be a neighbour. It’s not about proximity or status—it’s about compassion, generosity, and love that crosses boundaries.

**Rethinking Dementia**

In our society, people often see those living with dementia as though they are the ones lying on the side of the road – helpless, in need of rescue. It’s true that a dementia diagnosis brings loss and grief, and those living with it often need specialist care. But that’s not the whole story.

Every person living with dementia is unique. You may have noticed this if you’ve cared for or loved someone with dementia. Some days are harder than others. One day, their memory will be impaired; on others, it will improve. ’ At times, they may be lit up with joy, but at others, they may be more anxious.

Tom Kitwood, a writer on dementia, likes to say, ‘if you meet a person living with dementia, you have met one person living with dementia. Every journey is different.

Irene’s story challenges the assumption that people living with dementia are passive recipients of care. Instead, she shows us what it means to live fully and generously.

**Care: A Two-Way Gift**

At Fitzwarren House, Irene is a source of life and joy. Several of the people we met described her as a good Samaritan. She greets Maria, the music therapist, with warmth and enthusiasm. She organises domino games and gently enforces the rules. She checks in on the care team, offering them her kindness.

Irene is not just a recipient of care—she is a giver. In the language of our parable, she is a neighbour to her community. She helps the people around her slow down and notice the important things.

The best care flows in two directions: sometimes, we give and receive care. Time with Irene is like that. She draws you out of yourself and focuses on the important things. Irene reminds us that when society might overlook someone, they still have gifts to share.

At MHA, we believe everyone should have the chance to give and receive in a community that values them for who they are. The kingdom of God is made of people of all abilities, each contributing their unique gifts. It takes a whole community—professionals, residents, families, and friends—to create a space where people can flourish.

**Our Call**

In Irene’s story and the parable of the Good Samaritan, we see that

love and care are not one-directional. In God’s kingdom, the lines between giver and receiver blur as we find moments to serve and to be served. Irene’s life demonstrates that even in the face of challenges like dementia, each of us carries gifts that bless those around us.

The call to love our neighbour is not limited to a single act of compassion—it’s a way of life. It’s about creating communities where everyone is valued, seen, and included, where people can give and receive in ways that reflect their unique gifts and experiences.

I want to leave you with two questions:

* How are you building communities of care in *your families, our workplaces, and our churches?*
* How could you support MHA as we try to do things differently? We’re creating communities of care, where everyone gives and receives their gifts. Our work is sustained by prayer and the generosity of others. Thank you for everything you do to support our work.

This MHA Sunday, may you be inspired by Irene’s generosity, by the Samaritan’s courage, and by God’s boundless love to go and do likewise

Amen.