

**Title of the ministry position:** Side by Side Companion

**Responsible to:** Side by Side Program Coordinator

**Goals of the ministry:** To be a friend to a person living with symptoms of dementia, and to walk alongside them at the Side by Side Program so that the primary caregiver can enjoy a respite time with confidence.

**Roles, Responsibilities, and Tasks:**

- Arrive promptly so that you can welcome your participant.
- Wear your Side by Side nametag.
- Check the day's schedule to ensure you know a) which participant you will be companioning, and b) which "buddy group" you are assigned to. Buddy groups are groupings that will come into effect in the case of a fire alarm, and are important for safety.
- Give your participant a warm welcome as they arrive, and help the participant hang up their coat/hat/gloves, if applicable. Please ensure that you are able to recognize these items so that they can be obtained at time of departure. Coat tags are available to help with identifying coats.
- Ensure that your participant is wearing their Side by Side nametag (with the church address and phone number on it).
- Ensure that your participant has any notes they will need (e.g. notes from the primary caregiver saying when they will be returning). These notes will normally be kept with the nametag.
- Get to know the participant and provide support and friendship according to their changing needs. Let the Program Coordinator know of any changes that you notice.
- Ensure that the participant feels welcomed and encouraged as he/she participates in the various activities, and assist gently as required without taking over or doing too much. Always allow some extra time for the participant to do the activity on their own and only assist if needed. Encourage your participant and affirm his/her abilities.
- Be alert for opportunities for the participant to make a contribution, and affirm the value of his/her participation in the group.
- Help the participant to transition between activities by inviting them over to the next activity and leading the way. If your participant does not want to take part, find another activity to do together. Ask the Program Coordinator for help, if needed.
- Provide enjoyment leadership by enjoying the day yourself!
- While your primary focus will be on your participant, we are all keeping watch together as a team. Be aware of others around you, be friendly, welcoming, and encouraging to all around you.

**Length of appointment:** Indefinite.

**Personal traits and gifts required:** To provide effective care as a companion requires patience, kindness, sensitivity, and a firm belief in the intrinsic value of the participant as a loved child of God. It is important to be attentive to the participant, and alert to any indications of distress.

Flexibility to adapt to changing needs is important, and willingness to ask for help from the program coordinator or others if you are struggling.

**Training to be provided:** Volunteers are required to complete the “Dementia Basics Online” course provided by the Alzheimer Society of Calgary at:

<http://www.alzheimercalgary.ca/find-support/sessions-and-workshops/dementia-basics-online>

The Alzheimer Society of Calgary provides a Certificate upon completion of the online course.

**Orientation available:** Volunteers will receive information about their participant’s program goals, needs, hobbies, and interests.

**Support and supervision provided:** Support and supervision provided by the program coordinator as needed. Also, other companions are available for support. Please ask questions if you are unsure of anything.

**Mandatory activities:** Take part in program activities alongside your participant. If you need to excuse yourself for a break during the day, ensure that someone else is supporting your participant while you are absent.

**Screening process used in the selection:** Conversation to determine a) personal suitability, and b) level and type of experience that the volunteer has with persons with dementia.

**Schedule and Commitment:** Weekly attendance for the full day of programming. Volunteers may choose to be backup companions who are called upon only when there is a shortage of regular volunteers. Time away is encouraged as needed. Volunteers are asked to advise the program coordinator as soon as possible of any plans to be away.