

[Stolen Memories: An Alzheimer's Stole Ministry & Tallit Initiative](#) describes the use of hand-sewn, individualized stoles and stole-style tallitot in advocacy for Alzheimer's and related dementias, but in the words of (Ret.) Bishop Kenneth L. Carder, author of *Ministry with the Forgotten, Stolen Memories* “is more than a creative book; it is an invitation to join a movement to bring hope and healing to people stigmatized and marginalized by society.”

Faith communities are uniquely positioned to do just that: to welcome those living with dementia and their families, to enable worship, support care partners, educate about dementia, promote brain health, and advocate for local and national policies and research funding. Having been recipients of support from our own faith communities during our caregiving years, Don Wendorf and I are motivated to “pay it forward.” At the heart of this is our belief that awareness is a good beginning, and empathy is essential, but they need to be coupled with action. Hence, the formation of [FaithUnitedAgainstAlzheimer's](#) and the Alzheimer's Stole Ministry & Tallit Initiative.

The idea for *Stolen Memories* grew out of visits Don and I made to pastors, priests, rabbis, and congregational care staff in 2018 as part of our *Dementia Friendly Faith Communities Initiative*. As we sat in pastors' offices, we became aware of many and varied pastors' stoles; and, as we commented on the stoles, we began to hear deeply personal stories of people and events that were meaningful to the clergy members. More and more, we were struck by the juxtaposition of the stoles “holding memories” and of dementia stealing memories. As one who has always loved the textile arts, the idea of fabric and stoles “holding memories” and telling stories resonated strongly with me. I began to think about what a pastor's stole or rabbi's tallit could convey in terms of support and advocacy with Alzheimer's and related dementias.

And so I made my first stole as a gift for a pastor who is living with dementia and the project and book grew from there. We see the stoles and tallitot as visual symbols of our efforts to initiate or expand dementia friendly faith communities. Wearing the Alzheimer's stole or tallit, especially in those months that are designated for dementia awareness, is meant to *increase awareness*, to share stories, and to spark dialogue and

ideas. Even more, wearing it is meant to *inspire* and *energize*: to generate concrete action to make a difference in the lives of all affected by these diseases.

The responses congregations may make to persons living with dementia, their care partners and their loved ones became the heart of our book with pictures of about 25 clergy members wearing their stoles and tallitot and their reflections: reminiscences about people they've known with dementia, scriptures or prayers the stole or tallit brings to mind, and what this ministry means to them. And we love that these clergy advocates are also wearing their stoles/tallitot beyond the walls of their faith communities - such as when they make visits to their representatives in Congress, or when they speak at conferences and training sessions. They truly are [ClergyAgainstAlzheimer's!](#)

In large part, *Stolen Memories* is about clergy talking to clergy. It's a short and gentle introduction to dementia and congregational care of families facing dementia and would make an excellent gift for every pastor, priest and rabbi.

Since it's inception I've made and given away dozens of stoles and tallitot and no two are the same! But we've also included simple step-by-step instructions and photos on how readers can piece and sew their own stoles and tallitot and it's our dream to recruit other individuals and sewing groups to this ministry. If you'd like one for a clergy person who would wear and use it as we envision but are unable to make it yourself, please contact me at ldeverman@icloud.com.

Creating these stoles and tallitot is a labor of love for me. Don and I have witnessed that "fabric holds memories" and we hope the making and wearing of the Alzheimer's stoles and tallitot will help promote a world in which our memories last our lifetimes.