



Feast

The Feast Time is central to Godly Play with older people, as it is with children. Jerome Berryman says that "a feast is something that gives unusual and abundant pleasure, a ceremonial meal of dignity and depth." In the feast we make sure we gave *time* to sit and enjoy together and a *choice* of what was on offer. Taking care over these everyday tasks is key to building community and valuing people. It also models to staff that they can do simple tasks with love and care.

During the Response Time Edna, who used to attend an evangelical church, chose to write out John 3:16 'For God so loved the world...' and was pleased to read these words out during the Feast.

Godly Play is person centred and because each care setting and each group of adults is unique there is no one size fits all. There may be people in the group with physical impairments, e.g. back problems, hearing loss, speech impairment, limited vision, unable to walk. There may be people in the group with cognitive impairments e.g. dementia, memory loss, stroke.

We offer some ideas for adaptations, followed by 'Reflections from the Field' to help you ask the question - how can I best serve the needs of the older people in this particular context? You might find the Reflective Evaluation Sheets helpful in reflecting on your own practice. We encourage you to share your experiences with others - perhaps through our Facebook page. We would like to include some of your ideas and experiences in updated versions of these documents.

Jerome Berryman says if there's one part of the Godly Play session you must never leave out - it's the Feast!

Ideas of Food and Drink for the Feast

Fresh juice, elderflower cordial, fruit snacks, old fashioned sweets, bread and cheese buffet, cream tea, fish n chips, sherry, Pimms, beer, guinness, mocktails, cocktails, Sunday lunch, pie and peas, hot chocolate, tea and biscuits, fresh coffee, international foods, cakes, desserts...

N.B. Please read the safeguarding checklist sheet if you are providing the feast.

Reflections from the Field

1. *"I had been bringing in some red sugar free squash and a small biscuit or sweet and a small salty snack for the feast. One of the staff members had said it was OK. I then discovered I had 3 diabetics. The sweets prompted a lot of memories about going to the shops to get penny sweets. I had been saying grace before the snack and treating it as a type of Breaking of Bread or mirroring communion. I am now working with the staff team so that their afternoon tea trolley coincides with the snack time. What I hope to do in the future is to have a small suitcase with little jars as a portable sweetie, shop where we have all the food allergies etc covered and each resident can select a penny sweet."*

'... Ooo, that fits well, combining feast with afternoon tea trolley, hmmm. I can see the thing about penny sweets prompting all sorts of rememberings."

2. *"We've had lovely feast times with one of our settings in which the residents and activities coordinator have baked the day before and made chocolate brownies for our arrival. In another setting we've found that the taste of sugar free squash takes some getting used to!"*

3. *"During the Response Time Edna chose to write out John 3:16 'For God so loved the world ...' and was pleased to read these words out to everyone during the Feast."*

4. *"Performing an act of loving service to the group by always volunteering to wash up after the Feast was very important to Sheila who was the wife of a retired minister."*

5. *"We invited the local vicar in our session at a care home in Sheffield a few weeks ago. We told the story of the World Communion and then he led the feast by giving communion to the residents. Sharing the communion followed on well, and the story's objects (chalice and plate) were passed around for residents to feel and talk about. Some residents responded positively to the ritual and the liturgy."*

6. *"When going into a new care home for the first time, it's a good idea to have a tea party at the first session. It's a great opportunity to do introductions, establish friendships and get to know the specific needs of the residents. Yesterday, we chatted over tea and cake (bringing grapes next time as one of the residents is diabetic!) and (as always) had the Holy Family figures at hand to pass round and hold. We finished with a hymn (He's Got the Whole World in His Hands) and a sung blessing. Rich blessings...and just over a cup of tea!"*

7. *"Should there be a clear break between the response time and the Feast like we do with children? During the reflective Evaluation Sheets of today's experience, we felt that a more fluid transition worked this time. After the story of the Ten Best Ways some people were engrossed in their responses whilst others were not so engaged. So the cups of tea and homemade biscuits (which had been made by the residents) were served whilst some were still continuing with their 'art' response (about which you can read in the Response channel). During the feast the helpers chatted one to one with the elders. At the end we held hands in a circle and said the Grace together which was a lovely way of sending each other out with a blessing"*

8. *"Mmm... those who were working on their response were given the feast to have whilst they finished, but we could try waiting till each person has packed her/his materials away before giving that person their feast - which will help to make that important transition of coming out of the story."*

9. *"The logistics of trying to do a separate feast time are quite difficult. We tried in one of the homes to have it separate, but the tea trolley never appeared when we needed it, even when we planned. I think it might be trial and error, depending on the home and the input of staff. If the activity co-ordinators are the ones in charge of the tea, then you'll be able to ask. If it's a tea trolley you need to flag down, then it's pot luck. Another option, which we've done a few times is to take an interesting drink and cake in to have a set feat time, even if elders are supping a cuppa tea all the way through. Elderflower cordial, sherry or fruit smoothies have all gone down well in this time! Also, they are something generally care homes don't serve, making the time more special."*

10. *"Fruit for the feast at Yo's session last week. Yo cut the fruit at the table as people were arriving, and the feast was passed round from a basket at the start of the session."*

11. *"How can we involve the adults in serving each other (as we do with children)? For example - it may be appropriate to ask if someone would like to hand out the food - in which case having the food in a basket with a handle may help (rather than biscuits slipping off a plate) There is a lot written about the benefits of the Montessori method with older people e.g. <http://www.alzheimers.net/2014-05-27/montessori-method-dementia/> "*

12. *"We've done the feast in lots of different ways over the last year. In some settings we have taken in fresh fruit and asked the residents to assist chopping it up. In other homes the activities co-ordinator has baked with the residents the day before to prepare for our arrival. We have drunk tea, fresh coffee, elderflower cordial and even sherry!"*

"Making the feast time a 'special occasion' was important to us at the beginning of the project. We were aware that choice and time were often things the care home was in short supply of. In the feast we made sure we gave TIME to sit and enjoy together and a CHOICE of what was on offer. I believe that taking care over these everyday tasks is key to building community and valuing people. It also models to staff that they can do simple tasks with love and care. It's not just about the shows and activity sessions, it's all the time in everything that we show love and care."

13. "We have found that it is not necessarily appropriate/easy to have a clear-cut end to the Response time before moving in to the Feast. It may take quite some time for cups of tea to be given to everyone and so it may not be appropriate to ask people to wait until everyone has been served! We have been doing the prayer and blessing at the end of the Feast."

14. "Music and singing can be very powerful for older people (and there is much research into the benefits of music for people who have dementia). A familiar doxology for some is 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow....' What have others tried?"

15. "Other ideas for the prayer/blessing at the end is giving people the option to hold hands and saying the Lord's prayer or the Grace together. What about asking people what prayer they would like to end with..."

16. "The most moving Feast I have ever been part of in a Godly Play session was spooning fresh soft fruit into the mouth of a lady who is blind and has dementia. With strawberry juices running down her chin she was so enjoying the experience and reliving the memories of a child eating fruit straight from the allotment."