



# Adaptations to Thresholds and Circle Building

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.

## **Building Relationships**

It's relationships that matter and if you have built up the relationships with the elders and the staff in the care setting for weeks or months before starting the Stories for the Soul sessions it is very beneficial.

For groups that have not met you before you could hold a tea party as a way of welcoming and preparing people. During the tea party you could show them the types of response materials that they can choose from and you might bring the Holy Family set with you. The figures could be passed round.

Names matter, and name tags may be very helpful for the session.

## **Setting up the environment**

### **Where should the storyteller sit?**

There will probably be people coming and going during the session, so it is even more important that there is an 'escape route' for people, whereby they don't need to move in front of the story.

### **What might be on the focal shelf?**

Bring in the same familiar items e.g. the Holy Family, a cross or a candle.

### **Where to tell the story?**

See more about this on Adaptations to the story

### **Creating the Environment and Threshold When People Are Already in the Room**

If you are going into a space (e.g. a care setting) where people are already in the room, it can be difficult to create a threshold and build the circle. You could:

- Set up the space together e.g. ask the participants to help put out the Holy Family and the response materials. Example 3 below gives a wonderful idea of bringing the resources in a shopping trolley.
- Walk round and have a chat and appropriate physical contact with each person.
- Perhaps playing some music might help the participants to transition into the session.

### **Ideas for Circle Building with Older People in a Care Setting**

You are facilitating a gathering which is participatory and mutually empowering and so perhaps invite the elders to lead in a prayer, a song, a poem or a greeting. If there are people living with dementia who used to lead or take part in church services, then this memory may be accessed if the liturgy is familiar.

- Start with refreshments. A cup of tea or a drink of water is what people might really need before you start, and it is a way to build relationships.
- Singing a song or a hymn e.g. He's got the whole world in his hands
- Use a liturgical greeting that people are familiar with e.g. The Lord be with you
- Use a Body prayer e.g. I am here, you are here, we are here, together
- Read a poem

### **The Blessing at the End**

It might be that you will leave the room before the participants, but you can still ensure a clear ending and transition:

- Use a blessing, perhaps with people holding hands, perhaps lead by one of the elders
- Sing a closing song. See example 6 of an elder leading the closing song.
- Go around to each elder before you leave

## Reflections from the Field

1. *"How do you adapt the 'getting ready' for elders who are already sitting in the room when you arrive? Often it takes a long time (yesterday it was 45 minutes between us arriving and greeting those who were already there and the start of the session). Obviously, we would want to go to each individual and talk with them, offering a hand or other appropriate physical touch. This could be done by both the storyteller and the doorperson, but what if you have other helpers? - it may be helpful to think about how many 'visits' each older person is getting. Would the older person benefit from a longer interaction by just one person? Would it be helpful for the storyteller to remain seated at the focal place during this extended 'crossing of the threshold'? These are all things I am mulling over, realising that each situation is different, that we need to adapt to each individual, but that by being intentional may help us to better meet the needs of the group and each person.*

2. *"We usually go around to greet people holding a hand or a handshake and a hello with a smile and eye contact. I usually say hello, I am Bridget, we have not seen each other for a while but it is nice to see you. If there are just two of us we each go around to everyone if we have more volunteers we take turns saying hello to a few people, so each person has some time. I ask permission to switch the TV off and say I have come with a story and we are going to spend some time singing too. Part of the welcome includes our godly play shopping trolley and as we set up in the lounge in front of the dozen or so residents this is an area that interests them as they are keen to see what comes out of the trolley."*

3. *"I am now taking longer and more time building the circle. Both the residents and staff seem to need it. The staff seems to want to do a last minute gathering up of people who might like the Stories for the Soul service. The residents need an even longer warm up a pre-beginning. So, we do the usual meet and greet, but after the TV is off and before the opening body prayer and singing I will take my time unpacking my shopping trolley in front of them. I have all the bits we need in cloth bags. We might chat about trolleys and shopping or something I have bought and then when I am really ready to begin and peaceful and we have the standing cross up and the tablecloth on the story table I begin. It has helped me a lot to know I don't need to rush and that my getting ready can be part of everyone's getting ready."*

4. *"'Getting ready' is extremely important! It usually affects how the rest of the session will go and helps residents, staff and YOU to focus and be open to receive. I've often looked back on sessions which have been more challenging and noticed that it is the threshold/getting ready that has been rushed or overlooked."*

5. *"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!"*

6. *'During the response time a lady came in late, so I showed the story to her and then we got chatting. She used to sing in her church choir but felt pushed out towards the end. Together we quietly practised singing 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' and she was surprised at how the tune just came to her (though she struggled to recall the words). At the final blessing this lady beautifully led us in the singing. Although she usually goes out on a Tuesday she is going to make sure that she is around to join us from the beginning in a fortnight. I can't wait!'*

7. *"After the blessing Barbara was asked if she would like to put the Holy Family back in the basket (having set it up at the start). Remarkably all the figures were returned; in contrast to the previous session in which three very large and shiny shells had been secreted behind the cushions and up her jumper!"*

8. *"The care staff and the residents of a care setting for independent living, were having difficulty with the way Arthur, who has dementia, was responding to them. The chaplain observed that the Godly Play sessions allowed Arthur to work well in community. The individual welcome given to each person and the building of the circle meant that Arthur felt valued and therefore accepted the request of the storyteller to let others have a turn at speaking, whereas in other situations this would have resulted in confrontation."*

9. *"Good relations with care staff is so important! The storyteller and I (door person) met with the manager of the care home yesterday. We consulted diaries and times of when we plan to come in, who we are and what we will be doing, gave an information poster to put on display, invited the manager to come to one of our sessions, talked about key carers and activities coordinators who will be involved in the sessions, asked what we are expected to do in case of fire or if an incident occurs during a session...and lots more! Thanks Carrie for the advice given in the elder's pack."*

10. *"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..."*

## **Top 100 Hymns**

1. A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
2. Abide with Me
3. Alas and Did My Saviour Bleed?
4. All Creatures of our God and King
5. All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name
6. All the Way My Saviour Leads Me
7. Amazing Grace
8. Are You Washed in the Blood?
9. At Calvary
10. Battle Hymn of the Republic
11. Be Thou My Vision
12. Before the Throne of God Above
13. Blessed Assurance
14. Blest Be the Tie That Binds
15. Child of the King
16. Christ The Lord Is Risen Today
17. Cleanse Me
18. Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing
19. Count Your Blessings
20. Crown Him with Many Crowns
21. Day by Day
22. Doxology
23. Eternal Father, Strong to Save
24. Face to Face
25. Fairest Lord Jesus
26. Faith is the Victory
27. Faith of our Fathers
28. Fight the Good Fight

29. God Leads His Dear Children Along
30. God Will Take Care of You
31. Great Is Thy Faithfulness
32. Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
33. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
34. Have Thine Own Way, Lord
35. He Hideth My Soul
36. He Is Coming Again
37. He Lives
38. His Eye Is on the Sparrow
39. Holy, Holy, Holy
40. How Firm a Foundation
41. How Great Thou Art
42. I Am Thine, O Lord
43. I Love to Tell the Story
44. I Need Thee Ev'ry Hour
45. I Surrender All
46. I'd Rather Have Jesus
47. I'll Fly Away
48. In the Garden
49. In the Hour of Trial
50. In the Sweet By and By
51. It is Well
52. Jesus, Lover of My Soul
53. Jesus Loves Me
54. Jesus Paid It All
55. Just as I Am
56. Leaning on the Everlasting Arms
57. Lord I'm Coming Home
58. Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

59. Love Lifted Me
60. Moment by Moment
61. More Love to Thee
62. Morning Has Broken
63. My Faith Looks Up to Thee
64. Nearer My God, To Thee
65. No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus
66. Now We Thank All Our God
67. Come All Ye Faithful
68. O for A Thousand Tongues to Sing
69. Holy Night
70. Little Town of Bethlehem
71. Worship the King
72. Old Time Religion
73. Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour
74. Peace, Perfect Peace
75. Praise Him! Praise Him!
76. Precious Lord Take My Hand
77. Rescue the Perishing
78. Revive Us Again
79. Rock of Ages
80. Safe in the Arms of Jesus
81. Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us
82. Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling
83. Standing on the Promises
84. Take My Life and Let It Be
85. Take Time to Be Holy
86. The Old Rugged Cross
87. There Is a Fountain
88. There Is Power in The Blood



89. Till the Storm Passes By
90. Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus
91. Trust and Obey
92. Victory in Jesus
93. What A Day That Will Be
94. What A Friend We Have in Jesus
95. What Child Is This?
96. When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
97. When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder
98. When We All Get to Heaven
99. Wherever He Leads, I'll Go
100. Yesterday, Today, Forever

# Prayers

## Creator God

### Creator God

(Hands in front of your body and then spreading out in an offering gesture)

### You feed my soul

(Hands coming up as if bringing food to the mouth)

### With the whole earth

(Hands reaching above head as high as they will go and spreading down each side in a stretched circle)

### You feed my soul

(Hands coming up as if bringing food to the mouth)

### With the plants that grow

(Left hand holding right wrist. Then right hand moves upwards wiggling the fingers like a growing plant)

### You feed my soul

(Hands coming up as if bringing food to the mouth)

### With the creatures that walk

(Right hand walks two fingers across left hand)

### And swim

(Breast stroke action)

### And fly

(Lock thumbs together and flap hands)

### You feed my soul

(Hands coming up as if bringing food to the mouth)

**With the winds that blow**

(Sway and move arms in a wave)

**And the rain that falls**

(Raise your hands above your head and wiggle fingers coming down)

**You feed my soul**

(Hands coming up as if bringing food to the mouth)

**With the stars in the heavens**

(Raise your arms with clenched fists and when fully stretched open hands several times)

**You feed my soul**

(Hands coming up as if bringing food to the mouth)

**And I grow strong in my heart**

(Point to self, flex your bicep and point to heart)

**In my mind**

(Point to head)

**And my spirit**

(Raise your right arm and wiggle fingers)

**With your food**

(Hands coming up as if bringing food to the mouth)

**Amen**

## **Serenity Prayer**

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things, I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;  
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
As it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
If I surrender to His Will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life  
And supremely happy with Him  
Forever in the next.

**Amen**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom come,

Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

For ever and ever.

**Amen**

# Together

I am here

**(Point to self and then spread hands in an offering gesture)**

You are here

**(Stretch arms up to the sky)**

We are here together

**(Put thumbs together pointing towards yourself then stretch out to make a circle)**

**Amen**

## **May the Road Rise Up to Meet You**

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

the rains fall soft upon your fields

and until we meet again,

May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

**(Traditional Gaelic Blessing)**

## **St Patrick's Breastplate**

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,  
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.



# Deep Peace

Deep peace of the running wave to you

Deep peace of the flowing air to you

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you

Deep peace of the shining stars to you

Deep peace of the Son of peace to you

**(Iona Community)**