

Associates of Godly Play UK

The Magazine : No. 1 Autumn 2017

Editor: Rebecca Nye, National Co-ordinator for Godly Play UK

Welcome!

I wonder, are you ready for this first edition of our new magazine?



This is a new threshold for us all. We are delighted you have found your way here, and that you are an Associate of Godly Play UK.

In this first issue you'll find news, tips, reflections and stories about the many ways Godly Play is supporting the spirituality of childhood.

We are aiming a little higher than simply a 'newsletter'. With so much going on in Godly

Play, it feels like there's a need to record and share things, and to provide a platform that encourages people to write reflectively and critically to enhance our understanding even more.

Please feel free to explore the content in the way that suits you best, though the order has some resemblance to a Godly Play session. In every issue we'll have an initial piece which reflects some special *news* in our wider circle, to build community. Then, you'll find one or two more *substantial articles* and *reflective pieces*. We hope these will stimulate your wider wondering. To suggest ways you might take your wondering further, there are *reviews* of both adult and children's books. Each issue will also include two regular *spotlight features* on a Godly Play space and on an interesting person. Finally, of course there's a feast - of *bite-sized news* items and *notices*.

We would love to receive suggestions for any sections, and of course your feedback about this issue. After all the work editing it, I realise we don't have a title! I wonder if anyone can suggest one...Please send your ideas and feedback to rebecca@godlyplay.uk



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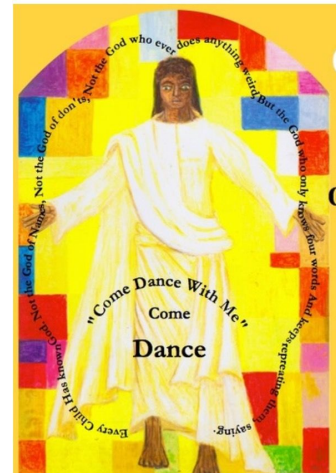
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Dancing for a Decade of Godly Play: the National Conference

By Diana Williams

The doors opened for *Godly Play UK's 2017 Childhood Spirituality Conference* at Sheffield Cathedral at 6pm on Friday May 12th. Turn back the clock a decade and Rebecca Nye was giving the first Annual Lecture at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. Thanks to an incredible amount of growth, the interim ten years has provided so much to celebrate.

As the 200 delegates arrived, there was time to enjoy the beauty of the Cathedral, browse the stalls, sip a glass of wine, and meet and make friends, before getting settled to listen to the outstanding first speaker, John Bell, who spoke about 'The Tangibility of Jesus'. With characteristic humour and insight, he explored the sensitive ways in which Jesus physically touched and was touched by people around him. He spoke about seeing Godly Play with school children in an area of urban deprivation in Middlesbrough, and recognising its capacity to affirm and support childhood spirituality.



The evening was also a chance to be welcomed by the Cathedral's Dean, be inspired by the Chair of Trustees Gill Ambrose and for my part, launch the new Associates' membership scheme. Whilst we had high hopes for a positive response to this, I was overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity shown when so many people responded to the invitation to join in support of Godly Play's future.

On Saturday the Cathedral was buzzing again with life and laughter. The flea-market stall, with its array of hard-to-source Godly Play materials, the book stall, the wonderful array of Bowthorpe materials and the many other associated stalls all allowed the delegates to come away with so many good things, both tangible as well as intangible. As the feedback confirmed, a definite highlight was Peter Privett's keynote lecture theme of the Conference, *Come Dance With Me*, inspired by a poem by Hafiz, a 14th Century Sufi mystic.



*Every child has known God
Not the God of names,
Not the God who ever does anything weird
But the God who only knows four words
And keeps repeating them, saying:
"Come Dance with Me."*

Hafiz



Peter explored the metaphor of dance for our relationship with God. And using images and insights from other writers, he took the theme deeper and deeper, posing searching questions to encourage us to reflect on their roles in supporting the spiritual life of children.

After lunch it was hard to choose between the array of workshops - from *Dancing the Story*, to *Deep Talk*, *Godly Play with Elders* or prayerful *meditation* on the keynote lectures. Some got creative with an abundance of response materials or heard a Godly Play story. Really moved by Peter's talk, I was deeply surprised to find myself dancing with joy through the *labyrinth*, provided by Barbara Wallace.

For me, part of the dance was the flow of so many wonderful people I met at the Associates' table. People who, until now had been just small icons on Facebook or names on paper, arrived in the flesh, with forms, support and enthusiasm for our vision. I felt both humbled and encouraged in equal measure. This was also the case as Mark Elvin from Bowthorpe spoke with deep compassion about the effort and patience required to produce the Godly Play materials. I also became more aware of the hard work of our team of Advocates and Trainers, of whom the overall conference-organiser, Kate Cornwell, deserves special mention. From welcoming, hosting, supporting workshops and countless other jobs, it was wonderful to see in practice how the Godly Play community functions as a supportive circle at every level.

The 2017 Conference culminated in a collective act of worship that was profound and reverent yet also riotously joyful: an embodiment of all the Conference had been. Together we blew kazoos, danced in the aisles, created human sculptures, sang and celebrated our time together with the Lord of the Dance Himself. God only knows what our next conference will be about but it will be great to see you there, wherever it is!

Don't forget, as an Associate of Godly Play UK, you will be able to book for the next conference at a specially-discounted rate.

The next conference will also overlap with the Association's Membership AGM.



New friends in the circle

By Rebecca Nye

When introducing any of the Saints stories (vol. 7 *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*), the storyteller takes a good look around and says, with a twinkle in their eye : *'Did you know that there are more people in our circle than you can see?'* I've found children really love this strange suggestion that what seems absent, is somehow present! It's a fundamental of playing 'hide and seek'. And there's plenty of wonder for all ages that we are part of a vast community across time and space.

Every year since 2002 when we began to offer the '3-day course', we've welcomed new faces and perspectives to the big circle of Godly Play in the UK. Over the last year alone our busy trainer team have run 12 courses: at Ampleforth Abbey, in Essex, Cumbria, Bristol Derbyshire, Surrey, Middlesex, Sheffield, York, Powys, Manchester and in Coatbridge, near Glasgow. These recent courses mean that 140 new practitioners have joined the Godly Play circle, so there are now more than 2100 people in the UK who have completed the accredited course.



New faces in the circle at the June course in mid Wales, with Trainers Sue North-Coombes, Diana Williams and Cass Meurig.

Every course is unique, thanks to the special combination of people who come and to the distinctive features of the venues - churches, retreat centres, theological colleges and schools. It's fantastic to be in fully-resourced rooms which so

clearly show how the 'unspoken lesson' speaks to the children and others who use it regularly. But some of my most vivid experiences are rising to the challenge of packing up everything to set up a room from scratch the night before a course starts, sometimes in the most unlikely of spaces - a pub in the Lake District was memorable! In fact, at this year's course in Manchester, which now has a fabulous Godly Play room (as seen in the photo on the front page of this issue), we were reminded that their church's Godly Play started by taking the children from the church to the local pub!

Often people who come on the 3-day course are new to the approach, but for others the course offers a time to refine and share skills they already have. For everyone, including the trainers, the time and company provides space to reflect and learn more about ways to support spiritually-rich, Godly Play-informed practices with children and adults. Quite

often the group seems include someone attending as part of their sabbatical or in a period of discernment, and nearly always there are comments that 'it was like a retreat', despite the long days!



Trainers Andrea Harrison and Sian Hancock, expanding the circle in Bristol, men included!

As we don't spend money on advertising, almost everyone comes through 'word of mouth' and we are often able to respond to requests for courses in particular places where there is new interest. So, think about whether there might be someone you know - maybe your minister on sabbatical, a teacher, a parent or grandparent - who might find the 3-day course valuable. In our next edition, we will hear from some recent participants about what the experience meant to them and how it will inform their work - making some of our 'invisible friends' even more real!

See the end of the newsletter for notices about upcoming training and enrichment events.

Feature Article : Godly Play Spoken at Wolfson Children's Hospital

*by Sharon Eddins, Lead Chaplain MDiv, BCC
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In UK hospitals it has been hard for Godly Play to find a foothold, so this is an area ripe for development. However, in the USA some hospitals have quite well-developed Godly Play programmes, and a few even have Godly Play rooms. In the following article, we are grateful to US chaplain Sharon Eddins who shares with us her experiences and research findings about the difference Godly Play can make to sick children.

One of several children's hospitals in the United States in which Godly Play is spoken is Wolfson Children's Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. For almost two decades, this program, founded by Jerome Berryman, has proven itself to be an effective therapeutic and spiritual intervention for children experiencing physical, emotional, and spiritual stress. As was demonstrated in our 2008 study published in *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, depressed and anxious hospitalized children who heard Godly Play stories experienced significant reductions in depression and anxiety, and all who heard these stories described themselves as feeling more spiritual (i.e., closer to God) afterwards.



However, alongside these positive quantitative results, there was a feeling among the Wolfson Spiritual Care Team that there was an additional story – a qualitative story – that needed to be told.

We knew that in pediatric clinical settings many have suggested the need for spiritual interventions and we knew that Godly Play addresses this need through narrative, conversation, and play, so we turned our attention to ‘disability theology’. This advocates for the full incorporation of the physically and mentally impaired into the Church and society. In keeping with several tenets of disability theology, we had observed that Godly Play encouraged the establishment of relationships with the impaired, approached the impaired as ‘ordinary’ individuals, and provided opportunities to give and receive hospitality with impaired individuals too.

Although our research found that many ‘believed’ that spirituality and religion is important in patient care, we also found resistance to the utilization of spirituality by a wide range of healthcare professionals. Despite acknowledging the need to treat patients holistically, many pediatric healthcare professionals feel challenged to understand and respond to a child’s spiritual needs. Some are ambivalent about the role of spirituality and religion in treatment plans (with the exception of end-of-life situations), whilst others either ignore spiritual needs or address them poorly.

Supplementing the healing process

Our Spiritual Care Team’s experience has been that Godly Play – with its components of sacred story, wondering’ and art response – intentionally and directly addresses the psychological and spiritual needs of our young patients, and effectively supplements the healing process in which the medical team and other ancillary team members are engaged. When our young patients hear sacred stories and are encouraged to discover for themselves the meaning of these stories, diversity is welcomed and embraced, which is critical in our setting committed to



cultural effectiveness. As the children are invited into the stories, and offered open-ended wondering questions for reflection, they have an opportunity to focus on their thoughts and feelings, often giving voice to these in the presence of a compassionate caregiver. And when they express themselves with art – which is sometimes overtly spiritual, sometimes not – they often give voice to the psychological and spiritual aspects of their own life stories, which provides valuable insights to us as we continue to journey alongside them.

Supporting ‘ordinariness’, relationships and hospitality

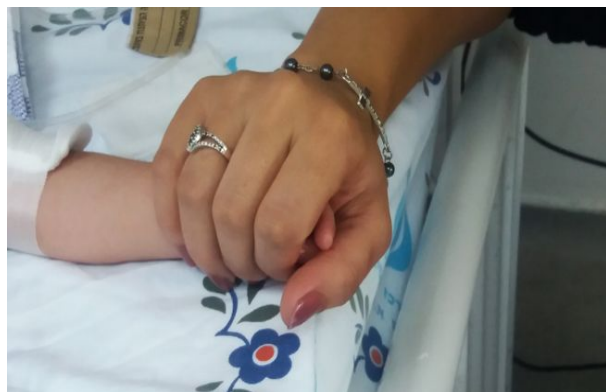
In keeping with several disability theology recommendations, through Godly Play we can bear witness to honoring our young patients as no less or more ‘normal’ than other children. Instead of being reduced to their diagnoses, which reveal only one aspect of

these children's life stories, our pediatric patients are approached with recognition of the ordinariness of their lives, honouring their decision to hear or not to hear stories, and so on. In spite of this broad perspective, our storytellers do not lose sight of the fact that, if a story is chosen, accommodations may be needed. This was the case with Ted who, due to paralysis, needed to view the story from a reclining position.

Our Spiritual Care team is also intentional about getting to know our patients and their families. The illnesses of many of our patients require frequent hospitalizations, so we can develop significant long-term and short-term relationships between many of our young patients and the storytellers. This was the case with Jack who requested the presence of a storyteller and his favorite parable when he was worried about his mom who was delayed in returning to his room. And, daily, we bear witness to the hospitality that is both extended and received, which fully incorporates the children into the context of the sacred, as was the case with Beth who was happy to share her chocolate crackers with her storyteller.

Some Godly Play is offered in a group setting in our Children's Chapel, which also encourages the building of relationships among patients and their families. But the majority of sessions occur in hospital rooms or in hospice/palliative care in homes. This means the storyteller must be invited into the child's living space, giving children the chance to offer hospitality, often repeatedly. In turn the storyteller extends hospitality by inviting the child into the narrative world of the sacred story and, in many ways, serves as a kind of host in this spiritual realm. The 'playing field' becomes level – the hierarchy is undercut – as the child and storyteller take turns giving and receiving.

Openness to further faith traditions



In both the hospital and home settings, our team has had the privilege of sharing these stories with children from a variety of faith traditions beyond the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In observing the children's abilities to find and draw parallels from their traditions and integrate these parallels into their wondering and/or art responses, we think the value of these interventions comes through the participation in sacred stories.

We are increasingly aware there are numerous stories from other traditions that would invite children into the narrative world in a similar way, and we are confident the development of these materials would be welcomed, particularly in our pediatric healthcare world in which new avenues for healing are continually sought.

A model for full participation of impaired children

Godly Play is offered at Wolfson Children's Hospital because we believe in the creative, imaginative, and transformative power of this approach. As long as our patients – with a

variety of diagnoses, and from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds – continue to weave their stories into these sacred stories, and experience an observable sense of safety in our clinical environment, we anticipate Godly Play will continue to be ‘spoken here’. Based on our positive experience, we hope other pediatric healthcare teams will see Godly Play as a potential and valuable resource to nurture the spirituality of hospitalized children and children facing life-limiting illnesses.

In conclusion, from our 2014 *JPCC* article (see link below), ‘Godly Play, through its praxis, is not only a helpful spiritual and therapeutic intervention in clinical settings. It is a model for the full participation of impaired children in the Church and society. It is our experience this practice provides a way forward for the Church and society to create a world in which children with mental and physical impairments are not only included, but belong.’

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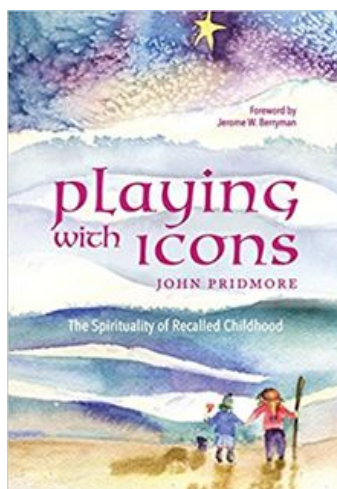
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We look forward to featuring research and development undertaken by Godly Play UK, supported by the generous funding of the Associates scheme.

Reviews: Books to take your wondering further...

Reviews by Peter Privett and Dani Redhead



Playing with Icons: The Spirituality of Recalled Childhood (2017) by John Pridmore (Published by All Saints Church. Copyright © Centre for the Theology of Childhood of the Godly Play Foundation) Available in the UK through Amazon only)

John Pridmore has spent a lifetime studying, writing about and upholding the spirituality of children. He has also been part of Godly Play's life in the UK. He attended one of the first Godly Play day conferences at the University of Cambridge in 2002, and became our theologian consultant in 2005. Whilst researching for this new book, *Playing with Icons*, John spent time with Jerome Berryman at the Centre for the Theology of Childhood. The book asks the key questions: What is it like to

be a child? What might be required for children to flourish spiritually? What does Jesus mean when he challenges us to 'become like this child'?

John stands in the tradition that sees spirituality as natural to all children. Not only fluent in the disciplines of theology and spirituality, he is equally proficient in the world of literature, and it is to this discipline that he turns to examine his questions. Using the autobiographies of writers who recall and reflect on their experiences of their own childhoods, John weaves a creative, stimulating and challenging argument.

Challenges to this approach could be that the examples chosen are too elitist, too exclusive, or that the examples are 'odd' and cannot possibly speak as a universal or common experience of childhood, especially for the technologically-literate children of the 21st century. However, in *Playing with Icons* John Pridmore argues that what these perceptive professional wordsmiths can provide is sensitive recall and reflection on their childhood experiences, and the ability to find the words for things so many have known but couldn't express. So, although contemporary children might not roam the hills with abandon and are at the mercy of consumerism and suffocating visions of education, the essence and reality of the examples outlined still ring true.

The breadth of examples is extremely rich and culturally diverse: male and female, privilege and poverty, rural and urban, and experience that spans time (different periods of history) and space (different cultures and continents). The first part of the book explores the well-documented themes of spirituality as natural to childhood, the ability to perceive the world as 'miracles at every turn', the ability to live in the present moment, the heightened awareness and intensity of the experience, and the importance of the sensory nature of that experience. What I found new and challenging was the theme of longing and nostalgia. It is not the adult longing for a lost childhood in the light of adult inability of living in the adult world, but the longing and yearning *in* childhood for the world beyond the frontiers of this.

John continually encourages us to see the child as a model for our own discipleship *'to see childhood as a benediction even if the memories are dark.'*

It is in 'the dark night of the soul' chapter, at the heart of the book, that John offers a real challenge to us as adults: *'to stay with them [the children] however long the night.'*

The dark night of the soul as experienced by children is often neglected in the writing about children's spirituality and the examples give the subject the justice it deserves. Their distress, their fears, the feelings of abandonment, and the primal grief of being left alone are all terrors of the soul. As John states: *'The child fearful of the dark and the Christ of God dreading Calvary are very close.'*

This chapter for me was the most important as it takes seriously the normal terrors of children and counters the romantic and superficial views.



How we nourish and alternatively demean the spirit in children is the topic for the rest of the chapters, alongside how religious language can both hinder and enrich, be both a blessing and a curse. The significance of quality relationships, open questioning and the role of the senses as a means of grace are given as examples of nourishment, so it is no surprise that Godly Play is advocated and that the forward is written by Jerome Berryman. The book's sub-title '*the Spirituality of Recalled Childhood*' certainly encapsulates my experience of reading this. I found myself calling to remembrance many of the themes mentioned, some confirmed and some brought into the present that had been forgotten. It continued to challenge me as an adult, to re-examine the ways in which I pastor and support the children with whom I share this life of the spirit. I really do invite and encourage you to read *Playing with Icons* and discover all the things I've missed out!

Peter Privett, Godly Play UK Trainer



Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter (1994) by Gerda Muller (Floris Books)

This series of four small board books by Gerda Muller, a Dutch illustrator born in 1926, is a wonderful addition to a 'response time' library. Beautifully observed and intricately illustrated, they are suitable for children from the very young through to middle primary school. They chart the four seasons with detailed, realistic images of children enjoying simple pleasures such as kicking leaves in Autumn, feeding birds in Winter, sowing seeds in Spring and eating ice cream in Summer. The pictures are sufficiently detailed that the more you look at them, the more you see – ideal for enjoying repeatedly. In each of the books the children depicted are different and there is no feeling that the author is trying to tell a particular 'story', which adds to their charm.

There are plenty of books about the seasons on the market, but what makes these books especially suited to a Godly Play setting is that there are no words in them, so each child can make the story their own. There is also a real sense in the illustrations of the wonder of nature and God's creation, and the importance of connectedness to the changing scape of the seasons, without any overt religious intention. I find this helpful, especially with children who would like to spend time with a book but don't want to read a Bible or 'religious' story. I have also found them useful for those times when a child is unsure what to do during response time or is new to the classroom and is feeling daunted by all the materials. Selecting one of these books with the question 'I wonder if this book has anything in it that is right for you at the moment ...?' can be a great help. And finally, on a practical note, these books are made of thick board, so they can withstand the use of many pairs of hands and still be worthy of a Godly Play space!

Dani Redhead, Godly Play UK Trustee

If you would like to suggest a book, or would like to write a review, do let us know!

Spotlight on Sacred Space: To have a place where it feels like *'God is watching us play.'*

By Rebecca Nye with Jeanny Wang

In each issue we will shine a spotlight on different ways to create sacred space for Godly Play. We are delighted to feature the room at Holy Trinity C of E Primary School, Northwood (Middlesex) which has been developed by Headteacher Daniel Norris and Godly Play 'chaplain' Jeanny Wang. As you can imagine, their setting speaks louder than words and easily inspires those who visit. If you would like to contact the School about a visit, please email admin@holytrinitynorthwood.org

Holy Trinity Primary School has its own dedicated space just for Godly Play. This took vision and time to develop, as well as some brave funding decisions made by the Headteacher Daniel Norris. Taking on a school in some difficulties, he was convinced that both staff and pupils would benefit most from *spiritual* investment, and in that context other challenges would be more surmountable. Initially just one teacher completed the 3-day course, began to collect resources and use Godly Play some of the time. But when she went on maternity leave, Daniel sent himself on the 3-day course and was convinced his school needed to embed Godly Play throughout its ethos and into its very fabric.



The school is a fairly cramped site with one class per year group, so the solution was to 'go up', creating a new space above the classrooms. Once the space was carpeted and painted, they sought up-to-date advice on buying and making resources from a trainer (Rebecca) who also helped with some layout challenges. As

things came together, a whole staff 'inset' session was offered and in 2014 the room was officially opened by the local mayor! Knowing that people are a vital ingredient in creating and maintaining sacred space, a dedicated Godly Play teaching assistant, Jeanny Wang, was recruited, and most of the class teachers have been able to attend a 3-day course run in their school.

Jeanny explains that the features which particularly help the space 'to work' include *'the location of the room - being tucked away from and above the main circulation of the school works really well. Children take their shoes off, enter through a door and walk up a flight of*

carpeted stairs to enter the carpeted space. Everything is open and light, with windows on every side. When you are sitting in the circle and look out you see Holy Trinity Church in the background, lots of sky and big trees all around.' She believes the thick fluffy carpet is a key feature of the sacred space too: *'It marks and associates the sacred space with Godly Play as there are no other areas carpeted like this in the school.'* And being practical, the low-level sink with an area of vinyl flooring is invaluable too.



I asked Jeanny what role the room has in the school's life – what difference does it make? *'It has made a difference to all the children in the school who are able to bring deep and personal needs, often working out what they need or how they feel or think and how to 'be'. Children can make deep theological connections and at the same time can develop self-understanding, care for others and self-correction. It is a safe place particularly for vulnerable children. Children with behavioural and emotional difficulties can often feel 'normal' and accepted as part of the circle/community. They are heard and can express themselves there.'*

The room is well-used for up to three Godly Play sessions every day, so that every child goes every week. It's also used as a lunchtime prayer space (alternately for KS1 or 2) which includes painting, mark-making prayers, lighting candles, writing prayers in sand and wiping the words/marks away with a squeegee tool, feather prayers, laying stones as a way of marking prayers in the space, and silent prayers. The Church's youth worker also runs a club there once a week. Twice a week it's used by staff for prayers and reflection, and when staff experience sadness and loss they have chosen to meet there simply to be together. Crucially, in the view of the Headteacher and the pupils, it is never used as a general breakout space for SATS, reading sessions or learning support: it's deliberately a sanctuary from all that. Interestingly, R.E. mostly takes place in the ordinary classrooms: the Godly Play sessions doubtless support religious teaching and learning, but are really so much more than that so they have opted to keep them separate for now.

This sacred space makes a clear impact, with teachers saying *'It's the best space in the school, it's so calm and peaceful'* and a non-Christian TA saying *'I love coming to this room...I used to think Godly Play was just a word...I wish my own boys had had this experience'*.

But the most important thing is what children think of their upstairs Godly Play space, referred to by one year-4 child as *'going up to heaven'* and by a nursery child as a place

where 'it feels like God is watching us play'. The rest of the children's comments are priceless too: I simply couldn't choose any to leave out



'Amazing... a lovely place of prayers.'

'A very special place. It's secret.'

'I feel very close to God up here.'

'I like the carpet, makes me feel chilled out and relaxed. It's soft and you can dig your fingers in it.'

'I like it when you look around you see all the stories, it focuses you more and there's loads of things to do.'

'I like where you put it - it's so calm and relaxing. When you're all geared up the room really calms you down, like when you're angry or something.'

'Let's you get away from the troubles of the world and lets you get close to God.'

'You get personal space and get to calm down - don't have to work all day'.

'You get a chance to talk and give your ideas a little bit more. I'm very grateful to have this.'

On recent visits there, I've been impressed not only by what a fantastic resource this is, but how the whole staff have been inspired to 'bring Godly Play downstairs' too, so that its principles have become a whole school ethos. Currently, Headteacher Daniel has been re-inventing school lunchtimes so that these are modelled on more on the Godly Play 'feast', followed by outdoor playtime as an opportunity for 'free response'.

A remarkable story about a remarkable place, but the best thing is that the Headteacher is now executive head of an additional, brand new school in North London which had a Godly Play space designed into its building plans! This new school offers a bi-lingual curriculum, so Godly Play UK has supported the new staff so that Godly Play can be provided in both English and French in alternate weeks. In fact the slow pace, visual cues and re-visiting of core stories every year offers an ideal context for language learning too. Who knows what the next chapter in this inspirational and enviable story could be!

Do let us know if you want to tell the story of your Godly Play space in a future issue.

'We walk on holy ground. If we do not care for one another and what is at hand in the environment directly about us, the classroom, how can we expect children to care for and take care of the whole of creation, "our island home", when they grow up?'

Jerome Berryman, *Godly Play* (1991) p.83



A chance to meet: Rachel Bainton, Godly Play UK

Rachel has been a Godly Play UK Trainer since 2008. She's based in Newcastle but has led 3-day trainings as far south as Cambridge and as far north as Dunblane. Like many of our trainers, she combines her Godly Play work with a career as well as a family. For 20 years she's worked as a Mechanical Engineer, but has more recently become a self-employed 'maker' of decorated eggs and green wood products.

How did you get into Godly Play in the first place?



I was helping out with Sunday School at church, we were in the cycle of filling the time with a piece of Scripture, an activity and a song, and I was dissatisfied with the whole thing; we'd spend hours preparing craft activity resources, with no guarantee of how many children might come. We'd spend the session, while feverishly completing the craft activity, drilling the children with what they 'should' have learnt that day - just in case anybody asked. I felt really frustrated and sensed that I was not serving the children.

The diocesan children's advisor held a session to resource Sunday School leaders. She told a Godly Play story and I was hooked! The joy of not having to tell children what to believe!

The liberation from worrying about how many children would be there! I researched on the web (fairly limited at the time), I read books, and found a local introductory day. I introduced Godly Play to our Sunday School, and to adult groups in church, and of course, I found that Godly Play taught me so much, and allowed the children to teach me. My initial reasons for being drawn to Godly Play seem rather superficial now, as the whole breadth and depth of Godly Play continues to teach me and to inform all aspects of my life.

What do you like best about being a trainer?

Being a trainer means that I get to accompany people at all stages of their journeys with Godly Play. The best moment for me is when someone tells a story for the first time: maybe the first time without a script, or the first time with adults, and they find that they've really 'entered' the story. It's wonderful to watch someone having to travel from that place in the story, back to the circle. For me, that connection with the story is a fundamental part of being a story-teller, and I think that once someone has experienced it, they 'get' Godly Play in a new way.

Tell us about some of the things your trainer role has recently involved

In addition to weekly Godly Play sessions on Sundays and midweek at my Church, my recent trainer work includes running a monthly support network for our region (with fellow trainer Mary Cooper), running taster sessions and introduction days, four 3-day

courses, two enrichment days, and a Godly Play retreat. Also conference planning with other trainers, advising trustee meetings, and mentoring new trainers!

What's your favourite Godly Play moment or story?

Recently I told the story of Creation to a reception class. In the wondering, as a response to which part of the story they liked best, one child said '*nothing*'. I paused, and was aware of the teachers bridleing a bit. Do you know what I mean? Doing that eye contact with each other, 'wrong answer' response. Well, luckily the child was unaware of the teachers. I reflected back his answer, and he added a word... '*the nothing*'. Ahhh!



'So you liked the nothing best?' 'Yes, the nothing... before everything... before the smile, or maybe halfway through the smile.'

In the response time, this child really explored the story materials. He drew a smile to put on the underlay. He drew a picture for the seventh day. He retold the story with his pictures and images. Afterwards, the teachers shared with me that this boy has atheist parents, and he is always adamant (in a church school) that he doesn't believe in God. This explained, in part, their reaction to his perceived answer to the wondering question. However, what was wonderful for me was that through Godly Play, this little boy had been given the space to step beyond 'answers' and to really play with God, and what God might be.

In Godly Play we say that 'you never stop learning', so what's something that you learnt recently?



Something I learnt recently was from a child. He turned to me during the wondering and told me '*God is blue*'. That still sits with me. In times when I have space to reflect, his words keep coming back to me. What I'm learning all the time from Godly Play is that I need more space and time for reflection. To reflect on what I've heard, what I've learnt, what I've wondered, what other people have wondered. I'm still finding ways to build more time for reflection into my life, and at the moment, when I tell or hear the Parable of The Good Shepherd, it reminds me that the cool, clear, still water can be a reflective place. I'm struck by the thought that by giving time and space for this reflection, we can then be refreshed, and touched... maybe by that 'blue' God.

(Image: 'Life with God' by Anneke Kaai)

I wonder who we'll meet in the next issue...?

Enjoy the Feast : Bite-sized News Items!



For future issues we'd love to feature short news items or other snippets sent in by our readers in this section. After all, the feast is not about 'how big' the feast is, but the chance to share things together and give thanks!

Godly Play UK needs new Trustees : *Godly Play is a movement to influence the Churches' support of spiritually rich practices with children and adults.*

We are looking for people to consolidate and expand the range of Trustee skills with an eye to succession planning. We need motivated people sympathetic to the aims of Godly Play UK to fulfil these voluntary duties. We would like Trustees who can offer oversight to Godly Play UK, contributing actively in one or more of the following areas:

- support and encouragement of our Trainers
- developing our policy
- defining strategic direction
- ensuring effective management and financial security.

We would like to have a wide range of people on our small Trustee body in order to be representative of those who use Godly Play across the UK in a range of settings. Applications from BME backgrounds would be particularly welcome. Travel and out-of-pocket expenses are offered.

Trustees are expected to

- *attend two full Trustees meetings a year (one for the inside of a day in the spring and a residential meeting over two days in the autumn)*
- *join a sub-group focusing on a particular area of development*
- *support the work of Godly Play UK in the region in which they reside*
- *contribute to advice and support on an ad hoc basis according to their own particular skills and experience*
- *attend events*

For more information about this, please contact the Chair of Trustees, Gill Ambrose, chair@godlyplay.uk

For a recruitment pack please contact our Administrator, Sheila Rogers, sheila.rogers@talktalk.net

If you would like to express your interest in this position, please send a covering letter along with a CV and the names of two referees. These will be considered by current Trustees and a response will be sent to you in writing.



Salvation Army Godly Play : A new story about Catherine Booth, the 'Mother' and co-founder of the Salvation Army, is now being trialled with children. The story, researched in association with theologians at the Salvation Army, was written by Rebecca Nye. It joins three others about their distinctive liturgical actions and doctrine: The Flag, the Mercy Seat and their Social Action work.

Godly Play is proving very popular throughout this tradition under the guidance of Andrea Harrison, the Salvation Army's 'Godly Play Enabler' and UK trainer. As it's a worldwide movement there's growing international interest. Andrea went to Jamaica with Godly Play advocate Richard Prescott in February, and will lead a course in Estonia in next month. Meanwhile, 'Officers' from Denmark, Italy, Germany, Poland and Pakistan have come to the UK to complete 3-day training.

Facebook Group: The Godly Play UK Facebook group now has more than 1350 members!



This is a fantastic resource for practitioners to share their experiences, ask questions and support each other. We're delighted by how much this is used (with new posts almost every day), and by the quality of 'safe and enquiring space' this virtual place provides. Members of our trainer team take turns to ensure questions are answered promptly, and that anyone in this enormous circle should feel welcome to chip in! We are also using the data from these posts to identify areas for further development and courses. If you haven't joined yet, do have a look... Just search Facebook for 'Godly Play UK' and request to join.



Birthday Blessings: Jerome Berryman's 80th Birthday

Jerome was delighted to receive cards from hundreds of people in the UK, which were hand-delivered by trainer Peter Privett, who is also the Chair of the Godly Play International Council.

We have been so blessed by Jerome's work : creating Godly Play, his gifts for writing the stories and his invaluable support for Godly Play in the UK. So, in return, with enormous smiles all round, Peter gave Jerome a birthday blessing.

Upcoming opportunities: come along or pass it on

Click these links or see the Website for further details www.godlyplay.uk

- [Birmingham: Storytelling Circle](#) 2nd October 2017
- [South Wales: Network Meeting](#) 10th October 2017
- [Sheffield Training day Godly Play with Older People in Care Settings](#) 13th October 2017
- [Sheffield Taster session \(evening\)](#) 17th October 2017
- [Birmingham: 1-day Introductory course](#) 21st October 2017
- [Ottershaw, Surrey: 1-day Introductory course](#) 28th October 2017
- [Sheffield 1-day Introductory course](#) 10th November 2017
- [Cambridge: 1-day Introductory course](#) 11th November 2017
- [Derbyshire, Cliff College: 3-day Accredited Training course](#) 14th-16th November 2017
- [Sheffield: Advent Retreat with the Saints](#) 1 December 2017
- [Sheffield: 3-day Accredited Training course](#) 13th, 20th, 27th January 2018
- [North Tyneside: 4-day Accredited Training course](#) 2nd-3rd Feb & 2nd-3rd March 2018
- [Cambridge: 3-day Accredited Training course](#) April 21st, May 19th, June 9th 2018
- [Llantarnam Abbey, Wales: 3-day Accredited Training course](#) 4th-6th July 2018
- [Exeter: 3-day Accredited Training course](#) 24-26th July 2018

Finally, thank you for being a special supporter of Godly Play UK. We hope you have found things in this issue that encourage and affirm you and your work.



*May the Good Shepherd,
who knows all of the sheep by name,
lead you to the good green grass
and guide you through dangerous times and places.
May you find your pearl of great price,
and know that you journey with all the people of God,
who are as many as there are stars in the sky
and grains of sand in the desert.*

Associates of Godly Play UK: Caring about what really matters...

***"Scatter the seeds
and a New life would be coming"
Lydia 2002.
Drawn in Trumpington, Cambridge,
the first Godly Play room in the UK.***



Godly Play^{UK}

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