



Associates of Godly Play UK

The Magazine

Issue 17

September 2025



At the threshold

Hello! Greetings from the team who have planned and compiled this issue, in the hope that you will enjoy hearing news from other people involved with Godly Play, and perhaps find space and encouragement to reflect on the work you are doing, wherever you are.

Thank you for opening the magazine. This issue is perhaps more 'newsy' than usual as we have had quite a lot of comings and goings since our previous issue in March. Now perhaps, like our threshold picture, we look just a little different.

It is good to have you within the circle which is Godly Play UK.

*A Christian movement centred on childhood spirituality
providing training to transform thinking and practice for the whole of life*

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Building the circle

This issue of the magazine opens with goings and comings, inviting you to share in our thanks to three people who have been key to the work of Godly Play UK and the delight that we have been able to identify a new trustee and find such a competent new administrator. People make us who we are and so we celebrate their contributions to what we offer. In addition, we are able to celebrate the development of our new materials suppliers, Jennyruth, whose website is now up and running, and invites orders.

Among our feature articles, Eona Bell reflects on the place of the Bible in the Godly Play programme and Peter Privett shares thoughts about the art of unknowing – how we make space for the movement of God in the hearts of children. Angela Clare, a Godly Play Advocate in London, shares her experience of researching what the equity audit being undertaken by the Godly Play Foundation has to offer us, based on her work in the diverse congregation which she serves.

We share three books, an interesting set of Bible stories for ‘kind and contemplative kids’, and two quick reads for adults, and our Bite-sized news shares some encouraging local developments.

We are delighted that our programme of courses has done so well this year, after a slow emergence from the doldrums of the pandemic world. All our three-day courses for the rest of the year are full and you can see what is now on offer in 2026. In addition, our online introductions continue to be well booked, and we have listed a new, and really useful, offer from the Godly Play Foundation in the USA – a free 30-minute webinar on Getting Started with Godly Play.

Finally, we share some details of our Conference next year. It is to be called ‘In Children’s Shoes’. Stuart Lee will help us to think about how we can really listen to children and nurture them. The conference will be in Rugby on 6 June 2026. Save the date now.

Goings and Comings

Sheila Rogers ... is retiring ...



Sheila has been our administrator for almost 20 years, taking on a role that grew and changed, and changed and grew. Trained as a teacher of Religious Studies, and also in working with children with learning, emotional and behaviour difficulties, Sheila began working for Godly Play UK in 2007.

Sheila has been a wonderful gift to Godly Play trainers, standing in the gap between enthusiastic course leaders and participants, handling all the administrative tedium that we'd like to pretend doesn't concern us: health and safety, GDPR, insurance. She guided us patiently through these and other modern administrative minefields so that we could relax into our training roles. Always willing to problem-solve and co-ordinate trainers working from opposite ends of the country, she kept the show on the road.

She has equally been a gift to everyone who has contacted Godly Play UK for any reason whatsoever: to ask a question, join a course, find more information... So many people will have benefited from Sheila's patient, kind and person-centred response. Not only has she been kind, she has been efficient: whatever the question, whatever you had forgotten, whatever you needed to know, Sheila could always find the answer. Her memory stick, and her knowledge of what was on it, seemed to have hidden depths! (She also recruited us a trustee – in the person of her talented and problem-solving husband, Rob!)

We shall thank Sheila properly when our trustees and trainers have their annual get together in October, when we will make a presentation to express our thanks. But meanwhile, we are sure that everyone who reads this, who has come across her in any way, will think of her with gratitude and remember something of an encounter with her.

And we shall have the opportunity to see her again, as she and Rob will be part of the team organising our conference in Rugby (where they live) next year.

Thank you, Sheila. May your retirement be a happy one free from visits to the post office to send off a missing certificate, script or training manual!

Judy Yeomans ... is diverting ...



Judy has been a trainer for Godly Play UK and a wonderful networker and enabler for Godly Players in the South-East of England.

She has particularly helped us recently with looking after our Associates, keeping our subscribers in touch with the work that they help us to do. She has also been part of the group that has planned and put together this magazine.

Judy is going to stop being a trainer, but she will now take up a new role, as the Advocate with responsibility for links with Associates.

We are grateful to her for pioneering a new role and a way to support and promote Godly Play and help it to grow.

On page 7 you can read some of Judy's thoughts on being a trainer, particularly in relation to a recent course that she was involved in.

Vicky Parry ... is retiring ...

Vicky joined the Trustees in May 2017 and has expertly guided us in our financial and compliance obligations.

Vicky worked as a teacher before retraining as a Management Accountant working in property management and as the CEO of a company offering support in the community to adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and mental ill-health. In 2008 she became a school bursar, a role with responsibilities for Finance, Human Resources, Health and Safety, Compliance, and as Clerk to the Governors, and it was these skills and experiences that she has so generously gifted to Godly Play UK.



From being a new charity finding our way, Vicky has turned us into a capable and compliant organisation, with proper budgets, the capacity to offer bursaries and to run safe and healthy courses.

Thank you, Vicky, for all you have done for us all in your quiet and supportive way over these last eight years! We wish you the best adventures in your new rural way of life in Somerset.

George Watt ... has joined us ...



George is our newest trustee and joined the Board officially in June. We are delighted to welcome him to this role.

George is the Moderator of the North Thames Synod of the United Reformed Church. Although he was born and brought up in Scotland, all George's ministry has been in the south of England. As well as a widely experienced senior minister, George has been a Godly Play practitioner for many years. We feel fortunate that he offered to support us in this way. Among his first tasks was to be part of the team that worked to find a new administrator.

Chloe Sargent ... has arrived ...



Chloe is our new administrator, and she tells us about herself below.

Hello, I'm Chloe and I'm delighted to be joining Godly Play as the new Administrator. I know I'm stepping into big shoes, as Sheila has so faithfully and brilliantly cared for this role for over 20 years. I'm very grateful for the warm handover she has given me.

My background is in education: I trained as a primary school teacher and have been teaching in schools across Bristol since 2017. In 2021, I moved into charity administration, discovering a particular love for organisation, systems and (believe it or not!) spreadsheets. For the past few years, I've worked with Encounter Christianity, a charity that brings

Christian RE lessons and workshops into Bristol primary schools, where I've been both behind the scenes and in the classroom.

Alongside this, I've continued some supply teaching, keeping my communication skills sharp, but I'm now excited to focus on supporting Godly Play's mission behind the scenes. I love the way Godly Play nurtures children's faith through storytelling and wonder, and I feel privileged to play a part in that.

At home, life is full, with two young boys (one just starting school and the other still a toddler), a husband who works as a police officer, and the excitement of celebrating our 10th wedding anniversary next year. As a family we love getting outdoors and exploring nature, and when I can, I enjoy reading and a quiet cup of coffee. I'm especially grateful for a role that blends flexibility with meaningful work, and I look forward to getting to know many of you over time.

Reflections on recent Core Training

Lisa Griffin looks back on training in Guernsey.



In May, Peter and Alison from Godly Play UK visited Guernsey to train eleven new presenters, ten from Guernsey and one from the UK. We had a fantastic three days together as we explored all the different components of a Godly Play session.

As we explored different Godly Play stories as adults, we could feel

certain emotional tugs when seeing the figure of Sarah buried beneath the sand once she dies, or the rocky dangerous places that the Good Shepherd leads his sheep through. We could see how the response time to the stories opened up space to have the opportunity to reflect on the story we had just heard. We saw the importance of how value is given to everything a child might say. We all found it very beneficial, and it has opened our eyes to how we approach children and schools work in general.

Since the training we have had regular sessions where we have explored stories together to consolidate our learning, led lessons in schools (Guernsey and UK), made story props, led sessions in dementia care homes (UK), and developed a Godly Playroom where we did the training. Best of all, perhaps, we have seen doors open within our communities to lead Godly Play.

And Claire Brocklesby reflects on training in Cambridge.



Claire was ordained in the Church of England in 2024 and is serving her curacy in semi-rural benefice north-west of Cambridge. She was surprised and enthused by the healthy number of children and young people in her parish and was keen to find ways to build on that ministry. Having come across Godly Play during her training at Westcott House where ordinands were given a 'Godly Play taster day', she decided to sign up for the three-day training, and was so glad that she did!

Having recently completed the three-day Godly Play training, I have already started to put this training to good use. I inherited a nearly complete set of Godly Play resources and was keen to start using them. Serving my curacy in a setting where we have a healthy number of children and young people (which I appreciate is quite rare for a rural parish church) I was enthused to explore the role of Godly Play both with the younger children, but also with the teenagers in our youth group.

The training was really helpful, because not only did it equip me to retell the stories that are central to Godly Play, but it also helped me to think about childhood spirituality. The course gave me the opportunity to explore new ideas and importantly, engage in discussion with others on the course, sharing our own experiences and personal insights. The group quickly bonded, and I learnt just as much from the other trainees as I did from our wonderfully knowledgeable course leaders.

So far, I have had the privilege of telling Godly Play stories in church, in our youth group and I have also taken a couple of stories into the local primary school. I am so grateful that I have had the opportunity to do this training and already I can really see how it is enhancing my ministry. Going forward, I am interested in thinking about how I might start using Godly Play in other ways, possibly with an adult audience. It is a huge privilege to tell the stories of the Bible in such a creative way, and I am so pleased I took the step of signing up to the course.

A Trainer's perspective on core training.

Judy Yeomans

I had the privilege of becoming a trainer in 2017, after some years of sitting in circles of children and adults in church. I hoped this would keep me grounded in open, non-judgemental appreciation of the wonder that abounds in a Godly Play setting. This was to become one of my great delights in leading training. Each circle of participants brings new life experiences, personal triumphs and tragedies, and reflections on their spiritual encounters and journeys, that I am honoured to be entrusted with.

There is much for us all to learn from each other, and this is never truer than when my fellow trainer and I are prepared to go 'off script', adapting to hastily noted needs or maybe unexpected circumstances. But this also requires courage on my part, to let go of what I want to share and make the training flexible and more collaborative. A recent training at Cuddesdon with Brenton Prigge provided the security (for me, at least) to tolerate some uncertainty and not knowing, waiting to see

'Learn from the mistakes of others because you could never live long enough to make them all yourself.'

what might unfold. This is akin to the relationship that develops between Storyteller and Doorperson as they share the anchoring of a Godly Play circle in order to be fully in service to the members. And as many participants have commented over the years, most of the 'Aha!' moments come in the breaks, during the rich sharing of not just that morning's Godly Play experience but so much more. I am always richer for these times.

Eleanor Roosevelt said something along the lines of 'learn from the mistakes of others because you could never live long enough to make them all yourself' and I smile at this, knowing that in the best training I've been part of we create a safe enough space to allow us all to learn from each other, our efforts and our errors. I hope I can continue to learn from my fellow Godly Play Storytellers and Doorpersons in all their varied roles for GPUK as I step down from being a trainer.



Our new suppliers

Godly Play resources are once more available online!

Jennyruth Workshops is a productive workshop based just outside Ripon, North Yorkshire, where adults who have a learning disability design, make and sell a wide variety of stock and bespoke products, made predominately from wood.

Our brand-new website went live at 5pm on Monday 11th August 2025. Designed to be more accessible, informative, and user-friendly, the new site marks a significant step forward in how we connect with our community. One of the most exciting new features is a dedicated page for Godly Play resources.



Having officially signed our exclusive licence agreement with Godly Play UK (GPUK) and Godly Play US (GPUS) earlier this year, we are proud to offer the only UK-manufactured collection of Godly Play resources online.

This marks the beginning of a growing resource hub tailored to support Godly Play practitioners, educators, and communities. We look forward to expanding the range to meet your needs and enrich your storytelling and spiritual engagement. We invite you to explore the new site, discover the resources, and join us in celebrating this exciting milestone! We're committed to expanding this product range, if we don't yet stock a resource you would like to see, please do get in touch to register your interest. This will help guide our planning for the next release of products online.

Visit us at <https://www.jennyruth.co.uk/>

For all specific resource enquiries please email us at godlyplaysales@jennyruth.co.uk



Feature articles

Learning to read the Bible with Godly Play

By Eona Bell



Eona is a Godly Play trainer. She is an anthropologist and also now has a role as a church children and families' worker. Here she reflects on the place of the Bible in the Godly Play room.

'I think they might be ready for something more than Godly Play,' my supervisor told me a few months ago. He was talking about the little group of children to whom I have been teaching Godly Play on Sunday mornings in church over the past couple of years. For the first time in my life as a Godly Play practitioner I have had the privilege of facilitating a circle like this, over an extended period in which I have seen the same children almost every week. We have gradually worked through the core stories together, some more than once, and added in a few of the saints for added measure (the children love matching the flags to their countries, and finding the saint for their birthday months). Establishing a practice of Godly Play in this church has taken time and a lot of patience. I'm still not sure all the adults understand what we are doing but, little by little, I have seen the children become more 'fluent' in the languages and rhythms of Godly Play. They have slowly learned to sit in a circle, take turns and listen to one another's wondering, and know where to find the stories and response materials they might need for their response. We have a felt Circle of the Church Year hanging on the wall, and one of the children is sure to remind me if I forget to move the arrow to the appropriate block for the week.

I know there is still much more for us to discover together from the spiral curriculum of Godly Play. I don't want to abandon completely what we have built up over months and years. And yet, in some ways I could understand what my supervisor meant. I had seen how excited the children were after a happy week away at a Christian summer camp, when three of them sat down in the Godly Play circle, each holding their own Bible, keen to show me how they'd learnt to highlight key passages, and speedily locate specific books. There had been prizes at camp for learning memory verses, although none of those had really stuck in their minds.

I had planned to tell a Godly Play story that week, and found myself thinking on my feet – should I continue with the Godly Play session, even if this meant asking them to 'put the Bibles away' while I told the story, or jettison my plan and take the children's lead, using the time together to explore more about the print Bibles in their hands?



<https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>

On that occasion, I realised it would feel deeply disrespectful – both to the children themselves, and to the sacred texts – to put the Bibles aside as we might do a football, a jacket or anything else the children occasionally brought into the Godly Play room. It also seemed wrong, on that occasion at least, to privilege the Godly Play way of presenting Scripture (through voice, symbol and gesture) over the actual texts which had so fired the children’s enthusiasm. As it happened, the story I was going to tell was one which could be easily found in a single chapter, so I was able to pivot towards a compromise, inviting one of the children to read the story aloud from his Bible, before continuing with the Godly Play process of wondering, response and so on.

What is the place of the Bible in the Godly Play room?



Afterwards I found myself wondering more about the place of the Bible in a Godly Play room.

What does Godly Play say – in both spoken and unspoken lessons – about what the Bible is, and the place it may have in a child’s life?

How well am I, as a Godly Play practitioner, equipped to support children as they learn to navigate and read the books of the Bible for themselves?

And is it right to think of Godly Play as a stepping stone, particularly good for young children and people with lower levels of literacy, leading to the real experience of reading the Bible as a text?

Jerome Berryman wrote about the use of Scripture when he summarised the differences between Godly Play and other styles of teaching. He contrasts the ‘discovery model’ of learning in Godly Play – when each person learns to create existential meaning for their lives through the process of playing with God – and the ‘transfer model’ in which the teacher decides what the student ought to learn.

The ‘transfer model’ is alive and kicking in many contexts where children may encounter the Bible today. Every year in the UK, the charity Gideons International gives away 400,000 copies of the New

What does Godly Play say – in both spoken and unspoken lessons – about what the Bible is, and the place it may have in a child’s life?

Testament and Psalms to children starting secondary school.¹ This is a generous act of giving by volunteers, and I recall my son’s pleasure at owning his own pocket-sized book, and the encouragement he received to start a daily practice of Bible reading from the Gideons volunteer who spoke at his class assembly. But the Gideons edition is firmly in the ‘transfer model’, with specific directions to appropriate verses to read when you face a particular situation in your life.

¹ <https://retodaymagazine.online/article/free-bibles-for-your-pupils/>

Many parents, teachers and children’s ministers continue to teach ‘memory verses’ as a means for children to absorb Biblical texts. For Berryman, this could be valuable:

‘Memorizing key doctrines and Scriptures is important and provides us with spiritual resources we can use all through our lives. Things I memorized as a child have often been a comfort to me as an adult ... Don’t [children] need to know the orthodox concepts that have stood the test of time? The answer is ‘Yes’. The way that one gets to orthodoxy, however, makes all the difference.’²

The basic problem with the ‘transfer model’, according to Berryman, is that it relies too heavily on abstract ‘concepts’, ideas which are already completed, and can be transferred from the mind of the teacher to the mind of the student. In the ‘discovery model’, by contrast, Godly Play engages not only our intellects in the making of meaning, but ‘involves the whole person – body, mind and spirit.’³

So, how does Godly Play prepare children to use the Bible?

Through the body



If we are fortunate enough to practise Godly Play in a space where stories can be laid out on shelves around us; we can see in visual and tactile form how the whole narrative arc of the Bible spans out from Creation, through the Sacred Stories of God’s People, to the Incarnation, life and Resurrection of Jesus and on to the life of the Christian Church.

‘When you walk into a Godly Play room, you are walking into the Bible. The stories on the shelves

surround children with the contents of the Bible, where the Church’s story comes from.’⁴

We literally place ourselves within the whole story of God’s playful relationship with humanity.

Through the mind

In the Revised and Expanded edition of Volume 2 of *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, there are two lessons about the Bible. The first (Lesson Two) explains how the Bible was put together over many centuries as a collection of different books. It draws attention to a print Bible which we are encouraged to place on a stand in the Godly Play room, with a supply of blank bookmarks next to it for the children to decorate, if they choose, as a response.



² Berryman, J., *Teaching Godly Play*, (Morehouse Education Resources, 2009), p. 43.

³ Berryman, *Teaching Godly Play*, p. 42.

⁴ Berryman, Jerome K., *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, Vol. 2, Revised and expanded ed., (Church Publishing, 2017)



In the spiral curriculum, it is suggested that older children (aged 9-11) also hear the Enrichment Lesson in the same volume, which many of us will remember from the previous edition as the 'Books of the Bible'. In this lesson, we introduce the idea of genre – the different types of writing found in the Bible. We talk about the names of the books, and how some people like to memorise them in order, which can be useful if you want to look something up.

I don't know how many readers of this magazine have access to the materials

for this Enrichment Lesson – the miniature bookcase with painted wooden blocks representing each book in the Bible, colour-coded to indicate genre. I have never owned or been able to borrow a set, but I'm keen to get advice on how to make the materials, as I think the children I work with are more than ready to hear the lesson, and would enjoy the mental challenge of pronouncing and placing the blocks in order.

Through the spirit

When we tell Bible stories in Godly Play using gesture, symbolic materials and words spoken 'from the heart' we are enabling our listeners to engage with Scripture at the deepest level, and internalise God's word as a treasure for the rest of their lives.

There will always be a place within children's ministry for engaging with the Bible in various ways. I am very grateful that I was entrusted with the privilege of reading lessons aloud in church when I was still a child, and still feel blessed to hear a child's voice from the lectern during worship. I hope that the children will have opportunities to see Bible stories depicted in art, both from the past and our own time, and from different cultural traditions. Some of them will encounter Biblical texts through music, like my son who knows many of the psalms by heart after singing in a church choir.

But I will not stop using Godly Play to explore the Bible with the children I minister with, trusting that our playful God is still waiting and ready for the next bit of the game.



The art of unknowing – the art of Godly Play

By Peter Privett



I Julian, a novel by Claire Gilbert, inspires Peter Privett to make some connections with the heart of Godly Play practice.

Claire Gilbert, in her inspired novel about Julian of Norwich, imagines Julian thinking about the many who come to her with their problems and troubles. They think she is wise, and so they seek advice and guidance. But she does not solve their problems. Instead, she learns to listen, and to be silent with an open heart and a smile of encouragement.

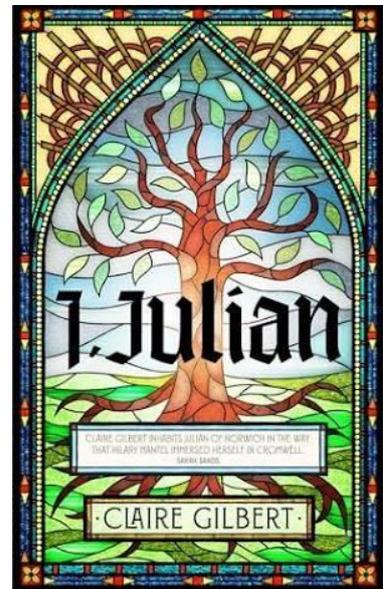
‘I learn how to counsel my fellow Christians, for now I am an anchoress I am believed to be able to offer advice.

‘Each afternoon, after Nonnes and sometimes before as well, I draw aside my curtain to the world and find a soul waiting to speak, from Norwich, sometimes further afield. Many become familiar to me. They tell me their news and they seek counsel and I have learned how much to say, which is very little, and how much to remain silent, which is mostly needed. I am not wise, and I do not solve their troubles. But I learn to listen with my face turned towards the person speaking, with my heart open to them and my smile warm in encouragement.’⁵

In the novel, Julian learns to pay attention to what is being presented. She notices what is said, and holds back on making suggestions and opinions. Later in the novel she is aware of her own feelings of shortcoming, her fears of being misunderstood, and her anxieties of being punished as a heretic. This awareness leads to a need to spend time dealing with her own issues and this is worked out in her writing.

She learns to listen, and to be silent with an open heart and a smile of encouragement.

friend often says that ‘It is important to notice what you notice.’ Noticing when my work and issues are prominent during a session is important. It is essential that I park them to be dealt with later, either with the doorman in the debrief at the end of a session, or with someone else.



This reminds me of the times in a Godly Play session when I notice that my own personal stuff is coming to the fore, when my wondering is not open and is about my own work. A Quaker

⁵ Claire Gilbert, 2023, *I Julian*, Hodder and Stoughton (p.207)

Unknowing

Julian gradually comes to a place of letting go, of dwelling in 'unknowing.'

'And my counselling takes the same more deeply unknowing form. When I open the curtain of my cell and the eyes and the heart of me to the person seeking me, I know nothing at all and I do not speak. I only listen. Those who come learn that they will not be taught by me, but by the movement of God in their own hearts. And that they are safe to speak freely when they are with me. Even the Bishop's spies cannot provoke words from me at this time.'⁶

Unknowing – getting ready



The novel made other connections for me in my practice of Godly Play.

The first words and actions of a session are: 'Are you ready?'

I don't think that this is just about the group about to enter the room. How do we, as adults who are leading the session, get ready? What attitudes, what mindset do I need to be in when leading a session?

In the novel, Julian enters a place of 'unknowing.'

A group of theological students asked me once, 'What is going on in your head as you enter that room?' I thought for a while and said, 'I guess I wonder what is going to happen today.'

Before a session starts, I try and enter this place of unknowing, a condition of openness. Sitting on the floor helps, even though with back problems it is not as easy as it used to be. The coming down to the ground seems to reverse the usual power dynamic of control. If you physically can't sit on the floor, then try the inner work of what might it mean to be open and flexible today. Whatever the physical position, the work is an emptying, a willingness to be present, and a commitment to listen to both the verbal and non-verbal. Am I ready?

Unknowing – trusting the process

Another question I ask myself before a session is, 'Do I trust the process?'

Julian dwells in the place of unknowing.

Do I really trust the process of Godly Play to do the work that it needs to do?



The entrance to Mother Julian's cell, St. Julian's Church, Norwich
Photo: echinkle22
Creative Commons Attribution- Share Alike Licence

⁶ Ibid. (p.301)

I can easily give prominence to what children might say or do, but for much of the time the real work is hidden from me. Trusting ‘the movement of God in their own hearts,’ relates to a deep belief in children's innate spirituality, and the hope that Godly Play will empower them to direct their own spiritual growth. However, even though there is empathetic support from an adult, the child has to do the work for themselves.

Unknowing – creating safe space



St Julian's Church, Norwich. Photo: Amitchell125, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International licence

Julian, with her ‘unknowing’, creates a safe space for people, a place to speak freely, and where they gradually learn that they will not be taught by her.

Godly Play easily becomes a clever teaching aid, subtly shifted into an imaginative way of teaching Bible stories: what Godly Play story can I tell that will help with this pastoral challenge? Expert storytelling and wondering skills can morph into the means to fix a problem.

Julian offers an alternative. Instead of trying to match a particular Godly Play story with a particular pastoral issue, her insights suggests that the task of the adult is to enter the place of ‘unknowing’ so that a safe open space can be created and held.

Godly Play is not a quick fix. It can take time. Sometimes time out is needed. Sometimes meaning is made gradually. But meaning and connection is always made by the child themselves.



Equity Audit

By Angela Clare

Angela is based in Islington, North London. She first encountered Godly Play in 2013, and completed the Godly Play core training in 2018. Last year, she became a Godly Play advocate, which has been wonderful. She is a children's and families volunteer at Hope Church, Islington, where they offer Godly Play most weeks for children aged 3 to 6 years and also gather once a term for a whole church Godly Play story, which is always very popular.

Earlier this year I co-hosted with Andrea Harrison via Zoom an enrichment conversation, on the topic of diversity, inclusion and equality within Godly Play.

To give some context, I had become interested in this subject due to my own church having conversations and activities about similar topics; for example, our sign language interpreter was offering regular support to our deaf church members. We later had a wonderful taster workshop on sign language for Christian groups,



which was well attended. Other conversations came up too, about neurodiversity and what support systems could be put in place.

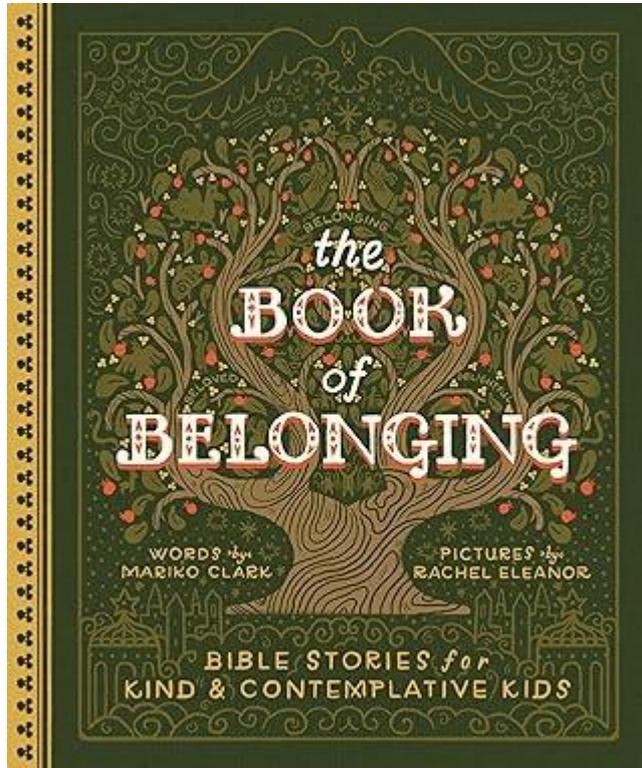
Around the same time (late 2021) that these conversations were happening, I came across the Godly Play Beloved Me, Beloved We, equity audit that the Godly Play Foundation were running. This audit clicked with me immediately: I was very interested in the focus on reviewing the Godly Play wording of the stories and the materials, to make them more inclusive, to reflect diversity and promote equality. It was very helpful to discuss my thoughts with other Godly Play storytellers, advocates and trainers. I outlined a few examples, using the story that had been reviewed first in the audit, which was the Creation lesson, comparing the original wording and the suggestions made in the revised version.

The Zoom conversation was very in depth and made us wonder deeply about the words used and the colours too: for example, darkness = nothingness, and assuming all beings can walk, etc. In conclusion, it was felt that the ideas for this audit were positive and thought provoking. I noticed while writing this report that the Godly Play Foundation has just completed The Great Family audit. Do take a look at the revised version, it has lots to wonder about.

You can find information about the equity audit being undertaken by the Godly Play Foundation here: <https://www.godlyplayfoundation.org/equity-audit-toolkits>

Taking your wondering further...

Book reviews



The Book of Belonging, Words by Mariko Clark and Pictures by Rachel Eleanor, 2024, Convergent

Reviewed by Captain Yvonne West

The Book of Belonging is 'designed for families seeking a Bible storybook that reflects the diversity of God's people'. The very first page reminds us that we belong to God, are beloved by God and are delightful to God. What a lovely way to start this reading adventure!

These themes are carried throughout the narrative, as the reader is reminded of the three key words – Belonging, Beloved and Delightful.

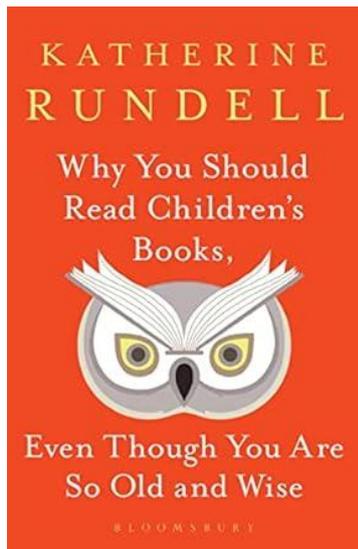
As I opened the package, my first impression was that this is a book to be treasured. The deep colours of green, gold and red on the outside cover give it a luxurious feel. The rich colours continue inside as the stories are brought to life through striking illustrations.

The words themselves are beautifully lyrical, using a rich vocabulary to pull out the narrative structure of Scripture and make it feel like the perfect bedtime story. It's a hefty book which might be difficult for little hands to grasp and hold. However, it's perfect for sharing and would evoke powerful imagery for a child when read by an adult.

Inclusivity and historical representation are conveyed by introducing the biblical characters using their Hebrew name as well as the name we are more familiar with.

There are 'Wonder Moments' and 'Mindful Moments' throughout the book which invite the reader to pause and reflect, creating lovely opportunities to develop emotional and spiritual literacy. Some of these give practical suggestions for multi-sensory and creative reflection. Some pose wondering questions about the kingdom of God and how we can help everyone to feel they belong. Others ask the reader to notice their feelings and emotional reaction to a story.

The book ends as it begins, reminding the reader that they belong, and giving an invitation to 'Come and trust who God says you are'.



Why you should read children's books even though you are so old and wise, Katherine Rundell, 2024, Bloomsbury Publishing

Reviewed by Gill Ambrose

Gill is Chair of the Trustees of the Godly Play UK charity and has recently been trying to keep abreast of the Percy Jackson novels, which she has found challenging!

I have written about books about children's books here before – because I love children's books, and so I love books about them. I would say, in fact, that a really significant factor in my faith formation as a child was the novels I read, where faith moved easily within the pages and permeated my thinking. And now, what he is reading forms an important feature of my friendship with my grandson. We play out the stories of his recent reads, sometimes books I have read, but now more often, newer texts, which I have to learn about, and so my world enlarges.

Why You Should Read Children's Books is a tiny book by a prize-winning author, who has many titles to her name, spanning a vast range of ages and genres. I took her biography of John Milton on holiday, for example. She offers an outline of 'how children's fiction came to be' from *The Babees Book* of 1475 through various worthy texts of the 17th and 18th centuries leading into something much more exciting: the world of fairy tales. In a few brief pages she describes the relationships between fairy stories right across the world and what they do. 'Real fairytales are about hunger: hunger for power, above all; but also hunger for justice, for love, for change and transformation, for other humans.'

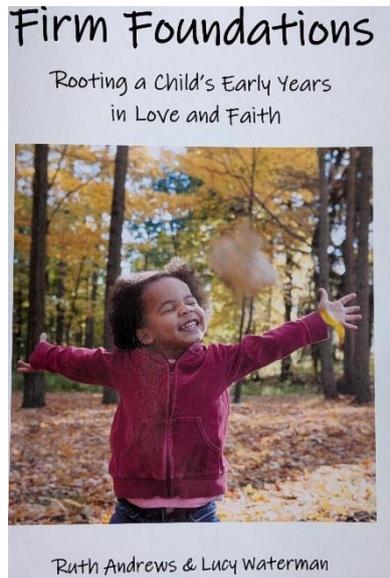
Unlike Lucy Mangan's *Bookworm* (which I reviewed here a few years ago) or Francis Spufford's *The child that books built*, Rundell doesn't tell us about books she loved as a child, but in 62 tiny pages offers a survey of the qualities that children's books offer us. Here are a few examples:

'Children's novels, to me, spoke, and still speak, of hope. They say: look, this is what bravery looks like. This is what generosity looks like. They tell me, through the medium of wizards and lions and talking spiders, that this world we live in is a world of people who tell jokes and work and endure. Children's books say: the world is huge: They say: hope counts for something.

'Children's fiction ... offers to help us re-find things we don't even know we have lost. Adult life is full of forgetting ... When you read children's books, you are given the space to read again as a child: to find your way back, back to a time when new discoveries came daily and when the world was colossal, before your imagination was trimmed and neatened, as if it were an optional extra.'

This is not particularly a religious book, but I think I enjoyed it because it reaffirmed my sense that the world of the child and the world of the adult inevitably intertwine; things that have the capacity to feed the child also have the capacity to feed the adult, which is why we shouldn't be surprised when we find that adults who come across Godly Play are often entranced, and enriched and enthusiastic.

Firm Foundations: Rooting a Child's Early Years in Love and Faith, Ruth Andrews and Lucy Waterman, Love Early Years



Love Early Years is an organisation which supports those working with young children in groups and church situations, encouraging people to understand more about how to nurture Christian spirituality in the lives of young children.

This little book considers Christian spirituality in the early years, looking at how different age groups can be supported, how children learn and the best ways to work with them.

Chapter 5, in particular, is of interest to us, as it looks at Bible stories and Godly Play. It covers examples in some detail, ending with some reflective questions for adults about their own earliest memories of faith or of a spiritual experience.

Available from Loveearlyyears.com or on Amazon, this is a helpful handbook not only for those running groups for preschool children, but also for those who wish to advocate for this important area of work.

Bite-sized news

Chichester loans library

Chichester Diocese, with the help of Sussex Godly Play advocates has been refreshing and replenishing its library of Godly Play stories. You will shortly be able to borrow any of Volume 2 core stories, the 6 parables and liturgical stories for Advent, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. These will be listed on their website too. Thanks to Caroline Donne, Lesley Mason, Alison Day and retiring trainer Judy Yeomans for pursuing this! If you can't find the story you are looking for, please let Dan or one of the Sussex advocates know, as we would like to build this library up, if there is demand. Please contact the Children and Youth Officer for the Diocese: Dan Jenkins, dan.jenkins@chichester.anglican.org

Details of other Godly Play lending libraries around the country are on our website at <https://www.godlyplay.uk/help-and-support/borrowing-godly-play-materials/>

Core Course for Roman Catholic teachers

In mid-September, 12 teachers from Roman Catholic primary schools, across the country, are gathering at Buckden Towers for training in Godly Play and to consider how it can be used with the new Roman Catholic Religious Education curriculum. We are excited to see what emerges from this grant-funded gathering.

Norfolk networks

There are now two Network Groups in Norfolk: South and East Norfolk (contact Fiona Prentice) and North and West Norfolk (contact Trudie Morris) so there are lots of opportunities to find out about Godly Play in East Anglia.

Sending out Events and Training Opportunities

Online Introductions to Godly Play

In these online introductions to Godly Play, you will have the opportunity to experience a whole Godly Play session, followed by three sessions each exploring a different Godly Play genre. There is also an opportunity to discuss key elements of the Godly Play approach. The group size is small, ideal for asking your questions.

Thursday 25 September and every Thursday until 16 October

7pm to 8.30pm Trainers: Brenton Prigge and Mary Hawes

Course details and a Zoom link will be sent out by email one week before the course begins. Cost £50

Booking: www.godlyplay.uk/events/online-introduction-to-godly-play-21/

Monday 29 September and every Monday until 20 October

1pm – 2.30pm Trainers: Natalie Jones and Alison Summerskill

Course details and a Zoom link will be sent out by email one week before the course begins. Cost £50

Booking: www.godlyplay.uk/events/online-introduction-to-godly-play-22/

Three-day Core Training

Walsingham, Norfolk, Anglican Shrine

27 February – 1 March 2026

This is a residential course. Trainer: Andrea Harrison

Booking: <https://www.godlyplay.uk/events/three-day-core-training-walsingham-2026/> Cost: £490 (Early Bird rate until 24 November £460)

Cambridge, St Andrew's Church, Girton, CB3 0PN

14 -16 May 2026

Trainers: Eona Bell and Andrea Harrison

Booking: <https://www.godlyplay.uk/events/core-training-cambridge/>

Cost: £335 (Early Bird rate until 14 February £315)

Bursaries: With support from our Associates, Godly Play UK makes some bursaries available to subsidise the costs of attending three-day training, subject to applicants fulfilling the stated requirements outlined and adequate funds being available.

www.godlyplay.uk/archives/updates/apply-for-a-bursary-to-attend-godly-play-training/

Online with the Godly Play Foundation

Getting Started with Godly Play: in this free 30-minute webinar, learn next steps to get your Godly Play program started.

The Godly Play Foundation offers this free webinar bimonthly to help you learn next steps to get your Godly Play program started. This is a recurring, live webinar offered on Thursdays bimonthly. registration@godlyplayfoundation.org

Dates

25 September 2025, 6pm UK time (1pm USA EST); 23 October 2025, 6pm UK time; 22 January 2026, 6pm UK time; 26 February 2026, 6pm UK time

GPUK Conference 2026: Saturday 6 June



MAKING MEANING THROUGH STORY, WONDER, & PLAY

"In Children's Shoes"



Full Conference

Saturday 6 June
St Andrew's Church,
Rugby, CV21 3PT
Speaker: Stuart Lee

Afternoon workshops

St Andrew's and
Rugby Baptist Church

Enrichment Days

Friday 5 June
St Andrew's Church

Stuart Lee



At this year's conference, Stuart Lee – priest, spiritual director, Jungian psychotherapist, Godly Play practitioner and trainer – will help us to engage with the inner lives of the children we work with.

Through guided discussion and practical exercises, Stuart will invite us to explore how adults can truly listen and respond to the children in our circles. Together we will consider the skills and sensitivities that we might need in order to nurture their spiritual, psychological and emotional growth.

His session will focus on three essential dynamics: Containment, Reverie, and Symbolic Thinking, keys to supporting children in ways that honour their depth and individuality.

Stuart currently works mostly in private practice as a psychotherapist and supervisor in South-West London and teaches fledgling psychotherapists at the British Psychotherapy Foundation. He also runs an experiential reading group for Carl Jung's 'Red Book', which allows him to pursue his interest in the overlap between psychology and spirituality and the role of the imagination. In his spare time, he loves cooking and walking with his border terrier, Dexter.

Please let us know if you have any particular hopes for workshop and enrichment days. Send your suggestions to admin@godlyplay.uk



May the Good Shepherd,
who knows all of the sheep by name,
lead you to the good green grass
and stay with you in time of danger.
May you find your pearl of great price,
and know that your 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.

The Godly Play UK Magazine is published twice a year and distributed to all on our mailing lists.

It is generously funded by Godly Play UK Associates. To find out more about being an Associate of Godly Play, look at our website:

<https://www.godlyplay.uk/join/>

This issue was devised and edited by
Eona Bell, Gill Ambrose, Peter Privett and Judy Yeomans.

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