



A **GODLY PLAY**® QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

FEBRUARY 2017

Of Councils and Covenants

Godly Play in Psychiatric Wards

Godly Play in Tanzania

Ultreia! Buen Camino!



A LITTLE
MONTESSORI
STORY p.8



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Welcome to *the* **CIRCLE!**

At the heart of Godly Play are stories: stories that are shared in circles all over the world when children and adults sit down to hear and see these lessons so lovingly crafted by Jerome Berryman over so many years. But there are other circles in Godly Play; circles of storytellers and doorpersons, circles of regional and national associations, and worldwide circles of individuals committed to the integrity and advancement of Godly Play. These circles as well have their stories; there are stories about how Godly Play became established in countries and regions, stories about how Godly Play is adapted to particular contexts or circumstances, and so many more.

The Circle is a quarterly electronic newsletter that will capture these stories, share news from around the Godly Play world, communicate information that will be of importance to Godly Play practitioners, pass on the latest thoughts from our founder, and highlight Godly Play spaces from around the world. The Circle is yours, and it is yours to share wherever and with whomever you like.

—The Godly Play Foundation
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Of Councils and Covenants

By THE REV. CANON DR. ANDREW SHELDON

Godly Play, of course, emerged in the United States under the tutelage of Jerome Berryman, and over time began to more formally establish itself in the U.S. through-- among other things--the publication of the earliest story volumes, the production of materials, and the formation of a formal training process. In the late 1990's and early 2000's individuals in other parts of the world began to take note and, not surprisingly, Godly Play began to spread internationally. What followed was much casual conversation and cooperation amongst Godly Play individuals and constituencies. Then in 2007 in Evesham England, there was the first somewhat formal meeting of Godly Play international representatives. At that time this meeting included representatives from a handful of European countries, the United States, and Canada. In time this body became the International Advisory Board (IAB) and subsequently met in Madrid, Finland, and Germany. In 2012 at Burg Bodenstein, Germany this body, inspired in part by the question of who exactly was advising whom, changed its name and its mandate. The name was changed to the Godly Play International Council (GPIC), and the core mandate became that of seeking international consensus on what values and practices would best ensure the integrity of Godly Play everywhere.

This group continues to deliberate on administrative matters, such as how the Council is run, how many representatives from a given country/region may attend meetings, and where and when we should meet. The GPIC also collects and disseminates country/region reports and discusses what initiatives, instruments, or protocols may need to be put in place to further strengthen the Godly Play international community. But at the heart of the Council's work is The International Covenant of Agreement.

The Covenant of Agreement is meant to reflect the above mentioned consensus on what best ensures the integrity of Godly Play everywhere. When we think of the Council's work, it may be appropriate to refer to Jerome Berryman's typology in his book *The Spiritual Guidance of Children*. In it Jerome addresses the core values and practices of Godly Play and provides a descending hierarchy of how Godly Play could function in a particular setting. He



begins with 'ideal Godly Play', followed by 'good enough Godly Play', 'okay Godly Play', 'Godly Play in name only', and 'anti Godly Play'. In Jerome's rendering, the focus is on adherence to the method in a particular setting by local leaders and centers on knowledge of the foundational material, participation in Core Training(s), awareness of the curriculum, and breadth of experience. To the extent a setting or a person exhibits significant mastery in the above, then to that extent the expression of Godly Play could be ideal. As the mastery diminishes, so does the categorisation. And quite frankly, 'Godly Play in name only' and 'anti-Godly Play' cease to be Godly Play at all. As such, it seems that the goal of any Godly Play practitioner is to see 'okay Godly Play' as perhaps not good enough and take it from there.

The Covenant of Agreement picks up on this approach by focusing on issues that have universal application and directing its conclusions towards country/region associations for implementation. As such it addresses subjects such as Core Training, the training of Trainers, translations of the stories into other languages, the making of materials, and more. Within each subject area there are two categories of adherence: minimum requirements and best practices. It is hoped that by keeping to the minimum requirements, country/region Godly Play associations would at least realise something akin to 'good enough Godly Play'. If a constituency also aspired to institute best practices, then we would perhaps have something closer to 'ideal Godly Play', or at least really good 'good enough'!

At our latest meet-ing in Latvia, the GPIC

functioned as it often does. We received country/region reports, we considered some new initiatives meant to bring the international community into closer communion with The Godly Play Foundation and with each other, and we dealt with various ‘housekeeping’ issues around the functioning of the Council itself. But again, our main piece of work was to consider two new subjects and to reach consensus on what minimum requirements and best practices would ensure adherence in these areas. The two areas we looked at were the training of Trainers—the qualifying and discernment process, the training of Trainers event itself, and the ongoing formation of accredited Trainers—and stories ‘in the style of Godly Play’. To illustrate what all this looks like I want to focus on one of these areas. In so doing, you will receive some insight into how the GPIC works and also be the recipient of the Council’s recent work on this topic of some importance.



Stories ‘in the Style of Godly Play’

The GPIC seeks to react and respond to issues that emerge within the larger Godly Play community. In this instance the issue has to do with the question of what makes a Godly Play story a Godly Play story and addresses the reality that many Godly Play practitioners throughout the world are writing/creating stories and materials for their Godly Play room and/or context—stories that are not to be found in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*.

What makes a Godly Play story a Godly Play story? Although there may not be universal agreement, I think it fair to say that the Council reached a consensus that, at this point in time, a Godly Play story is a story written by Jerome Berryman and contained within *The Complete Guide*. My own opinion is that this is not just a matter of intellectual property rights but also an acknowledgement that Jerome has a particular giftedness that is reflected in these stories—and that it is a giftedness not easily emulated. Nonetheless many others, no doubt inspired by Jerome’s example, have written stories and created materials that they think of as ‘Godly Play’ or as at least ‘like’ Godly Play. This is a reality; the stories do and will exist, and quite frankly there is little the Foundation, the Council, or a country/region association could do to change this, even if we wanted to.

I think it is also fair to say that there is broad consensus that this practice could be a legitimate one. I have written much about context in the last two issues of

The Circle. For the purposes of this topic, it could be argued that a particular context calls for particular stories that may not be found in the Godly Play canon. There are cultural contexts, ecclesiastical contexts, national contexts, and denominational contexts that aspire to have their situation addressed by a story in a style and a format that they have come to appreciate and admire. There is a very current example of this. 2017 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther nailing his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. As such, it seems entirely appropriate that Lutheran Godly Play circles have access to a story about Martin Luther told

in the style familiar to them. And as was noted in a recent issue of this publication, such a story exists.

Given all of the above, the GPIC felt that it would be important and suitable to develop criteria for the creation and writing of such stories, and the terminology we have chosen to categorise this particular genre of story as stories ‘in the style of Godly Play’.

(I should note that this entire conversation and exercise is directed only at the Godly Play community. We are aware of the many ‘knock-offs’ of Godly Play that exist out there and the GPIC is not addressing that phenomenon.)

Thus, at our most recent meeting the GPIC got to work on legitimate stories ‘in the style of Godly Play’. At the meeting itself a small group of GPIC representatives considered the mandate: “Godly Play practitioners have and are creating stories in the style of Godly Play; stories inspired by Jerome Berryman’s particular approach to storytelling. These stories are often developed for a particular context or character. If these stories are to genuinely be ‘in the style of Godly Play’ what criteria are to be employed in their development?” This group then began to develop such criteria while also attending to the categories of ‘minimum requirements’ and ‘best practices’. Their conclusions were then brought to the larger group for further discussion, and consensus was reached. Following the meeting select individuals are reviewing the findings, and in time this subject area will be included in the Covenant of Agreement.

But possibly having tweaked your curiosity, I can share some of what the Council came up with. Stories ‘in the style of Godly Play’ are developed by people fluent in Godly Play, meet a need, are tried out with children, leave space for multiple meaning, fit the spiral curriculum, flow out of a core metaphor, are told with objects that meet

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Covenant standards, can be placed in an existing genre, includes wondering, and leaves room for silence. There is more of course, and the work around what is a minimum requirement and what is a best practice is ongoing. When the Covenant of Agreement is updated, national/regional associations will be informed, and the Covenant will be available to all in various ways.

In the meantime I want to reinforce the fact that this work of seeking international consensus on what values and practices could best ensure the integrity of Godly Play everywhere is collaborative work. There may be only so many representatives around the table at any given time, but all voices can be heard. If you have thoughts or issues that arise out of the Covenant or if you believe there are subjects or concerns the GPIC should be considering, then communicate with your national/regional leaders or GPIC representatives, and your voice will be heard.

Perhaps a final word would be to remind ourselves that things like standards, requirements, and practices, policies, procedures, and protocols are always to be held lightly. They are also to be held. We all want to see Godly Play flourish, and we know that one chance of that happening is by our careful attention to the method and the theories that undergird it. But there is more. There is the spirit of Godly Play, there is a Godly Play way, there is the innate spirituality of those in the circle, and of course the movement of God's spirit at work in the circle. This is more mysterious than standards and practices, more elusive than requirements, more about values and principles than policies or protocols. This too needs to be held, and perhaps not lightly. The extent to which we can hold all of this in tension, steeped in prayer and attentive to the Spirit, is the extent to which Godly Play will be much more than we could ask or imagine.



Andrew describes his introduction to Godly Play in this way: "It was love at first sight!" Andrew immediately recognized the value of this innovative program and became an early advocate of the program in the Diocese of Toronto. He is an Anglican priest and professor and an experienced adult educator. Besides being a

Godly Play Trainer and storyteller, Andrew functions as the Godly Play Advocate for International Development. andrew@godlyplay.ca



SALAMANCA, SPAIN





MOSEGOL CHURCH, SEONGNAM CITY, SOUTH KOREA



RIBEIRA, SPAIN



BARLBOROUGH HALL SCHOOL, CHESTERFIELD, DERBYSHIRE, ENGLAND



A Little Montessori Story

By JEROME W. BERRYMAN

Once upon a time our family went to Bergamo, Italy so I could study Montessori. Really we all studied Montessori while we were there. Thea and I talked each night after the girls were in bed, and our girls, who were five and eight, went to the Italian Montessori school. They learned Montessori from the inside while Thea and I learned it from the outside.

Most weekdays from September through June in 1971-1972, I walked to the Upper City in Bergamo to study at the *Centro Internazionale Studi Montessoriani*. The course was located on the piazza of the old citadel in the Upper City, although in 1989 the course moved to Via Pignolo. Our family lived in a one-bedroom apartment near the major hospital in the Lower City.

Thea organized our family life, which was busy. We all walked together to the Montessori school in the morning. When the girls were settled, Thea and I had a wonderful cappuccino, quiet conversation, and a brioche at the corner bar. I then went to the Upper City to work. Thea explored

Bergamo and did the shopping, which was a social occasion in our neighborhood of small shops. She picked up the girls after school because I didn't get home until later. Sometimes I came home for lunch with Thea. I walked down from the Upper City along the ancient alleyways and streets and then returned through the white marble Porta S. Giacomo in the sixteenth century wall for the afternoon lectures. Our older daughter Alyda studied ballet at the Teatro Donizetti and was on the swim team. Our younger daughter, Coleen, who was born with spina bifida and was paralyzed from the chest down, went everywhere with them by bus and on foot in her brace, swinging along with her crutches.

Each morning I practiced with the Montessori materials at the Centro. During the afternoons I read Montessori's books and discussed her philosophy with the other students. In the late afternoon there were two hours of demonstrations and theory. I still have my notebooks from those lectures.

One of the things that kept me going for forty-four weeks was the sheer brilliance of the Montessori materials and their integration in what Montessori called “cosmic education.” This synthesis of knowledge was embedded in the Montessori learning environment for the children to see and touch. The community of new Montessorians also kept me going. The third motivation was Montessori’s “philosophy.” Her writing style included enthusiasm, poetry, medical acuteness, stories, religion, educational psychology, and philosophical analysis—sometimes all in the same paragraph. It takes a good bit of study to sort this out. Today, Angeline Stoll Lillard, Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia, is a welcome and knowledgeable guide. She wrote *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* (2007), which is clear, concise, and comprehensive.

Lillard won the Developmental Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association Outstanding Dissertation Award in 1992. Her Ph.D. was from Stanford University, so she was academically equipped to write about Montessori. She also attended a Montessori school as a girl with her sisters, but when she began her graduate training she was a skeptic about Montessori. In 1982 her mother, Paula Polk Lillard, was one of the founder-teachers of Forest Bluff School, a Montessori school in Lake Bluff, Illinois in the United States. She published four books about Montessori education herself and co-authored another. Professor Lillard’s children also attended a Montessori school, so she knows this approach as a child, a scholar, and a parent.

Professor Lillard noticed that Maria Montessori was primarily interested in solving educational problems rather than writing theory. She attributed this to her training as a physician, one of a handful of Italian women doctors in the late nineteenth century. Physicians look for symptoms and treat accordingly. Montessori did the same with education. This is why her theory was built up from experience, although it did not unduly limit her continuing experimentation. When she found a learning problem, she carefully observed it and tried materials and strategies until she found a solution to which children responded with enthusiasm. This is how Godly Play developed as well.

Montessori did not put her lessons in print. She wanted her students to work with the materials to learn the lessons, not the page. She wanted them to ask the more experienced

trainers questions to arrive at the answers on their own. This helped internalize the lessons. Her maxim was to “follow the child,” which had two meanings. Following children by careful observation shows us what to do to help them learn. Following the child is also a way of life that leads to establishing the peace the world longs for. This peace begins in small communities of children all over the world. The same could be said for Godly Play, although our lessons have been published. This was so people who already understand the spirit of Godly Play by nature can have access to them no matter where they live. This can lead to misunderstanding and misuse, I understand, but it honors the experience and insight of intuitive Godly Players everywhere.

The Bergamo training had some legendary characters. The main lecturer during my time was Camillo Grazzini, and most everyone who studied with him has a story about his extreme devotion to and knowledge of Montessori education. Sometimes we listened to the tall, white-haired, and aristocratic Eleonora Honegger. She was one of the founders and directors of the Montessori school our girls attended on Viale Vittorio Emanuele II, which was also the demonstration school for the course. In my class we also heard Mario Montessori, who

was Maria Montessori’s son. He visited to lecture and to demonstrate lessons about the constructive triangles for children 6-12 years. He was about 73 at the time and was the founding director of the course in 1961. Like the Montessori training, Godly Play has its own legendary characters.

Professor Lillard discussed eight Montessori principles that are now well established by research. *Movement* enhances learning and cognition. Grasping a Montessori material with your hands guides you to “grasp” the idea it embodies with your mind. *Choosing* your work and having a measure of control over your environment adds to motivation for learning. *Interest* is also important. When you can work on what you are interested in, then the work is more focused and deeper, especially if this interest builds on prior knowledge. *Intrinsic rewards* such as mastery are much more powerful than external rewards such as prizes and praise. *Learning from peers* is more conducive to learning than competition. When an older child helps a younger child, both benefit. *Connecting learning to life*



Maria Montessori



makes learning more effective. This is why Montessori often introduced her lessons with stories and included lessons on the child's care for the self and care for the environment, which included gardens in her schools. A *warm relationship with the teacher* also enhances learning. In research "warmth" has a specific meaning. It is high authoritative and low authoritarian behavior combined with low permissive and low neglecting behavior. Montessori would have agreed. She was very specific about what she expected from her teachers. She wanted them to put the child's needs first as well as provide a warm and nourishing relationship for them. Finally, children have a need for meaningful *order in the environment* that they can count on to learn well. This order involves both space and time. All these characteristics of Montessori education are relevant for Godly Play.

These eight principles enable children to construct their knowledge rather than have it poured into them from the outside. Most schools of education and theological seminaries teach that children construct their knowledge. If constructivism is widely taught and supported by research, why is so much education governed by behaviorism? Why do teachers act as if the child is an empty container to be filled from the outside? Why does the factory model's assembly line continue producing "educated children"? In the Montessori course we were taught to push back against this by speaking up in an informed way and being excellent teachers *to show* the better way. The

same is true for Godly Play.

Perhaps the most dramatic moment during the Bergamo experience was the final examination in June at the end of the course. If we passed the written examination, which took several hours to write, we were allowed to take the oral exam, which was considered more important.

One at a time we entered the practice room where all the Montessori materials for 3-6 as well as 6-12 were sitting on shelves. The 3-6 materials were included because during the course we had spent three months on the theory and practice for the pre-school child. This was the foundation for the 6-12 years, but in addition many of the early lessons had levels that were returned to by the older children. Examples are the Binomial and Trinomial Cubes. These are boxes with blocks inside. The colors of the blocks are "clicked" together like a puzzle to make the cubes in the Primary Class (pre-school). Older children, however, can lay out the blocks and derive the algebraic formulas involved by following the colors they had known only by their senses years before.

The three examiners sat at the long table by the windows at the far end of the room. Grazzini was there with his short black hair, austere bearing, dark eyes, and lively, quick wit. A flowery lady from England in a big hat and a crisp, pastel dress sat next to him. The third person was self-contained and in my memory gray—gray hair, a gray dress,





contained and in my memory gray—gray hair, a gray dress, and gray skin. She had bright, sparkling eyes and spoke a mixture of English and Italian with a Dutch accent and a sly sense of humor.

The examiners asked you to get a particular material of their choosing from the shelves, bring it to the table, and then present it. If you did well, they became interested and asked you to tell where the lesson fit in the curriculum and what its theory was. I can't remember how many presentations we made. I think about three. It was more than enough to show what you knew about the many lessons in the room and all seven of the required Montessori books. It also showed you how much more you needed to learn.

The study and gaining experience of Montessori was a large undertaking. After Bergamo we moved to Cleveland Heights, where I was head of a Montessori school and helped develop one of the early Montessori middle school programs as well as a program for children challenged by different kinds of disabilities. We moved the next year to Houston so Coleen could have access to the Texas Medical Center. In Houston, Thea and I both began teaching in Montessori schools while I also worked in churches. Thea, who had been trained in music at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, was soon the music teacher at School of the Woods, a Montessori school where I also worked part time. She taught there the rest of her life, over thirty years. I also taught medical ethics in the Texas Medical Center using my legal as well as theological training, and I taught pediatric pastoral care on the clinical faculty at Baylor College of Medicine using my Montessori training to help care for children in the hospitals. In 1984 I moved to Christ Church Cathedral in Houston where Godly Play continued its development in the church context. We had eight beautiful Godly Play rooms at the Cathedral.

This little story connects the creation of Godly Play to its Montessori roots. Perhaps you would like to go to Bergamo and take the course I did or you may know of a Montessori course closer to home. If you can't do a course, then you might read *Montessori Learning in the 21st Century: A Guide for Parents & Teachers* (2011) by M. Shannon Helfrich, who is a Montessori teacher and trainer. A longer and more academic study is *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* (2007), which was mentioned above.

No matter how you study Montessori, you need to visit a Montessori school and take the time to observe often and get acquainted. Your understanding of Godly Play will be deepened and broadened. You will then understand why this little Montessori story had to be told.

And everyone lived happily ever after . . .



I founded Godly Play with my wife, Thea. We worked together almost from the time we met in 1960 in Princeton until her death in 2009. Thea was a student at Westminster Choir College, and I was a student at Princeton Theological Seminary when we met.

Godly Play IN PSYCHIATRIC WARDS

By CHAPLAIN JUDITH GILBERT

I have been taking Godly Play to people on our hospital wards for over two years now, and I feel that it is a valuable tool in developing spirituality. As a chaplain, my role is not to take people through a course of religious education but to help people express things that are important to them and to affirm them as human beings. Spiritual care in our hospitals is a vital part of developing wellbeing, particularly where the medical model is dominant. Our psychiatrists are now more aware of addressing spiritual needs, and indeed, they have their own spirituality group in the Royal College of Psychiatry. But I think having a tool like Godly Play helps them to see how patients can be encouraged to develop their spirituality and improve their sense of wellbeing for themselves.

In my work with this tool, I have chosen certain Godly Play stories that I think address the needs of the patients that I support. I find that the parables are particularly helpful. For example, the Parable of the Good Shepherd has themes of being lost and found, whom to trust, and the mention of safe places, which can enable people to look at these themes in their own lives if they wish. Although I chose a story for the themes I think might address needs, I'm often surprised by what people do

talk about in the wondering time! I was once told that sheep don't drink but get their hydration from the grass that they eat. The story recipient was rather puzzled by sheep gathering around "the cool, clear water" in the Good Shepherd story.

This was important because it enabled the hearer to talk about his experiences in farming and, hopefully, to feel affirmed.

I find that it is necessary to make adaptations to Godly Play when it is used on the wards. For instance, I find that the wondering and response times tend to merge. This is because of context and doing what I think is most helpful for patients who are struggling with mental ill health. I work closely with the occupational therapists, and I attempt to have one of their staff with me when doing a session. Before I began using Godly Play, I talked with the other staff to explain what it is about and to obtain their support. I think this was really important. However, sometimes

I need to cope with doing a session on my own or having interruptions from other staff or visitors. I have to not allow my frustrations to be dominant! This can be quite taxing for me as well as unsettling for patients.

In more recent time, I have been enthused by the extension of Godly Play into Deep Talk, developed by Tuula



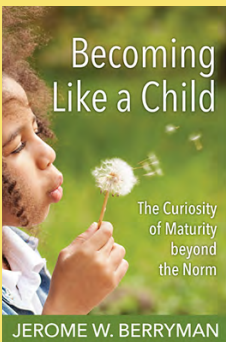


Valkonen in Finland. In my inpatient groups, I have made use of some of the Deep Talk stories that she has written because of the themes they address. I have also worked with Godly Play in staff groups from the wards, and I hope to take Deep Talk into staff development sessions in the future.

I recently published an article about my experiences of using Godly Play. The abstract, together with details about it, can be found using the link: <https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/HSCC/article/view/29817>



A chaplain for Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in Kettering, United Kingdom, Judith Gilbert has practiced Godly Play continuously in her work since 2014. Judith is originally from Sheffield in South Yorkshire and has two grown daughters. A member of the Methodist Church, Judith also worships with her local Quaker community. jugilb@btinternet.com



Berryman invites the reader into a creative process that explores what it means to be spiritually mature, starting with Jesus' injunction to "become like a child."

"The quality of Jerome Berryman's scholarship, insight, and vision about childhood's theological and spiritual nature is without equal. In this one book, the reader will find rewards and challenges that could not be provided by reading a hundred other books in this field."

—Dr. Rebecca Nye
 Researcher, consultant, and trainer in the field of children's spirituality and author of *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters*.



The Foundation regularly publishes *online articles* about the Godly Play curriculum. Here are our most recent articles. *Click on the image or text to read online.*



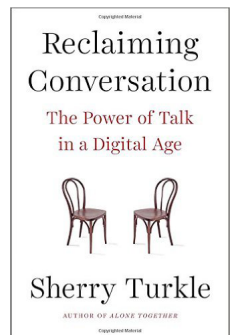
The Mystery of Christmas, the Wonderful Impossible
 by Jeannie Babb

Living into the Story with
 Maureen Hagen
 by Jeannie Babb



Because God Imagined Us
 by Jeannie Babb

All Saints and All Souls
 by Alyssa Pasternak Post



NEW Book Review
 by Jerome Berryman: Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age



Godly Play IN TANZANIA

By THE REV'D. CANON VITHALIS YUSUPH

I'm Vithalis Yusuph, an Anglican Priest in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, Diocese of Kagera. Tanzania is in Eastern Africa. I have been a Priest for twelve years now, having been ordained in 2005.

I was born into a Christian family but received Jesus as my personal savior when I was 9 years old. I soon began to sing in our church choir. Then in 1994, after finishing my Primary education, I began to teach Sunday school with no background of Biblical Training.

In 1998 I was given a church to serve as a Catechist, and then in 2000 I joined Bible School where after two years I joined Theological Training and graduated with a Diploma in Theology in 2005. In 2003 I met Godly Play U.S. Trainer Dr. Suzi Robertson at St. Philip's Theological college. This is the time I first heard about Godly Play, and I was among other students that Dr Suzi trained as Godly Play teachers. Later on in 2005, Dr. Suzi trained me as a Godly Play Trainer. Since then I have been teaching Godly Play classes in my home Diocese of Kagera and other parts of my country, Tanzania.

When and where Godly Play is given a chance in the community of believers is like drawing a picture in the minds of children which cannot be taken away even when they are old. Godly Play in the African setting creates a more communal society as it brings love, togetherness, and fellowship to the children and community as well. When children meet and are taught, then the adult guides and surrounds them so that children can be encouraged in what they are learning.

Godly Play in Africa, and specifically in Tanzania where I serve, is more important than any other thing in the Church as it creates the community of believers that knows what it means to be closer to God. Last month I visited the Refugee Camp where I was lucky enough to do a Godly Play session for 20 minutes. The refugees were from Burundi, just 37kms from where I live. I was very happy and motivated to see Godly Play bringing children of the different tribes together, which is hard sometimes due to the civil wars that creates enmity. Godly Play brings reconciliation. We were reconciled to God the Father



because Jesus the son of God came down to be with us. As daughters and sons of God, we can reconcile the world through Godly Play. Let us together preach the Gospel of the reconciliation to the broken world through Godly Play.

Please pray for Godly Play in Tanzania. We are moving on, though still facing challenges in the lack Godly Play classes, teaching materials, and enough teachers. My passion for Godly Play makes me teach Godly Play even where there is no building. Attending the North America Godly Play Conference of 2015 brought me closer to Godly Play. Let us draw a picture in the minds of our children to build a global Godly Play community.

Godly Play is about reconciliation. Godly Play is about coming together. Godly Play is about fellowship. And Godly Play is about wondering together!



Vithalis Yusuph is an Anglican priest and Godly Play Trainer living and working in Tanzania. Vithalis and his wife Monica have been gifted with four children, two girls named Irene and Grace and two boys named Samuel and Asante. You can watch Vithalis tell the Parable of the Good Shepherd in Swahili on the Godly Play Foundation YouTube channel.



Ultreia! Buen Camino!

By DAVID PRITCHARD

My home is in Galicia, near the holy city of Santiago de Compostela. Last year a record number of pilgrims walked the Way of St James. People from all kinds of nationalities and backgrounds, religious or otherwise, continue to head towards Compostela—stage by stage, one step at a time. *Ultreia!* (onwards!)

Before moving to Galicia, I had lived in Madrid for thirty-six years. In my role as a children's ministry practitioner, I tried to keep up-to-date with the literature on the theology of children. In the 1990s, I noticed increasing references to the writings of Jerome Berryman, to Rebecca Nye's research, and to Godly Play. Finally, in 2003, I decided it was time to investigate more fully. I was visiting London at the time, but I only had one week at my disposal for continuing education.

The first day or so I spent visiting Godly Play classrooms in the area and chatting to practitioners. Someone informed me that an introductory day would be taking place that same week in the north of England. So I caught the train from London to York, where Peter Privett, a Trainer from Godly Play UK, was leading the session.



Like many before and since, I immediately fell in love with the Godly Play approach and especially the Great Family. Peter then told me that there was a spare place available on a residential training event which he and Rebecca Nye would be leading in the Midlands that very weekend. Well, why not? So, in a single week, I had visited five Godly Play classrooms at different stages of development, observed a taster session, and then got to tell a parable in my very first experience of Core Training. My heart warmed to this seriously playful approach to Bible engagement. But at the same time, my head was buzzing with questions and not a few doubts. "Would this method really work with children in Spain?" I wondered.

Back in Madrid, I collected my own set of Godly Play materials and began testing out stories with my grandchildren. More formal trials took place a year later with other Spanish-speaking boys and girls from different nationalities: first in a Sunday school setting, and secondly at a Christian youth club with children from a range of religious and non-religious backgrounds. As I observed their wondering and creative responses to Godly Play, the more I became convinced of its value and of the need to share my discovery with others.

Thus began my own pilgrimage as a Godly Play Trainer. And a pilgrim's progress is achieved over a number of specific stages. *Ultreia!*

The first stage was to invite Peter Privett to Spain to lead a full-day introduction. Our public inauguration took place in April 2004. Forty-five people attended from Madrid and other surrounding towns and provinces. Over the following months, different churches and groups from many other parts of Spain asked for similar introductions. Almost every other weekend I would be driving along one of the radial roads out of Madrid with a stock of Godly Play materials in the back of my van in order to respond to such requests.

The second stage was to give trainees hands-on experience in learning and practising Godly Play stories and to help in creating their own materials. So, Saturday workshops were also taken out on the road over the length and breadth of Spain.

The third stage was to set up a support structure, not just for new Godly players, but also for me! So much of the travelling and training over the next ten years was done on my own. There are some pilgrims who choose to walk or ride to Santiago alone. But the vast majority enjoy the blessings of community and story sharing, which is so characteristic of the *Camino*. Likewise, it was encouraging when fellow Godly players came together to translate stories, create a website, organise annual conferences, and finally set up a formal association: *Godly Play España*.

The fourth stage was to enlarge our team of Trainers to offer a more enriching experience through a diversity of personal skills and styles. *Godly Play España* now has three



accredited trainers: Celia Paterson, Fanny Benítez, and me.

The fifth stage was to break out of Spain's minority Protestant community and offer the gift of Godly Play to Roman Catholic catechists, parish workers, and school teachers. Last year there was an explosion of interest from several Catholic networks, including the Archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela. Now many people from such communities take part in our training events.

There is still a path to follow and undoubtedly many more stages to complete. For example, we have yet to establish Godly Play in academic circles in Spain or to translate scripts into the other official languages: Basque, Catalan, and Galician. But as we continue our journey, stage by stage and one step at a time, so we greet you our fellow pilgrims from the worldwide Godly Play circle with both the typical Latin and Spanish salutes: «*Ultreia! Buen Camino!*».



As a long-term missionary in Spain, David Pritchard has been involved in many different kinds of Christian ministries over the years including pastoral care, play work, and inter-faith activities. He was the national children's ministry coordinator for Unión Bíblica (Scripture Union in Spain) from 1985 to 2014. Since 2011 he has served as chair to Godly Play España. Although technically 'retired', he is still very much on the road—both in Spain and beyond! david.pritchard@godlyplay.es



FROM THE FOUNDATION

Dear Ones,

Right now is an exciting time in the history of Godly Play. Our circles are growing and becoming stronger and more connected through [Foundation Membership](#), [Facebook](#), [The Circle](#), and [web articles](#). We continue to grow and learn on our own and together. Jerome continues to write prolifically, his newest book having come out last month, and Core Trainings are forming in Cuba and New Zealand and across the globe. Last Fall, Godly Players from around the world found their way to Latvia, and we will be together in Denver this June for the [2017 North American Godly Play Conference](#).

Yet as we grow and learn and our circles become stronger, it's important to stop to recognize that we are doing something more than religious formation or even spiritual guidance. We are, in fact, bringing the Kingdom of Heaven.

A young Latvian Godly Player—full of energy and the Holy Spirit—turned to me at the European Conference and remarked: “Isn’t it amazing that we all come from different places and even different denominations, yet we all share the same values in this work? And at the center of it is Christ.” My heart leapt.

Indeed. At the center of it is Christ, and the work of Godly Play is the Kingdom made manifest: “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (1 Cor 12:27). With every circle, with every story, with every connection and training and conference, we come together to grow and become stronger in Christ, in Christ’s mission, in the Kingdom of God. And that realization makes my heart leap every time.

With deep gratitude for you and your ministry,

REGAN M. SCHUTZ

Director of Communications & Development
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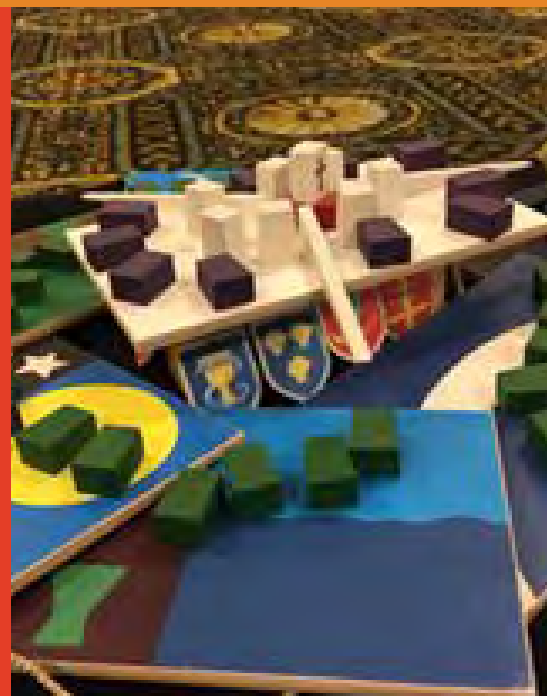
UPCOMING CONFERENCES 2017

JUNE
23 - 25, 2017
COLORADO, USA

2017 North
American Godly
Play Conference:
"DRAWING THE
CIRCLE WIDER"

MAY
12 - 13, 2017
SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND

2017 Godly Play
UK Conference:
"COME DANCE
WITH ME"
John Bell and
Peter Privett



2017 NORTH AMERICAN GODLY PLAY CONFERENCE

DRAWING THE CIRCLE WIDER

JUNE 23-25, 2017
DENVER, COLORADO

godlyplayfoundation.org/2017nagpc

2017 NAGPC:

WHERE WE STARTED:

The Story of Godly Play &
Jerome's 80th Birthday

WHAT WE HAVE:

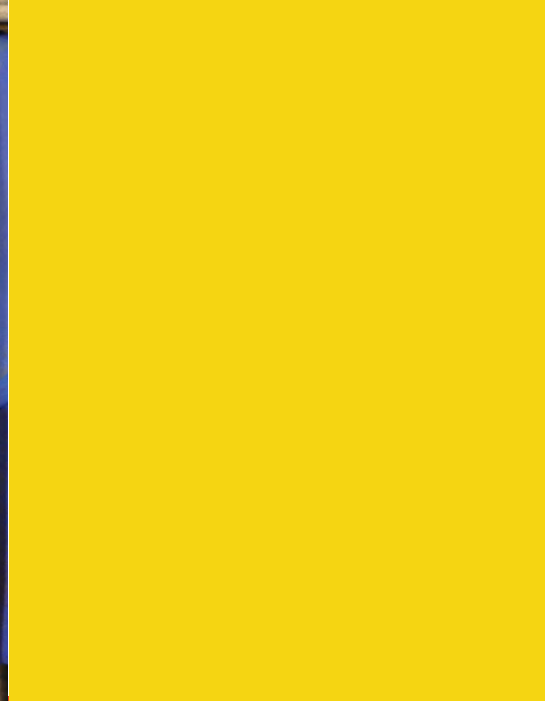
The Full Curriculum

WHAT WE NEED:

Spiritual Maturity

WHERE WE ARE HEADED:

New Stories, New Books



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