



A **GODLY PLAY**® QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

MAY 2017

Godly Play Gone Global

---

Building the Circle with Each Other

---

Godly Play in a Jesuit School

---

Godly Play through Uruguay

---

How Godly Play came to Norway

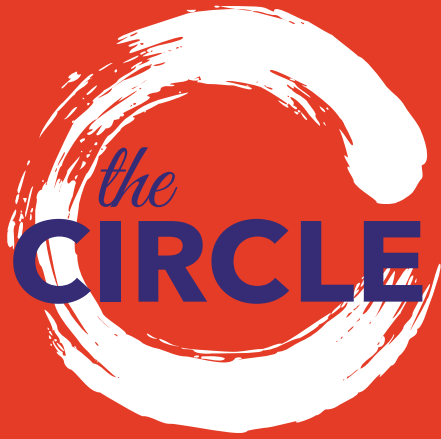
---



THE  
PERFECT  
PERSON p. 8

---

by J. BERRYMAN



A **GODLY PLAY**® QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

MAY  
**2017**

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  
[info@godlyplayfoundation.org](mailto:info@godlyplayfoundation.org)



**6**

---

GODLY PLAY  
ROOMS

**14**

---

GODLY PLAY  
THROUGH  
URUGUAY  
By TONI M. DANIELS



**4**

---

**GODLY PLAY  
GONE GLOBAL**

By THE REV. CANON  
DR. ANDREW SHELDON

**8**

---

**THE PERFECT  
PERSON**

By JEROME W. BERRYMAN

**10**

---

**BUILDING THE  
CIRCLE WITH  
EACH OTHER**

By WOLFHAND SCHWEIKER

**12**

---

**GODLY PLAY  
IN A JESUIT  
SCHOOL**

By MARIA NEAL

**16**

---

**HOW GODLY  
PLAY CAME TO  
NORWAY**

By RUNE ØYSTESE

**17**

---

**ADDITIONAL  
READING**

**18**

---

**FROM THE  
FOUNDATION**

# Godly Play Gone Global

By THE REV. CANON DR. ANDREW SHELDON

Like many people I have a ‘bucket list’; a list of things I want to do before I ‘kick the bucket’. In my case it has always been more of a list of places I would like to visit before I die. And the list has been long.

This delight in travel and adventure goes back to when I was a child. I took great pleasure in losing myself in an atlas. I would trace great rivers, design long ocean trips, and imagine itineraries of the grand journeys I would take through the various continents and regions of the world. Growing up and into adulthood I would almost always have an atlas with me as I read a book, and when a place name was given I would look it up so I could geographically place myself in the story. These days my Google Maps app serves this purpose well!

When the time came that I could strike out and travel, I tried to do as much as I possibly could. The bucket list is still long, but it is getting shorter. And it is getting shorter in part because of Godly Play.

As I write this I am still feeling jet lagged after returning home from three weeks in New Zealand. While there Amy—my spouse, training partner, and Executive Director of Godly Play Canada—and I trained new Trainers and then mentored them through two Core trainings. Just prior to that trip I visited three countries in Europe to conduct other Godly Play work. Indeed, since becoming involved in Godly Play about 13 years ago, I have visited 14 different countries to engage in some kind of Godly Play activity. The great delight of these visits is to meet other Godly Play enthusiasts. And many of them have proven gracious and considerate hosts. With more plans in place, the list of countries visited is sure to get longer, and the bucket list to get shorter.

And that’s just me. There are many other trainers, storytellers, and advocates who are almost constantly travelling the globe and sharing the good news of Godly Play.

But at 14 countries, I still have a long way to go. In a piece I recently wrote around the international scope of Godly Play, I identified 42 countries where Godly Play is present. In some cases Godly Play is thriving, in some it is established, in some it is emerging, and in some it is very early days. And almost all of this in the last 15 years or so. Fifteen years ago it would be fair to say that Godly Play was only firmly established in



one country—the United States—and perhaps emerging in a few others. Today: 42!

Reflecting on this explosion, I began to do some research on organisations and companies that operate in more than one country. One of my assumptions going in was that the terms international and global were interchangeable. I discovered, however, that this is incorrect as there are subtle and significant differences between global and international as it pertains to the aspects of organisational life. This has led me to the conclusion that Godly Play is actually not an international entity but rather a global entity. Let me explain.

An international organisation or company is one which is present in two or more countries but usually no more than a handful. International organisations may conduct activities in other countries but tend to retain majority focus on its home country. Further, the organisation is almost always headquartered in the home country, and all activities of the organisation internationally receive direction from the head office. Organisations and companies that describe themselves as international tend to have a smaller scope of operations.

Global, on the other hand, denotes something that is worldwide. For instance we call it global warming because it affects the entire earth. Global organisations and companies tend to have multiple presences throughout the world where programmes, chapters, or field offices operate simultaneously and somewhat autonomously in several countries or regions around the world. Although the relative size and strength of the organisation or company may differ from country to country or region to region, there is generally not a single

center of dominance. Organisations and companies that describe themselves as global tend to have a larger scope of operations.

I think it fair to say that Godly Play is global. We are to be found on every continent—bar Antarctica thus far—and those continents are regionally broadly based. Godly Play is world-wide. Furthermore, we have multiple presences where various associations, foundations, trusts, and structures operate simultaneously and somewhat autonomously to forward the activities of Godly Play in their country or region. Although the size and strength of these various structures vary, there is not a single center of dominance. Indeed, unlike organisations that identify as international, Godly Play does not have a headquarters as such. At least not in the sense of directing all of the activity of Godly Play in each of its affiliated bodies.

The United States has the largest concentration of Godly Play activity in the world, and the Godly Play Foundation is the custodian of the intellectual property and the trade mark. It is fair to say that Jerome Berryman and the Foundation he brought into place are very much the parents of Godly Play activity across the globe and thus carry significant weight and influence. Indeed, the Foundation has been and continues to be foundational to the growth of Godly Play. Amongst other things, they develop and update the curriculum, use their long experience to innovate training and other initiatives, and provide for an advocate for international development. But they have not and do not direct all Godly Play activity across the globe. Rather, they exercise their authority when obliged to as the trademark holders—for instance in negotiating publishing contracts—but otherwise they stand hand in hand with autonomous partners around the world who are the custodians of Godly Play in their countries and regions.

There are many aspects to this global expansion. Pockets of activity sprang up everywhere but not necessarily as the

result of an official plan or documented grand strategy. There was always a vision—I am certain Jerome Berryman longed for Godly Play to be a gift to all the children of the world. And in time others picked up on that vision and both brought Godly Play to their own context and spread it far and



wide through any number of networks. What ensued was an organic and collaborative movement which began to take on intentionality, form, and structure. The plan was simply to make Godly Play available as widely as possible and watch as the merits of the method proved persuasive. And clearly it did.

What is also noteworthy is that even as these pockets of activity sprang up everywhere, this activity did so on the one hand without substantial direction and oversight, but on the other hand with significant commitment to the core principles of the method and meaning of Godly Play.

Although autonomous, global partners are very much one when it comes to the integrity of the Godly Play method. But also of significance is the extent to which this global expansion has led to the enhancement of Godly Play practice. Through more formal bodies like the Godly Play International Council—and its forbearer the International Advisory Board—and through less formal means like simple conversation and sharing, Godly Play practitioners throughout the world have discovered and shared ways of improving our practices in many areas from training to translations.

In just over fifteen years, Godly Play has progressed from a one country national organisation to a 42 country global phenomenon. But what exactly would we call this global thing? We are not a global organisation; as noted, we are actually a number of organisations.

We could be thought of as a global movement; our significant growth in a short period of time would attest to that.

Perhaps most of all we are a global circle, a global community with ribbons of relationship that extend around the world. In Godly Play we value the interpersonal nature of the circle—the sense that all have come equally to enter into the story and to experience it as one. We also value the



# Godly Play ROOMS



intrapersonal nature of the circle: there is room to be apart, to hold different views and opinions, to value the space in-between. So it is with our global circle. We enter it as one, equally committed to the core values of Godly Play. But we also value the space in-between: the variances in context, in language, in culture, and in the ways we may practice Godly Play differently ‘around the edges’.

So my friends, a circle, and not merely an international circle but a circle that is decidedly global. Godly Play gone global! And we can all get to work on that travel bucket list!!



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](mailto:andrew@godlyplay.ca)

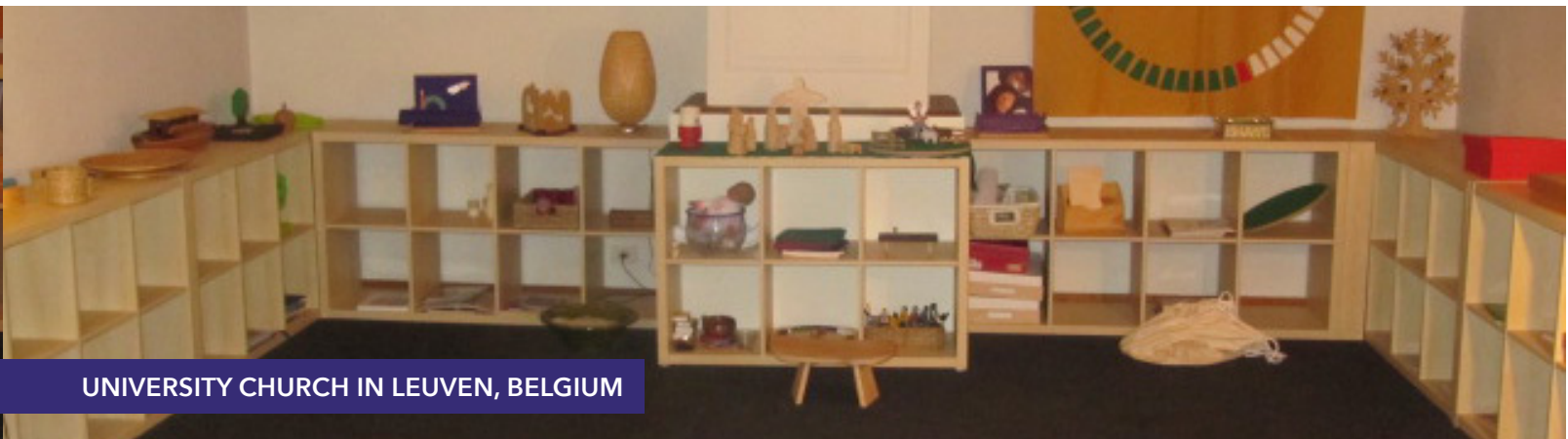




HOLY TRINITY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL IN NORTHWOOD, UK



OREWA, NEW ZEALAND



UNIVERSITY CHURCH IN LEUVEN, BELGIUM

# The Perfect Person

By JEROME W. BERRYMAN

In our village there was a person who thought he was perfect. He could see and talk and walk with ease. He could hear, and his appetite was good. When he walked down the street with his tall, lean frame, he held a mirror in front of his face to erase everything else.



You might think he loved himself too much, like Narcissus. After all, Narcissus was so obsessed with his reflection in a pool that he died of thirst, not willing to

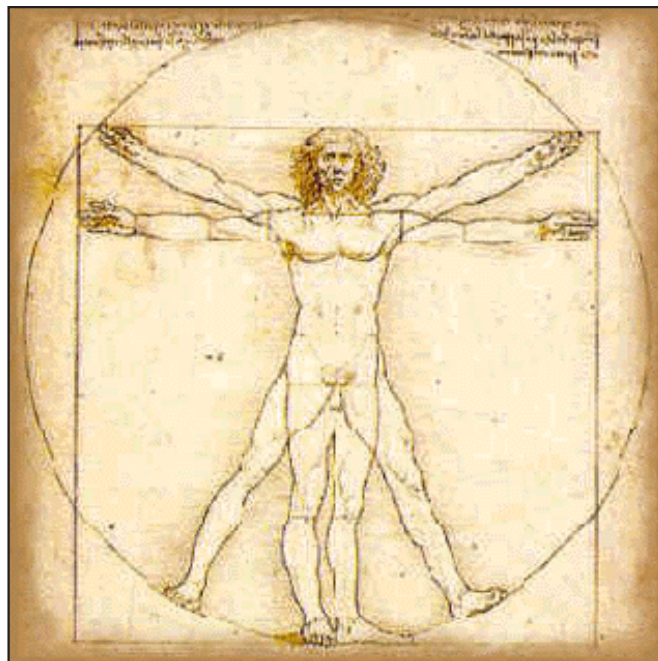
disturb it. The person in our village was also obsessed, it is true, but he could not love, even himself. He was all “I” with no “we” or even “me” left over.

One day, the perfect person was walking along, looking at himself in his mirror. All was well. Nothing disturbed his small world until he fell into a pit. The hole was not deep, but he did not know how to get out. All he could do was sit there, perplexed.

Finally, he began picking up pieces of his broken mirror, one by one, and dropping them back into the pile of fragments. He did this over and over until he was exhausted, then he lay on his back and looked up. “What was that? Oh, yes.” It was the sky, but it was wider and bluer than he remembered. Looking at its vastness made him dizzy, so he closed his eyes and sat up, hugging his knees.

While the perfect person’s eyes were closed he heard a curious tapping. He was not used to noises, since he was so self-visual, but finally he realized the sound was approaching the edge of the pit. He looked up toward the sound and two people appeared.

He had never seen such unusual creatures! One was walking, looking



straight ahead, tapping with a white cane. The other, also looking straight ahead, held on to a dog walking beside her with something like a handle on its back. The two creatures stopped at the rim of the pit. They didn’t look down. Where were they looking? He watched and listened to them with curiosity tinged with troubled uncertainty.

“There’s a big hole here.”

“I know. My dog stopped.”

“I can’t tell how deep it is. My stick can’t touch the bottom. Wait a minute. I think there’s something in the hole.”

“You’re right. I can hear movement and breathing. I wonder if it’s a person.”

“Hello,” they said together. There was no answer. They called again, “Hello. Is someone down there?” Still, there was no answer.

“Are you hurt? Can we help you?” the person with the cane asked.

“What shall we do?” he said to his friend. “The person may be unconscious.”

“You’re right. We need some help. I’ll go find someone who can see. It’s faster for me to go with my dog, but you need to stay here to keep the person company in case he or she wakes up.” The person with the dog moved carefully but quickly out of sight. She found a friend who could see, and all three appeared at the edge.

In the bottom of the pit the perfect







person watched the new creature with special suspicion. The girl with the dog had brought back a young man in a wheelchair. At that moment another person came swinging along. Her lower body was braced because she was paralyzed from her chest down. She walked by swinging along on her crutches. Now there were four people at the edge of the hole. They began to talk to each other, outlined against the sky, as the perfect person watched with trepidation.

The perfect person leaned forward to listen more intently to the one in the wheelchair. He said, “Can we help you?” He looked right at him. This was unsettling, but the perfect person did not know what to say. He had no idea what “help” was, so he began picking up the fragments of his mirror again and dropping them back into the pile of broken glass.

“You were right to get someone who can see, but I’m looking straight at him, and I still don’t know what’s wrong. There is a person sitting at the bottom of this hole but he looks perfect.”

The person with the crutches began to move them out to the side, little by little, until she was down on the ground at the edge of the pit. She then reached out with one of her crutches so the perfect person so he could take hold and climb out. The crutch tip was right by his excellent nose.

“Take hold of my crutch. Pull yourself up. You can do it. Don’t worry. I am very strong. I won’t let you fall.” The



perfect person sat there with his nose twitching, but the rest of him could not move.

Suddenly the person in the wheelchair had an idea. “I know what’s wrong. He can’t speak. We need to find someone who can do sign language. I’ll go. I’m the fastest in my chair. Wait here.” Off he went, wheeling quickly.

Soon the person in the wheelchair was back with a friend who could sign to the perfect person in the pit. This young woman smiled broadly as she talked with her hands. She was accustomed to physical communication and could usually intuit what someone was thinking by how they moved, but the perfect person did not move. Her exuberant, physical words poured into the pit, but the perfect person had no idea what was going on. His face seemed to have fallen off, as he began shuffling the broken glass again, vaguely trying to find himself.



The five friends talked animatedly to each other. They touched as they talked. They shrugged their shoulders, scratched their heads, and threw up their hands—except for the person balanced on her crutches! What was going on? Why didn’t the person in the pit respond? What could be the matter?

All at once, another friend came rushing up in a jerky, awkward way. He was always late. It was hard for him to walk and talk at the same time. He often got lost because he didn’t know how to read signs very well. He hustled right up to the edge of the hole.

“There’s someone down there,” he shouted in his loud, slow way, and then he went right down into the pit. He picked up the perfect person and carried him out of the pit. He set him down on its edge, but the perfect person just sat there, his legs dangling over the edge as if they were not part of his body. His arms hung limply at his sides. He stared at the glass fragments left behind in the dust.

“Well, I guess that’s all we can do,” said the person with the crutches.

They concluded together, “He’ll be fine by himself. After all, he has everything he needs except speech, but he can probably do that. He just won’t. Let’s go.”

“Onward,” they shouted as they moved away from the pit. Together they made a strange procession—wheeling, swinging along with crutches, tapping, walking with a seeing-eye dog, animatedly gesturing, and jerking along with exaggerated movements. They made harmony out of uniqueness.

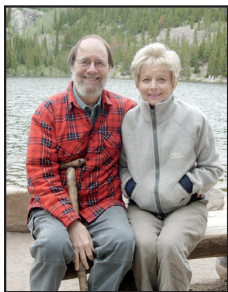
The perfect person, still sitting on the edge of the pit, turned his head to watch as they moved away. He stopped moving his hands like he was pouring glass fragments from one to the other, and he began to rub them together like they were cold. He stood up unsteadily and backed away from the pit, then he slowly turned around. Tentatively, he began to follow the others. He didn’t know how to do what they were doing, but it felt good to be close to it. He wanted them to be his mirror!

“Wait!” he shouted in spite of himself.

The perfect person slowly started to follow them. He stopped and shook himself like a wet dog, then he began to trot. The lively, tapping, swinging, wheeling, and stumbling crowd paused and waited for him. They opened their circle of warmth and took him in.

“What was that feeling,” he asked himself, seeking more.

Back in the pit, the broken glass sparkled for a moment in the setting sun. A breeze stirred up the dust in the bottom of the pit. The fragments disappeared, unable to put themselves back together again.



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.

# Building the Circle with Each Other

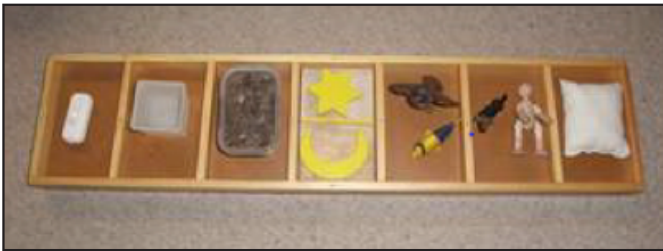
By WOLFHAND SCHWEIKER

“I am the Good Shepherd. I know each one of the sheep by name. When I take them from the sheepfold they follow me.” That is how the story goes. The story does not mention any deaf, lame, blind, or special needs sheep. I wonder how the story would change if some of the sheep were disabled to hear, see, or follow the Good Shepherd? How would he meet this challenge?



When I listened to the Parable of the Good Shepherd as it was told the very first time in Germany by Rebecca Nye, I was teaching Religious Education (RE) in a special school for physically and mentally disabled students. They loved the Godly Play stories. Most of them were not able to sit on the floor, so we built the circle around a low table being able to include the children sitting in wheel chairs. The visual materials helped to support understanding for the children with learning difficulties. Nevertheless, some words and sentences had to be transferred into so-called Simple German Language. The very first story I told in a group of mentally disabled children turned out to be tremendously playful. One boy tested the Good Shepherd by taking—without anyone’s notice—a sheep from the sheepfold while the shepherd was on his way to seek the lost one. Would he also seek the next sheep and all the next ones?

When I became an educator for RE-teachers in my local Protestant Church and was charged with nine different types of special schools at the Institute for Religious Education in Stuttgart-Birkach, Godly Play turned out to be a new and helpful approach in special education. Together with experienced teachers, we developed some ideas to help the blind, deaf, and lame to follow the stories more easily. We developed two-dimensional boards for the Creation story so the blind children could “look” at it by touching them. However, for children having been blind since birth, we were in need of three-dimensional materials: for instance, a light switch for the first day, soil and water for the second, and so on. These materials were presented synchronously to the blind child in a seven-sectioned board along with the story telling.



We discovered that for the deaf children, the unspoken language of Godly Play was a facilitating factor. In addition to the spoken language, a translation into sign language by the storyteller (or a person sitting aside) enriched and deepened the understanding even to the hearing-abled. Especially in the creative phase, different auxiliary means and specific creative materials needed to be provided: an anti-skid underlay, special scissors, and personal communication equipment.

In RE teacher education and Godly Play trainings, I sometimes use self-experience methods. What is it like to listen to a Godly Play story without hearing, to watch while being blind or partially sighted, or to sit in the circle with a stiff leg? These experiences help not just teachers to become more sensitive to various situations children with special needs are challenged to cope with in their everyday life. In a workshop at the 2008 Godly Play Conference in California, USA, we tried out



several experiments: What does it feel like to only understand every second word? What does it feel like sitting in the circle while your body hurts?

When Germany ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in March 2009, the former integration question

started to become urgent in a new way: How can each and every person participate fully and effectively in the circle? I started to introduce Godly Play as an inclusive approach in instructional courses for special education teachers. A first task was to move barriers in minds and hearts. The new approach seemed to provide a central key: “A Godly Play community begins right here, by building a circle where each and every participant is warmly welcomed” (Jerome Berryman 2002). Welcoming warmly is obviously more than a smile. It also means ensuring that everyone is able to gain access, to participate and to take part in the circle in an active manner. The open sheepfold can be seen as a meaningful symbol. It might be frightening not to have a locked gate while the Good Shepard is absent seeking the lost; however, the open gate stands for the freedom to walk in and out without any steps, walls, and barriers.

Physical, motor, or social-emotional needs of children make different adaptive supports inevitable. This is the first part of the latest empirical findings assessed in a second class of primary school which I presented on an academic poster in Riga, Latvia. The findings show a shift in perspective: Special needs children greatly enrich the circle. They are precious gifted children. The findings underscore that their special life story promotes and deepens the wondering process. For example, the presence of a girl in a wheelchair brought up the question of what it means to communicate on the same eye level physically and metaphorically. We recognized a precious treasure in Godly Play: Building the circle is not just a short period right before the story begins. It is an ongoing process which ensures everyone inclusively is warmly welcomed by the one who knows each of us by name.



Wolfhard Schweiker is a Lutheran pastor, professor, and religious educator who is particularly drawn to and gifted in working with mentally and physically challenged children and young people. He has been a Godly Play Trainer since 2007. He is married with three adult children and lives in Moessingen, Germany.

# Godly Play IN A JESUIT SCHOOL

By MARIA NEAL

*“For it is not knowing much, but realising and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul.”*

*— Ignatius of Loyola, The Spiritual Exercises*

“I wonder which of the ten best ways is the most important?” I looked at the ten tablets pushed in the sand making a path. “Don’t kill,” a young boy suddenly shouted. “Tell me more about that,” I answered trying to control my first time nerves—I was expecting a description of a zombie massacre video game scene. “Well some people kill others’ dreams and hopes and that’s not right because God gives us our dreams, and nobody should take them away.” And it was right there and then that any doubts I had about the value of launching Godly Play to enable spiritual development at Barlborough Hall evaporated.

Barlborough Hall, a Preparatory school in the Jesuit tradition in Derbyshire, UK, has two hundred and ten pupils aged three to eleven and twenty-six staff. In the entrance there is a statement from the Ignatian Pedagogy: “Jesuit Schools should be places where people are believed in, honoured, and cared for” (Ignatian Pedagogy n.37). This sets our way of proceeding, how we respect others, and how we value each and every member of our community within the school and beyond. The families who choose a Jesuit



education for their children do so for many different reasons. The intake is less than thirty percent Catholic, and a quarter of the pupils are not baptised. Yet parents sense, feel, it is something they want for their children. It is something beyond the academic excellence, broad curriculum, and small class groups. At Barlborough Hall, they can detect that the spiritual welfare of the child is valued as much if not more than the National Curriculum subjects and areas of attainment. Launching Godly Play into

this rich environment has been an exciting initiative.

St Ignatius sets out, in barely a single sentence, the twofold aim of Jesuit education: “improvement in living and learning” for the greater glory of God and the common good (Constitutions n.440).

It is a distinctively Jesuit method of teaching and learning, derived from the fundamental methods of the spirituality of St Ignatius. Teaching begins with pupils’ experience, then reflection on those experiences, builds upon them through new teaching and learning, and finally puts new knowledge and skills into action. The teacher’s deep understanding of



the context of pupils' background and learning styles, and careful evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching, results in learning and development that it is as much about the values and attitudes being adopted by a young person as about the knowledge and skills they acquire. In the Characteristics of Jesuit Education (1986), The Jesuit Pupil Profile sets out virtues we enable in our pupils. These are encouraged through displays around the school, discussed in assemblies and pastoral sessions, and articulated in marking comments, and act as a guide for parents.

So pupils in a Jesuit school are growing to be . . .  
*Grateful* for their own gifts, for the gifts of other people, and for the blessings of each day;  
*Generous* with their gifts, becoming men and women for others;  
*Attentive* to their experience and to their vocation;  
*Discerning* about the choices they make and the effects of those choices;  
*Compassionate* toward others, near and far, especially the less fortunate;  
*Loving* by their just actions and forgiving words;  
*Faith-filled* in their beliefs;  
*Hopeful* for the future;  
*Eloquent* and *truthful* in what they say of themselves, the relations between people, and the world;  
 Learned, finding God in all things;  
*Wise* in the ways they use their learning for the common good.  
*Curious* about everything;  
*Active* in their engagement with the world, changing what they can for the better;  
*Intentional* in the way they live and use the resources of the earth, guided by conscience; and  
*Prophetic* in the example they set to others.

In placing Godly Play into this tradition, I have been struck by how Godly Play and the Ignatian tradition work together to produce a depth beyond the sum of the parts. The wondering time given to pupils heightens their *attentiveness* to their own experience in relation to the story. They can begin to articulate their *gratefulness* for gifts and blessings and reflect how these are shared in the story and experience of

the parables. This has extended to the weekly Examen time where pupils reflect on their week; the "I wonder" questions are used by staff to guide the session. The sacred stories give us the example of *faith* and *hope* of the people of God on their travels and invite us to journey with them. The structure of the Godly Play session allows children the time and space to be *curious* and *active* in their imagination. The experience can be likened to Contemplative Prayer in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, where our senses are focused to explore Scripture. The pupils engage with each other and the world in the safe space of the Godly Play room. This leads to *intentional* and *prophetic* actions in their choice of response. The pupils develop *eloquence* and can express their feelings with *truthfulness* in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance.

These regularly timetabled sessions allow children to experience an improvement in living and learning beyond the usual school day. Many parents have commented on their child's positive response to Godly Play at home. Some become the storyteller and retell the story to their parents using toy figures and ask their parents the wondering questions. The discussion at home only enriches the Godly Play experience. Their Jesuit Education with Godly Play encourages them to ask "why?" and "I wonder?" when confronted with issues and choices as they grow, which will result in actions for the Greater Glory of God. AMDG.



Maria Neal is a Godly Play practitioner and teacher with over twenty five years experience in Religious Education, Catechesis and Children's Liturgy. She is a Catholic, who is a Minister of the Word and Eucharist in her local Parish. Maria discovered Godly Play through a Diocesan and Jesuit Chaplains conference. Since that first experience she has completed the three day Core Training and is developing Godly Play in Hallam Diocese, the British Jesuit Province, and at Barlborough Hall School.

# Godly Play THROUGH URUGUAY

By TONI M. DANIELS

Twelve years ago my heart was overwhelmed with longing. I sensed a deep desire to see children in Uruguay find hope in a vibrant relationship with their Creator as well as a longing for adults and children to practice sensing the Divine in community through the sacred stories of our people, through Jesus' parables, and through our Faith's liturgy.



English-speaking, interdenominational church, in hopes that they would see how emotionally and spiritually healthy this way of being together is for everyone. God moved so profoundly in their hearts by the proposal that they commissioned me to form a team to begin materials production and training. This team was made up of a variety of people involved in different

I had no idea God's plans were so much bigger than I could ever have imagined.

In August 2016 the circle was formed. Fourteen of us were joined by a rope, encircling a white glowing candle and a collage made up of photos of children from all over the world. "Jesus" was in the middle of us, sending us to all parts of the Spanish-speaking world. Joining the three Trainers were five Uruguayans, one Mexican-American, two Ecuadorians, and three international Spanish-speaking missionaries, each with a unique vocational calling, but united in our language of Godly Play, all working in different countries and different contexts, but none of us alone. How did this come to be?

In 2005 I sat in my first Godly Play exposure session in Amsterdam and profoundly encountered the Divine in the story of Creation. I felt so moved by this way of connecting with God that I begged, "God, if you would let me, I would give my life to see Godly Play take root in Uruguay." Little did I know, God's plans were much bigger than my dreams!

Upon returning to Montevideo, I began to share Godly Play with the staff at Christ Church, an international,

Christian churches and mission organizations, including the Saint Ignatius arm of the Catholic Church in Uruguay, One Mission Society, The Christian and Missionary Association, Christian Associates, and the Southern Baptist Mission. Within a year a complete Godly Play room was finished, and we mentors had reached the ability to move forward without more formal training.

In 2007, Christ Church hosted Uruguay's first ever-Godly Play Core Training in Spanish led by US Trainer Caryl Menkhuis Creswell. We had over 30 attendees from seven different Christian contexts. From there, the largest Catholic School in the nation decided to make Godly Play part of their catechism program for all their students. It was an amazing time of expansion within Uruguay. Soon, however, people from other countries began to hear about Godly Play and request training. It was becoming apparent that we needed to be trained as Trainers so that we could effectively continue the work God began in not only Uruguay, but apparently all over Latin America!

Fourteen Godly Play Trainers, eleven of us newly trained and commissioned, left our circle in August with a sense of awe, wonder, and renewed conviction. The Divine—our



Creator, our Redeemer, our Sustainer—entered into our stories to once again reveal The Grand Story to us and invite us to join in this amazing plan to become like a child and enter into a new reality, one not yet fully realized on this earth, a reality we have only tasted here and there and heard rumors about. Our “entering” into this Grand story meant becoming Godly Play Trainers, carrying this “way” within our own souls and inviting others to join us in the wonder and the Divine play of the Kingdom of God.

Two of us will be based in the US and begin training Godly Play mentors in both Spanish and English. Two will go with World Vision into child crisis situations all throughout Central America, training up adults mentors as part of their journey. Two will continue their work in raising up Godly Play practitioners within the San Ignatius community. Two will continue training English-speakers at Christ Church in Uruguay. One will serve to share Godly Play with every single South American Catholic presence possible. One will be training church planting

leaders all over South America. Yet another will be taking Godly Play to Colombia, where over 100 people there have been eagerly awaiting someone to come and train them! And we already have requests from Brazil, Venezuela and Bolivia to come and train people there!!

I am amazed. I am humbled. I am honored. I sense that our Creator was smiling down on me that day because I was stepping into a story MUCH bigger than my own, a story that would not only bring Godly Play to Uruguay, but to all of South America THROUGH Uruguay!



Toni M Daniels is a Trainer and Relational Coach with Comunitas International serving Godly Play and LK10. She loves sports, karaoke, and building joy with friends and family, especially her husband and three children.  
mattymaria@redfacil.com.uy

# How Godly Play CAME TO NORWAY!

By RUNE ØYSTESE



To understand the process of bringing Godly Play to Norway, we have to go back in time. In 1997 the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) decided that Christianity no longer should be a subject in the Norwegian public school. Instead we got KRL (Christianity, Lifeviews, and Ethics). Later it was changed to RLE and then again to KRLE (Christianity, Religion, Lifeviews, and Ethics). The teaching about Christianity and other religions should be objective, pluralistic, and critical. But Norway had signed the UN Child's Rights Convention. Therefore, the state has a responsibility also for children's spiritual development. We move on to 2003. That year saw the start of The Faith Formation Reform (FFR). The Norwegian Government decided that it would fund the religious formation of Norwegian children. Every religious (and secular-humanist) organisation with children would receive money for the formation of their children. The Church of Norway is by far the largest of these organisations, with around 75% of the population, so they get most of

the money. Last year the sum given to faith formation in Church of Norway was around 34 million Euros.

In 2004 Professor Rune Øystese, on behalf of the Diocese of Bjergvin, applied to the organisations of FFR for money to implement the ideas of Montessori Religious teaching—discovered in an internet search—into the Church of Norway formation curriculum. We went to a two-day introduction of Catechesis of The Good Shepherd. After two years we discovered Godly Play, and Anne Ludvigsen Kaldestad and Anne-Helene Gjengedal took a three-day Core Training in England. They came back full of joy. We started translating and testing the stories in our congregations. Peter Privett came from England for the first Norwegian three-day Core Training together with Constanze Lindner. She was a German Trainer before she came to Norway to work as a catechist. She could teach in Norwegian, and Peter taught in English, and now the participants were able to learn their stories and tell them in Norwegian.

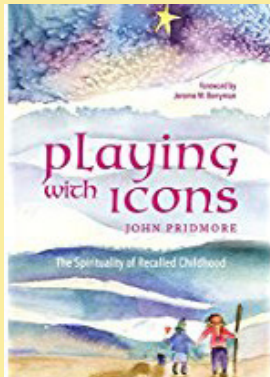
Anne, Anne-Helene, and Rune were trained as Trainers. They first participated in a Core Training. The next course they observed, then they taught courses alongside Peter; and after two years we had our “exam,” where Peter just observed. We have had between three and six Core Trainings a year all over the country. Most participants have been people working with FFR. We are now five Trainers and one person in the process of being trained as a Trainer.



Rune Øystese is a lecturer at NLA University College in Bergen, Norway. Rune recently provided leadership in the planning of the latest European Godly Play Conference and is past vice-chair of the Godly Play International Council. He and his wife Vigdis live beside a fjord just outside Bergen. [Rune.Oystese@nla.no](mailto:Rune.Oystese@nla.no)



# additional reading



## Playing with Icons: the Spirituality of Recalled Childhood

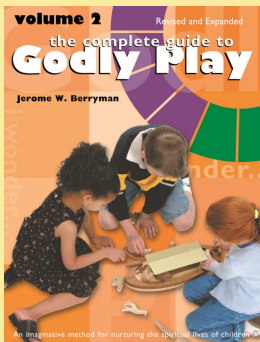
by John Pridmore

One of the goals of the Center of the Theology of Childhood is to publish books in the field of children's spirituality. *Playing with Icons: the Spirituality of Recalled Childhood* is a study of childhood memoirs which reveal the spiritual lives of children.

A basic premise of this study is that

from our birth—and indeed from before our birth—we are spiritual beings. Most of the children we meet in the book have formal religious experience. For some the experience was suffocating—threatening to stifle their spiritual growth—or simply inadequate as it failed help them express their spirituality. For others, religion promoted their spirituality by providing them a language with which to utter what lies beyond words.

Pridmore's book will be an important tool to include in your library as you support your circles of children and adults. It is an excellent pastoral resource for those working through their own childhood trauma to grow in their spiritual maturity, which in turn will support their Godly Play work.



## The Second Edition of *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*

by Jerome W. Berryman

With great excitement and much anticipation (and hard work on the part of many), we are pleased to announce that the revised and updated second edition of Volume 2 of *The Complete Guide to Godly Play* will be available in June! The new edition may be pre-ordered now from Church Publishing, Inc.

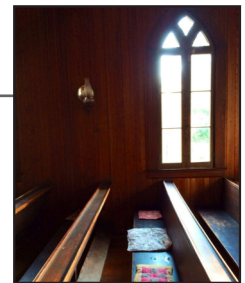
The Foundation regularly publishes online articles about the Godly Play curriculum. Here are our most recent articles. *Click on the image or text to read online.*



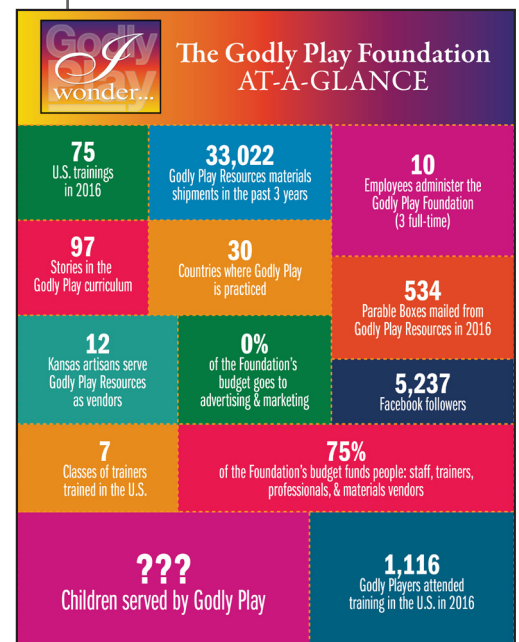
When the Good Shepherd calls your name

## Sacred Space for Godly Play

by Jeannie Babb



## Godly Play Foundation At-a-Glance





## FROM THE FOUNDATION

*Dear Friends,*

I continue to marvel at the ever-expanding reach of Godly Play! All over the world, circles of children and adult mentors settle in week after week to discover more about who God is and more about our relationship to God. It makes my heart sing as I consider how many children are being given the opportunity to come close God and to wrestle with the big questions of life. But I must confess . . . I am eager for more! Why? Because I know the need is great, and there are so many more children and adults who need to be in our circles.

We often read in the news about the increasing violence and divisions in our world. I believe that, above all, this is a spiritual crisis. What drives people to do violence to themselves or to others is a feeling that nothing really matters—a spiritual sickness of sorts. If a person has no hope, no sense of meaning and purpose, no relationship with something bigger than themselves, then striking out in anger at people all around them might feel like the only way forward. I firmly believe that Godly Play is one way (if not THE way) that we can make a difference.

As we read about the work of Godly Play world-wide in this issue of *The Circle*, I pray all of us will be inspired to continue inviting to those we know—and even those we are just getting to know—to join us. Godly Play is so much bigger than just a “Sunday School program.” Let’s all dream about new entry points into our circles beyond the norm: inter-generational gatherings, after-school programs, nursing homes, pre-schools, private schools, even online through blogs and social media . . . and so much more. Together we can change the world!



With deep gratitude for each of you and the work you are doing,

**CHERYL+**

The Rev. Cheryl V. Minor, Ph.D.  
Director of the Center for the Spiritual Guidance of Children  
Godly Play Foundation



# UPCOMING CONFERENCES 2017

**JUNE  
23 - 25, 2017**  
COLORADO, USA

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



2017 NORTH AMERICAN GODLY PLAY CONFERENCE

## DRAWING THE CIRCLE WIDER

JUNE 23-25, 2017  
DENVER, COLORADO



### **2017 NAGPC:**

#### **WHERE WE STARTED:**

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

#### **WHAT WE HAVE:**

The Full Curriculum

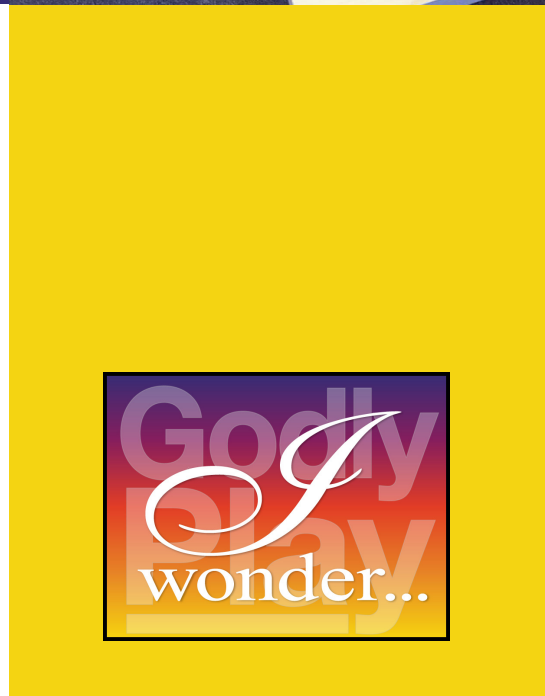
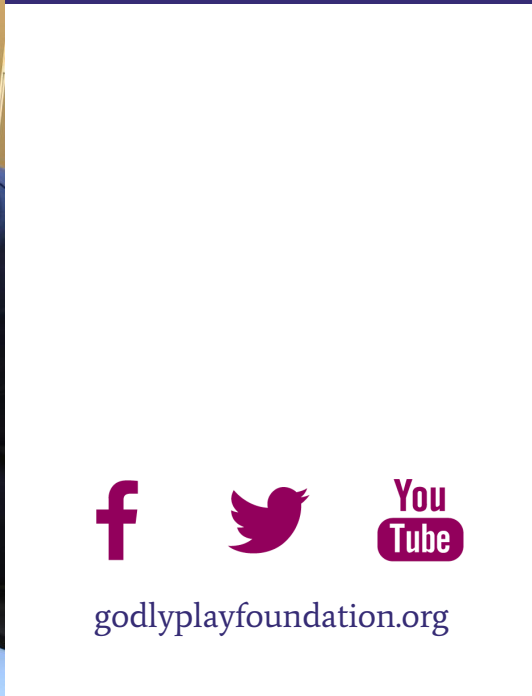
#### **WHAT WE NEED:**

Spiritual Maturity

#### **WHERE WE ARE HEADED:**

New Stories, New Books

[godlyplayfoundation.org/2017nagpc](http://godlyplayfoundation.org/2017nagpc)



godlyplayfoundation.org

