



A PUBLICATION OF THE GODLY PLAY FOUNDATION

JULY 2018

Godly Play: A Missional Pedagogy

Godly Play in Cambodia

Looking Two Ways

International Godly Play
Implementation

Godly Play Comes to Canada

Godly Play Training in
Harare Zimbabwe





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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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GODLY PLAY: *A Missional Pedagogy*

By THE REV. CANON DR. ANDREW SHELDON

In my work as a lecturer at a theological college, the bulk of the courses I teach are to equip leaders for the contemporary church. This includes a focus on the missional church and missional leadership. Now ‘missional’ is a term that some will instantly recognise and others find confusing. It is a term and an idea that became increasingly prevalent as the church became increasingly irrelevant. At its heart, the missional identity seeks to answer the question: what is the church, and for what purpose does it exist?

The answer to that question is rooted in God’s mission in the world. As such, it is not so much that the church of God has a mission in the world as the God of mission has a church in the world. Thus, the mission-shaped church: church shaped by what God is doing in the world. And so the core identity of the missional church is as sent, and the essential direction of a missional church is outward.

Now this is a very short and cursory introduction to the idea, but I offer it because some years ago it occurred to me that Godly Play is the quintessential missional pedagogy.

In a way that many other faith formation methods do not, Godly Play lives into this identity by embracing the notion that God is at work in the world and that the best we can do is faithfully partner in that activity by facilitating encounters with the living God.

So how does Godly Play embody this missional identity? In the first place, Godly Play rejects the Christendom understanding of faith formation as the imparting of information by those who know to those who do not.

John Dally in his book on missional preaching *Choosing the Kingdom* writes of two imaginations. The *dialectical imagination*, which is the word of God transcendent; and the *sacramental imagination*, which is the word of God in the life of the community. The dialectical assumes that there is a body of knowledge that transcends human existence that we the leader/preacher/teacher are compelled to pass on. In preaching I call this the ‘I know something you don’t know and now I’m going to tell you’ sermon.



The dialectical imagination then is based on information (something you don't know) and persuasion (why you need to know it). That sounds very much like the add water and mix Sunday School curriculums that still proliferate the ecclesiastical landscape.

The sacramental imagination, however, suggests that God is active in the community and in the world; and therefore the preaching/teaching/mentoring enterprise is that of discerning—indeed facilitating—God's activity. To the extent we preach or teach the Gospel it is not so much about Jesus as of Jesus. Not so much to the assembly on behalf of the church, but within the assembly on behalf of God's mission.

Such an approach honours the innate spirituality of all and the work of the Spirit in all.

It is an axiom in Godly Play that children come to us not as empty vessels that we have to fill but as vessels already full of God. Godly Play Trainer Rebecca Nye has also written about the need to trust the child, the story, and God to interact in such a way that a connection is made. As such, we—the adults who practise Godly Play—are more like facilitators than providers. More mentors than teachers. To the extent we can trust, to the extent we can let go of our need to control, to the extent we can let go of the illusion that we know something the children don't know and now we are going to tell them, to that extent we can expect that a connection is made for the children and for us; that we too can encounter the divine that is within and without us. This is the reason I believe that Godly Players stay on the floor year after year. We too are being fed.

And another quick word on this. If you are doing Godly Play with teens or adults, or the aged, or those with dementia . . . don't change a thing—except maybe to get off the floor so everyone can better participate. All of the above applies

to every age and stage of life. Trust the individual, trust the story, trust the God who is at work in the world.

Godly Play is also missional in the way it embraces a post-critical approach to our text and tradition. For many centuries of the early church, it was not considered important that every Christian agree on everything. Indeed there were different views on the nature of Jesus, different views on what texts could be considered sacred texts, and no real push toward what would later be called orthodoxy: right belief. You could call this the pre-critical paradigm of the Christian Church. Only when Christianity became the official religion of the Empire did the need for right thinking and strict adherence to such thinking emerge. In short order we had the Chalcedonian formula which established the 'true' nature of Jesus, the Nicene Creed, the canon of the New Testament, and the emergence, therefore, of the idea of heresy. This you could say was the advent of the centuries-long critical paradigm. As such, church leaders and scholars would come to the text and traditions through a critical lens determined to find the one true interpretation and application which would then be universally applied.

Now over time, individuals and movements and



denominations would arise and propagate different true interpretations and applications . . . but always through the same critical lens. Indeed, when biblical criticism emerged in the 19th century it used the same critical lens to overturn previously held ideas of truth—even the whole idea of truth—and so for another 100 years or so, liberals and conservatives battled it out by coming to different conclusions using the same tools.

As Christendom ended, a third way emerged. This third way is effectively articulated by the New Testament scholar Marcus Borg, amongst others. Borg says that as young children we experience the pre-critical naturally, and that



as we grow older we essentially spend our entire adult life engaged in critical thinking, often finding it to be of benefit in many aspects of life. But ultimately, critical thinking—finding the one true meaning—is corrosive to a life of faith. As such, Borg posited the usefulness of another approach called post-critical naïveté. That is, to be able to hear as true events possibly not factual. As I like to say, ‘all stories are true, and some of them actually happened!’

Borg uses the example of how we relate to the Nativity story over the course of our spiritual journey. In childhood naïveté, the angels, the star, the virgin birth, the magi, Bethlehem, Herod’s savagery . . . no problem. In critical stage . . . this story does not jive with reality and history as we know it. In post-critical naïveté, whether it happened this way or not, it is true. It says something about what kind of effect Jesus has on those who encounter him. It says something about what Jesus represented to his disciples. The symbols and metaphors are rich and have application

for our life even today. Maybe it didn’t happen exactly like this, but it is profoundly true.

I like the nativity reference because it speaks so pertinently to the Godly Play story of The Holy Family. We know it didn’t happen that way. Even a critical reading of the Bible is clear it didn’t happen that way. But the story is true, and those of us who have wondered with children and others on this story know the many profound truths to be found in it.



Godly Play employs post-critical naïveté. Jerome Berryman has written stories that neither employ the critical method to make claims for the factuality of the events, especially as it pertains to the harder-to-believe aspects of the story, nor does Berryman employ the critical method to challenge the supernatural claims of the story or

offer more convincing scenarios. In the Godly Play Exodus story, God simply comes so close to Moses and Moses feels so close to God that he knows what to do, and the people

of God make their way through the sea to freedom—and Miriam leads the dancing.

This post-critical approach is an important way forward. We do not ask people to believe impossible things. But neither do we feel the need to disparage or explain away the seemingly impossible. We simply tell the story and uncover the truth that transforms our lives.

In this respect, Godly Play can be a gift to leaders and churches that reject the fundamentalism of critical thinking at both ends of the theological spectrum. This critical thinking is making the church irrelevant and unnecessary on the one hand and out-of-touch and unattractive on the other. At last year's Godly Play conference in Denver, Jerome spoke of the river of life whose one bank is rigidity and the other is chaos. I suggest that we could also consider that both banks are rigid, but the one rigidity leads to certainty and the other rigidity to chaos. The rigidity that leads to certainty makes the church out-of-touch and unattractive; the rigidity that leads to chaos makes the church irrelevant and unnecessary. Godly Play sails down the middle of this river of life proclaiming truth that transforms lives and facilitates encounter with the divine.

Godly Play is the quintessential missional pedagogy.



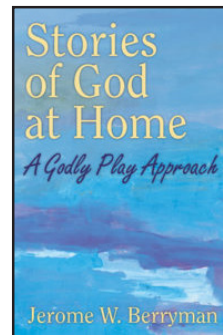
Andrew describes his introduction to Godly Play in this way: "It was love at first sight!" Andrew immediately recognized the value of this innovative program and became an early advocate of the program in the Diocese of Toronto. He is an Anglican priest and professor and an experienced adult educator.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

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



additional reading

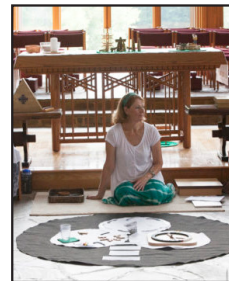
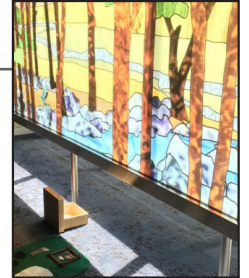
The Foundation regularly publishes *online articles* about the Godly Play curriculum. Here are our most recent articles. *Click on the image or text to read online.*



Stories of God at Home
by Jerome W. Berryman

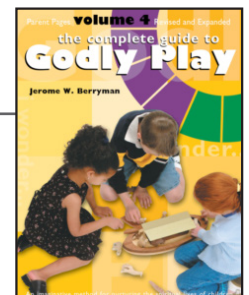
The Parable of the Good Shepherd in a Children's Hospital

by Chaplain Jessica Shannon,
MDiv, BCC



Bringing Godly Play to the World and the World to Godly Play

The Complete Guide to Godly Play, revised and expanded
Volumes 2, 3, and 4





GODLY PLAY *in Cambodia*

By THE REV. DR. ANN M. TROUSDALE

The children were lined up in two wide rows to welcome us as our bus passed through the brick gateposts, cheering as we arrived. We had ridden through miles of lowland dotted with the occasional water buffalo; passed square unpainted wooden boxes raised on stilts, homes for the people of the area; passed the barely-visible remains of a small ancient Buddhist temple and a large gated contemporary Buddhist compound; to arrive at one of two small Methodist churches my home church supports in Cambodia. My church—First United Methodist in Baton Rouge, LA in the United States—had been sending mission teams to Cambodia for a decade, but this was the first trip I had felt an inner nudging to join. This mission, like others, would have a double focus: construction and holding Bible schools for young children.

There were seven of us on this mission team, six people from my home church and one person who is a Methodist missionary in Costa Rica. I did not know when I

volunteered that Godly Play was to be part of the mission, but as the team began to meet and formulate a plan for the Bible school, it seemed that Godly Play stories were a natural choice around which to build the program. As we talked, it became clear that there would be some compromises, however; because of the number of children who would be attending as well as limitations in facilities, materials and personnel, it would not be possible to hold complete, intact Godly Play lessons. And while I felt some hesitancy about the compromises that would be necessary, I felt that we could preserve the core principles of Godly Play within the necessary limitations.

We had of course done some reading to learn about the history and culture of the Cambodians, but nothing could have prepared me for what I experienced the first two days. We flew into Phnom Penh and in the next 48 hours experienced a range of emotions from joy to deep pain. We worshiped with a vibrant, faith-filled group of young

people who attend college in Phnom Penh with the help of United Methodist scholarships and toured both Toul Sleng Prison, a former school used as a torture center by the Khmer Rouge, and the Killing Fields, one of the locations where the Khmer Rouge murdered hundreds of thousands of people, burying their bodies in mass graves.

Spending time at these sites brought home in a visceral way a sense of the suffering the Cambodian people have endured—the unimaginable pain and cruelty. Beginning in the late 1960s, Cambodia suffered spillover from the Viet Nam war, but more dire devastation came in 1975 when the Khmer Rouge seized control, beginning a systematic genocide of the aristocratic, educated, and professional classes, killing an estimated two million people. Cultural, educational, and religious centers were destroyed along with much of the country's infrastructure. In 1979 the Khmer Rouge was overthrown by Viet Nam, which installed a socialist government that lasted until 1989; two years later a Cambodian coalition government was formed. Rebuilding the country has been slow. Forty years later Cambodia is still suffering the effects of those events: widespread poverty, homelessness, hunger, lack of education, loss of the professional classes, and the lasting emotional and psychological effects of such trauma.

From Phnom Penh we went by bus to Kampong Thom, from which we traveled to churches in the rural areas in the Kampong Thom province. We were to lead Bible school for two days at each of the two churches we sponsored, spend an additional day leading a workshop for adolescent girls and boys who live at one of the churches, and then another day at abbreviated Bible schools.

Today some 95 percent of the Cambodian people are



Buddhist; Christians comprise approximately 0.4 percent of the population. Many of the children who were to attend the Bible schools are not Christian or church-goers; for some this would be an introduction to the faith. I had struggled with which stories to tell and settled on

two foundational stories: Creation and The Holy Family. I did not know which Buddhist creation myths they would be familiar with, if any, but I wanted them to hear the story of a gracious God who created the world and called it good—very good. And to hear the story of the birth of Jesus, who began by reaching out his arms to give them a hug and who still reaches out his arms to give the whole world a hug.

The two churches where we were to conduct Bible school at Reaskmay and Samreth had begun as home churches in two of the tall wooden box-like houses like those we had seen on the way in. But through the sale of Cambodian crafts and direct donations, our church and another United Methodist church in Baton Rouge had been able to provide for the construction of two spacious concrete block churches. Built on concrete slabs and painted a soft

yellow-gold, they were quite attractive with wide double doors, large windows, and marble floors. Each comprised a large room with a raised section at one end that served as a chancel area during worship and two small rooms behind the chancel areas. Each was wired for electricity, but the electricity was working in only one of them, powering oscillating fans which gave some relief from the tropical heat.

It is never known how many children will attend the Bible schools. They come from the surrounding countryside, some on foot, some on bicycles, some on the backs of motorscooters (a popular form of transportation in

Cambodia). Once the Bible school has commenced, the word continues to spread among the nearby neighborhoods and villages, and more children are likely to appear the second day. It turned out that between 60 and 80 children between the ages of two and ten attended at each church. We included children ages five to ten in Godly Play; other team members would provide activities for the younger children, who, our missionary leader thought, would be too young for Godly Play. As it turned out, including younger children in the Godly Play stories would have been logistically difficult if not impossible simply because of the number gathered.

We began each day with singing in the large main rooms; our interpreter and youth director proved to be a gifted guitarist and song leader who had an easy rapport with children. Following the singing, the older children were divided into groups of 15 to come to Godly Play in shifts. About 10 of the adolescent boys and girls who lived at one of the churches joined the team to help engage the children with games while they waited their turn for Godly Play.

We had hoped to do the storytelling on the raised area in the main room, but the constant traffic and influx of other Bible school activities proved too distracting, so we moved into one of the small rooms, which were even hotter and more stultifying than the large open space. But I was the only one who seemed even to notice the heat! Cambodia is a tropical country, and the temperature was well into the 90's—one day reaching 102 degrees in the sun.

One is struck by the sweet dispositions, the happiness, and

the instinctive generosity of the Cambodian children. They are also noticeably polite and compliant. In our Godly Play classes at home, it generally takes two or three lessons for some of the children to learn how to get ready to cross

the threshold and enter the circle and how to stay ready through the story. The Cambodian children were calm and ready from the time they entered the room. In the four days of storytelling, only one child so much as touched another in a mildly disruptive way.

Telling the story with an interpreter proved not to be as difficult as I had

anticipated. I had worked with an interpreter previously, but in a setting in which eye contact with the audience was appropriate and I could read facial expressions and body language. But here, I instinctively felt, maintaining my own focus on the story was of particular importance while the interpreter interacted with the children in a more interpersonal way. Because my focus was on the story throughout the storytelling, I could not read the children's

degree of engagement, but the photographs that were taken seem to indicate that at the beginning the children were not so sure of what they were witnessing or how to respond, some becoming intensely engaged as they became more comfortable with the process.

When time came for the wonderings, I was able to

look up. The children were politely waiting for what was to come next. I began, not able to anticipate how they would respond; I could only trust the process and the Holy Spirit. At first, the children were reticent to offer their responses. But our interpreter had the ability to put the children at ease and soon one response came forth, followed by another and another. Their responses were as diverse as



those of the American children with whom I have shared Godly Play, and as often as surprising. I regret that I did not take field notes following the sessions to be able to cite specific responses, but some of the patterns are easy to recall. For example, many of the children cited as their favorite day of Creation, or the most important day, the day God created day and night, mentioning specifically the sun and the moon. I do not know how to interpret this pattern; perhaps the significance was that some of them do not have electricity in their homes, so those great lights discipline their daily lives. For quite a few, their favorite day was the day of rest. What this day signifies for young children in a Buddhist country where, to my knowledge, a Sabbath is not observed, I do not know; but the yearning was there.

Almost always, when I tell The Holy Family to American children, the Christ child is named as either the favorite or most important part of the story. Several of the Cambodian children mentioned the Christ child as their favorite part of the story as well, but specifically mentioned his wanting to give them a hug. One child said that for him the most important part of the story was when (and here the interpreter had to search for a translation) the “ghost” reached out to hug the whole world. Several children nodded in agreement. I do not know what the word translated “ghost” was in the Khmer language, nor the connotations of it, but the children clearly were attuned to the large powerful figure wanting to hug the whole world. (I must say it was gratifying to me that this element did not go unnoticed; it was good to feel that sometimes my instincts are correct!)

Following the storytelling and wondering, each group of children went to the tented area in front of the church to do their work using art response materials. Because of the constraints, these were more limited and directive than in a Godly Play room setting. A member of the team had prepared small spiral-bound booklets for the children to retell the days of creation through art. The hope was that they would re-read the booklets themselves and perhaps tell the story to their families. For The Holy Family, they had materials to work with to recreate a nativity scene.

We did not share a Godly Play-style feast with the children, but rather took a break for lunch, the children heading home to eat with their families. In the afternoon, they finished their artistic work and played games with the adolescent children. We had a closing musical session

before sharing a feast and ending for the day.

Leaving the churches at the end of the second day of Bible school was painful—my heart seemed to want to remain with the children. A part of this wrenching had simply to do with the love that had been shared, but for me I realized that a part of it had to do with realizing that neither Godly Play nor I would be able to be part of their continuing spiritual formation, their growing understanding of the faith, and how the scriptures connect to their own lives. I am heartened by my church’s ongoing commitment to these two churches and by witnessing how our material support relieves the harshness of poverty in the Cambodians’ daily lives—and by seeing the long-term fruits in the lives of the young people who attend college in Phnom Penh, on the way to realizing their dreams through higher education.

And, too, I am comforted by the last lines of a prayer written by Ken Untener (often attributed to Oscar Romero), a prayer that to me also expresses our work with Godly Play on a more ongoing basis:

This is what we are about: we plant the seeds that will one day grow. We water seed already planted, knowing that they hold promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, and opportunity for the Lord’s grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.



The Rev. Dr. Ann Trousdale is a retired professor of children’s literature at Louisiana State University and an ordained Deacon in the United Methodist Church. She lives with her dog Sadie in Louisiana.

Looking Two Ways

By THE REV. DR. JEROME W. BERRYMAN



The ending of 2017 and the beginning of 2018 is a time for looking two ways. The New Year is here, but it is not established enough to block out the old one. The Roman god Janus had two faces to look forwards and backwards. We will use our memory and imagination to do this.

Do you remember the North American Godly Play Conference last June? Even if you were not there, you may have imagined what it might be like. I remember it well, and I would like to thank you for your prayers and generous, festive messages. My gratitude is still overflowing to have been remembered on my 80th birthday, and you were generous to remember Thea and me as the creators of Godly Play. Christian language is the language of love, so it needs to be taught with love. It also needs to be taught playfully to engage the creative process to make existential meaning with it. That was natural for us. We loved to play, and we loved each other and the children.

On the evening of the Conference banquet, I told the story of Godly Play, then Coleen and I spent the night in the emergency room at a nearby hospital. On Monday she moved to the intensive care unit to begin her battle with a very large pressure wound that had opened up quickly and was infected with two very dangerous infections. She also experienced a serious reaction of her whole immune system. This explains

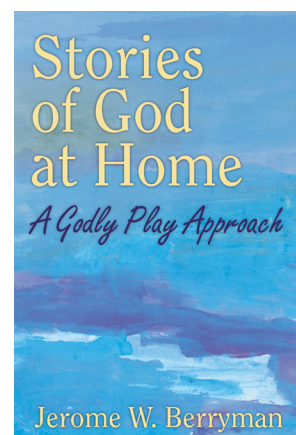
a bit why you have not heard anything from me until now about the Conference. I have been supporting Coleen and solving daily problems in three hospitals during the last year.

Coleen came home on the 11th of December. What a wonderful Christmas present for us both! Her wound had been closed October 2nd, but it took until mid-December to be strong enough to move back into her power chair to get around. There are new challenges, but to have her home for Christmas was a great gift.

During the Conference I also talked about *Stories of God at Home*, which was published in April. The book is about how to present Godly Play in the home in a way that weaves stories of God with your family's stories to meet the challenges of the present and future as well as those still unresolved from the past.

The title and some of the inspiration for the book came from Rilke's *Geschichten vom lieben Gott*, which was translated into English as *Stories of God*. Rilke wrote his book in 1899 in seven nights. My book took a lifetime to write. As he said, he wanted to bring God into "direct" and "daily use." My book hopes to do the same. Rilke's *Stories of God* was one of his favorite creations. *My Stories of God at Home* is one of my favorites.

Stories of God at Home has eight chapters. The first six chapters include Godly Play presentations. They are: Creation, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, the Good Shepherd, and the Church Year. The versions for the home are shorter and show how to weave the Godly Play presentations together with your family stories.



The Church Year unifies Creation, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost by placing a representative plaque from each lesson on each of the circle's four quadrants and then placing the Good Shepherd at the center to make God the center point in a circle that has no

circumference, since the only limit to God is that God is unlimited. The materials used for the presentations, including DIY versions, are available from *Godly Play Resources*. The book provides photographs of the materials and how to lay them out.

The seventh chapter is “Stories about the Stories of God.” Six classic children’s books are introduced and matched with the six stories of God so they can enrich each other. The stories are: *The Wind in the Willows* (Creation), *Frederick* (Christmas), *Charlotte’s Web* (Easter), *The Velveteen Rabbit*

(Pentecost), *A Christmas Carol* (The Good Shepherd), and *The Clown of God* (Circle of the Church Year). I am sure that you can find children’s stories in your own language to accomplish what this chapter does for those who read and speak English

The last chapter discusses how to be ready for family challenges. This involves layering in the stories of God by their annual celebration, and integrating them with your family’s stories to build up a resource to draw from in times of need. This layering also helps us become aware of our deep identity, which is the flowing of creative power that joins our image of God (the *Imago Dei*) with the great river of God’s creativity that flows out from and returns to God.

The book’s conclusion is mostly nonverbal. It suggests how to experience our deep identity so we can be refreshed and strengthened by God’s creative power.

Begin this spiritual practice by lying on your back in a comfortable and quiet place. Use your imagination to reflect calmly on Creation, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Then place the Good Shepherd at the center of the circle and weave these celebrations together with your family’s stories.

When you have imagined your way into the circle with no circumference, then lift your arms up toward the heavens and slowly enfold the Creator. Draw God close with an embrace until you feel your *Imago Dei* connect with the great river of the creative process. Take all the time you need.

Remain still but alert after the enfolding. Leave your arms



lightly crossed and resting on your chest. When the connection between the Creator and the Creator’s image within you is strong, then extend your arms out to your sides to make a cross out of your own body. Your right hand touches the structural limit of your existence, which tends towards rigidity; your left hand touches your openness limit, which tends towards chaos. It is as if your right hand touches the bank of the great river where form or structure lies and your left hand touches the bank where openness lies. This gesture joins structure and openness in your life, so the creative process can flow

in you rather than becoming stuck in rigidity or chaos, which blocks the flowing of the creative process. Another way to say this is that you need to touch both banks to join them in yourself so you are in God and God is in you.

Rest in the invisible river’s deep current as it flows out from and returns to God. The more layers of the circle of celebrations you have already experienced, the greater your awareness of the flowing current will be.

You will probably feel the flowing of God’s creative energy in your open and relaxed hands first, then throughout your body. This experience integrates the three ways of knowing God: the knowing of the spirit by contemplation, the knowing of the body by the senses, and the knowing of the mind by language and reason. As you become more experienced with this approach, you will be able to be aware of being in God as God is in you, in any place and at any time. When you are restored and refreshed, then move on to meet whatever challenge may confront you and your family.



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.

INTERNATIONAL GODLY PLAY *Implementation*

By DR. MARTIN STEINHÄUSER

The following article is written for people who are engaged in bringing Godly Play to their own or to other countries. It uses the German experiences since 2002 as question-generating tools. This means: This article refers the historical developments in Germany only for the purpose to stir reflection for the readers regarding their own context. It is not intended to prescribe how to implement Godly Play. I will concentrate on the first few years. Phase I started in 2002 and ended in 2008 with the publication of the first book about the preliminaries of a contextualization of Godly Play in Germany.

The Golden Rule

In Germany, we detected a small gap between the enthusiasm of the enthusiasts and the silent wishes, needs, and fears of people working with children on a daily basis. There were reports from parishes that people felt a bit overwhelmed. There were reports from other places where Godly Play disappeared after “the key person” had changed jobs.

We tried to observe a kind of Golden Rule: the implementation of Godly Play in any given situation, be it on a small scale in a village or on a large scale for a national denomination, should not contradict the core values of Godly Play but rather echo them. I know how difficult it is to identify the core values of Godly Play! But maybe we can say: people you would be working with should be able to recognize values like “the child in the centre” or “slow speed” (Entschleunigung) or “awareness” (Achtsamkeit) from the way you present Godly Play to them and the logistical decision-making.

I wonder what you could actually do to ensure a slow motion introduction, sensitive to local circumstances?

Start: Enthusiasm, Failure, and Adventures

The way Godly Play came to Germany reveals the beautiful whimsicalness that surrounds all of the Godly Play method. In April 2002, I attended a European research conference on religious education in Elspeet,

NL. Juha Luodeslampi from Finland was also there, so he is my eye-witness for the story—all the more since he was as infected as I was! At the conference there was Rebecca Nye from the UK reporting on her children’s spirituality research. She invited participants to come back during lunch break in order to see a practical demonstration of what she had been speaking about. So I skipped my nap and went there. The scene was rather absurd: in the conference room, in a narrow space between a row of tables and chairs and a wall with large windows, Rebecca sat on the floor and presented The Parable of the Good Shepherd. There was very little room, so only a few could sit with her on the floor; the others sprawled across tables or stood pressed against the wall in order to see anything at all—all quite uncomfortable. Yet I was struck: how was it possible that such a simple presentation, under these weird circumstances, could touch me deeply inside? Reflecting on these questions coincided with a change of jobs: a few months later I started to work as professor at the university. Now I was in the position to invite some colleagues from Protestant pedagogical-theological training institutes from three different regions in Germany (I simply choose whom I knew and who was willing to share the cost). Together we organized a large starter day and a 3-day workshop in Berlin and Brandenburg for about 25 teachers, catechists, students, and researchers with Rebecca Nye and Gill Ambrose leading us. This workshop in December 2003 was the birth of Godly Play in the German-speaking area. We were all touched by Godly Play, and at the end we asked the deciding question: should we go for it or not?

What I want to say is: Godly Play often starts with enthusiasm. This energy is enormously valuable. Nothing can replace it. Maybe one can look at this starting group as a bagful of seeds becoming a multi-flowered, colourful meadow. People tend to get passionate about Godly Play and are eager to invest enormous amounts of time and energy into its implementation.

In Germany nearly all in the starting group were Lutherans. Unfortunately, we were not careful enough to include other denominations (in persons as well as in institutions) right from the beginning. Today we are happy to have Protestants and Catholics, Methodists, Mennonites, and Free Evangelical Parishes amongst our Trainers and supporters, but relatively speaking, we are facing the consequences of this early failure: the Ecumenical heart of Godly Play is difficult to see in Germany.

I wonder: When you are starting with a handful enthusiasts, would it make sense in your situation to include people from other denominations?

Since we were still not sure about this “godly what?” (Germans always need to spell this . . .), I organized a 4-day-trip to Cambridge, UK in May 2004 where Gill Ambrose had a Godly Play classroom in her parish. Six months after the initial training, we were about 10 from the three regions. Gill and her husband Tom were so generous and hospitable—they even allowed us to put up tents in the garden of the vicarage! So for the first time, we saw a Godly Play room—and enjoyed a bit of training by Rebecca. It was a great experience and adventure for all of us. It contributed to our conviction to go for it. I acted as a “travel agent” again in May



2005, and again it was great fun and empowering for another 10 persons.

Image: Our tents in the garden of Gill and Toms vicarage

I wonder: In your beginnings, is there

a chance for you to get firsthand insights from existing Godly Play rooms? Could you ask practitioners from other regions or even countries to invite you for introductory days? Travelling together could also strengthen your community as starters.

The triangle of identity and support - and more

Rather soon after the first encounter, it is helpful to create first structures, even on a very small scale.

In Germany, we were lucky to have a few people in the first group with good connections to training centres for religious education, for catechists or nurses. They provided extremely helpful infrastructures and experienced advice.

So I wonder: Can you find allies in training centres for religious education for catechists or nurses? It might create ambivalent feelings to involve the middle-range-academic-

and training-scene so early in the process. Maybe it feels a bit like a “top-down”-strategy. But mind that “bottom-up” has not only beauties but difficulties of its own, such as many enthusiasts starting many actions at many places without coordination.

They say Germans are very talented in creating structures. Maybe that is true, but everybody needs to find the balance between creative chaos and organized responsibilities. So we followed the advice to found a “cooperative” as a “registered charity” (gemeinnütziger Verein). It required far less German “burocrazy” than we had feared. So just 12 months after the initial training, our “Godly Play deutsch e.V.” started off with nine members in December 2014. It included three seats and the treasurer, all having come out of the initial group. Our aim was to have a legal entity that could negotiate with the Center for the Theology of Childhood about licences for translations, materials, and training-certificates. To have such a cooperative was also ecumenically and financially important to our work (membership fees and collecting money from churches and foundations would have been difficult if Godly Play had been attached to one particular church or organisation.) To become a member allows people to express their enthusiasm. It ensures contact between the base and the steering persons. Membership fees create income, and we had over 170 members by September 2017 donating 3.-€ per month. This is one of the three “columns of income” for our cooperative.

Image: Great fun at our election-process of the first Board members - we had only a paperbin to collect the votes... March 2018



I wonder: What is the best structure you can create for your country? How can you organize access for public and lawful liability without becoming a “bureaucratic power-agent”? Maybe you prefer to avoid any legal entity?

Translations

To have the Godly Play books translated was one of our first aims. Therefore, we searched for a publisher and started a translating process amongst the initial group of enthusiasts. Later in this article I will describe how the international contacts and negotiations went hand in hand with the national process. As for the translation of the books, we were lucky to find a well acknowledged, long established publisher (Evangelische Verlagsanstalt).

From Finland and Spain, we heard that the translations provided by one single translator or from a different context of the Spanish language created some dissatisfaction in Godly Play communities. Our Norwegian friends, on the other side, have decided to print no books at all but to share translations through trainings and an internal area of their website, so all stories could be worked on in terms of the finest language even years after the first version was uploaded. Other international Godly Play groups have found yet other ways, like for French or Dutch. I believe that translation is a core challenge for a method that aims so much on the development of a *verbal and nonverbal language* to express existential issues as Godly Play does.

We worked carefully on the language for the stories in Vol. 2-4. Each story was translated by two persons independent of each other. These first versions were tested with children. Then we met in workshops of about 12-15 persons to present the different versions of the German wording as well as to share the results of the testings to each other. Then we created a simple "spiral bound test version" of the book to broaden the test process for a year. The storytellers gave feedback. In some cases in Vol.4, denominational changes had to be made according to liturgical differences. The final versions were published in 2006 and 2007. To have translation processes like this proved to be an excellent opportunity for all to develop a deeper understanding of Godly Play and to participate in the dissemination of Godly Play. Actually, I think of these processes as a kind of "research". And yet, looking back at those processes from 10 years later, I also have to say that we could have taken more time before we published. On the other hand, after a while, you need to get the stories out of the box. It is comforting to know that we could use the chance of a second (2014) and a third (2017) edition to correct and improve.

Image below: Impression of the first translation workshop, Dec. 2004

I wonder what kind of process seems appropriate for your situation to develop the best possible translations of Jerome Berryman's unique style of storytelling?



Materials

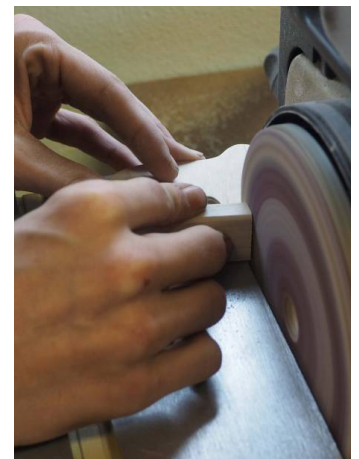
At the beginning, it is wonderful—and may deepen understanding—to produce individual copies of Godly Play materials in a DIY-style for the personal use. Many of the materials are easy to make. Those that have words with them also needed to be translated. But after a while, the question of production on a bigger scale, of buying and selling, of taxes and licences turns up.

We didn't want Godly Play in Germany to depend on expensive delivery of the beautiful materials from the US. From Sally Simpsons and the friends at Bowthorpe, UK we learned about the good results of producing materials within a sheltered workshop, which employs the differently abled. The Leipzig Diaconia was easy to convince. This is a large institution that runs a number of kindergartens, homes for elderly people, and sheltered workshops as well as a number of other welfare-entities. The leadership welcomed Godly Play in. One of their workshops has a metal and a wood section, textiles and packing and shipping, claywork, and color-equipment. They employ

about 170 people with all sorts of handicaps. In 2004, they bought "one of everything" from GPR and installed a small Godly Play task force of about 12 people who, with some guidance, are now the Foundation-authorized German materials makers.

Images above: Impressions from the Lindenwerkstätten, Sheltered Workshop at the Diaconia Leipzig

Later I will describe how this all developed in close connection with Tom and Jerome Berryman. In our cooperative, Godly Play deutsch e.V., we have one section taking care of aesthetical and material questions. This group visits the Lindenwerkstätten regularly for supervision, for storytelling, and for good community. One of the group-leaders working there also attended an accredited training. We believe it is vital that those who make the materials know the ways in



which they are used.

I wonder what cooperations, Foundation and local agreements, structures, and maybe subcontractors you need to make Godly Play materials accessible for storytellers in your country?

Training

In Germany, it was also one of our first aims to establish a training structure. In autumn 2005 the first accredited 3-day-training in Germany took place in Stuttgart. Trainers Peter Privett and Cindy Bishop came from England. I was part of that group, and thus I can witness the funny mix of languages in which the training took place.

Peter came back to kind of “shadow” two more courses in April and November 2006, which were run by German storytellers. A few Germans attended 3 days-courses in England or even the US. At the first European Godly Play Conference in Evesham (September 2006), the Finnish and the Germans expressed their wish to have not only storytellers but also accredited Trainers of their mothertongue. It took only another six months to set up the first German Training of Trainers at Brandenburg in February 2007. Again, Peter Privett came to train, together with US Trainer Di Pagel from San Francisco. And again we had this funny mixture of English and German. The training was organized by Evamaria Simon and myself, who during the course were “shadowed” by Peter and Di. By 2013, Germans could offer a Training of Trainers in their own language. One of the first decisions of our German College of Trainers was to extend Core Training from three days to four days and to combine it with compulsory attendance at an introductory day. By that, we avoid many “basic” questions in the trainings and have also more time for units on conceptual questions, for debriefing of doorpersons, and for experiencing two full 90 minute sessions, including all other elements during one training.

Image: Rev. Peter Privett from Rugby running the first teacher training at Stuttgart, Sept. 2005

Books, materials and training—I learned from Jerome that he calls this “the triangle of identity and support”: they all three depend on each other.

Our experience in Germany is that this triangle is a great tool for participation and spreading Godly Play. We have experienced that establishing the



*triangle rather early in the process actually reduced work later on. We also learned that this triangle needs extension by a fourth corner: research. In our German context, in practice as well as academically, it is of vital importance to communicate and critically assess a new method like Godly Play with the faculty and experts around. If **you** don't promote that, **they** will do it anyway. So you are better to be part of these talks.*

There are many ways to get access to translations, materials, and trainings. The Godly Play Foundation is also involved here, currently working through the Godly Play International Council on a [Covenant of Agreement](#) between national associations.

I wonder whom can you contact to get information on the various ways to reach texts, materials, and trainings for your situation? If you could chose, which way would you prefer?

Website

The news about this “godly what?” spread quickly in Germany. We knew soon that we'd need a website to share information. We were—and still are—extremely lucky to have Martina, one of our Trainers, being into IT and websites and willing to set it up for very little money: www.godlyplay.de. Today, after the third relaunch, I have to warn everybody: to create a dynamic website that really invites people and also advertises training events and news is BIG work. Mind the “Golden Rule”: we wanted the design and the functionality to mirror the core values of Godly Play. We are happy to have a graphic designer who is patient enough to draw new icons (do you like them?).

According to our experiences, the area of public communication has grown into a significant part of our work and effort. In our early days, we had to raise money for every little flyer, postcard etc.

I wonder what ways suit you best to get information about Godly Play to the people around you? Maybe you like flyers—they are easy to make? Or you produce postcards that people can use? Or you think of a roll-up that helps at conferences and public places?

The film

If you enter “Godly Play” on YouTube, you'll find a channel run by the Godly Play Foundation. But there is also a lot of rubbish to see. And anyway, until a few years ago, nothing was in German! So our Board decided to make this a project. Even today, the making of “Was ist Godly Play?” was one of our most beloved projects. We were lucky to meet Uwe, a film maker, whose short piece on Protestant Schools in Saxony I had seen and liked. The Board of our cooperative wrote a story-board, which was great fun. We raised money, which was no fun. And then Uwe travelled about 1.000km across the country to catch situations

and dialects. We spent hours and hours in selecting scenes (we had material for 90 minutes and money for a 5-minute film—and in the end, the film ended up 20 minutes long!). Again: the aim was that the film mirror Godly Play values in the “Golden Rule”! Uwe was simply great in getting at eye-level with the children, making himself invisible while shooting. In 2012, when the 4th European Godly Play Conference met in Germany, we showed the film with a live-translation, prepared by Sheila Whittenberg. The response was so good that we decided to produce [a professionally dubbed version](#). It had its First Night at the North American Godly Play Conference in Toronto and went online on YouTube in 2013.

I wonder: can you imagine to produce even a small, short film about Godly Play in your mothertongue? Maybe just bits of various stories, followed by a short introduction of the concept and some national contacts? Think of the YouTube generation! But it might be the wrong way for you because you prefer the “live” experience. Maybe you say that such videos only keep people away from trainings? I wonder what is best?

Regional groups

In Germany, very soon after the first significant contact with Godly Play in 2003, people started to share their experiences with this new method in their regions. In this way, regional groups sprang up. The cooperative



Image above: Meeting of the Godly Play regional group of Saxony at the Methodist Church in Chemnitz, 2009

and its Board realized that these regional groups are a vital and vibrant part of Godly Play in Germany. They fulfill several functions: a) they coordinate activities (such as trainings and regional media-relations), b) they inform and support participation (back and forth with the cooperative, testing of stories etc), and c) they share experiences (collegial advice in the various fields of practice, in academic enrichment days). Regional groups in Germany can have their own moneys; they are (legally speaking) not parts of the cooperative.

They meet once or twice a year. Their moderators are expected to be a member of the cooperative. All Trainers in Germany have to belong to a regional group.

The development and dissemination of Godly Play does not really work top-down. In most places, it works bottom-up. Godly Play is as much a movement as it is an organization. It needs some sort of steering (a trust, foundation, or cooperative will be helpful), but at the end of the day, it is the people in the villages and cities across the world who carry Godly Play onward. The question is how the various groups of engaged people can help each other to stay in touch with the larger Godly Play community.

I wonder what tools you can develop to keep people in touch with each other, to help them to become even better storytellers, to explore the world of Godly Play even deeper? Maybe you have existing regional structures in children’s ministry where you can attach meetings? Or you develop an exchange through social media (although this is rather limited to information and facts rather than processes)?

Network meetings / national conferences

Often a training ends with enthusiastic wishes “to stay in touch”. And when people try to introduce Godly Play in their home parishes, they stumble across many new questions which cannot possibly be dealt with during the Core Training. Often such questions focus on practical issues: how do I get parents to support my Godly Play work? How can I . . . ? What should I do if . . . ? But there are also deeper questions that arise about the background of Godly Play in the context of Montessori and Cavaletti, or the notion of play, or the understanding of the Bible in the story scripts. Sometimes other persons in the home parish throw such questions in. It might happen that newly accredited storytellers feel left alone with all these new questions!

In Germany we felt that a nationwide network-meeting every second year, lasting for three days, would be appropriate for Trainers and storytellers to meet to exchange experiences and to discuss a specific topic. We organize these meetings each time at a different place, trying to support those regional groups and to widen our horizon. The first meeting in 2008 was attended by 25 persons. The sixth such conference in 2018 had 65 participants and focused on the creative activities of children in the free response time. By the way, always on the second evening we use a 90-minute slot for the general assembly of our Godly Play deutsch e.V.. New Board members are elected, accounts are given, projects and ideas are discussed. This assembly is always followed by a feast with celebration and dancing and lots of laughter! Always on the third day we celebrate the Eucharist together, as you can imagine, in a creative Godly Play-way of liturgy.



Image above: engaged group discussions on “Godly Plays contribution to Public Education”, Networkmeeting at Plön, 2010

I wonder which ways might be best in your context to keep in touch with Trainers and storytellers, to offer help and support?

Being part of the international structures

In most cases, the development, introduction, or implementation of the Godly Play method happens as a fluid exchange of experiences and knowledge between people in the given local situation and people from the outside, like Trainers, regional associations, and national cooperatives. It is, however, important to also understand that by introducing Godly Play, one becomes part of an international movement, a community across the continent and even the globe. One might not see any effects of this in the local work with children. But maybe you want to look at these international structures as a “triangle of identity and support, version 2.0 “. This international community unfolds in (at least) two directions: the exchange of wisdom regarding Godly Play and the covenants with the Godly Play Foundation, which is charged with maintaining the integrity of Godly Play as it spreads throughout the world.

As explained, Godly Play mingled its way into Germany through England. I have already mentioned the huge importance of this help. Another expression of that was the “invention” of the European Godly Play Conferences. From my previous job at the Comenius-Institute, I knew how valuable international exchange is—mind that it was at one of these conferences that I met Godly Play in 2002! So in 2005, when preparing for my second group-trip to Gill’s Godly Play-room at Cambridge, I suggested that Rebecca Nye put up such a conference in 2006. Rebecca brought Peter Privett around, and I will never forget how these two experienced Godly Players, sitting with me on the lawn of Trumpington, turned my suggested (academic) conference structure upside down into a Godly Play-like type of planning! Anyway, in the end, the first EGPC took place at Evesham, UK, followed by the second in 2008 near Madrid, the in third 2010 near

Helsinki, the fourth in 2012 in Germany, and the fifth in 2016 in Riga, Latvia. Each of these conferences were organized by a enthusiastic team of volunteers. The number of participants grew each time. There are already heralds of the next EGPC 2020 in Mechelen, Belgium!

Image below: 2nd European Godly Play Conference at Madrid, 2008: The German group introduces itself in a creative way to the conference

Similar experiences have been made by those who joined the European College of Training in Ely, UK in 2014 (the next one coming up in Driebergen, near Utrecht/NL in 2018) or who attended one of the North American Godly Play Conferences, like Evamaria Simon and Wolfhard Schweiker from Germany did in 2008. It seems as if taking part in such an international conference has a huge effect on the motivation and knowledge of those who participate.



I wonder what kind of international exchange of wisdom you could participate in? Where are your conferences, and how can you organize the transfer of experiences to those who don’t have the funding or time to travel? Maybe you have something to offer at such meetings? Maybe you can financially support Godly Play friends from countries less well-off than your own to travel to international gatherings?

But this is only one half of the international structures. The other one deals with “decision making persons and entities,” especially when it comes to licenses regarding texts, materials, and trainings. Every national group needs to get in touch with the Godly Play Foundation.

September 2004: from Germany, a representative of our proposed publisher, of our proposed material maker, and I as the cooperative representative flew to Cambridge to meet Jerome Berryman and his brother Tom (who then was administrating Godly Play Resources). We were guests at a meeting of UK Godly Play material makers that weekend and found it very helpful to have our national triangle of identity and support right together in one place with the foundations of Godly Play.



Image above: Tom and Jerome Berryman meeting with the author, Anne Grimm from the Protestant Publishing House, Leipzig and Uwe Ebert, department chief of the Lindenwerkstätten Panitzsch, Cambridge 2004 (from left to right)

In March 2005, Tom Berryman visited (beside other European material makers) the Lindenwerkstätten to offer support and advice. Another six months later, Jerome came to Germany to run an introductory day, to attend one of our translation workshops, and to visit the Evangelische Verlagsanstalt as well as the Lindenwerkstätten.



Image above: Rev. Dr. Jerome Berryman visits the Lindenwerkstätten in Oct. 2005

February 2006: during another trip to Germany, Jerome and his wife Thea met with New Testament scholar Prof. Dr. Peter Müller and his wife, Godly Play Trainer Dr. Anita Müller-Friese (Pic 21). While Peter belongs to the

friendly critical companions of Godly Play from his academic perspective, Anita belonged to the first group of Trainers in Germany.

In November 2006, Jerome had the idea to establish something like an "International Advisory Board". He invited Alison Seaman from the UK, Juha Luodeslampi from Finland, and me to attend one of the Board meetings of the Centre for the Theology of Childhood in Houston. But then, unfortunately, Jerome fell ill and could not join the Board meeting. Juha and Alison were able to cancel their flights; but I could not. So I ran into the somewhat weird situation of being the only international guest at a meeting of an "IAB" that didn't really exist. But the company of Rebecca McClain, Tom Blackmon, James Creasey of Living the Good News and the other members of the Center's Board was great and helpful anyway. On the same trip, I also visited Tom Berryman and the Godly Play Resources crew at Ashland, Kansas. In September 2008, I invited the International Advisory Board to meet prior to the 2nd EGPC (see above). This was actually the first working meeting of this group.

Images far right: IAB meeting under the Spanish Olive trees, Sept. 2008 ((from left to right: Caryl Menkhous (College of US-Trainers), Rebecca McClain (Executive Director of GPF), Tim Alderson (President of the GP-Board), Laury E. Poland (Church Publishing), Juha Luodeslampi (Finland), Anne Ludvigsen (Norway), Mike McCown (GPR), David Pritchard (Spain), Alison Seamon (UK))

When reading this, you might think that this is too much detail. And yet, it is through such stories and encounters that trustful working relationships are built.

It is through direct, trustful, and committed visits and exchange of ideas and positions that national cooperatives and the Godly Play Foundation build up a kind of trust that can carry cooperation into the future.



Since 2012, the International Advisory Board has changed into the “Godly Play International Council” (GPIC) and continues to revise a Covenant of Agreement between the national organizations to ensure quality as well as development.

I wonder which channels and what process seems appropriate for you or your national organization to get in touch with the international communication or even decision making-levels of Godly Play?

At the beginning of this article I wrote that I would concentrate on Phase I, the introduction of Godly Play into Germany. I believe that there is a certain set of “intro-questions” that will arise everywhere in a more or less similar manner, no matter where you live. For us, this phase took about 6 years.

Phase II (2006-2011) was coined by two directions of activity. Direction one was to implement what we were given through the Godly Play books, structures, trainings, and materials. Direction two dealt with critical discussions on the concept, on many questions around adaptation of stories and materials, on discussions with the German experts on religious education (RE), Sunday School, education in parishes. In doing so, we were part of the international discussion. The International Advisory Board tried to describe “core values” of Godly Play and discovered that first of all we need a common understanding on how to develop such core values, and where to derive them from . . .

In Phase III (2011-2018), we tried to put into practice what we had learned. This included the ongoing classical Godly Play work, but it also meant searching for an understanding of Godly Play that would fit into and communicate more precisely with the German context of RE in church and society. In 2016, the general assembly of our cooperative defined a German name for this attempt: “Gott im Spiel,” a name that does not exactly translate “Godly Play” but also indicates the close connection. Under this name, we have developed a set of stories for the German classroom and a handbook

for practitioners. Godly Play offers a reliable basis (in ideas, values as well as in terms of copyright) under which the special needs of our language-area can be recognized and dealt with. I therefore want to call this phase “contextualisation”. In the same Phase, we realized that the growing span of activities and members in our cooperative required adaptations in structure and ways of steering our cooperative. Together with the College of Training, the Board developed a new model of six “areas of working” that offer playful opportunities for Trainers and storytellers to participate in the necessary structural work according to personal preferences.

Phase IV has begun in 2018. I call it “consolidation”. We will take time to slow down. The new structures will require some attention. The new Gott im Spiel-stories will create the need for enrichment-trainings.

Looking back at the “early years of Godly Play in Germany”, from 10-15 years later leaves me nearly breathless! So much happened in such a short time, so many people joined and invested their time, competence, and money. So many people trusted that this all would not be in vain.



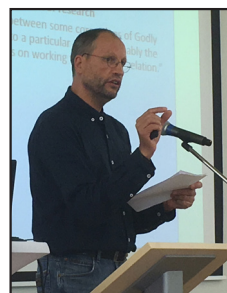
I wonder what you liked best about this story?

I wonder which part you might think is most important?

I wonder where you are in this story?

I wonder what part we could leave out and still had all we need in this story?

I wonder what you wonder about . . .



Dr Martin Steinhäuser was instrumental in bringing Godly Play to Germany, and has provided leadership as Chair of Godly Play Germany since. He is also a Godly Play trainer. Martin is a professor at Evangelische Hochschule in Moritzburg, and a researcher in the area of church work with children.



GODLY PLAY *in Canada*

By AMY CRAWFORD

Godly Play began to emerge in Canada in 2003, initially through the efforts of The United Church of Canada. In 2003, Allison Rennie, Program Coordinator at the Naramata Centre, an education and retreat centre of the United Church in British Columbia, attended a children's spirituality conference in Chicago. At that conference she was introduced to the work of Jerome Berryman and Rebecca Nye. Also that year, Amy Crawford began working at the General Council Office of The United Church of Canada as Program Coordinator, Children and Young Teens. Amy had been introduced to Godly Play in 1997 and 1998 at a series of workshops led by Jerome Berryman in Kansas City. With her green, red, and blue binders of stories, Amy used Godly Play in local churches

throughout the late 1990's and early 2000's. Her position with the national church encouraged her to think about a broader introduction of Godly Play in Canada.



In 2004, Allison attended a Core Training in California and invited Jerome Berryman to present some lectures at a children's ministry event at the Naramata Centre, which Amy also attended. Both Amy and Allison continued using and promoting Godly Play in Canada and were selected to attend a Training of Trainers in Dallas in 2007. In 2008, US Trainer Becki Stewart came to Naramata Centre and, with assistance from Amy and Allison, trained six additional

trainers all from British Columbia. In 2009, a second group of Trainers was trained by US Trainer Caryl Menkhus and Amy Crawford in Toronto, including people from Ontario,



Quebec, and the Maritimes, thus extending the reach and potential of Godly Play across the country and to other denominations. Since then, we have trained two further classes of Trainers and now have active Trainers in most regions.

As well as advocating for Godly Play nationally, in 2003 Amy also began a Godly Play program at a local Anglican Church where her husband, Andrew Sheldon, was the Parish Priest. Andrew became a strong supporter and promoter of Godly Play, and slowly Godly Play began to find a presence in the Anglican Church as well. From a position of strength on the west coast and a modest presence in the Toronto area, Godly Play began to expand across the country. In time, Godly Play came to be established in the Maritimes, Newfoundland and Labrador, and throughout Southern and Central Ontario. Through Naramata's influence, Godly Play spread from British Columbia to the neighbouring province of Alberta and into Manitoba. It is probably fair to say that the strongest Godly Play activity is to be found on the two coasts.

Canada is an officially bilingual country and has long had a French speaking presence in Quebec City through the leadership of Godly Play Trainer and Laval University professor Robert Hurley. We now have another bilingual Trainer, and recently a first Core Training in Montreal took place. As we look forward to a French translation of *The Complete Guide* and *Teaching Godly Play*, we can only imagine that Godly Play will grow in francophone Canada.

Godly Play Canada has also played a role in the international community. Canadians have been present on the various boards and councils of the global community from the start. As well, Godly Play Canada has had a key role in spreading the Godly Play message throughout the world. Robert

travelled to Switzerland to do a Core Training in French, and Andrew and Amy have done Core Trainings and trained Trainers in Australia, South Africa, India, and New Zealand.

A non-profit corporation for Godly Play Canada was established in 2008. The Board has met to establish principles, practices, and protocols for Godly Play in Canada. Under board leadership, Godly Play Canada has a [website](#), an [electronic newsletter](#), and an active [social media presence](#). The Board, in its membership, also reflects regional, linguistic, and ecclesiastical diversity.

Godly Play in Canada continues to grow and spread with the most use in Anglican and United Churches, and a growing presence in other traditions.



Amy Crawford is the Team Leader for Faith Formation and Mission at the General Council Office of the United Church of Canada. She is also the volunteer Executive Director of Godly Play Canada.



GODLY PLAY TRAINING *in Harare Zimbabwe*

By GODLY PLAY SOUTH AFRICA TRAINERS JOAN AND STAN TRUBY

The Zimbabwe Godly Play story started in 2014 at the Anglicans Ablaze Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa after Andrew Sheldon of Godly Play Canada inspired the audience with his Godly Play lecture and workshop. Bishop Chad from Zimbabwe was there, and two years later he sent Fr William Nyapokoto and Fungai Madziwa on the 14-hour-long road trip from Harare to South Africa to attend a Godly Play Core Training.

What joy to hear from Fungai some months later about how he had started telling stories despite his difficulties in finding and making the story materials! And so began our initial conversation

to plan the first Zimbabwean Godly Play training in Harare.

He had inspired others there to learn this method, and I was keen to visit and support him by offering training in his country.

Finances were tight as they could not ask more than \$40 per participant due to the dire economic situation there. They were able to cover everything needed for the training as well as the Trainers' accommodation and food (the Trainer fees were waived), but were unable to cover the cost for our flights out of the monies received for the training. I remembered something I had heard about possible sponsorship being available through the International



Pictured left: Fungai Madziwa telling the Ten Best Ways to a group of families near Lake Chivero



We ended the afternoon with talk of future training, as well as looking further ahead to a time of Godly Play Zimbabwe with its own trainers one day! We said goodbye to wonderful people who had become friends, but giving one another the hope that we would meet again in the not too distant future!



Development Fund of the Godly Play Foundation, and I applied. The application was granted, and Zimbabwe committed to pay the shortfall. We finalised arrangements with Fungai and Fr William—everyone feeling very excited. We left for Zimbabwe with a suitcase full of stories and training materials.

I had heard about Zimbabwean hospitality, and we were not disappointed. We were in fact quite overwhelmed by the kindness of everyone. A brand-new house was put at our disposal for our accommodation and as the training venue, for which we thank the generous owner. We lacked for nothing, and no trouble was spared in getting the items we needed for the training or in making sure that we felt at home.

The training went very well. Fr William presided over a very special Eucharist in our Godly Play space on Sunday, and we had beautiful singing and some beautiful wondering questions based on the readings in the place of a sermon. It was indeed thought-provoking and very touching. Towards the end of the last day of training, we were honoured to have Bishop Chad join us for the Circle of the Church Year story told by Fungai, Godly Play's ambassador in Zimbabwe.

The Bishop gave us all his full support of the programme and committed to buying a few sets of the story volumes for the use of those who had done the training. He also assisted us in giving the 13 new story-tellers their certificates, to the sounds of much joy from the group.



Bishop Chad

BOCA RATON, FLORIDA



WHITTENBERG, GERMANY



WETASKIWIN, CANADA



Godly Play ROOMS



PINE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA



FROM THE FOUNDATION

Dear Friends,

Happy Green, Growing Days! Having children and being involved in church work means that my calendar revolves around the school and program calendar. So, this time of year feels like an ending to me. The busy holidays are past us, we have celebrated the risen

Christ, and our school and church programs are over for the year. This is often the time of year when I step back and reflect. This past program year, Godly Play has seen growth in numbers, languages, trainings, and connections. We are particularly excited about our two newest endeavors – Stories of God at Home: A Godly Play Approach and the US Missioner Program! The addition of these two new programs will make our circles even wider and stronger. None of this growth would have been possible without each and every one of you and the big work that you are doing to bring Godly Play to more people.

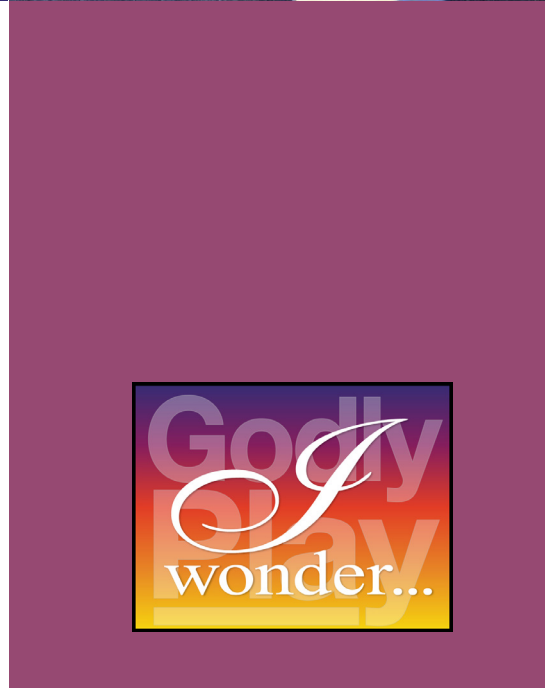
Our US Membership Program has seen continued growth this year. Many of you are taking advantage of our membership benefits such as discounts on training and resources and invitations to quarterly webinars. If you are getting ready to renew your membership and to commit to another year in community with us, we are offering some special renewal gifts that I know will deepen our relationship even more!

My favorite part about my work with the Foundation is being able to talk with Godly Players around the country about your programs. Some of you are in an exciting phase of growth as you add new Godly Play rooms. Others are doing the important work of implementing brand-new programs in your congregations and schools. Hearing about your passion for bringing more children and adults into Godly Play circles gives me so much hope because I know that you are all spreading hope and love as you work to bring about God's Kingdom!

I pray that the ending of this program year provides opportunities for new and exciting beginnings in the autumn. I also hope that you will find some time this summer to relax and remember all the gifts of the other days of the past program year.

With hope & gratitude,

Teresa Phares
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