

## So, what IS Godly Play? And how can we all grow from it?

"I wonder." This phrase is at the very heart of Godly Play, the education model used with GCPC preschoolers and early elementary aged children. Godly Play, based on the methods of Montessori, encourages children to engage in the stories of scripture in ways that invite them into the Story of God's people, all the while teaching children the sacred language of faith.



Before crossing the threshold from the hallway (common space) into the Godly Play room (sacred space), the children are given time to calm their spirits and ready their bodies for Godly Play. They enter the room one at a time and are invited into the circle by name.

In the Godly Play room, you will not find rows of chairs or lots of tables. Instead, children are invited to gather in a circle on the floor to hear and see the story. The story is always followed by *wondering questions* like, "I wonder how the lost sheep felt when she was found by the Good Shepherd?" or "I

wonder how the person who was robbed and beaten felt when the Good Samaritan stopped to help him?" Consider this description of wondering from Dr. Rebecca Nye, author, researcher & consultant in Childhood Spirituality, National Coordinator Godly Play in the UK.

"Immediately following each story, the group shares in a 'wondering' session, reflecting on how different people, feelings and issues in the story raised feelings or thoughts in their own minds. Authenticity is seen as an important virtue here, in what is after all intimate spiritual conversation. What seems to be a key element of Godly Play is an ability to demonstrate the open potential, the infinite layers of meaning and connections that faith stories contain. It tries to avoid, at all costs, the impression that religious narratives have a closed system of meaning, a code that, once cracked, does not need further thought or engagement."

Plenty of time is given to wondering because this is where children (and the adults who lead them) imagine who God really could be. Following the story time children are offered the opportunity to choose how they will respond to the story through art, sacred play or working with one of the stories they have heard.

After a time of responding to the story and tidying up, the children gather again in the circle to enjoy "The Feast," a special time for singing and prayer as we share a simple meal of cookies and water. This time is symbolic of the times that Jesus, the disciples and the early church members shared meals together as community. Before leaving, each child receives a blessing from the storyteller, a beautiful way of sending the child into a new week with the reminder, "You are a beloved child of God."

## Here's why we should care

The teachings of Godly Play have the great potential for building the foundation of our children's faith. As a child is baptized, we congregation members speak vows of promise to care for the child, to help in the faithful nurture of the child, and to help the child know what it means to be in a loving community. Godly Play is one way we keep this promise.

### **What does it take to be a Godly Play Storyteller?**

- Do you love children and enjoy being a part of their growing in faith?
- Do you love the sacred stories of scripture and long to take more time learning and listening to God through these stories?
- Have you been looking for a new way to serve at GCPC and are available on several Sunday mornings, 9:15-10:15?



If you answered YES to the questions above, then Godly Play might just be the next place God is calling you to serve. If you would like to learn more about Godly Play, please contact Heather Ferguson, Director of Children's and Family Ministry at GCPC ([hfergson@gcpcusa.org](mailto:hfergson@gcpcusa.org)).