

Beginning the Godly Play Church School Year

Welcome to Godly Play!

Godly Play offers a creative, child-honoring way of entering into and experiencing the biblical story. In Godly Play, we play with the language of God and God's People: our sacred stories, parables, liturgical actions and silence. Through this powerful language, through our wondering, through the community of players gathered together, we hear the deepest invitation of all: an invitation to come play with God.

What Happens in a Godly Play Session?

At the Threshold

A doorkeeper waits by the door to the Godly Play classroom, warmly welcoming children as they arrive. He says (of course, "he" could also be a "she"), "I'm so glad you're here. Are you ready to be part of a Godly Play classroom?"

Building the Circle

Children make their way into the room and sit in a circle around the storyteller. She talks (of course, "she" could also be a "he") quietly and easily with the children, building a community where each and every participant is warmly welcomed.

The storyteller says, "We need to get ready for the story." She shows how by sitting quietly, legs crossed, hands at the ankles. Conversation yields to silence. She smiles and says, "Watch where I go to get this story."

Presenting the Lesson

The storyteller goes to get the materials for the day's presentation—a box, a basket or a tray. She brings these materials to the circle.

Slowly, deliberately, she brings out the story figures and objects, gently moving and arranging them as she tells the story. The children's eyes focus where her eyes and hands focus, on the small wooden figures, painted plaques or beautifully finished props moving in the circle

The lesson continues, moves forward...and concludes.

The storyteller sits back, but keeps her eyes on the figures. "I wonder," she says. "I wonder what part of this story you like best?" There is silence for a moment, and then a child answers...and then perhaps another. The storyteller affirms each answer.

"I wonder what part is the most important?" Children name different parts. Every serious struggle to answer is affirmed.

"I wonder where you are in the story or what part of the story is about you?"

"I wonder if there is any part of this story we could leave out and still have all the story we need?"

The storyteller listens respectfully to every answer, repeating it, never calling one response good or another wrong. It is the child's effort to speak theologically in a seriously playful way that is being supported.

Response

The wondering sinks into silence. The children watch as the storyteller puts away the lesson. She invites them to think about what work they would like to do in response to the lesson. The children have been involved in the story and the wondering. Now that absorbed involvement continues as they, one by one, name what response they choose to make.