

HELP FROM GODLY PLAY TRAINERS

HELP WITH NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS: CONGREGATIONS AND PARENTS

IMPLEMENTING GODLY PLAY

In order to share more information with the congregation about Godly Play we began several projects. We produced a Godly Play Handbook which included what Godly Play is, how it works in a classroom, stories and pictures from the children and suggested books to read on children's spirituality. The handbook was produced in large quantities and made available to all the families and anyone else in the congregation who was interested.

Another way that we shared word of this ministry with others was through a "Godly Play Worship Service." Everything from the bulletin to the hymns and prayers related to Godly Play, to children and to families. This was also the day that fourth grade children received their Bibles. The service began with a processional led by children and families. They carried in a large papier mache set of the Holy Family, the altar cloth, candles and other items that belonged on the altar. One by one, beginning with the altar cloth, children and parents placed all the worship materials on the altar. A storyteller presented the Story of Noah and the Ark to the congregation followed by the four wondering questions which were printed in the bulletin. The congregation was given a short time to share their response to the questions with the person sitting next to them. I shared a short sermon on Faith Formation and the Work of the Children, and several of the teachers shared their thoughts on the experiences of working with the children in the classroom. It was a great service, well received by the congregation and significantly helped to further the entire congregation's understanding of Godly Play.

—by Kathy Meyer

ADVOCATING FOR GODLY PLAY IN YOUR CONGREGATION

by Kathleen Capcara

The Godly Play approach can appear radical to many people who are unfamiliar with its effectiveness and widespread success. Most adults instinctively feel that today's children should be taught the way they were taught. This can present a challenge to the educators who want to introduce Godly Play in a new setting. But if you take the necessary precautions in shepherding Godly Play through the hierarchy, you will be more likely to gain the support you need to begin using Godly Play in your situation. Here are the steps to making sure Godly Play is taken seriously as you present it. These guidelines apply when you are first beginning the program as well as when you are expanding the program by adding more classrooms or implementing Godly Play in other situations or other aspects of congregational life such as Children's Chapel or intergenerational events.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

If you sense Godly Play will be perceived as "controversial," talk with the church education professionals in your area who are using Godly Play. You will be able to find some contacts through the Godly Play web sites. Don't forget to be in touch with educators in other denominations who are using Godly Play. Keep a record of what you learn.

PUT IT IN WRITING

Even if you are not in a situation where a formal presentation will be needed, design a brief proposal document, with bullet points explaining your ideas for Godly Play. The act of writing down your plan for Godly Play will help you articulate it when you talk with others. When you put your ideas in writing, mention the place or places that have successfully used Godly Play. Be sure to include a list of resources needed to implement Godly Play. (See the checklist on page 61 of *How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*.) Write down a time line for implementing the program, the number of volunteers or staff required and the estimated cost of your plan for Godly Play. Include at least a sentence or two about the benefits of using Godly Play in your setting.

LINE UP ALLIES

Talk informally to the leaders in your congregation that you work with most often. This is better done one-on-one and face-to-face. Your enthusiasm and preparation will be best perceived in person. Use the telephone or e-mail only if the people with whom you are communicating know you well. Talk with parish leaders and those

who have actively supported children's programs in the past. Present your idea for Godly Play and ask for their feedback. They may have refinements on your plan that will make it even better. Tell them your idea is in the beginning stages and may not be implemented, but ask for their support. Would they (or their families) participate in Godly Play?

PAY ATTENTION TO THE "SQUEAKY WHEEL"

Once your plan for implementing Godly Play has been refined and has grassroots support, use the proper chain of command to present your Godly Play program idea to the powers that be. Each congregation and situation will be different. Whether it is the pastor or rector, the Christian formation committee, the parish leaders or all three, present Godly Play to the right people in the right order. Many ideas have been rejected because of a failure to inform the most sensitive person first. If you don't know the right order, network with your allies to find that information out.

REMEMBER LEARNING PREFERENCES

Everyone has a preferred approach to taking in new information and to making sense of the information once they have received it. Use the written proposal you prepared if you think it will help. Individuals with a "concrete/sequential" learning style and visual learners will respond well to a written document. People who are "abstract/random" and auditory learners may like it better if you explain your ideas to them. Because Godly Play lessons appeal to people of all learning styles, it is always a good idea to present an actual lesson as a way of showing people how Godly Play works. You can often borrow one set of lesson materials from another church in your area for demonstration purposes.

If the "personal chemistry" is not right between you and a person key to the approval of your idea, consider asking someone you trust to present Godly Play to that key person.

HAVE A "PLAN B"

If you appear to be too attached to Godly Play in all its details, some people may be more likely to resist it. Congressional bills often end up with amendments tacked on to gain full approval of the Senate and House. Be willing to let your program idea evolve. The more people feel that they have contributed to the development of Godly Play in your congregation or setting, the more likely it is to be a success. However, don't give in on details of the Godly Play approach that you feel are essential. Remember that one or two people enthusiastic about Godly Play can begin using the program on a shoestring budget by starting small and growing gradually.

YOU ARE NOT YOUR IDEA

Jesus said a prophet is often without recognition in his own country. Try not to take it personally if your Godly Play proposal is not approved. Perhaps the time was not right. If you still feel Godly Play would do great things for your congregation or situation, you might consider sharing it with another professional as something to try in her setting. If it is successful there, you will have additional validation the next time you present Godly Play where you work.

THE MANY WAYS TO USE GODLY PLAY

by Kathy Meyer

INSIDE THE WALLS

- Sunday school (an entire Godly Play classroom, or a Godly Play story told as part of the learning experience in a Rotation Model classroom or any type of Sunday school setting)
- adult education classes
- worship services (sermon or children's sermon)
- church council meetings
- meetings for men's groups, women's groups, youth groups, parents' groups
- confirmation classes
- inquirers' classes
- intergenerational events
- retreats
- communion instruction classes

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

- senior citizen groups
- nursing homes
- hospitals and hospices
- prisons
- inner city neighborhoods
- homes
- extended family gatherings
- college and seminary classes