

Godly Play at West Hills Friends



What is Godly Play?

Godly Play is the name of the Sunday School program we use for the K-5 children at West Hills. Developed by Jerome Berryman, Godly Play teaches children the art of using Christian language- parable, sacred story, and silence- helping them become more fully aware of the mystery of God's presence in their lives. This approach is quite different from the traditional model in which the teacher tells the children what they need to know. Godly Play is not about things that are that simple. It is not just about learning lessons or keeping children entertained. It is about locating each lesson in the whole system of Christian language and involving the creative process to discover the depths of meaning in them. It's about understanding how each of the stories of God's people connects with the child's own experience and relationship with God. Godly Play respects the innate spirituality of children and encourages curiosity and imagination in experiencing the mystery and joy of God.

More about Godly Play:

- Godly Play is a creative and imaginative approach to Christian nurture.
- Godly Play encourages participants to make meaning for themselves by inviting them into stories and providing the opportunity for them to connect the stories with their personal experience.
- Godly Play is a non-coercive way to encourage people to move into larger dimensions of belief and faith through wondering questions and open-ended response time.
- Godly Play values process, openness and discovery

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what to expect on sunday mornings

The Very Beginning

Every Sunday from September through May, we invite the children of our meeting to their time together around 10:15 am. Then the children are escorted down to the Godly Play room in the community building by the doorkeeper. As a parent, if you feel more comfortable escorting your child to the room yourself, you are more than welcome to do so. The children are greeted at the door by the doorkeeper. This adult's role is to welcome every child into the classroom and ask them a simple question, "Are you ready?" This question is designed to help every child be ready to enter a space that asks them to be attentive. Each child is introduced to the room one by one.

Building the Circle & Storytelling

When the children enter the room they are greeted by the storyteller. They take a seat in a circle on the floor. Once the children are in the room, the doorkeeper takes their position in the back, by the door. After a brief introduction the storyteller retrieves the materials necessary to tell the story that is scheduled for that Sunday (see schedule on the back of this brochure). The storyteller presents the story to the children, and when he or she is finished they ask the children open questions that encourage the children to pay attention to their own responses vs. responding to adult expectations:

- I wonder what you like best about this story?
- I wonder which is the most important part?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder if there is any part we could leave out, and still have all the story we need?

The children are invited to respond to any of the questions, but the choice is always theirs.

Response Time

After the wondering questions, the storyteller goes around the circle to ask each child what work they would like to do. The work time is a response to the story told, or to a story told before. The children have many options for response time, using a variety of offerings such as: painting (water color, tempera), drawing (pencil, crayon, colored pencil) modeling clay, play with story materials (wooden figures, sand, etc.). This time typically extends from 15-20 minutes. At the end the children are encouraged to clean up their own materials. If they have work that they would like to continue the following Sunday, it is stored in the room for next week. Considering the materials being used, parents should be aware of the potential for art related accidents to clothing.

Closing the Circle/Pickup

The storyteller typically calls the children back into the circle in time for parent pickup around 11:30 am. Depending on time, the storyteller will ask the children to share joys and concerns from their week, and then will close with prayer. Parents are encouraged to knock on the door when they arrive. The doorkeeper will open the door, identify the parent and then call the child who is to be picked up. As the child leaves both the storyteller and doorkeeper express gratitude for the child and their attendance.

The doorkeeper and storyteller stay in the room until all the children are picked up by their parents.

The Godly Play Room

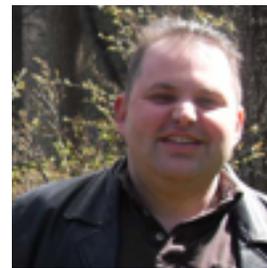
Godly Play is acutely aware of the messages that we pass on to our children. The Godly Play room is designed in such a way to communicate the importance of the work they are doing every Sunday morning. Like everything in Godly Play, we want to take seriously the spirituality of our children. The room, story materials, and art supplies all facilitate this goal.

meet the godly play team

All Storytellers and Doorkeepers have gone through background checks, and have been screened to ensure the safety of our children. They are wonderful people!



Caryl Menkhus



Matthew Cox



Jayne Calkins



Steve Messinetti



Bill Norris-York



Mark Pratt-Russum



Jen Seamans



Beth Pratt-Russum



*Not Pictured: Cindy Stadel

