

## What is Godly Play?

Based on a Montessori interpretation of religious education, Godly Play uses a multi-sensory approach to telling Bible stories with three-dimensional materials. This imaginative method serves to support, challenge, empower, and guide children along on their spiritual journey.

Godly Play assumes children have some experience of the Mystery of God's presence in their lives, but that they lack the language, permission, and understanding to express and enjoy this experience in our secular and materialistic culture. During Godly Play, children enter into the sacred stories of the people of God, into the parables Jesus told, into the Christian sacramental and liturgical tradition. Through "entering in," participants discover God, themselves, one another, and the world around them; it's much like what happens to grown-ups when we attend a church service that moves us.

The Godly Play classroom is a place for children to be themselves, to come closer to the mystery of God's presence, to learn the language of Christian people, to form community and take care of one another. Sacred stories, symbols, and liturgical actions are invitations to enter into the work of discovering God.

Godly Play was developed and has been classroom tested since 1972 by Episcopal priest, author and teacher Jerome W. Berryman. It is used by diverse denominations throughout the United States and internationally.

Please let us know of your questions, ideas, or reflections!

Below is the contact information for those best able to answer your questions:

### **Godly Play Contacts:**

***Dianne McFarland, Story Preparer***

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***Judy McCarthy, Storyteller Scheduler***

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***Kristin Bornholdt Collins, Greeter Scheduler***

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***The Rev. Madelyn L. Betz, Chair***

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**We are so pleased your child is part of our Godly Play community of children!** Many parents, grandparents and caregivers are reporting to us the surprising ways their youngsters are discovering divine Mystery in their lives. We suspect that, before long, you'll be noticing this too!

### **The Godly Play Foundation**

[www.godlyplay.org](http://www.godlyplay.org)

#### **St Thomas**

[www.saintthomashanover.org](http://www.saintthomashanover.org)

9 W. Wheelock St. Hanover, NH 03755

603-643-4155

Parish Office Hours:

Monday-Friday, 8:30am-2:30pm

**All welcome - no exceptions -  
to worship, love, serve and grow**



**Sunday School  
for Children  
Age 3 to Grade 4**

**Gathering every  
Sunday at 9:45am**

**St. Thomas Episcopal Church  
Hanover, New Hampshire**

# Ten Best Ways for Parents

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One of our Godly Play stories tells the children about the “Ten Best Ways.” It’s the story of how God loved his people so much that God wanted them to know the best ways to live. We also know these as the Ten Commandments!

Below is our Godly Play version of the “Ten Best Ways for Parents.” We offer them not as commandments, but as ways we’ve discovered help you best support your child’s spiritual formation through Godly Play.

**Here are ten ways you can help your child enter this Mystery:**

**1. Please help your children be on time--they won’t want to miss a thing!** Godly Play begins at **9:45 a.m.** on Sunday mornings with Celebration and Song.

**2. Visit the restroom.** Little ones find it easier to stay ready if they’ve been to the restroom right before they start Godly Play.

**3. Help your children learn to hang up their coats,** put away their boots, etc. before entering the classroom.

**4.** Because bringing toys or stuffed animals into the room often distracts the children from the story, it is helpful to **encourage your children to leave these treasures at home.** If a child cannot be parted from a special item, however, it can be brought into the classroom.

**5. The Godly Play story circle is built slowly and lovingly.** When children arrive, they wait outside the door while the greeting teacher welcomes them, helping them get ready to enter the circle.

**6. Parents and caregivers are welcome in the classroom.** Because we have such respect for the community of children and the way God is working within it, even the teachers keep a low profile. We ask that parent visitors help maintain the quiet and calmness of the classroom in order to help the children fully experience the story. If you need to enter the classroom after the story has started, we request that you enter quietly. Alternatively, the Greeting Teacher will be glad to bring your child to you if you need to talk with him/her during class time or to pick him/her up early.

**7. After church, keep in mind that your child may not always be able to tell you what they learned,** because a big part of what they learned is about *how to learn* about God and ways of God’s people. Many children just don’t have the language to talk about this; but you may be surprised when they say something that lets you know they “got it.”

**8. Also, keep in mind that children will not always be able to show you a physical product for their day’s “work.”** In Godly Play we focus on our relationship with God and the way relationships work in the community of children rather than on creating things for the children to take home. Sometimes, though, they *will* have treasures to show you.

**9. We welcome you to learn more about the Godly Play.** Contact one of us for an introduction and feel free to join us at Sunday School to observe a Godly Play session.

**10. We welcome all volunteers** and hope you will find a way to become involved with Children's Ministry here at St. Thomas! Please contact us (see back) for details on how to participate.