

I Wonder...

A child's natural sense of wonder is evidence of a spiritual life, the depths of which we, as adults, may not fully understand. By "wondering together" through scriptural lessons, we can begin to give children religious language that will allow them to express their spirituality.

Godly play is a unique program, based on the methods of Dr. Maria Montessori. The use of Montessori's approach to education has been adapted to Godly Play in order to stimulate children's active participation in story and ritual and to awaken their creativity for the learning of the language, sacred stories, parables, liturgical action and silence of the Christian tradition. This is the most appropriate kind of language to cope with the existential limits to our being and knowing.



Godly Play begins at 9:45 in the room located in the Chapel. The children return at the peace to celebrate Eucharist with the church family.

Fall 2011 Schedule of Lessons

- September 25 - The Circle of the Church Year
- October 2 - Creation
- October 9 - Noah
- October 16 – The Great Family
- October 23 - Jacob
- October 30 - Joseph
- November 6 - Moses
- November 13 - Elijah
- November 20 – The Holy Family
- November 27 - Thanksgiving weekend - no Godly Play
- December 4 - Advent I & Advent II
- December 11 - Advent III & IV
- December 18 – Christmas Pageant Rehearsal
- December 25 - Merry Christmas- No Godly Play

For more information contact:
St. James Episcopal Church
2423 SW Bascom Norris Dr.
Lake City, FL 32025
386.752.2218

We must not just see the child, but God in him.”

Dr. Maria Montessori



Godly Play

An imaginative method for presenting scripture stories to children

Developed by Jerome W. Berryman

Understanding Godly Play

What makes Godly Play different?

-Storytelling-

The Godly Play method uses storytelling to convey spiritual lessons.

Stories are presented dynamically, as if they were happening now. The story is always told-- not read-- in a way intended to heighten the listener's experience of awe and mystery.

Multisensory materials are presented as a part of each story. These materials are later available to the child to manipulate as she works to incorporate each lesson as part of her spiritual experience.

Bible stories are presented in an open-ended way. "morals" or doctrinal points are not given, but emerge through active "wondering".

-The Prepared Environment-

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.

Just as adults experience the Church Sanctuary as sacred space, so do the children experience the Godly Play room as sacred space.

What Happens During Godly Play?

Children are invited into a peaceful room, where adults model reflective behavior and where lessons can be explored. Religious stories or parables are shared with the children using three-dimensional materials that invite them into the stories and connect them to their personal experience. Open ended "I wonder..." questions and ample response time give the children the chance to consider their own questions and reflect on the story from their own perspective.

They then choose from a range of options to respond to the story. After they clean up from their response time, they enjoy a "feast" (snack and juice).

Each class parallels the experience of the Eucharist. Each session includes a period of Preparation (meeting and greeting), the Ministry of the Word (listening and responding to a Bible story), Communion (sharing food and drink), and a Blessing and Dismissal.

At the end of our time together, each child is thanked for coming, and the class is brought to the "big church" for Communion.

This is play. It is Godly. It is meeting God along with the children rather than teaching them what we, as adults, think they ought to know.

The Roles of the Facilitators

One teacher is the lead Storyteller while the other manages the more practical issues and needs, including greeting the children and encouraging them to collect themselves quietly so the group may begin. Both teachers act as spiritual supporters and guides and are there in service to the children and to support the community that develops.

They understand that each child has a unique and independent relationship with God.



Each week we invite God's presence and grow in community as we experience a deepening spiral curriculum. In Godly Play, we play with the language of God and God's people: our sacred stories, parables, liturgical lessons and silence. Through this powerful language and wondering about the stories, our circle of children hear the deepest invitation of all:

Come play with God.