

How to Build a Godly Play Program

If you are considering setting up a Godly Play program in your parish, gathering all the materials is one of the most important pieces of the process. A considerable amount of time, talent and treasure will be invested in assembling what is needed for this ministry. As a result, good stewardship practices with respect to each of these areas of resource should be used as this program is being built. This will ensure that what are invested are the best offerings of the community for this ministry.

Building any new ministry within a parish, takes the support of the full congregation, in one form or another – there are many ways that members of the congregation can contribute to developing a Godly Play program. In order for Godly Play, or any new program to be successful in a parish, it must have broad support and investment from the membership and leaders of the parish. In order to build this support and investment, many conversations will need to be had so that people are familiar with Godly Play and why it is the right program for a particular parish. The following guide, lays out the most important steps in that process and what sort of financial and time commitment will be necessary from the parish along the way. The larger the parish, the longer it will take to get a Godly Play program up and running. If you put in the time in having conversations and doing training before you begin to use Godly Play then the program is more likely to be successful. For parishes with fewer resources to purchase or find materials, I would also strongly recommend a gradual introduction of Godly Play – training one leader at a time, using this approach occasionally and gradually building your collection of story materials.

First things First:

If you are considering using Godly Play, in one form or another in your parish, the first thing to purchase are the Godly Play books: Volumes 1-4 contain all the background information at stories you will need for the first 3-4 years of your program and cost about \$25 dollars each. You can purchase volume 1 alone for just the background and method information, volumes 2-4 have stories.

Total cost \$100

Time invested 20 minutes, to purchase books online

Another way to learn about Godly Play is by attending an information and exposure session. At present these are being offered at different Churches around the Diocese. Please contact Caitlin for information on attending or hosting an exposure event. Clergy, wardens and other parish leaders who are considering Godly Play for their parish are advised to attend one such event. These events are about the philosophy of Godly Play, and why it might be appropriate for your parish (they are less about how). This is an important step in the process of garnering support for Godly Play from parish leadership – clergy, wardens, parish council, parents, youth and all staff and volunteers who work with children and youth should be consulted about any potential changes to children/youth spiritual formation programming as their insights and support will all be valuable. There is usually a nominal fee associated with attending such an event, around \$10 or so, sometimes including lunch or other snacks.

Total cost \$40 (For 4 people from one parish at an event)

Time invested 8 hours (2hrs for 4 people)

Training:

Once you have purchased the Godly Play books and have decided to use this approach to spiritual formation, in one way or another, the next thing to pursue is training. Staff and volunteers who will have a leadership role in Godly Play should receive full Godly Play training. Clergy who may not have a direct involvement in program delivery, but will have a support or supervisory role in the administration of Godly Play, should also receive at least some training in Godly Play.

At present, there are two different training models: 8 hr Introductory Training followed by 12 hr Core Training = Complete training or 3x8 hr Full training. The second model is newer, but is preferred by Godly Play Canada at the moment. The costs associated with each work out to \$375/person. Trainings happen regularly in BC, but usually only 2 or 3 times a year in the Lower Mainland and space is limited. Sorrento Centre and Vancouver Island also have training opportunities, but there would be higher costs associated with them due to travel costs. (This may also be the case for training in the Lower Mainland depending on the location of the parish). It can be a 6 month-1 year process for a parish to train the number of leaders needed to lead Godly Play in a parish. Here is a breakdown of how many volunteer leaders are needed based on program size and format:

Program Size/Format	Minimum # of leaders with Full Training (20-24 hrs)	Minimum # of leaders with Partial Training (8 hrs Intro or training in progress)	Total Cost of training and time invested
Very Small Parish 1 class (6 students max) *Occasional or Separate program	1 paid or volunteer storyteller	Clergy	\$500 32 hrs of training
Very Small Parish 1 class (6 students max) **Weekly Sunday School program	1 paid Godly Play leader or 3 rotating weekly volunteer storytellers	Clergy	\$500 - \$1500 32 – 80 hrs of training
Small Parish 1 class (7-15 students) *Occasional or Separate program	1 paid Godly Play leader or 1 volunteer storyteller	Clergy and 1 volunteer doorkeeper	\$625 48 hrs of training
Small Parish 1 class (7-15 students) **Weekly Sunday School program	1 paid Godly Play leader or 3 rotating weekly volunteer storytellers	Clergy and 3 rotating volunteer doorkeepers	\$875 - \$1625 56 – 104 hrs of training
Small to Middle-Sized Parish 2 classes (15-30 students total) *Occasional or Separate program	2 paid Godly Play leaders or 2 volunteer storytellers	Clergy and 2 rotating volunteer doorkeepers	\$1125 72 hrs of training
Small to Middle-Sized Parish 2 classes (15-30 students total) **Weekly Sunday School program	2 paid Godly Play leaders or 6 rotating volunteer storytellers	Clergy, any children and youth staff and 6 rotating volunteer doorkeepers	\$1875 - \$3375 120 – 216 hrs of training
Middle-Sized to Large Parish 3 classes (30-45 students total) *Occasional or Separate program	3 paid Godly Play leaders or 3 volunteer storytellers	Clergy, any children and youth staff and 3 volunteer doorkeepers	\$1875 120 hrs of training
Middle-Sized to Large Parish 3 classes (30-45 students total) **Weekly Sunday School program	3 paid Godly Play leaders or 9 rotating volunteer storytellers	Clergy, any children and youth staff and 9 rotating volunteer doorkeepers	\$2625 - \$4875 168 – 312 hrs of training

*Occasional or Separate program: Godly Play happens during specific seasons or 1/month, totalling no more than 20 Sundays a year or happens at a separate time from worship

**Weekly Sunday School program: Godly Play happens up to 37 Sundays a year. (Excluding school breaks and special days) during Sunday worship.

Materials:

While people in the parish are receiving training, this is a time for support from the wider community to be built. This can happen in a number of ways, exposure sessions as mentioned earlier are a great thing for parish leaders and parents to participate in so that they know why Godly Play is being chosen as a spiritual formation program for the parish. But another way to build support and to connect the rest of the parish is to involve them in gathering the materials used in Godly Play. Another way to invite people into this process is by having a special Godly Play Fund Raiser.

In the attached chart, you will find listed all the different items you need for the stories in Vol 2-4 of the Godly Play books and the stories for which they are needed (As some pieces are shared between stories and thus do not need to be found more than once). These books include 52 presentations and so given the natural breaks in weekly spiritual formation, and the importance of repetition for Godly Play, they provide enough stories for the first three years of a Godly Play Program.

In the lists below, you will find my own recommendations on which pieces parishes should try to find at the Church or from parishioners homes, which pieces can be easily made, which pieces can be made by various more skilled craftspeople, which ones can be purchased locally and which ones most likely need to be purchased from a Godly Play supplier. When you are assembling your materials, here are some tips:

1. One person needs to coordinate the collection, fabrication and purchase of all the materials needed.
2. Phone around to other local Churches to see if they have any Godly Play materials (or Catechesis of the Good Shepherd or Young Children in Worship) you can purchase or borrow to get started or copy. This can help you get going without spending a lot of money right away.
3. See if other parishes in your deanery or archdeaconry are planning to use Godly Play – you can share some of the presentations which can be scheduled at any time of year with another parish (just make sure you coordinate your schedules first). You can also get together to make some of the materials and share crafting resources, skills (like sewing, painting or woodworking) or just work together to make the same stories at the same time.
 - a. Each parish should get their own set of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter stories as these are seasonal.
 - b. One set of sacred stories and a desert box, a set of parables and a set of other liturgical stories could be shared between three parishes in a deanery and scheduled at different times of year in each place.
 - c. An archdeaconry could share the enrichment lessons that are not seasonal.
4. Make your schedule for Godly Play first so that you know which stories you are going to need first, and which ones can be made later on. The materials coordinator will need to have this schedule as soon as possible.
5. Use the story materials checklist and the lists of materials for each story in the Godly Play books to make sure you have all the pieces for upcoming stories.

List of materials to find (in the Church or from people's homes)

This list could be put in the bulletin and people could bring things in until everything on the list is checked off (this might mean people will go out and purchase some of the items, rather than just find them in their homes).

- Set of crèche figures (natural materials and durable for use by children)
- Baskets
- Stones
- Plain wooden blocks (for cities)
- Large rock for Mount Sinai
- Heavy chain

- Wooden boat
- Bible
- Bible stand
- Matches in a container
- Candle snuffer
- Christ Candle (white pillar candle)
- Gold coins
- Tweezers
- Bowl
- Pitcher
- Fragrant oil
- Baby Doll, wrapped in white blanket or gown
- bowl of sand and tapers or tealights in holders
- Collection of crosses in a container
- Small Rug
- Tray-shaped basket
- Ukrainian Easter Eggs
- White cloth
- Picture of the last supper
- Wooden sheep figures
- Wooden liturgical furnishings (doll house furniture)
- Blank book

List of materials that can be easily made

You could plan a felt cutting day or a box painting day where these basic pieces of various stories are put together by a group of people from the parish. If you don't have someone who can make the figures for the parables, which use a lot of the felt pieces, and you are going to have to buy them from a Godly Play supplier, then make sure you don't waste time cutting out the felt pieces that come in those sets or be sure to buy those pieces from a supplier that allows you to purchase just the more complex figures for a reduced cost (St Michael's Workshop in the UK for example).

- Rectangular felt underlays for the Holy Family (white, purple, blue, red, green)
- Creation story cards
- Black underlay for Creation story
- Blue yarn for rivers
- Blue felt for water
- 13 small scrolls
- Green vine or bush for Jonah story
- Blue sea-strips (Felt)
- Advent cards
- Pictures, labels and texts for Mystery of Christmas
- Gold parable boxes
- 12 brown felt strips
- Black felt shapes
- Blue felt shape
- Green underlay for Good Shepherd
- Light brown felt road for Good Samaritan
- Brown burlap underlay
- 5 brown felt rectangles
- White round underlay
- Small Gold box for birds
- Triangular tan underlay
- Green felt shrub or tree

- Yellow seed shaped underlay
- Set of nesting boxes of various colours
- Container of Gold threads
- Gold parable cards
- Gold 'I am' cards
- Box for sorting
- Box with context cards
- Purple and white underlay
- Egg-shaped samples of colours, designs and patterns
- Symbols for the 12 apostles – with explanation cards
- 2 green circles of felt
- Card with Jesus in the Upper Room
- Card with a reader in the Synagogue
- Set of cards showing the major parts of the Eucharist
- box of prompting cards
- Red parable box
- box with cards illustrating scenes from Paul's life
- Red strip of cloth or felt
- 3 white circle underlays

List of materials that can be made by more skilled craftspeople (Sewers, woodworkers, painters, potters)

- Circle of the Church year wall hanging
- Set of crèche figures (if you can't find them, they can be made)
- Figure of the Risen Christ
- Circle of the Church year presentation set
- People of God wooden figures
- Animal wooden figures
- Wooden dove in box
- Wooden whale for Jonah
- Desert box or bag
- Heart-shaped box with tablets for the Ten Commandments
- Tent and 4 coverings
- Furnishings for Ark and Tent
- Ark of the covenant
- Temple
- Model of Bethlehem
- 5 sheep for Parable of the Good Shepherd
- Good Shepherd
- Ordinary Shepherd
- Wolf
- 2 city shapes for Parable of the Good Samaritan
- 6 people for Good Samaritan
- Picture of Samaritan helping person
- Merchant and the seller
- Merchant's possessions
- Birds of the air
- 3 earth images for Parable of the Sower
- 3 bags of grain
- Sower figure
- Woman figure
- Table figure

- Box containing loaf of bread and 3 bowls of flour for Parable of the Leaven
- Box with triangular gold leaven
- Nests for birds of the air
- Well for Parable Enrichment lesson
- Bucket
- Purple and white reversible bags
- 6 puzzle pieces that form a cross (white on one side, purple on the other)
- Seven plaques showing the Faces of Christ
- Rack for Faces of Christ
- Wooden egg
- 3D Good Shepherd
- 3D Sheep
- 3D Sheepfold
- 3D table
- Figure of a priest
- Figures of people of the world
- Small patten and chalice
- Model of a synagogue
- Model of a lectern
- Model of the Upper Room
- Cloths used in worship (same as parish Church)

List of materials to purchase locally (if they can't be found or made)

- Wooden people of God (peg people)
- Wooden Ark
- Wooden animal figures
- Wooden dove in box
- Desert box (small, low, moveable sand box)
- Wooden blocks for cities
- Matzo
- Wooden boat and whale for Jonah
- Frankincense and Myrrh
- Set of nesting boxes of different colours
- Collection of crosses
- Baskets
- Wooden doll furniture for liturgical furnishings
- Book stands
- Blank books

List of materials to purchase from a Godly Play supplier (if they can't be made)

These are the lessons that it will be most difficult to make. Some of these you can make a more basic version using card board or laminated pictures, or felt if these were easier materials for you – this is true of the parable figures, and the Faces of Easter. I would recommend beginning by doing this, and then over time replacing them with nicer versions. That being said, buying a few lessons can help cut down on work required to assemble the stories you need for your Program each year/season.

- Circle of the Church Year (wall hanging)
- Figure of the Risen Christ
- Circle of the Church Year (presentation set)
- People of God
- Ten Best Ways

- Ark and Tent presentation
- Temple
- Jonah
- Wooden bookshelf with wooden books of the Bible
- Model of Bethlehem
- Parable of the Good Shepherd
- Parable of the Good Samaritan
- Parable of the Great Pearl
- Parable of the Sower
- Parable of the Leaven
- Parable of the Mustard Seed
- Parable of the Deep Well
- Lenten Puzzle
- Faces of Easter
- Good Shepherd and World Communion
- The Synagogue and the Upper Room
- Symbols of the Eucharist **This is a very expensive set to buy, I would not recommend buying it until Godly Play is well established in a parish.**

Total Cost \$1500-\$3000 (for all 52 presentations and a combination of finding, making and buying materials)

Time invested 1 week/presentation (I estimate that a parish could assemble all the materials for Vol2-4 in a year)

Godly Play Materials Needed by Presentation

Material	Circle of the Church Year	The Holy Family	Creation	The Flood and the Ark	The Great Family	The Exodus	The 10 Best Ways	The Ark and the Tent	The Ark and the Temple	The Exile and Return	The prophets	Jonah	Books of the Bible
Circle of the Church Year (wall hanging)													
Set of crèche figures		1											
cloths or felt underlays in liturgical colours (white, purple, blue, red, green)		5											
figure of the risen Christ		1											
Circle of the Church Year (presentation set)	1												
Creation cards			1										
Black underlay for Creation story			1										
Ark				1									
People of God wooden figures				8	8	8	8		8	8	8		
Animal wooden figures				1									
Wooden dove in box				1									
Desert box or bag				1	1	1	1	1	1	1			
Basket of stones				6									
Wooden blocks for cities				1					1	1	1		
Blue yarn for rivers				1					1	1			
Blue felt for water					1							1	
Matzo					1								
Heart-shaped box with tablets for the Ten Commandments							1						
Large rock for Mount Sinai							1						
Ark of the covenant								1	1				
Tent and 4 coverings (blue linen, woven goats' hair, tanned goatskin)								5					
Furnishings (incense altar, menorah, table for 12 pieces of bread, altar, basin)								1	1				
Temple									1				
4 Scrolls									1		4		
Heavy chain										1	1		
Boat													1
Green vine or bush for Jonah													1
Blue sea-strips (waves)													3
Wooden bookshelf with wooden books of the Bible													1
Bible on stand													1
Total number of pieces for each presentation	1	7	2	11	17	11	11	8	5	12	16	15	2

Godly Play Materials Needed by Presentation

Material	Advent 1	Advent 2	Advent 3	Advent 4	Christmas Eve	Mystery of Christmas	Epiphany	Holy Baptism	Parable of the Good Shepherd	Parable of the Good Samaritan	Parable of the Great Pearl	Parable of the Sower	Parable of the Leaven	Parable of the Mustard Seed	Parable of Parables	Parable of the Deep Well	Parable Synthesis 1	Parable Synthesis 2	Parable Synthesis 3
Set of crèche figures		1	1	1	1		1												
Wooden dove in box								1											
3 white circles for underlay								3											
Advent cards	4	4	4	4			4												
4 advent candles	4	4	4	4			4												
Matches in a container	1	1	1	1			1	1											
Candle snuffer	1	1	1	1			1	1											
Model of Bethlehem	1	1	1	1			1												
Christ Candle					1		1	1											
Pictures, labels and texts for Mystery of Christmas						1													
Frankincense, Myrrh and gold coins							3												
Tweezers							1												
Bowl								1											
Pitcher								1											
Container of Fragrant oil								1											
Baby Doll, wrapped in white blanket or gown								1											
Brass bowl of sand and tapers or tealights in holders								1											
Gold parable boxes with corresponding dots									1	1	1	1	1	1					
12 brown felt strips								12											
3 black felt shapes								3	1										
blue felt shape								1											
5 sheep								5											
Good Shepherd								1											
Ordinary Shepherd								1											
Wolf								1											
Green underlay								1											
Light brown felt road									1										
2 city shapes									2										
6 people (1 injured person, 2 thieves, 1 priest, 1 Levite, 1 Samaritan)									6										
1 covering piece (picture of Samaritan helping injured person)									1										
Brown burlap underlay									1										
5 brown felt rectangles										5									
2 figures (merchant and seller)										2									
Merchant's possessions figures (money, chest, bed, candle, vase, chair, etc.)										1									
White round underlay										1									
Gold box of birds											6		6						
3 earth images (rocky soil, thorns, good earth)											3								
3 bags of grain figures											3								
Sower figure											1		1						
Woman figure												1							
Table												1							
box containing loaf of bread (1 flat piece and 1 risen piece) and 3 bowls of flour												5							
box with triangular gold leaven												1							
Triangular tan underlay												1							
Green felt shrub or tree													1						
Nests for birds of the air													5						
Yellow seed shaped underlay													1						
Set of nesting boxes of assorted colours														6					
Plain parable box																1			
Well																1			
Container of golden threads																1			
Bucket																1			
40 gold parable cards																	1	1	1
15 gold 'I am' cards																	1	1	
Box for sorting																		1	
Box with context cards																			1
23 gold parable game cards																			1
Total number of pieces for each presentation	11	12	12	13	1	1	17	12	26	13	10	14	10	15	6	4	2	4	2

Godly Play Materials Needed by Presentation

Material	Mystery of Easter	Faces of Easter 1	Faces of Easter 2	Faces of Easter 3	Faces of Easter 4	Faces of Easter 5	Faces of Easter 6	Faces of Easter 7	The Crosses	Easter Eggs	Jesus and the 12	The Good Shepherd and World Communion	Circle of the Eucharist and the Upper Room	Symbols of the Eucharist	Mystery of the Eucharist	Paul's Discovery	The Holy Trinity	The Part that Isn't Written Yet
figure of the risen Christ												1						
Black underlay for Creation story																		1
Creation cards																		1
People of God wooden figures											8							
Wooden blocks for cities														2				
12 brown felt strips														12				
Purple and white reversible bag	1																	
6 puzzle pieces (white one side and purple on the other side)	6																	
Seven plaques showing Faces of Christ		7	7	7	7	7	7	7										7
Purple and white underlay		1	1	1	1	1	1	1										1
Rack for Faces of Christ		1	1	1	1	1	1	1										1
Collection of crosses in a container (with cards naming crosses)									1									
Rug									1									
Tray-shaped basket										1		1						
Square basket holding 1-3 Ukrainian Easter eggs										1								
1 real or wooden egg in a small basket covered with a white cloth										1								
Collection of 2-dimensional, egg-shaped samples of colors, designs and patterns										1								
Picture of the last supper											1							
Symbols for the 12 apostles - with accompanying explanation cards											12			12				
3D figure of the Good Shepherd												1						
3D sheep												1						
3D sheepfold												1						
3D table												1						
Figure of a priest												1						
Figures of people of the world (could be People of God)												8						
Small patten and chalice												2						
2 circles of green felt												2	1					
Model of a synagogue													1					
Model of a lectern													1					
Model of the Upper Room													1					
Card with Jesus in the Upper Room														1				
Card with a reader in the Synagogue														1				
Set of cards showing the major parts of the Eucharist														1				
Wooden liturgical furnishings (same as parish Church)															1			
Cloths used in worship (same as parish Church)															1			
Other worship paraphernalia (same as parish Church)															1			
box of prompting cards															1			
Red parable box																1		
box with cards illustrating scenes from Paul's life																1	1	
13 scrolls																13		13
Red strip of cloth or felt															1			1
Book stand																		1
Blank book																		1
3 white circles for underlay																		3
Total number of pieces for each presentation	7	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	2	4	13	25	4	5	4	41	1	29