

The Godly Play International Council

Covenant of Agreement

On Core Training

We agree that Core Training is at the heart of our work with Godly Play. And that all Core Training includes the following components, which are considered to be minimum requirements.

- At least 22 contact hours.
- At least two trainers.
- Each participant tells a story with wondering for feedback and evaluation by group and trainer.
- Three plenary presentations including the Spirituality of the Child, the Sacred Environment, and Building and Supporting the Community of Children
- A fourth plenary session that would include one of the topics found in point 3 below, under best practices where possible.
- Experience of the four languages or genres of Godly Play, sacred stories, parables, liturgical action, and contemplative silence.
- That a full session is included.
- Model principles and practices of Godly Play, including a playful attitude.
- Experience and practice doorman role, including debrief.
- Create a space reflective of the Godly Play environment principles.

Best practices where possible:

- Two full sessions.
- All participants act as doorman and experience debrief of the role
- The integration of the following aspects: building the circle; spiral curriculum; importance of play; the Montessori Method; the art of wondering.
- Participants are encouraged to engage on ongoing training, and associations are encouraged to develop advanced training models.

On Translation of the Godly Play Stories

In support of training and storytelling in places where Godly Play is established and emerging, the Godly Play International Council desires and encourages that Godly Play

stories will be translated into the native language(s) of those places where Godly Play is established and emerging.

Therefore when considering translations the following are offered as minimum requirements:

- Notify the Godly Play Advocate for International Development when a group begins to make translations.
- Translate in groups comprised of trainers and country association representatives where applicable.
- That the translator(s) have an intimate knowledge of the languages translated from and translated to, and an intimate knowledge of Godly Play, its ethos and method.
- That great care is taken to ensure the result is a translation as opposed to an interpretation, an adaptation, or a change.
- Try out the translations with children, and elicit feedback from a range of storytellers/doorpersons.
- Don't rush the process.
- All translated stories should be distributed in conjunction with the telling of stories and the training of storytellers/doorpersons.

Best practices:

- In any initial translation work include the translation of *Teaching Godly Play*.
- Those who provided the initial training in a region/country are encouraged to assist in the process.

N.B. If translations are to be published for sale, the Godly Play Foundation is required to give approval. If a country/region association desires to publish a translation for sale they should be in touch with The Godly Play Advocate for International Development in order to begin the process.

On the Production of Materials for One's Own Use

In support of training and storytelling in places where Godly Play is established and emerging, the Godly Play International Council desires and encourages that Godly Play practitioners will be encouraged, equipped, and enabled to make Godly Play materials for their own use.

As in other areas we understand that in each country/region the local Godly Play association is responsible for ensuring minimum requirements and best practices are met within that country/region.

Minimum requirements:

- That materials made for one's own use will be in line with, and take their lead from, those materials produced by licensed Godly Play material makers. And that trainers will direct practitioner to the relevant websites and/or other resources for purposes of comparison.
- That there will be consistency across stories regarding size, depth, colour etc.
- Trainers will communicate the importance of adhering to materials standards.
- That materials used in Core Training are of the highest quality available.
- Where and when appropriate, the materials can and should reflect the diversity of context, both ecclesiastical and cultural.
- That Godly play materials will comply with national child safety laws in force in the country/region.

Best Practices:

- That within each country/region there will be a centre(s) of excellence with a room(s) containing materials of high standard that will serve as a model for aspiring material makers.
- That Godly Play associations will offer trainer led material-making workshops

N.B. If within a country/region association there is interest in making materials for sale that country/region association should be in touch with The Godly Play Advocate for International Development in order to begin a process of consultation.

On the Training of Trainers

We agree that trainers are the primary equippers, enablers, and nurturers of Godly Play principles and practices throughout the world. As such it is of vital importance that trainers are selected, trained, and nurtured according to a high standard of expectations. To achieve this we consider 3 questions: What are the elements of a discernment process to determine who should be a trainer? What are the core elements of the actual training of trainers? What are our ongoing expectations of trainers in order to consider them active or competent to do the work? In each of these areas we propose minimum requirement and best practices.

The Discernment Process

Minimum Requirements:

- That the discernment is mutual; both sponsoring association and potential trainee are engaged in the process.

- The trainee has completed a Core Training, and has at least two years' experience as a Godly Play storyteller/doorperson.
- The trainee is fluent in the Godly Play core stories.
- The trainee evidences fluency around the theoretical foundations of Godly Play and has read Jerome Berryman's *Teaching Godly Play*.
- The trainee has an intimate knowledge of the flow of a Godly Play session, the Godly Play genres, the categories of stories, and the layout of the space.
- The trainee has experience working with children and evidences knowledge of a contemporary understanding of children's spirituality.
- The trainee has experience of working with adults in a ministry setting.
- The trainee evidences appropriate communication and learning skills.
- The trainee is committed to ongoing learning beyond the discernment process and the training of trainers' event/process.

Best Practices:

- The trainee practices Godly Play in a room that is exemplary in the quality of space and materials and number of stories available.
- The trainee evidences biblical literacy.
- The trainee has experience leading and managing groups.
- The trainee has advanced knowledge of the current learning in the areas of children's ministry, discovery learning, theological reflection, and group dynamics.

The Training of Trainer's Event/Process

We recognise that the usual setting for the training of trainers is a single event over a number of days, but acknowledge that this training may also take place over a period of time and involve numerous gatherings and other components.

Minimum Requirements:

- That a training with six or more persons be a minimum of 36 hours in length.
- The training is led by at least two trainers.

- That the lead trainers have at least 3 years' experience as trainers, have led a number of Core Trainings, are active in a Godly Play circle, and operate out of a context that models an exemplary Godly Play programme.
- Each trainee tells a story and is debriefed on that story.
- Each trainee has the opportunity to debrief a storyteller.
- Each trainee designs and leads a plenary session on either the Godly Play Environment, The Spirituality of Children, or Supporting the Community of Children, and is debriefed on that presentation.
- Training includes advanced learning on the theoretical foundations of Godly Play.
- Training includes learning on effective feedback techniques and resources, and learning on how to effectively design and lead a plenary session.
- Training includes learning on, group dynamics, adult education, learning theory, conflict management, and the spiral curriculum.

Best Practices:

- The training could include additional leaders who could function as advocate/assistant, chaplain, or other desirable role.
- Training includes learning on the training policies, practices, and protocols of the host national/regional association.
- Training includes an introduction to the global community of Godly Play and the instruments of unity that define it.

The Ongoing Formation of Trainers

Minimum Requirements:

- That the new trainer has the benefit of a mentor/co-trainer for at least their first Core Training and/or for the period of one year.
- The trainer leads at least one Core Training per calendar year.
- The trainer is active in a Godly Play circle, functioning as storyteller/doorperson.
- The trainer is up-to-date on all background checks or legal requirements necessary within their jurisdiction.

Best Practices:

- Trainer stays up to date on the latest learning in the areas covered in a training of trainers.
- Trainer attends national/regional Godly Play conferences/meetings.
- Godly Play associations are encouraged to develop advanced and ongoing learning opportunities for trainers.

International Training Agreements:

The GPIC acknowledges and affirms the importance of the college of trainers in every country in terms of informing the development of core training in that country. We also recognise and acknowledge that the discernment and development of trainers in emerging regions/country will necessitate the support of established associations and individuals. As such we offer the following principles and practices:

Regarding training in countries other than the trainers' own country:

- Trainers do not go into countries with existing Godly Play organisations to do training except by invitation of the organisation in that country.
- Trainers do not go into emerging countries without being mutually accountable to and consulting with international colleagues
- If someone participates in a Core Training in a country other than their own, their home country organisation will be informed.

1. Regarding the training of trainers:

- A shared database of current trainers and in which languages they train will be developed.
- Countries do not train trainers from other countries except at the request of the other country's organisation.

2. Regarding the language of the training:

- Where there are trainers that can speak the native language of the country or region where the training is happening then the native language speakers should provide and/or participate in the training.

- Whomever the trainers are it is a best practice that wondering take place in the language native to the participants.

Stories in the Style of Godly Play

Godly Play practitioners have and are creating stories in the style of Godly Play; stories inspired by Jerome Berryman's particular approach to storytelling. These stories are often developed for a particular context or character. If these stories are to genuinely be 'in the style of Godly Play' what criteria are to be employed in their development?

Minimum Requirements:

- Meets a genuine contextual need.
- Created by person(s) with intimate knowledge of Godly Play's principles and practices.
- Take time; don't rush the process.
- Connects to Godly Play core stories through inclusion in one of the existing genres, sacred, parables, or liturgical action.
- Uses quality materials/objects in telling story.
- Includes wondering.
- Uses an economy of words.
- Leaves room for multiple meanings.
- Leaves room for silence.
- Biblical sacred stories should be consistent with and not contradict biblical text.
- Fits all stages of faith development; can be told to children or adults.
- Are not used in Core Training.
- An addendum to any printed versions of the story should attribute and acknowledge Jerome Berryman's Godly Play stories as the inspiration for the story.

Best Practices:

- Is told to, and tested with, children.
- Is sensitive to the spiral curriculum; can be placed in one of the categories of core, enrichment, extension, or synthesis.
- Can be experienced in silence.
- Can be placed on one of the existing shelves in the Godly Play room
- Uses language, gestures, and movement commonly found in Godly Play stories.
- Has the potential to address the existential needs of hearers.

NB: If the story or stories in the style of Godly Play proceed to publication it would be important to enter into a conversation with the Godly Play Foundation. If you anticipate proceeding to this stage please be in touch with the Godly Play Advocate for International Development