

# Godly Play and Junior Church

There is provision for primary aged children during the 10.45am Eucharist on Sunday mornings during term time and on major church festivals. The provision alternates between The Godly Play programme and a programme of Junior Church which includes bible stories, activities, songs and drama.



## Godly Play

The Godly Play programme uses materials developed by Jerome Berryman, founder of Godly Play and formerly Director of the Centre for the Theology of Childhood in Houston, Texas. He is now retired but is still a Senior Fellow of The Godly Play Foundation in Denver, Colorado. Godly Play is rooted in ancient storytelling and uses an educational approach based on the Montessori model. Berryman intends that the model “helps teach the children how to listen well to storytelling and to be active in their learning and interpretations of the scriptures and worship for their lives.” Although originally developed in the USA it is now used widely in a number of Christian denominations and traditions across the UK and beyond.

Each Godly Play session begins by considering the liturgical clock and identifying where we are that day in the church calendar. The collect for the day is then read. An adult storyteller then tells the story. Each story has a range of artefacts and materials specially made for the story. The items are aesthetically pleasing using lots of natural materials. The stories we use throughout the year are various sequences of stories which aid continuity, progression and understanding of Old and New Testament narrative or about the worship children will experience in church. The story could be relevant to a particular church festival, or a series on the parables, or a series of Old Testament stories or a story about the formation of the Bible or Eucharist.

At the end of the story the storyteller then asks open ended reflective questions, mostly preset in the Godly Play resources. Children then interact, contribute, explore and analyse the story in more depth according to their own stage of development. Each time they revisit a story their own understanding deepens, this is the same for each of the volunteer helpers as well.

After the story children can use some of the excellent materials available in the Godly Play room. The children have the choice of materials and can use them in whatever way they decide, as long as it is safe for themselves and others. This part is called the children's work. Some children choose to use the materials from the story of the day, others revisit the materials from previous stories. Perhaps the most popular materials are the desert box, the ark and the materials for Holy Baptism. Candles are used throughout Advent, Christmas and Epiphany and in the story for Holy Baptism. The children love using the candles. The use of candles is always strictly supervised!



The final part of the session is joining in the Feast. The Feast represents the Holy Eucharist. It is plain biscuits, fruit, water or juice. We begin by washing one another's hands before sitting down and joining in prayer. After the Feast the children are taken into the cathedral to join their parents for the final part of the service.

#### Junior Church

Junior Church is not as formally structured as the approach for Godly Play. Each Sunday may have a different pattern depending on the decision of the leader for the day. Often it may begin with a bible story, followed by art and craft work, singing, dance or drama. Sometimes the time will be used to prepare for a presentation the children will be doing at a future date in a service, e.g. For Christmas, Good Friday or Harvest.

#### The Choir and Godly Play and Junior Church

Children who are in the choir can join in Junior Church and Godly Play until the point of the offertory in the Eucharist. They are collected and supervised whilst returning to the cathedral.

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