

Mutual Blessings
A Sheffield Movement for Enabling Godly Play

Vision, Mission, Principles, Values and Ethos Statement

This summary document sets out the purposes and principles of Mutual Blessings, a movement that has already begun, over many years, in all but name, to provide support in the Sheffield area for Godly Play practitioners.

The aims and objectives are expressed most fully in the 5 year Development Plan which accompanies this Vision, Mission, Values and Ethos document.

A third document, the Business Plan, outlines how much paid, voluntary and in-kind work there is to do and how the costs will be met for the work.

A. Vision

We are a Sheffield Christian movement which seeks to support spiritually enriching practices using the method and principles of Godly Play with people of all ages or needs, but especially those who may be on the edge of the church's ministry.

B. Mission

We will promote spiritual nurturing through Godly Play of people in the following places: churches, schools, dementia care settings, fresh expressions of church, health care settings and work with people who are marginalized, including those with disabilities. We will work in six different ways:

1. Planning and Development

We will create a structure for the movement that is well-resourced, begins with a few Church of England churches but becomes ecumenical and develops Godly Play ministry in specific contexts (e.g. in schools or for those with dementia).

2. Collaboration

Mutual Blessings will foster collaboration between people who are wanting to use Godly Play in overlapping ways or who are involved in training people for ministry. We will facilitate a mutual sharing of ideas, resources and training. Where staff are employed their task will be to work in collaborative ways with a variety of projects and organisations.

3. Promotion and Support of ministries using Godly Play

The movement will help to promote, initiate and support ministries using Godly Play by offering advice, sharing resources, and on occasions giving time to help to run the activities during the initial stages. This will be in a variety of contexts: churches, schools, dementia care settings, fresh expressions of church, health care settings and working with people who are marginalized including those who have disabilities.

4. Training

The movement will provide training appropriate to local needs (both general Godly Play training and training for using Godly Play in specific contexts) and contribute costs for those attending training, whether it is local or national. We will encourage those leading Godly Play to attend the 3 day accredited core training. Training in Godly Play equips lay people and ordained ministers in their wider ministry as well as enabling them to become effective practitioners of Godly Play.

5. Resources

We will provide grants to set up Godly Play spaces and purchase resources. Advice will be given on how to spend money wisely in making and buying beautiful resources that will last for decades and on how to best develop each unique Godly Play space.

A sharing of resources will be facilitated (to include continued use of the Godly Play lending libraries at Diocesan Church House and the Montgomery Centre).

6. Research

The effectiveness of Godly Play in many areas is something that is recognised and appreciated, but under-researched. A planned range of research initiatives in Godly Play will enhance the efforts of people using Godly Play principles both locally, nationally and internationally.

C. Principles of Godly Play as a method of spiritual guidance

Godly play...

- is an approach based on Montessori principles – we respond to the child’s (or person’s) request to ‘help me do it by myself.’ This puts the teacher in the role of spiritual supporter or guide who fully accepts that each child (person) has his or her own relationship with God already.
- is a creative and imaginative approach to Christian nurture
- respects the innate spirituality of each person
- encourages participants to make meaning for themselves by inviting them into stories and providing the opportunity for them to connect the stories with their personal experience.
- is a non-coercive way to encourage people to move into larger dimensions of belief and faith through wondering questions and open-ended response time.
- values process, openness and discovery.
- helps people to become more aware of the mystery of God in their lives
- helps people become deeply rooted as Christians and yet at the same time to use this powerful language and community to be open and creative.

D. Values

The values of the Godly Play method are also the values for the way the movement seeks to work with others... We will seek to promote a safe environment... give permission to explore...value questions...discover truths... give freedom to face difficulties... support play... open channels for deepening spirituality... build the circle... promote equality in the community... enable mutual learning... create opportunities for valuing the self and others... respect autonomy... work to include rather than exclude... call out the good in people... honour an ethic of blessing... encourage the importance of vulnerability... allow people to take responsibility for their actions and their words... trust in God - Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer

E. Ethos

Mutual Blessings seeks to work in a way that ...

- uses Godly Play principles in its organisation, administration and planning
- hopes to embody and inspire a holistic way of being part of the Church;
- recognises that the 'blessings' will be a 'mutual' nurturing of spiritual development for all who lead and participate in Godly Play.