



GODLY PLAY®

Godly Play® is an imaginative approach to Christian Education developed by Jerome Berryman. It is what he calls “his interpretation of Montessori religious education”. He feels that children have experienced the presence of God, but lack the language to express this to others. In the Godly Play® classroom they will have entered a sacred space in which they can feel safe and free to respond as they are surrounded by parables, sacred stories and liturgical action stories. Over a period of weeks, the storyteller will present each of these stories using wooden figures and materials that allow them to hear and see the old stories in a new way. During the hour, the children hear the story, respond by wondering and using art response materials, and then participate in “the feast” which is their communion experience.

The Danville Presbyterian Church has four classrooms that serve all children from age three through the fifth grade. The staff is currently made up of nine accredited teachers and nine doorpersons who rotate responsibilities so that there is always one storyteller and one doorperson in each room each Sunday. The classes meet from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. from September through May.

Recently the program has been named as one of ten “Centers of Excellence” by the Center for Theology of Childhood and is the site of an accreditation conference for teachers. Four of these conferences have been held, beginning in 2003, when Lois Howard, one of the trainers accredited by Jerome Berryman, was on the staff. These conferences are limited to 24 participants and more than 90 persons have been accredited at the four conferences that have been held here. The next conference is scheduled to be held on April 26 – 28, 2007. More information about the this conference can be obtained by contacting Jean Harney, Conference Coordinator, at clerk@presbydan.org

In December, 2006, the church received notification that its Godly Play® program had been awarded the **W.T. “Tolly” Thompson Excellence in Christian Education Award** by Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, VA.