



Volume 2 | Issue 1  
Winter 2017

# Canadian Circle Godly Play Canada

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Godly Play Canada is excited to welcome our newest Board member, Shawn Redden, representing the Maritimes. Shawn brings plenty of experience and a passion for Godly Play work, beginning with her Core Training in 2008 and then working with Janice MacLean to introduce Godly Play to the United Church in the Maritimes. From 2010-2016, Shawn served St. Paul's United Church in Sussex, NB and used Godly Play extensively in her role as faith formation minister. By 2013, the increased interest and participation of many Anglicans in Core Trainings signaled a need to support the regional development of Godly Play ecumenically and resulted in the development of the present Maritime Godly Play Coordinating Circle. Members from the Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, United, and non-denominational Community Churches have now participated in regional training. Shawn continues to serve as a trainer within the Maritime region and is looking forward to attending this year's North American Godly Play Conference in Denver, Colorado.

The Board's current priorities are strengthening the Godly Play Canada website, and improving communications and training opportunities across Canada. We meet regularly by conference call. The Board is working on ways that trainers can continue to learn and be supported in their work, with different models of training that work for people's various schedules. We continue to work on obtaining our not-for-profit charitable number status, which will allow people to contribute financially to this amazing ministry. We are grateful to our Executive Director, Amy Crawford, for all of the ways that she has spread the work of Godly Play, and how she models for us so many of the principles that shape Godly Play.

We look forward to gathering with many of you in a large Godly Play circle at the North American Godly Play Conference in Denver this June. Canadian trainers: please plan to stay the evening of Sunday, June 26 for dinner together following the conference. Cheryl Minor, Director of the Center for the Theology of Childhood and Godly Play Trainer, will also provide us with some information and resources for the Advanced Training that has proven successful in the US.

Maya Landell  
Chair, Godly Play Canada Advisory Board

## I Wonder Where You Are Doing Godly Play in Canada? A Look at British Columbia:

Here are the churches we're aware of that are currently doing Godly Play in BC. If we've missed anyone, please let us know so that we can update our info!

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*We'll take a look at Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba next, so if you're doing Godly Play in any of those provinces, send us an email, or even a photo or two – we'd love to include you in our Summer 2017 issue!*

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### **United Church of Canada:**

Cloverdale United Church  
Dunbar-Ryerson United, Vancouver  
Duncan United Church  
Fairfield United, Victoria  
Oak Bay United, Victoria  
St. John's United, North Saanich  
Sylvan United, Mill Bay



St. Andrews-Wesley United,  
Vancouver

### **Anglican Church of Canada: New Westminster Diocese**

Christ Church Cathedral (St. Brigid),  
Vancouver  
St Agnes, North Vancouver  
St Barnabas, New Westminster  
St Catherine, Port Coquitlam  
St Clement, Lynn Valley  
St George, Fort Langley  
St George, Maple Ridge  
St Helen, West Point Grey  
St James, Vancouver  
St Mary, Kerrisdale  
St Philip, Dunbar  
St John, Shaughnessy

## Unanticipated Blessings

Godly Play was introduced in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2009 when five storytellers from the Parish of the Good Shepherd completed core training in Nova Scotia. Godly Play has proved to be a blessing to the children of the parish, to the adult congregation and to the entire Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador.

Two of our storytellers attended the North American Godly Play conference in Toronto in 2013 and were so impressed with keynote speaker, Dr. Joyce Ann Mercer, that she was invited to speak at a Diocesan conference on children and youth, "It Takes a Church to Raise a Child," that was held in October 2016. During this conference, Labrador parishes presented on denominations working together to bring Godly Play to northern communities, a Godly Play story was shared with the entire conference body and the closing Eucharist replicated elements from the North American conference. Attending the North American Godly Play Conference has blessed our province in so many ways!



Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador Conference, "It Takes a Church to Raise a Child,"  
October 2016

We continue to be amazed at the power of Godly Play and the unanticipated outcomes that seem to wait around every turn. We also look forward to the North American Godly Play Conference in June 2017 and to all of the horizons it will open for us!

Donna Ronan  
Godly Play Trainer, Newfoundland

## From Syria to Duncan, via Godly Play and Love

There was such excitement at Duncan United Church early last January – our Syrian refugee family was all of a sudden arriving in a week! We had been talking about it and preparing for months – and suddenly they were going to be here.

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*Imagine my surprise that first Sunday last January when I found out that the two daughters from our Syrian refugee family would be in my Godly Play class!*

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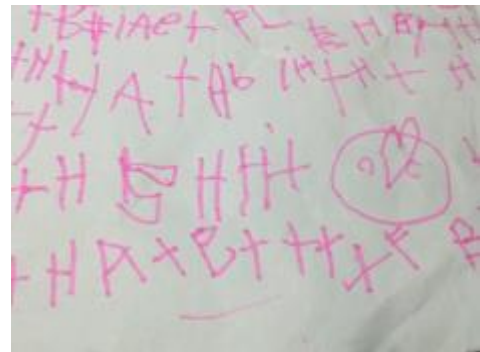
One of our biggest surprises once our family of four arrived was that they would be coming to church at Duncan United regularly. Like many of the folks on the refugee team, I assumed, wrongly, that our Syrian family would be Muslim and would need our support settling into the community, but would not be attending our church. So imagine my surprise that first Sunday when I found out that their two daughters, H\*, age 7 and A\*, age 6, would be in my Godly Play class!

We have had Godly Play at Duncan United for almost 10 years now, and I have had quite a few children in my class who speak French or Hul'q'umi'num (the language of our local Cowichan Tribes First Nation) as their second language, but I have never had any children in my classroom who did not speak any English at all. And I had no experience helping a child like A, who could neither hear nor speak. How on earth was I going to integrate these two new children into our circle?

The first few months were a bit of a blur. I kept telling our regular schedule of stories to our Godly Play class and worked on settling in the two new children. They loved response time the best, and always wanted to take art materials home with them, so we made sure they had lots of art supplies in their new home. If I did not have a congregational volunteer on a particular Sunday to sit with A, I

usually told that Sunday's story with her on my lap, which as you might imagine, was not ideal! But it worked to acclimatize the girls to our class and to let A know that it was a safe space for her. Sitting in a circle and watching story materials move around in front of her in silence must have seemed very odd!

H, the oldest, picked up English at lightning speed, particularly once she transitioned to grade 1 at a local elementary school. H loves to paint and draw, and usually chooses painting for her response work. For many weeks, I have received paintings of hearts, and she is generous with her hugs and shares her love enthusiastically! We are still working on how to get ready in the circle, to listen without talking and to take turns sharing during our wondering time, as ideas sometimes overflow and bubble out faster than she can manage. We have also had to work on moderation - she tends to get out enough paint for 10 paintings – as well as learning how to clean up! But I think H will transition to Canadian life very easily and I'm honoured to be part of her journey, including her first birthday in Canada a few weeks ago.



One of H's Drawings – Full of Hearts and Love! One of A's Drawings, and a Heart as Well

I'm still on my own journey to try to figure out how best to support A in our Godly Play room. When the family first arrived, there were a few visits to BC Children's Hospital in the hope that A could get cochlear implants to be able to hear. There just was no opportunity to do so in either Syria or Lebanon, and it was her mom's dream that someday A could hear and learn to speak. Specialists provided some hearing aids for A, but determined that she was past the point of language acquisition, so the best path forward was to focus on sign language. It is hard to know how much A hears with her hearing aids, but sometimes she does react excitedly to different things. She has been learning to sign for almost a year now, both at school and after school, and has also started to write the letters of the alphabet, so communications with her is coming along. I often give her a "thumbs up" when she makes a good choice, and I use the signs for "thank you" and "stop," which we both know; however, my limited sign language does not allow for much tailoring of communications to what is needed for the situation! We will both keep learning our sign language as we journey together.

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*Matching seems to be A's favourite way to respond, and after a year, she is starting to learn how to be in the circle with the rest of our Godly Play class for the story and wondering.*

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Luckily I have a grade 11 youth in my congregation who worked with A at day camp this past summer at George Pringle Memorial Camp, our local United Church camp, who has offered to be her Godly Play buddy. K\* has been mainly working quietly with A in another part of the classroom while she is still learning how to be in the circle long enough for both the story and wondering. A is very interested in the materials on the shelves and may remember wondering last

spring with the Faces of Easter story where the children are asked to bring something from the classroom shelves to tell more about that part of the story. One Sunday during Advent, A matched materials from the shelves to pages in one of the books from our shelves, and more recently she matched the apostles' symbols to their cards from the story "Jesus and the Twelve." A also loves to paint so we have to watch carefully because she will pull out paint and supplies just as the Godly Play session is ending if we are not keeping an eye on her! Definitely a challenge for our Doorkeepers. Most recently, A managed to sit in our circle long enough to watch the Parable of the Good Samaritan, including the wondering, without her buddy K – huge progress! It is difficult for her to understand when it is the storyteller's turn to move the story materials, but we are getting there - I can only imagine how strange the whole experience must seem to A without any sound.



A's Wondering During Advent 2016

My next idea is to try putting together cards with pictures of the Godly Play session so that we can point to the part that we are in and help A learn the regular routine. As A learns more sign language, hopefully we can find someone who can sign the story and wondering for her. Another trainer suggested making object boxes of the stories for her so that she can match her story to the one being told in the circle. Of course, this would be a great deal of work!

If anyone has experience or wisdom that they can offer to this situation, I would enjoy getting your feedback. It takes supporting the community of children to a completely new level, and I want to do the best job I possibly can.

Erin Arrowsmith  
 Accredited Godly Play Trainer and Practitioner  
 Children and Youth Coordinator, Duncan United Church

\*Names have been omitted to protect privacy

## Focus on Godly Play Rooms: Wall Street United Church, Brockville, ON

Laurelle and Shirley Avery lead the Godly Play program at Wall Street United Church in Brockville, ON and share a beautiful, cozy Godly Play room with their circle of children. Thank you for sending us your pictures!

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*Wall Street  
United Church  
5 Wall St., Brockville, ON*

*Focal Shelf*



*Sacred Stories – Old  
Testament & New  
Testament*

*Parable Shelf*



*Response Area*



*Response Time*

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## Upcoming Trainings

### Commuter Core Training – Victoria, BC

3 Saturdays – Jan. 14, March 25, and April 29, 2017; 8:30 am - 5:00 pm  
Oak Bay United Church, Oak Bay  
Trainers: Gaye Sharpe, Erin Arrowsmith, Barbara Hansen  
Contact: Erin Arrowsmith - [erin.arrowsmith@gmail.com](mailto:erin.arrowsmith@gmail.com)

### Commuter Core Training – Fort Langley, BC

3 Saturdays – March 4, April 1, April 22, 2017; 8:30 am - 5:00 pm  
St. George's Anglican Church, Fort Langley  
Trainers: Barbara Hansen and Mary Nichol  
Contact: Mary Nichol – [marlynichol@gmail.com](mailto:marlynichol@gmail.com)

### Commuter Core Training – Toronto, ON

3 Saturdays – Jan. 28, Feb. 25 and March 25, 2017; 9:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Islington United Church, Etobicoke  
Trainers: Amy Crawford and Maya Landell  
Contact: Betsy Anderson, Coordinator of Continuing Education, Emmanuel College – [betsy.anderson@utoronto.ca](mailto:betsy.anderson@utoronto.ca)

### Core Training – Toronto, ON

Thursday to Saturday, April 27-29, 2017; 3:30 pm Thursday - 4:00 pm Saturday  
St. George's on-the-Hill Anglican Church, Etobicoke  
Trainers: Amy Crawford and Andrew Sheldon  
Contact: Andrew Sheldon – [andrew@stgeorgesonthehill.ca](mailto:andrew@stgeorgesonthehill.ca)

### Core Training - Sackville, NB

Sackville United Church  
May 5, 6 & 7  
Contact: Fay Cameron - [registrargodlyplaymaritimes@gmail.com](mailto:registrargodlyplaymaritimes@gmail.com)

### Core Training – Montreal, PQ

Anglican Diocese of Montreal  
Thursday to Saturday, June 1-3, 2017; 3:30 pm Thursday - 4:00 pm Saturday  
Contact Lee-Ann Matthews - [lmattthews@montreal.anglican.ca](mailto:lmattthews@montreal.anglican.ca)

## You Won't Want to Miss This!

### North American Godly Play Conference, Denver, CO June 23-25, 2017

A chance to connect with Godly Players from around the world!

<http://www.godlyplayfoundation.org/save-the-date-2017-north-american-godly-play-conference/>

#### Godly Play Trainers:

Stay through June 26 to take advantage of Godly Play Canada's Canadian Trainer Gathering, including Godly Play Advanced Training with Cheryl Minor.

## Godly Play Canada Canadian Circle

Issued three times per year

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