

Timetable Academic Symposium

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022


14:00 (2 pm)	<p>Welcome and opening lecture</p> <p><i>Listening to the bible: performance criticism, narrativity and Godly Play</i></p> <p>Geert Van Oyen, Professor of New Testament at the UCLouvain, Belgium</p>	Auditorium
14:50 (2.50 pm)	<p>Lecture:</p> <p><i>Performing the final act: Godly Play and the Normativity of the Future</i></p> <p>Armin Kummer, Researcher at the Unit of Pastoral and Empirical Theology at the KU Leuven, Belgium</p>	Auditorium
15:30 (3.30 pm)	<p>Coffee break</p>	Hall
16:00 (4 pm)	<p>Lecture:</p> <p><i>Power, nurturing the spiritual life of children and Godly Play</i></p> <p>Annemie Dillen, Professor of Pastoral Theology and Empirical Theology at the KU Leuven, Belgium</p> <p>& Elaine Champagne, Lay Dominican and Associate Professor in Spiritual Theology and Spiritualities at the Faculty of Theology and of Religious Sciences at the Université Laval in Québec, Canada</p>	Auditorium
16:50 (4.50 pm)	<p>Paper presentation: two parallel sessions, please stay within one room for the three presentations</p>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jessie Rogers 2. Bridgit Steenkamp 3. Hannelie Yates 	Suenenszaal
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cora O'Farell 2. Jeremy MS Clines 3. Catherine Kennedy 	Hoviuszaal

18:00		
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(6 pm)		
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18:00 (6 pm)	Poster time: guided tour, listening to explanations about the posters	
18:30 (6.30 pm)	Dinner	Restaurant
20:00 (8 pm)	Godly Play session	
	Creation (in English)	Hoviuszaal
	Parable of the Great Pearl (in English)	Sterckxzaal
	Creation (in Dutch)	Merodezaal
	Story of the Deep well (in English)	Elia Chapel
	Parable of the sower (in Dutch)	Elia Living Room
21:00 (9 pm)	Free time	Restaurant

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2022

09:00	Welcome	
9:30	Lecture: <i>Godly Play in the light of vulnerability and hospitality</i> Marianne Moyaert, Professor of Comparative Theology and Hermeneutics of the Interreligious Dialogue at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands	Auditorium
10:30	Coffee Break	Hall
11:00	Lecture: <i>The silence of modernity: Maria Montessori, play and the soundscape of progressive education</i> Pieter Verstraete, Associate Professor in History of Education at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the KU Leuven, Belgium	Auditorium
12:30	Lunch	Restaurant
14:00	Start of the 6th European Godly Play Conference <i>Like a mustard seed</i> <i>Godly Play, Trust and Transformation</i>	

Papers

1. **Jessie Rogers, *Playing with Parables without Pinning them Down: John Dominic Crossan, Paul Ricoeur and the Theoretical Foundations of Godly Play***

Jerome Berryman names John-Dominic Crossan's work on parables as foundational to his own approach to the parables of the Kingdom ["Being in Parables with Children," 1979]. Crossan's view of parables is deconstructive; he postulates that parables, unlike myths, are inherently paradoxical and that they ultimately subvert all understandings of reality. An alternative approach to parables which preserves their disruptive function but which allows for a surplus of meaning is offered by philosopher Paul Ricoeur with his hermeneutic of disclosure. The power of the parable to make, and not only to deconstruct, meaning appears well substantiated in Godly Play praxis. This paper proposes that Ricoeur's exploration of the dynamics of parables offers a richer theoretical foundation for the approach to parables in Godly Play.

About Jessie Rogers: Jessie Rogers is a scripture scholar and Dean of Theology at St Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth (Ireland). She is a Godly Play trainer and founding member of Godly Play Ireland.

2. **Bridget Steenkamp, *Godly Play, trust and transformation through youth-led, theological research utilising the Mosaic Approach***

My Masters in Practical Theology explored the possibility of youth-led research using the Mosaic research approach after Godly Play storytelling. The Mosaic Approach is a qualitative, participatory, non-directive, polyvocal, multimodal, visual, social scientific approach developed to allow co-research with children about their perspectives. The Mosaic Approach 'adopts a craft metaphor', facilitating children's creation of personal and shared narratives while allowing multiple opportunities to opt in or out of the research process.

Participant research methods such as the Mosaic Approach are used in social sciences but have yet to be used in theological research. I argued that Practical Theology could be enriched by the voices of children while the children themselves are spiritually nourished through the process of Godly Play followed by the Mosaic Approach. Child and youth narratives are important in the academic exploration of childhood spirituality. It is this interplay of oral storytelling and subsequent youth narratives which I explored in a pilot study in 2021.

Youth researchers made 'snapshots' of their spiritual world, allowing for 'knowledge creation rather than knowledge extraction.' The pilot study explored 'relational consciousness', evident in the youth's deep connection with themselves, others, their environment/nature, and God. The youth co-researchers created a 'co-construction of meanings.' The youth co-researchers were actively involved in the whole research process. This led to the drafting of a letter of their findings for the leadership team of their church outlining what they felt youth needed to grow spiritually. A final feedback questionnaire indicated that all participants felt spiritually nourished during the research process. This pilot has allowed me to begin my doctorate in Practical Theology exploring child-led eco-theological action research using Godly Play and the Mosaic Approach.

About Bridget Steenkamp: Rev. Bridget Steenkamp has been telling Godly Play stories for 17 years. She is based in a Godly Play classroom in London at a Pentecostal, Assemblies of God church with a small team of Godly Play storytellers. Bridget worked with others on projects like 'Godly Play in a Suitcase'. This case study can be found in the book '*Godly Play a European Perspective*'. Bridget works closely with

Godly Play South Africa and co-compiled a workbook, *'Making Meaningful Materials'* to support the work of Godly Play in Africa. Currently Bridget is studying for her Doctorate, exploring child-led eco-theological research.

3. Hannelie Yates (North-West University, South Africa), *Liberating theological education, and Godly Play*

In the context of South African theological education, reflections on children and their faith are mostly associated with the practical theological field of children's ministry. After highlighting shifts in academic children's ministry, this paper explores the re-imagination of theological education as appreciating agency, trust and transformation in dialogical spaces with children. With reference to a partnership experience with Godly Play, South Africa and informed by Stephan de Beer's "theological education as fostering faith-based agency", it then suggests a liberating theological education paradigm in academic children's ministry.

Cora O'Farrell, *Supporting young families in the spiritual nurture of their children, using Godly Play principles*

This paper will share the story of a small-scale ongoing research project currently taking place in Ireland, under the stewardship of Dr Jessie Rogers and Dr Cora O'Farrell (both Godly Play Trainers). The project was born out of the recognition that many new parents may not consider themselves closely connected to Church; for most, their first encounter with parish occurs through the sacrament of Baptism. If they experience a welcoming community which can connect with them in a meaningful way and help them to feel more empowered in their role of nurturing the spirituality of their child, perhaps they may want to continue with that connection beyond just the 'event' of the celebration of the sacrament of Baptism. Answering the call of *Amoris Laetitia* (Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on Love in the Family) which urges the Church to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, the project's ultimate goal is to use the principles and methods of *Godly Play* to support parents/care-givers to nurture their child's spirituality.

The first phase of the project involved the collection of data from parents and baptism team members by means of surveys and focus group interviews. This occurred in 2022. Following analysis of the data, plans are now being made for the commencement of a pilot project in one Catholic parish to commence in Autumn, 2022. Whilst the context is a Roman Catholic one, the principles are relevant to all Christian communities.

About Cora O'Farrell: Cora is the Director of the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education (MDCCE) at Dublin City University. She has taught Religious Education at undergraduate and postgraduate level for the past twenty years. She is a member of the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference and is active in pastoral initiatives within the Archdiocese of Dublin. Cora's research interests include Religious Education, The Domestic Church and Children's Spirituality. Cora is a *Godly Play* Trainer and a founding member of Godly Play Ireland.

4. Jeremy MS Clines (University of Sheffield), *Representations of the Ancient Near Eastern landscape in 'Godly Play'*

The presentations on the Hebrew Bible for children, entitled 'Sacred Stories', by Berryman, present the landscape of the Ancient Near East (ANE) from Egypt to Babylon as, quite literally, a sandy desert. The method of places the whole region in a sand-bag or sand-box, which is then used to place wooden figures, rivers, stones for altars and different pieces of blue to represent rivers and the Red Sea.

This 'sandy' setting is always named at the beginning of the presentation as 'the desert', which is 'a dangerous place'. Providing a uniform topography—a consistent backdrop for these diverse narratives—constructs a misrepresentation of both political and physical geography. To homogenize both the landscape and textual varieties raises a range of issues around the politics of interpretation.

These presentations posit Christian theological meaning onto Hebrew Bible narratives. 'The Great Family', focusses on Abram, Sarai, Isaac and Rebekah, omitting Hagar and Ishmael altogether; 'The Exodus' covers some of the arrival in Egypt and subsequent departure of the community, here named as 'People of God'; 'The Ten Best Ways', interprets the Decalogue; 'The Ark and the Tent' includes details from Exodus 25–31 and 35–40. The curriculum then jumps forward to: 'The Exile and Return', which covers the building of Jerusalem, its destruction, the Babylonian exile and, very briefly, Ezra and Nehemiah! The final presentation using the 'sandy' landscape, 'The Prophets', names Elijah, Elisha, 'three Isaiahs' (each of the three are discussed in more detail), and then Amos is singled out among the listing of the latter prophets.

This paper asks if Berryman has moved towards a dystopian reading of the ANE landscape? And also asks if Berryman has wandered into the politics of land-rights by labelling the whole region as not land but shifting sand so dangerous nobody goes there.

About Jeremy MS Clines: Jeremy M S Clines (Jem) is the Coordinating Chaplain at the University of Sheffield's Belief, No Belief and Religious (BNBR) Life Centre and is a member of the Sheffield Centre for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies (SCIBS), a Director of Sheffield Phoenix Press a co-founder of the Deep Talk network, belongs to the Sheffield Spiritual Accompaniers network, and is also a co-writer for Eco Family Travel.

Previously Jem was a trustee for Godly Play UK. Concurrently Jem assisted with the Sheffield based Godly Play with Elders funded project and the Mutual Blessings funded project, both exploring working with Godly Play in community contexts.

So far Jem has been writing for publication in the area of higher education chaplaincy. As a collaborator on the Sacred Texts Child Readers project at SCIBS with Cath Kennedy, he has written two new pieces that relate to the papers being presented in Mechelen. Jem blogs about environmental theology and the liturgy and is an eco-activist. In autumn 2022 Jem begins new work as founding editor of the forthcoming Journal of Deep Talk and also the Journal of Chaplaincy in Higher Education.

5. Catherine Kennedy, *'We really need a black person to give us their perspective': BLM, Godly Play and online space in the practice of children's Christianity*

The Black Lives Matter protests of 2019 prompted many Christians to reflect on the ways racist constructs are embedded in the discourses and material culture of their church tradition. This included the Godly Play community in the UK.

This paper takes as a case study one group's discussions exploring how the 'people of God' figurines, a key part of the Godly Play system, could be made more racially inclusive, and whether this mattered for the children present.

The conversation showed that the group intended to be inclusive and situated its engagement with race within a broader cultural context. However, participants had not systematically identified whiteness in Godly Play materials or considered the implications of its construction of identity.

Underlying this discussion are questions of who is represented, according to whose definition, and to what purpose, when children are invited to identify with representations of the people of God.

About Catherine Kennedy: Cath Kennedy is a PhD scholar looking into children’s biblical reception and the ways it reflects broader Christian culture. Her current project examines Godly Play in the broad context of Christian children’s work using real reader methods, Text World Theory and Museum Theory to examine how Jerome Berryman’s method functions to both support and limit participants’ cognitive responses.

Cath is funded by the White Rose Consortium for Arts and Humanities (WROCAH). She teaches, edits and proofreads, and runs the Sacred Texts Child Readers blog with Jeremy Clines (<https://sacredtexts.hcommons.org/>). If you are interested in writing for the blog, or in Cath’s research, you can contact her via email or social media: <https://hcommons.org/members/cath/chkennedy1@sheffield.ac.uk> <https://www.linkedin.com/in/cathkennedy/>

Posters

1. Kathryn Lord and Kate Caroe, *Trust, Transformation and Play in OutoftheBox, and its Benefits in Schools*

A journey of trust and transformation and a spirit of play is facilitating the creation of OutoftheBox by a community of storytellers around the world.

OutoftheBox uses story and play to promote personal and community wellbeing. It has been inspired by the principles and storytelling methods of Godly Play and Deep Talk. One box of beautifully crafted materials (or in fact any objects the storyteller has to hand) can be used to tell any number of stories on cloth, on sand or on the earth. A core set of 49 Wisdom stories are in development, and stories from six other genres are following. OutoftheBox stories are being used with children and adults in a range of contexts, including schools, care homes, hospitals, workplaces, faith communities, community groups, therapeutic settings and in spiritual accompaniment.

OutoftheBox Training is a not-for-profit organisation that is equipping and empowering storytellers to use the OutoftheBox approach to serve the needs of their particular context. A community of storytellers from across the world is collaborating online and face-to-face to co-create what OutoftheBox is becoming. A one-year pilot phase from June 2021, involving over 20 schools in the UK, was instrumental in refining the OutoftheBox approach and the ways by which OutoftheBox Training supports and collaborates with storytellers. The pilot also generated evidence of how OutoftheBox complements the school curriculum and supports children’s wellbeing.

Section 1 of the paper is an overview of the journeys of the co-founders of OutoftheBox, Kathryn Lord and Kate Caroe, in which multiple circles of the creative process can be seen as contributing to the emergence of OutoftheBox. Section 2 considers how the OutoftheBox principles and methods are built on trust and play and we see how OutoftheBox is intentionally nurturing a community of storytellers where the creative process is at work. Section 3 and the Appendix provides anecdotal evidence of the relational creative process at the centre of the children’s play in the OutoftheBox sessions in schools. Section 4 considers the way ahead to enable the continuation of the creative process in the OutoftheBox movement.

The paper can be read here <https://www.outoftheboxtraining.org/blog/papers-written-on-outofthebox-practice>

About Kathryn Lord

Kathryn is co-founder of OutoftheBox and co-director of OutoftheBox Training. She led a three year project adapting Godly Play® for older adults, including people living with dementia (which became

Stories for the Soul). Kathryn is a spiritual accompanier and retreat leader. She has a past career as a secondary school teacher, and was a trainer for Godly Play® UK for 12 years.

About Kate Caroe

Kate is co-founder of OutoftheBox and co-director of OutoftheBox Training. She is a home educating mum of six children, following Charlotte Mason's educational philosophy which means reading and talking about lots of stories! She is Chair of Steel City Choristers and was previously responsible for Godly Play® at Sheffield Cathedral.

2. Jeremy Clines, *The box as a stage for parables and midrash in the 'Godly Play' curriculum: an act of concealed interpretation.*

When 'parables' are shown from the GP curriculum, shall we wonder how many of the adults and children thought they were grappling purely with biblical text?

Biblical reception research requires honesty about how the text is framed. Berryman's 'parables' show in plain sight the 'frame': a portion of text showcased from a golden box, the accompanying words name the text as special. What is hidden is most of a 'parable' script and the questions are not biblical text.

The 'Parables' section of the curriculum of 'Godly Play' achieves this by synthesizing selected biblical material, plus one text, 'The Deep Well', written by Berryman he claims to be 'rabbinical [...] midrash' into a consistent format framed within a theological narrative. How much of a sacred text are children receiving?

Berryman's 'Parable of Parables' directly addresses the question of reframing of the bible. All the boxes within boxes make a critique of reception history. This story makes a bold claim, the 'parables' box unlike all other boxes, is the final wrapping on the package, less corrupted, closer to the original.

Change occurs when text is performed since "all translation is interpretation, meaning that translators decide what the source text means and then try to transfer that meaning into new words [...] all translation is political, [...] therefore, we must pay close attention to the way that biblical language functions within church contexts and more broadly" (Bryan Bibb, 2014: 340, "There's no sex in your violence: Patriarchal translation in Ezekiel 16 and 23" _Review and Expositor_ 2014, Vol. 111(4) 337–345).

Has Godly Play placed itself in extraordinary territory by having no child-readers of sacred texts, but only child-receivers of carefully stage-managed performances, where interpretation and questions take up far more of the 'script' than the bible, which has been hidden in plain sight?

3. Catherine Kennedy, *Forced Marriage: Problematic, Biblical and in Godly Play?*

Forced marriage is a profound social problem throughout the world, including in some Christian communities. That is the finding of academic researchers and of the United Nations. Moreover, Western legal systems and societal attitudes still struggle to consider this reality, especially for marginalised persons. It is therefore perplexing that Western Christianity is still taught using stories of forced marriage. Religious materials for children have a lifelong effect, orienting cultural ideas of belonging, virtue and family life, so what children are learning about the Bible is important. Some researchers suggest that the failure to adequately protect individuals from forced marriage and its persistence in religious teaching are linked.

Although almost all children's Christian resources normalise forced marriage, the issue is especially clear in Godly Play, making it a good case study. Recently, additional Godly Play stories such as one about Harriet Tubman have been proposed. These explore godly lives which are not oriented around early, reproductive marriage. However, these are optional and subordinate to the main Godly Play curriculum.

The question is: if forced marriage is not a value in our churches, what more should we do to address its portrayal as a romantic or godly destiny?

4. Brenton Prigge, *Godly Play Core Training Online, UK Pilot: An experience in Reflective Practice*.

Running a core training online over an extended period of time was not only an exercise in Reflective Practice for the Trainers, it also increased the opportunity for participants to engage in Reflective Practice during the course.

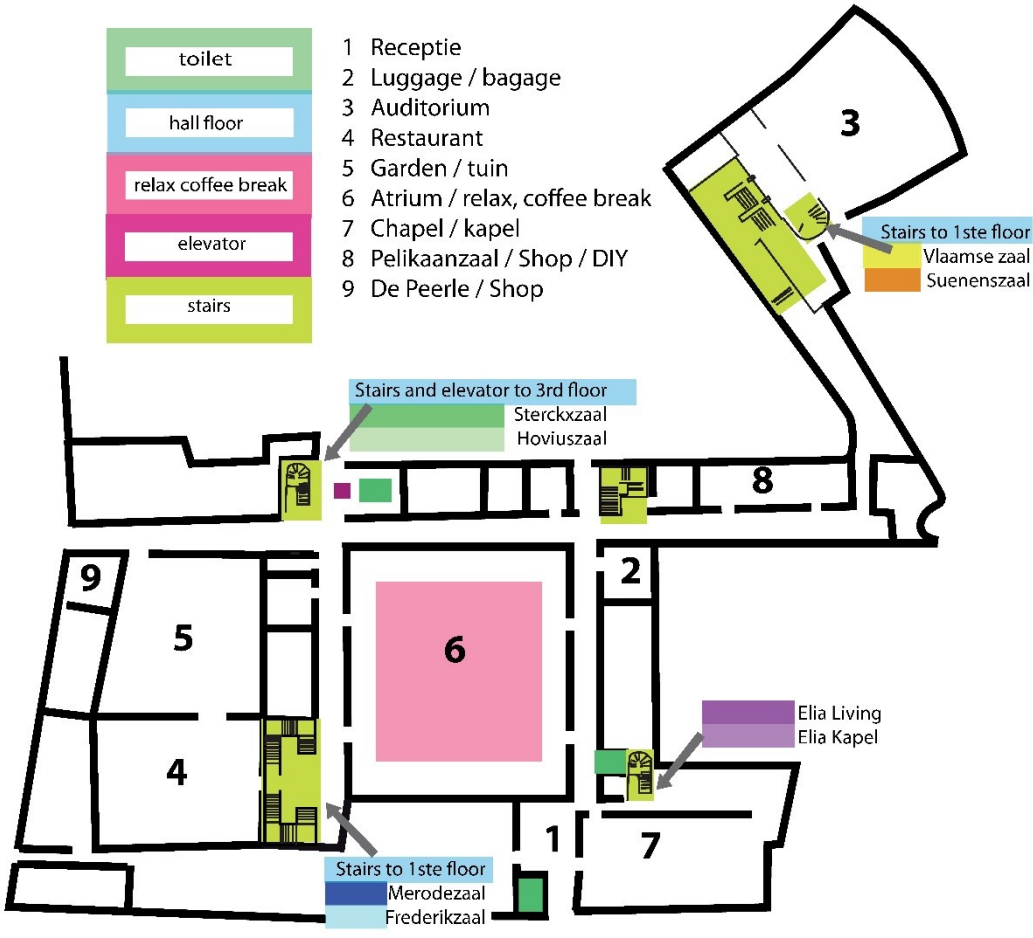
Four trainers spent four months carefully planning and developing, then were able to reflect, adapt and adjust to the needs of the circle as the course unfolded.

Participants were encouraged to play with the stories between weekly sessions, and brought their questions and insights back to the circle.

A strong sense of community was developed, and a sense of being on a journey of shared discovery, for both trainers and participants.

In this poster I will share a snapshot of this story (and being in the story) - what we liked most, what was important and what we would leave out (or do differently).

Plan of the Conference Centre



POINTS OF ATTENTION FOR PARTICIPANTS



Accessibility of the building

Unique entrance from Merodestraat 18
during welcome hours



Free space and coffee breaks

Garden and atrium or in the corridor in case of bad weather



Included in the fee

All meals and drinks during the day
After 21:00 you pay per consumption (with drink coupons)



Smoke-free building

also prohibited in the inner gardens



Chapel

Permanent access to the chapel
Eucharist at 8:00 (in Dutch) and
on Sunday morning 8:30 (in English)



Register for workshops

Stairs before the restaurant
Coloured cards per workshop



Assistance team

Staff recognisable by yellow scarves

Emergency numbers

+32 478 54 72 84 (mobile phone An)

+32 474 76 02 41 (mobile phone Caroline)