

UNPLOWED GROUND



Children are an important part of church life and at Mountainview it's no different. Jesus said "let the little children come to me." So they are important because they just are – God has given them infinite value. Also, most people who will have an ongoing faith in Jesus Christ, come to believe in Him before they are 18. This shows the vital importance of making sure children have the opportunity to know Him. Plus, today's children are tomorrow's leaders – how they are influenced as children will have a great effect on how they act as adults. Finally, many unbelieving parents think their children should have some "religious education." As a result, if kids are happy at church, their unbelieving parents continue to come as well –and might learn something and change their lives without planning on it!

At Mountainview, we have been searching for a meaningful way to provide ministry and Christian education to our children. Last spring, through an accidental invitation, I ended up at an introduction day for Godly Play. This is a comprehensive method of Christian education. In the words of the website : *The goal of Godly Play is to teach*

- children the art of using religious language, parable,*
- sacred story, silence, and liturgical action to help*
- them become more fully aware of the mystery of God's*
- presence around them and in their lives.* (www.godlyplay.org).

Some Christian Reformed churches use a similar program for their children's worship called "Young Children in Worship."

We are really excited about this program. It meets the needs of a variety of ages within one classroom. Right now, our children's ministry consists consistently of 12–15 kids ranging from age 3 to age 11. Teaching to the levels of this age range in one group is difficult, but the stories and free response of Godly Play allows this to happen. Also, instead of needing to find a new curriculum each year, Godly Play can be used year after year, because as the children grow older, their wondering and interaction with the same stories change. Finally, this method can also easily be used in the many Bible study groups that Mountainview has.

The process of getting Godly Play introduced has taken about a year, and two weeks ago, we first used it at our Sunday service. Because the stories are all told from a script, we had a few introductions and training sessions with David Pritchard, a local trainer in Godly Play. We had 19 adults involved in these sessions. Currently we are also in the process of gathering the simple, wooden materials that are used to tell the stories. Thankfully the grandfather of one family is a retired carpenter and is interested in making most of these materials.

Praise God with us that He has provided such a wonderful way to impact our children's lives with Him and His good news!

Blessings,

Kelly + April Crull

PS – The start-up costs for this children's program will be about \$300 (to buy the scripts, wood for materials, and art supplies). If you would like to contribute to this for Mountainview – please let us know and we will get you further details.

