

## Renewal for the Journey: practical suggestions from Melinda Wenner Bradley for beginning a New First Day School year

While renewal and revival might not be the first things that come to mind when we think of the autumn season, for Friends beginning their religious education year autumn does bring these opportunities. Whether your First Day School or youth program uses Godly Play® and Faith & Play on a weekly basis or stories are woven into a larger curricular theme, here are some suggestions for renewing practice and reviving your commitment to this engaging method.

- Gather with your religious education/First Day School committee for planning and to worship together. Work together in small groups to practice stories and provide feedback to one another.
- Attend to your story materials, shelves, and art supplies. Is your classroom space ready to welcome children? Have you refreshed art supplies and made room for ongoing work to be stored? Have you checked story baskets and boxes to be sure each story has its materials and nothing is missing or damaged? (I find that doing this “check up” for my classroom is a wonderful way to reconnect with stories I might not have told in some time!)
- Re-read volume 1 or 5 of The Complete Guide to Godly Play® and find time to discuss your reflections on practice and method with your fellow teachers.
- Consider how you will communicate to parents about this year’s program. Will you send monthly or weekly notices or calendars? Will you provide after each lesson a slip of paper for parents that describes the week’s lesson? Would it be helpful to do an “orientation” or story session for parents to experience? What tools can you provide for them at home, as the lesson continues to be explored and wondered about by their children?
- Consider how you will communicate with the meeting community about this year’s program. Would a multigenerational story experience be welcomed?

I find that making space in my week to prepare intentionally for Sunday morning with the children is essential not only for each lesson and for the children, but for my own growth and nurture. And I believe that *any* opportunity to review Godly Play® practice and method has tremendous value. Not only am I more present to the needs of the circle of children, but I am renewed in my own journey with this Spirit-led work.