

## **Honoring the life and legacy of Jerome W. Berryman, the Founder of Godly Play DRAFT**

Submitted by:

The Rev. Cheryl Minor, Ph.D. (Canonically Resident Clergy) All Saints', Belmont

The Rev. Maggie Arnold (Canonically Resident Clergy) St. Stephen's, Cohasset

### **THE RESOLUTION**

#### **Resolve 1**

WHEREAS Dr. Berryman created and founded the Godly Play method of education and spiritual guidance, the most used curriculum in the Episcopal Church and practiced in more than 60 countries

#### **Resolve 2**

WHEREAS Dr. Berryman nurtured the faith of both children and adults for more than 50 years;

#### **Resolve 3**

WHEREAS he published over 18 books and countless articles devoted to the principle Jesus taught, that "becoming like a child" is the path to spiritual maturity;

#### **Resolve 4**

WHEREAS Dr. Berryman continued to work and publish prolifically until his death on August 5, 2024, at the age of 87;

#### **Resolve 5**

WHEREAS the passage of this resolution would not only honor Dr. Berryman personally, but would announce to the Church at large the commitment of this diocese to Christian education and to the spirits of children.

#### **Resolve 6**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 240th Annual Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts gives thanks for the life and ministry of the Rev. Dr. Jerome Woods Berryman and acknowledges his impact and the impact of Godly Play on generations of Christians, young and old.

### **EXPLANATION**

The Diocese of Massachusetts should pass a courtesy resolution honoring the life and legacy of Jerome W. Berryman because his contributions to the Church—and particularly to the spiritual lives of children—are profound, enduring, and global in scope.

#### Explanation 2

Jerome W. Berryman was the founder of Godly Play, a spiritual formation method rooted in Montessori principles and deeply grounded in the liturgical and theological tradition of the Episcopal Church. Godly Play invites children not merely to learn about faith but to experience it, to wonder, reflect, and respond in ways that are developmentally appropriate and spiritually authentic. Through this method, Berryman affirmed that children are not simply the future of the Church—they are full spiritual beings now, capable of deep engagement with Scripture, liturgy, and mystery.

#### Explanation 3

Godly Play has transformed generations of children and their adult mentors across countless Episcopal parishes—including many in the Diocese of Massachusetts—nurturing a lifelong relationship with God that begins in wonder rather than instruction, and grows through participation rather than passive reception. It has also crossed denominational and international boundaries, serving Christian communities around the world and becoming a vital ministry tool in formation programs from parish Sunday schools to cathedral centers.

#### Explanation 4

Berryman's theological insight and pedagogical genius have reshaped the Church's understanding of children's spirituality—not as an afterthought to adult formation, but as a sacred realm of its own. His work has left an immeasurable impact on clergy, educators, parents, and most of all, children who have encountered the sacred through storytelling, silence, and wonder in a Godly Play circle.

#### Explanation 5

By passing a courtesy resolution, the Diocese of Massachusetts would rightly recognize Jerome W. Berryman's vision, ministry, and faithful witness. In doing so, it would honor not only his legacy, but also the vital place of children in the life of the Church he so passionately championed.

### **STATEMENT AGAINST**

The Diocese of Massachusetts should not make a practice of honoring the life and legacy of one person. Many visionary educators have had an impact on church life.

### **IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

This resolution would have no budgetary or personnel implications.