Stories of God's Love

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A Catholic publishing company tapped faculty at the University of Dayton to develop a new preschool curriculum series using a research-based, age-appropriate approach to educate young children in faith formation.

The series, *Stories of God's Love*, was published by RCL Benziger in March and is the first new preschool program that follows the guidelines for preschool materials developed by the Catechism committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Every lesson in the series is based on early childhood education research and the liturgical elements of the catechism, said UD education professor Shauna Adams, one of the three authors of the curriculum.

"Young children don't understand abstract concepts, which makes teaching about God very challenging," Adams said. "They tend to learn best when you start with something they know and are comfortable with such as family, friends and the great outdoors, themes that are very present in the Bible."

For example, one lesson in the series begins with discussions about a child's family, then transitions into discussion about God as our father and how we are members of his family. Adams said. When teaching about creation, the series uses children's everyday environments instead of jumping to giraffes and elephants in Noah's ark.

*Stories* also has a strong family component. Each lesson has a take-home flyer for parents that allows them to continue the teaching and activities at home.

Joy Comingore, clinical administrator to the early childhood licensure program, and education professor Joni Baldwin, an expert in early childhood education, collaborated with Adams as authors of the various components of the series.

The series' three contributing writers are also all education experts with ties to the University. They include Susan Ferguson, director of UD's Center for Catholic Education; clinical faculty member Beth Engelhardt, who directed a parish preschool for 14 years; and Debra Grisso, a former reading teacher and current school guidance counselor who received her counseling credentials from the University.

"This was a team writing effort," Adams said.

The series is designed to meet the needs of single-day and multiple-day classes at parishes and preschools. RCL Benziger will provide online support for teachers, catechists, children, and parents

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