

Playgroup Plus

Ministry Manual for starting a Christian Playgroup





SYDNEY

GFS SYDNEY is an Anglican organization that operates in the
Diocese of Sydney
and is part of a world wide organization

GFS SYDNEY supports Christian ministry to children and women
by providing resources and creating opportunities
for them to share their faith.

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GFS Sydney

WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF PLAYGROUP!

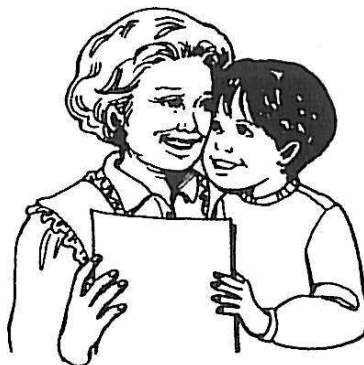
It's a world of fun and play, imagination, laughter and tears; a world of friendships, sharing and caring and building relationships. It's a place for making a mess and cleaning it up! It is one of the most worthwhile place you can ever be!

Playgroup has enormous value for the young child. Here he can play, listen and learn to share. Here he often gains his first experience of being part of a "group". Here he can do things on his own, with friends or with Mum or Dad.

Playgroup is a wonderful outreach ministry to parents, especially mothers, although in today's role-sharing society, Dads often come along too. Here mothers meet new friends, share their mothering problems and joys, and learn to understand their child's development.

Playgroup can be the first building block of a family-oriented church. From playgroup, baptism enquiries will flow; families are invited to join in Parish activities and to bring their children along to Children's activities. Eventually parents may join a Christianity Explained or Lifeworks Course.

It is important to let Playgroup be very non-threatening. It is a bridge building exercise and must be entered into with a real desire to simply LOVE each mother and child who comes along.



WHAT KIND OF PLAYGROUP WILL WE HAVE?

Over the past few years different models for a Christian Playgroup have evolved. The one you choose may be influenced by the area you live in, whether your church draws a large number of children along to Sunday Kids activities, whether you minister to many people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. So here are some ideas: you may choose one or a combination of concepts.

THE 'SIMPLY PLAYGROUP' MODEL.

In this model, you run a playgroup using good themes for a child's development. There is no "religious" element, except for Easter and Christmas, but the playgroup is run by Christians with real desire to share God's Love with those who come along. This is done by having an 'open heart' to those who come, and realising that our own Christian lives are a powerful witness. Parents are always given access to information about ministries in the church and by 'building bridges' through social occasions with the mothers, opportunities can arise for inviting them along to outreach activities. This model works well in areas with people of differing ethnic backgrounds.

In some areas this is the best non-threatening ministry model to choose.

THE 'PLAYGROUP PLUS' MODEL

In this model you run the playgroup as above, PLUS once a month you use a Bible Story Theme. You let the parents know that this will happen as part of your program. It is still a fun morning (and can actually be the best morning of all!)

Depending on your Parish you might ask one of the Staff to come and give the story on that morning.

This gives the Mums and children the opportunity to get to know the Minister or Children's Worker and is valuable link to the church family. After a while you could hand out invitations to your Sunday Morning Children's Program. You will find that this style of Program often reminds Mums of their own Sunday School times and awakens a desire to 'come back to church'. If they do, be there to welcome them and help them feel at ease.

THE CHRISTIAN PLAYGROUP MODEL.

In this model, the theme each week is based on some Bible teaching. This is done very simply, so that the littlies are gently hearing stories from God's Word and the Mums are hearing too. The fun of the day is built around the Bible Theme. The teaching can be given by the Playgroup Supervisor, or by Parish people who come in to help. (Remember though that chn find some security in the same people giving the story in the same place.)

This model works very well for churches that may not have enough facilities for a Pre-school Sunday Morning Activity, OR for churches in an area where families have lots of Sunday Sport commitments and Kids Sunday Attendance is very low. The reality is that most pre-school children today do not hear about Jesus. Parents need to know that the Playgroup will follow Bible themes; some of the stories may even challenge the parent. In this model you can feel free to invite parents along to church outreach activities such as Lifeworks. Once again invite the Parish staff to come along now and then to give the story or simply to join the parents for Morning Tea.



DEVELOPING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES FOR MOTHERS

Most young mothers feel housebound or are juggling part-time work with parenting...so it is a real ministry to them to offer them times of enjoyment away from the busyness of their homes.

- Asking a few mums around for Morning Tea is a great way to start to build relationships, perhaps having a helper to mind their chn for them.
- Once a term organise a "Take-a-Break" night for mums. You could have a speaker on personal topics such as Women's Health and Beauty or a craft night eg how to make creative cards etc. Cooking nights, ideas for entertaining are always popular. Perhaps you could have a debate eg "Books versus videos"...be creative.
- After mums have enjoyed these nights, you could arrange a Dinner with a Christian speaker to challenge the mums about their own Spirituality.eg "What is this life really all about!"
- Follow this with invitations to Christianity Explained or Lifeworks
- Invite families along to a Family Service. Involve the Playgroup chn in singing some of their songs.
- Encourage them to send their older children along to GFS, CEBS or KIDSPLUS after school groups. This opens up more times of contact with families.
- Ask your Rector about trying a "Toddler's Service" or a "Pram Praise!!!!" Do this on your Playgroup morning, taking all the strollers and chn down to the front of the church. Sing some songs, have a puppet show or story and pray for families and children (15 mins is long enough) Then have a special Morning Tea that the Parish Ladies (MU?) have prepared for you. Do this once a Term? Ask grandparents along?

- Hold a Father's Playgroup day on a Saturday...morning or afternoon. Daddy comes along and plays and paints with his child. Grandparents' days are a great outreach to families too.
- Eventually you could invite Mums to come at a separate time to join a Bible Study Group...daytime or evening. Provide Parish babysitters?

Name _____ Welcome

Visitor _____ Welcome!



IMPORTANT GUIDELINES FOR PLAYGROUP SUPERVISORS

ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR PLAYGROUP SUPERVISING TEAM MUST HAVE COMPLETED THE REQUIRED TRAINING IN CHILD PROTECTION AND HAVE SIGNED THE DECLARATION FORM. (State Legislation) YOUR PARISH SHOULD KNOW THAT THIS HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN AND SO SHOULD THE PARENTS WHO COME ALONG.

Remember the 5 Playgroup "P's"

1. Practise the Presence

Be always aware that this Ministry is committed to God. Seek to 'practise the presence of God' during your playgroup session. When a problem arises....how would Jesus have me handle this? Go into your morning just being God's person.

2. Prayer

Pray as a committee for each morning. Ask some members of your church to pray for you during that morning time. Include Playgroup as a topic in the Church prayer points. Pray for your mums, especially those in special need. Pray for the children.

3. Positive thinking

This is an essential skill for a Playgroup Supervisor to develop! Try to handle any difficulties that arise in a positive way. Speak to any negative mums lovingly to help them see a positive attitude to their problems. Help mothers to speak positively to their children...try getting through a morning without saying "no" to the children, rather offering them alternative things to do.



4. Pastoral care

Have a listening ear and an understanding heart. Should you become aware of any special needs, let the church staff know eg parent in hospital, people seeking marriage guidance counselling, baptism enquiries etc.

Try to be at the baptism of your Playgroup chn with a small gift.
Invite mums to Women's Outreach activities in your church.
.....

PLAYGROUP ACTIVITIES

Playgroup activities fall into two categories

1. Free Activities

These include paint, fingerpaint, playdough, free drawing, free cutting, pasting, stamping, waterplay, threading, climbing, dressing -up, puzzles, imaginative play, sandplay, tricycle riding, picture book corner etc.

2. Directed Activities

Creating crafts using different and exciting mediums eg. fabric, foil, foam, cardbd, timber, glitter, leaves, bark, shells and lots more. Sometimes the value lies in the child doing it himself, sometimes in co-operating with Mummy, or sometimes Mummy might do most of it eg stapling, but the child enjoys playing with it afterwards...as in a kite.

- Remember that a child may appear to have done very little some mornings...but may actually have made some great observations while playing in the sandpit or while building with the Lego.
- Remember all pre-school outlines and activities should be large.
- Photocopy enlargements are really useful !



- Always write using proper school letter formation...do not write the child's name in capital letters. This only confuses him as he learns to recognize his name. Ask your local school for a copy of their writing script if you are not sure.

PLAYGROUP RECIPES

PLAYDOUGH

Mix in a saucepan

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt

1 cup plain flour

2 tablespoons of cream of tartar

Then add:

1 cup of water

1 tablespoon of oil

food colouring

Stir, cook on medium heat for approx 3 mins, until dough suddenly comes together in a pliable mixture. Wrap in gladwrap and keep in the fridge

FINGERPAINT

12 tablespoons of cornflour

10 cups of water

Edicol dye or food colouring

1 cup Lux flakes

1 teaspoon disinfectant

Put 9 cups of water into a large saucepan to boil. Blend the remaining cup of water with the cornflour, into a smooth paste.

Gradually add cornflour mix to boiling water, stirring constantly.

Add soapflakes and disinfectant and stir well. This fills three

2 Litre ice cream containers. Mix one teaspoon of edicol dye with a teaspoon of cold water (or use food colouring) and to each container (different colours). Stir well.

EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

Parents pay a weekly fee to come to Playgroup (some choose to pay by the term). From these funds you will gradually be able to build up good resources

Always buy good quality toys and puzzles...don't let your Playgroup gather everyone's broken used toys!

Some useful equipment ideas:

Puzzles, large toys for toddlers (no small pieces), dressing up clothes, Dolly's Corner....a toy stove, cupboard and tea set. A sandpit (covered when not in use and topped up with fresh sand a couple of times a year), a swing and a climbing facility. A fabric tent is fun for a cubby, an old boat is of great play value...all in a safe fenced area. If you have absolutely no money when you begin, remember you can have lots of fun with just old boxes and a few rubber tyres.

Gather nature items, soft wood offcuts, egg cartons, cardboard rolls, empty margarine containers (for paint and glue). Use coloured patty cases, cottonballs, wool, gift paper, popsticks, clay, playdough, rolling pins and biscuit cutters, non toxic paint and glue, painting paper, brushes, little paint rollers, some pieces of thick soft foam (for handprints), some plastic trays, safe scissors, crayons and thick pencils.

Kindergarten suppliers are a great place to look for equipment....many have catalogues they will send you eg KESCO (Nth Parramatta) Kangaroo Trading(Brookvale) Modern Teaching aids (Brookvale), Playways Kindergarten Toy shop (Bondi) etc. Good children's books are important...if mothers join a Book Club(as at school), bonus books are awarded to your group.

If you cannot readily afford lots of books, use your local library to borrow storytime books each week.

Remember to 'Make Memories' at Playgroup. Take lots of photos and videos to use for Parish displays

If you have a pianist and piano...USE THEM at musictime. Live music is wonderful because it can respond straight away to the chn.. If not, use CD's or Tapes for songs and movements.

ORGANISATION

You will need a roster for setting up, morning tea and cleaning up. Also roster someone to make fresh playdough for each day (a hygiene must)

Involve mums in cutting out and sewing...some Church women may be happy to help too. Sometimes older women in the church are happy to come along and be a "Grandma" to help mums by nursing the new baby and letting mum have some time with the toddler.

It is important to have a good First Aid kit on site, containing bandaids, antiseptic cream, Hirudoid cream for bumps and bruises, an eye-wash, tweezers etc. Ask your pharmacist for suggestions. It is also useful for your Playgroup supervisor to have done a First Aid course.

STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN WHAT YOU DO IN
GOD'S NAME

STRIVE FOR CLEANLINESS IN YOUR PLAYGROUP

STRIVE FOR HARMONY IN YOUR TEAM



A SUGGESTED PLAYGROUP CONSTITUTION

Your Church Council may want to have a constitution for your Playgroup. This is usually held on file and is simply there to provide reasonable guidelines for the Supervisors.

This is a sample constitution, draw up by a lawyer...it may be useful for your group.

1. The group shall be called.....
2. The aims and objects of the group, based upon a desire to show forth Christ's Love, are:

Concern: (A) For children

1. To allow social contact with other children
2. To give children opportunity for free expression
3. To provide stimulating and enriching educational experiences


(B) for Mothers (parents)

1. To develop friendships
2. To increase parents' understanding of their children and their needs
3. To share the reality of the Christian life with mothers

There shall be a committee consisting of:

- a. The Rector, (ex officio)
- b. Supervisors who should generally be members of the Anglican Church, recommended to the Rector, and if approved, then ratified by the Church Council. All supervisors shall have completed Child Protection Training and have signed the required Declaration.
- c. A secretary appointed by the Supervisors and approved by the Rector and Church Council. The secretary shall keep proper books of account in consultation with the Parish Treasurer
- d. Present audited accounts to the Annual Vestry Meeting.

- e. Half of the committee shall represent a quorum. In the absence of the Rector, the committee shall appoint a chairman and shall meet at least once a term.
- f. A Playgroup Annual General Meeting shall be held once a year, prior to the Church Annual General Meeting at which the audited accounts shall be presented and adopted.
- g. Times and place of Playgroup Ministry shall be.....
- h. In the event of the Playgroup winding up, its assets shall be disposed of at the discretion of the Parish Council.
- i. The fees for membership and attendance shall be such as the committee shall determine The mother/ guardian shall be deemed the member.
- j. The committee shall have the right to limit the number of children in the group.
- k. The committee shall determine the rules for the good order and functioning of the group
- l. The committee shall have the right to terminate the membership of any persons who fail to comply with the rules.
- m. This constitution may be amended only at a General Meeting/ Notice of such an amendment must be in the hands of the Secretary 14 days before the General Meeting and must be included in the notice sent to members calling such a meeting. Any such amendment must be ratified by the Church Council.

 **“Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”
Mark 10:14**