



NEWSLETTER

Term 4
2008

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome to another newsletter!

A reminder - don't forget to pass this issue on to others in your team as well as those in your church who have heart for the Playgroup ministry, so they can be encouraged as well.

We trust you are

- encouraged by reading the stories of what some of our Playgroups are involved in.
- informed about what some important duty of care issues are in the operation of your Playgroup
- keen to open up your diaries for 2009 and put some of the dates of events planned in ahead of time and letting others in your team know about these.
- interested in looking at the mug shots of those that are the denominational representatives on the CPN exec for 2009, so you are able to put a face to a name.

I have a few changes happening in my little world in the next months that I would love to share with you....

I am expecting a new baby in March 2009 which is very exciting for our family - a little baby sibling for our son Liam (7 year old) to love and enjoy. This means that I will be finishing my role as the temporary coordinator of the Early Childhood Ministries at the Baptist Union of Victoria at the end of 2008. I have been thankful to God for His timing and the opportunity I have had to minister to those involved in early childhood ministries in the Baptist churches over the past 2 1/2 years in this role.

A new person will take on the role as Coordinator of the Early Childhood Ministries at the Baptist Union from the start of 2009. This will be a part time position (24 hours per week). We would value your prayers in this process of change at the Baptist Union office.

I will continue to be involved in the world of Playgroups and all things Early Childhood through the Baptist Early Childhood Team (BECT) and the Christian Playgroup Network (CPN).

Amidst changes it is wonderful to be able to hold onto God's promise of care for each and every one of us wherever we are at ... "but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." I encourage you to have a read of Matthew 6:25-34 and hold onto His promise to you.

As we lead into Christmas time may you take the opportunity to reflect on God's gift to us of His Son - the greatest gift of all. May you also take the time to be refreshed and recharged for your continued ministry to the children and families in your Playgroup.

Looking forward to catching up with you soon,

X Ruth

TERM DATES 2009

- Term 1 2nd February - 3rd April
- Term 2 20th April - 26th June
- Term 3 13th July - 18th September
- Term 4 5th October - 18th December

PROPOSED TRAINING EVENTS FOR PLAYGROUP LEADERS AND TEAMS IN 2009

TERM 1

Friday 13th (afternoon) & Sat 14th
- March Caleb Ministries Course
"Relationship Matters" - see enclosed flyer & page 4 for details
Saturday March 21st Shepparton - Rural north

TERM 2

Saturday May 30th Melbourne - Playgroup Conference
Saturday June 20th Warnambool - Rural west

TERM 3

Saturday September 12th Warragul - Rural east

More details about these events will become available in the new year.

COMMUNIC8 '08 AGM REPORT

by Sue Nicholls



Excellence Award presented to Lucy Van Rossen from St Marks Anglican Playgroups in Emerald.



ministry to them – and I get inspired when I spend time with others who share this passion.

The team from Caleb Ministries was another dose of inspiration. They encouraged us to listen dynamically and to ask good questions so that people feel comfortable and know that we care. They also encouraged us to go to a deeper level in our relationships – to probe (gently) and to seek to really understand a person's life or situation. They also reminded us to respond lovingly, and to reveal something of ourselves in our conversations. The "cherry on the cake" is to offer to pray – not something that will happen in every playgroup session perhaps, but something that few people will refuse when we offer.

Playgroups are all about relationships with the families that we minister to and my time at this conference was well spent because of the encouraging stories I heard about people coming to know Christ and the great principles of communication shared by the Caleb Ministries team.

Playgroups give us a unique opportunity to make significant connections with women and families. This stage of life, when mothers are mainly at home with their little ones and therefore attending playgroups, can be a time when many are struggling with all sorts of issues and questioning their significance and worth. Communic8 08 gave me both skills and inspiration. CPN are considering holding a full-day seminar with Caleb Ministries at some stage – keep an eye out for it for your dose of inspiration!

I love stories! At this conference, there were stories that brought tears to my eyes – because when I hear of people who were once far from God but now can testify to His goodness and mercy, I'm always moved. And when they've come to Christ through playgroup, it's doubly moving – because that's the reason I'm passionate about playgroups. I want to see the mums in my playgroups impacted for Christ as a result of my love and

"I always come away feeling encouraged and excited to be involved in a playgroup"



"Very inspirational"

BENDIGO PLAYGROUP

by Ros Elms

Team leader Andrea has certainly found gold in the playgroup ministry at Bendigo Salvation Army. Held in the children's room in historic 'Gravel Hill' primary school, the playgroup enjoys an average weekly attendance of 28. Andrea heads a committee of 8 leaders, however she says one of the key features for inclusion of families is that the running of each session is shared among the families, as all adults attending have children to look after. All families have the opportunity to go on the roster to perform a task & responsibility during the sessions (eg: children's craft/activities open & set-up, children's morning tea, adults morning tea, story & song, pack-up & close).

Some of the gold that this community playgroup has achieved:

- The Playgroup is a 'Five Star Playgroup', awarded by Playgroup Victoria.
- Successfully gained \$1500 from the City of Greater Bendigo Community Grants Program. Their project was titled 'Five Star Fun for Families @ Playgroup'.
- The Playgroup is now recognized by the City of Greater Bendigo Council as a 'Child Friendly Service' after our completion of an application.

When asked what they have intentionally focused on in setting up a playgroup ministry Andrea offers the following:

Help to meet a demonstrated need of families with young children in our community.

By completing the 'Five Star' training modules with Playgroup Victoria we demonstrated our desire & commitment to provide best practice (eg: policies & procedures in place).



A wonderful 'team' of dedicated parents/carers who all work together very cooperatively & effectively to provide an enjoyable experience each week. Playgroup 'belongs' to everybody!

All families are given a 'Responsibilities & Expectations' document. This creates a community where families feel comfortable, accepted, supported & encouraged in a Christian environment – (evident by regular attendance & arrival of new families).

Aim to have a holistic ministry in action – meeting people's needs (morning tea, fellowship, having something worthwhile to do & go to with their children), building relationships & community, education, and demonstrating & communicating the love of Jesus.

Conscious effort to encourage everyone to be friendly and welcoming, to deal with conflict in constructive ways and to learn from each other – provide hints and ideas about behaviour management and childhood development.

Andrea sees her role as a facilitator and encourager – creating opportunities for families to enjoy their playgroup experience and to encourage & support them when they take on responsibilities & leadership.

They dream big dreams at Bendigo. Andrea's dreams for the ongoing ministry of the playgroup include:

To provide a safe, enjoyable and enriching experience for families in our community in a Christian environment where the love of God is displayed.

To help meet the needs of families with young children in the community.

For all members to continue to build & strengthen their relationships with each other (adult to child, adult to adult, child to child, etc.) so we truly become a loving, caring & supportive community.

Most importantly I pray that each member experiences the love of God at Playgroup and seeks and/or further develops a spiritual relationship with Jesus.

For families to feel accepted, supported & encouraged in the journey of parenting. For children to feel safe and encouraged in their play & learning experiences & socialization. That God's Kingdom is built with families who have started and/or deepened their faith while attending a Christian playgroup.



DOROTHY HUGHES

1. How would you describe yourself in a sentence?

Hmm, next question please.

2. How long have you been part of the Christian Playgroup Network?

Since May 2007, when I replaced Pat Horman as the Anglican Playgroup Ministry Coordinator.

3. What role do you play on the Christian Playgroup Network?

I am the Anglican representative on the Executive Committee. In 2007 I took on the role of Public Officer (which basically means signing the annual returns for Consumer Affairs after our AGM), and I have just been elected as Secretary for the Executive – a way of making sure I pay attention at meetings?!

4. During the week I

I am working full-time as Children's & Families Ministry Facilitator for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. I never have time to be bored – the best bit is visiting playgroups and getting to sit and chat to mums around the sandpit, or sharing ideas and prayers with the leaders.

5. My family consists of

My wonderful husband, Alan, 3 daughters, 2 son-in-laws, 2 granddaughters. My 25 year-old twins, Bec and Rita are married to Erik and Andrew respectively, and their daughters, Elissa and Jessica arrived 10 weeks apart last year – a very exciting year. Joanne finished uni last year and moved out in March, taking the dog with her – so we are empty-nesters!

6. I am currently reading

Children Matter, by Scottie May, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse and Linda Cannel – it's about children's spirituality and the role of the church in nurturing faith development.

7. What do you love doing?

I love my job - it's such a buzz when a church or a ministry leader "gets it" about ministry to children and families. I love spending time with my family, knitting, pottering in my beautiful garden, meditating, doing biblical exegesis, drinking tea from lovely porcelain teacups, reading, singing, and so many other things I would be here all day telling you.

8. What do your friends say about you?

I don't know! I do know they are very patient and loving.

9. Finish this sentence ... If only I could ...

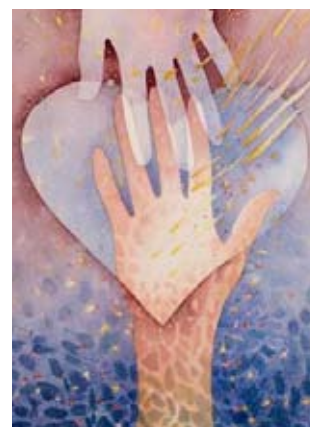
"...knit, read and listen to my husband all at the same time – I would save so much time!"

Caleb Ministries - Relationship Matters

for Playgroup
Leaders and
Teams

After conducting such a vibrant session at our conference, we are excited to be able to tap into the Caleb Leadership Ministries resources again. Caleb Leadership will be conducting a short course on March 13th and 14th 2009 to develop and deepen our capacity to have meaningful relationships and conversations which count, so put those dates in your diary. Venue and cost details are still to come. Please see the enclosed brochure for a description of the short course.

CPN member discount for the course \$70 per person





DUTY OF CARE

by Joy Williams

At long last the playgroup that your Church has spent months in the planning and implementation is now up and running. The program is set and parents seem happy with what is happening - they are coming back each week so that is a good indication! While the group has started off smoothly there are many things you need to be mindful of. Many of these fit under 'Duty of Care.' What exactly is Duty of Care?

Who's Duty?

Care of what or whom?

To give time and space to take this in and set your processes in motion I thought that we could cover a different area regarding Duty of Care for the next 2-3 newsletters. The areas we will cover are:

- Administration
- Indoors
- Outdoors
- Accountability

It is important to understand what Duty of Care means if running a playgroup. The aim is to provide a safe environment for parents, children and playgroup staff/volunteers. We need to ensure that all involved do not act in a way that would injure or distress those in the playgroup with whom we have contact. By thinking ahead and careful planning many potentially dangerous situations can be avoided.

This section covers:

ADMINISTRATION

There is a certain amount of paper work that needs to be completed and kept up to date.

- **Enrolment Forms.** We need basic information but must include emergency contact and medical details.
- **Attendance Sheet.** Although the parent or carer is responsible for their child/children it is important to know who is in the building/playroom while the playgroup is operating. The sheet should contain - time of arrival and also departure. This gives the playgroup co-ordinator exact numbers if there is an emergency and evacuation is required. Everyone needs to be accounted for.
- **Rules of the Group.** The rules/guidelines for the playgroup will be better received if stated in a more positive than negative way. An example of this would be "We walk inside" instead of "do not run inside"
- **Emergency Evacuation Procedures.** There should be an Emergency Evacuation procedure displayed for all to see. This should be practised 3-4 times a year - at different times. Everyone needs to know what to do and children need to feel comfortable with the routine, not frightened.
- **Accident form.** A basic form needs to be available to detail any accidents to the children but also any parents/carers or volunteers. This should include a description of the incident and injury and the action taken.
- **Insurance.** All playgroups need to be covered for public liability. You should also check with your Church as the playgroup may be covered by the Church policy. Being a member of Playgroup Victoria is the best way of ensuring you are covered. Playgroup Victoria also has wonderful resources and publications to support all playgroups. This covers the administration part, Next time we will talk about the indoors and outdoors. Proformas of Playgroup forms can be found at www.planetpreschool.com.au or contact your CPN representative.

SESSION #3 WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE PLAYGROUP LOOK LIKE?

by Heather Karrasch

The right numbers create the right connections

- A circus or a celebration? It's possible for a playgroup to be too large – so that the focus is on management and control rather than on having quality time together.
- A right sized group is one where people are quickly missed if they are not in attendance – and there is follow up to make sure that all is well
- And a right sized group develops friendships which overlap into spontaneous, informal activities outside playgroup with no room for “in” and “out” cliques

The followers of Jesus need to be on deck

- A playgroup is a natural launching pad for building caring relationships
- These then offer scope for the followers of Jesus to combine their faith with practical support
- But it is not enough for just one or two leaders to be followers of Jesus – other helpers with faith are key people although not engaged in the leadership

There's room for everybody!

- A healthy playgroup becomes a healthy community – it is for everyone: children and their parents and also those without children
- Community blossoms within and beyond the playgroup – with other social activities providing creative bridges between the playgroup and the congregation

Time to talk!

What does an effective play group look like? Take some time to think about....

Are the right numbers creating the right connections?

- What is our playgroup like most of the time: a circus or a celebration?
- Are we expending too much energy on control – or are we really enjoying our times together?
- Do we miss those not in attendance – and do we follow them up?
- Are we encouraging friendly and spontaneous social activities, including the creation of friendly bridges between playgroup and congregation?

Are the followers of Jesus on deck?

- Is our playgroup a natural launching pad for building caring relationships?
- Do we have sufficient followers of Jesus to combine their faith with practical support?

Is there room for everybody?

- In what ways is our playgroup a healthy community for everyone: children and their parents and those without children?
- Are we creating space for those without children to lead and participate?

Playgroups With Purpose

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FEEDBACK

■ We would appreciate your feedback on the website, and suggestions for helpful links and material. You are invited to email these suggestions to Judy Harris at juanha@dcsi.net.au.

CPN WEBSITE

■ Don't forget to visit us at <http://www.cpn.org.au>.

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