

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Term 2
2009



Welcome to another newsletter!

I trust you enjoy reading through it, and are encouraged and informed in your ministry through Playgroup.

Don't forget to pass the newsletter onto others in your team or those within the church who have a heart for the Playgroup ministry.

I come with some news of the latest addition to our family – Charlie James was born just 18 minutes past midnight on the 29th March, a healthy boy. Both he and I are doing well, and his big brother Liam (8 year old) is stoked to have a little brother to love. My husband Andrew has been able to have some time off work over the Easter holidays which has helped me lots in my getting back on my feet.

While I was waiting for Charlie's arrival, a group of about 25 Playgroup leaders and team members and CPN denominational representatives, had great day with the team from Caleb Leadership Ministries on Saturday 14th March in Blackburn at the 'Relationship Matters' course.

The focus of the day was on 'Building Relationships at Playgroup', which is at the heart of the ministry of Playgroup. It was encouraging to hear of the positive feedback from this course....

- Thank you for a wonderful conference on Saturday! I benefited greatly from my attendance, both in the material covered and in the opportunities to talk with other Playgroup leaders. Thanks for all the work you put into making the day happen.
- The day was GREAT. There was so much enthusiasm all day, I think people went home with a renewed vision and commitment to playgroup ministry, and definitely more confident in what God could do through their playgroup relationships. Isn't God good!

We trust that you and your team are encouraged in the ministry that you are part of.

We look forward to hearing from you or seeing you at one of our events this year.

Blessings

X Ruth



*The Lord has filled my heart with joy.
! Samuel 2!*

term dates 2009

Term 2 20th April to 26th June

Public Holiday – Mon 8th June (Queen's Birthday)

Term 3 13th July to 18th September

Term 4 5th October to 18th December

training events for playgroup leaders and teams in 2009

TERM 2

Saturday May 30th Parkville, Melbourne
Playgroup Conference 2009
9.30am – 3pm
See flyer on page 5 & 6 for details and registration

Saturday June 20th Warrnambool & District Baptist Church
Rural west regional event
9am – 1pm (1-2.30pm optional guided networking & BYO lunch)
\$10 per person – early bird or 3 or more people from the same church
RSVP 9340 8815 or email explore@ctm.uca.edu.au

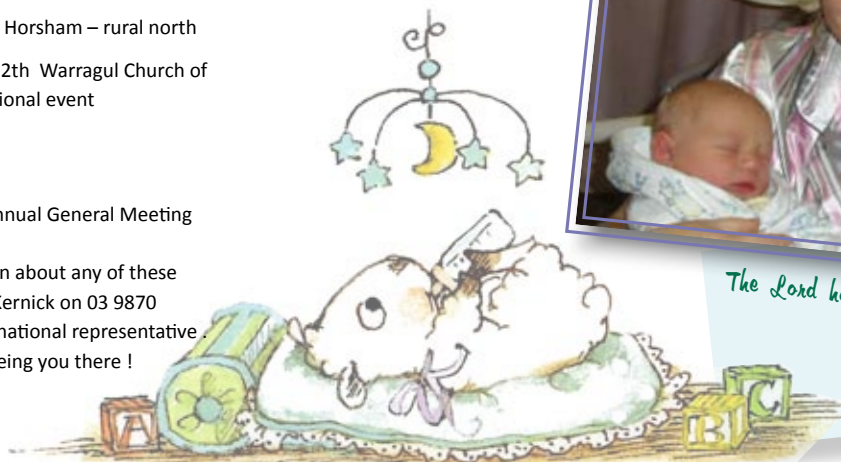
TERM 3

Saturday August 29th Horsham – rural north – west regional event
Saturday September 12th Warragul Church of Christ - Rural east regional event

TERM 4

October – date TBA
Christian Playgroup Annual General Meeting

For further information about any of these events, contact Ruth Kernick on 03 9870 7730, or your denominational representative. Looking forward to seeing you there!



LOUISA RAGGATT IN PROFILE

1. How would you describe yourself in a sentence?

I am Mum who works, who likes to blog, have breakfast with her husband and blow raspberries on her Baby Grace's belly.

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

I'm just a newbie! Having taken on the role of Early Childhood and Families Facilitator for the Baptist Union of Victoria in Feb, I have also joined the CPN and I am very excited to have the opportunity to work with such a passionate and dedicated team of people in this wonderful ministry!

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

It's a little early to tell but my heart's passion is to see churches partnering with their Playgroups to share the love of Jesus with their community. If you are passionate about this too then I would LOVE to hear from you!

4. During the week I...

Doing a million and one things and am so thankful that I enjoy most of them...could do without the cleaning! I have a beautiful little girl who will be 1 in a week's time, and she keeps me busy. I work for the BUJ, study and co-lead a Women's Bible study and Sunday School class. Life is rarely dull!

5. My family consists of...

My wonderful husband, Mark, my beautiful little girl, Grace and our crazy feline friend, Rumpel!

6. I am currently reading...

So many things! 2 great books, one for my study on Hermeneutics which is the interpretation and application of scripture and one from Scripture Union: Come and Follow Jesus, talking with Children about following Jesus by Ceily Cupit. This is a fantastic book and if you haven't already read it then I encourage you to order a copy from Scripture Union.

7. What do you love doing?

Spending time with my bubba and other new Mums who are thirsty for Jesus, sharing with them the highs and lows of life as we journey together, towards Christ!!!!

8. What do your friends say about you?

My friends say that I am honest sometimes very honest, both about myself and in my opinions! I am loud, passionate and easily excitable!!

9. Finish this sentence "If only I could finally have a day when..."

If only I could stop sinning and be more like Christ in my life and relationships!



PARTNERING WITH YOUR CHURCH

Louise Raggatt

Baptist Union of Victoria Early Childhood & Families Facilitator

When I first became involved with Playgroups I was really excited about seeing women come to Playgroup and move from there, through ministries such as Women's Bible study and Alpha, to a personal relationship with Jesus. Isn't that all our hearts desire? A week before Easter I had the extreme privilege of

seeing that dream become a reality!!

Jane and I met last year; in fact we met in the delivery room!! As we journeyed together as new Mums Jane started coming to Playgroup with me...and she loved it. The space, the women, the coffee!! The more she came, the more she came to love the women she met there and long for the freedom she saw in them.

Our story could end here, I could tell you of the wonderful conversations we have each week and I could share with you my longing for her to one day come to faith. But that's not my story and it's not Jane's. It's not the story because my church chose to do something new – it chose to partner with Playgroups.

The leaders of the Women's Bible study decided to partner with Playgroup by running a 4 week Parenting Series during the normal Bible study timeslot and extending personal invitations to Playgroup members. This is where Jane's journey really took off; she came along and said she had never encountered a group of women like them before. They loved her and loved her son, so when the Parenting series was over she kept coming.

As we met for our weekly post-Bible study lunch the other week Jane looked at me and said "I want the freedom I see in those women. I want to be free." As she said those words, I heard the Holy Spirit whisper in my ear "Now is the time. It's going to be today". And it was.

Less than a year after meeting, and 6 months after joining our Playgroup, my friend Jane put her trust in Jesus. It happened both because Playgroups provided a warm and loving space where Jane felt welcomed, and because Playgroups and Women's Bible study partnered together to provide a stepping stone to faith.

None of us need to be convinced of the importance of Christian Playgroups. We know the power of a loving community of women and we relate to that sense of coming before Christ, tired and broken. Jane came to Playgroup a tired and overwhelmed new Mum looking for friendship. She came to know the ultimate friend in Jesus, by seeing the freedom He gives his followers. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." (Gal 5:1) What joy!

Are you partnering with your church? Does your church understand that they need to partner with you? How can you, together, proclaim the gospel of Christ, a gospel of love and grace and compassion, with those in your midst? It's time to start that conversation!



STEPPING STONES

A Service for Pre-Schoolers and their Carers



M

any congregations are exploring new ways of connecting children and their families into the worshipping life of the church. Here's an example of one model being explored by a local church...

"Stepping Stones" is a half hour worship time for pre-schoolers and their carers which we started at Mt. Eliza in August 2008. Held in the church on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of the month from 9.30-10am, it is a time with Bible stories (OT Bible stories as well as

following the life, works and message of Jesus), prayers and worship songs specifically written for small children. Support is provided by members of the Sunday congregation who come along to hold babies, listen to the parents and lead the singing. Attendance varies but

the children who attend always immerse themselves totally in the theme.

Whilst many elements are the same as our congregational worship time...

- meeting in the church
- lighting of the candle at the beginning of the service and blowing it out at the end (unless we have children crawling around)

- prayer time as individuals and shared prayer time as a community
- praying the Lord's prayer together
- Bible story time either read, acted out with costumes, or told using props
- ending with a shared Blessing

...others are different.

For example, the use of specially made prayer cards - pieces of card covered with contact with pictures of the world, different types of family units, pets, the church, people who help us and so on - during the service and the saying of the Lord's Prayer together emphasise the importance of prayer in worship. The

children also take away a colouring page, stickers or a craft activity related to the theme which they can work on at home. These activities will usually need the parent to assist and so will encourage further discussion.

Our aim is to offer a weekday service to families who cannot come along to church on a Sunday morning, and to offer something short and specifically aimed at the age group (no boring bits!). I felt it was really important that we meet in the church rather than in one of the other rooms where the children's activities usually take place as it sends a message to the children that they are truly welcome into the church and that it is their space too.

Submitted by Claire Dawe
Family, Youth and Children's Worker
Village Uniting Church Mount Eliza

NB. Claire has kindly made available outlines of a number of these services. Contact chris.barnett@ctm.uca.edu.au if you would like to see them.

Looking for craft ideas, administrative documents and to learn from others running a playgroup? Then why not visit our websites to learn more about how we can help you!

PLAYGROUP VICTORIA
www.playgroup.org.au

Planet Preschool
www.planetpreschool.com.au



CONNECTED

with the local community

- Dorothy Hughes

their local community. There are playgroups that meet in aged-care facilities and community centres. It is worth considering different ways of connecting to groups in the local community that may not be able to attend the mid-week playgroup in the church hall. Saturday morning playgroups can be a great opportunity to connect with working parents, particularly dads.

Some churches have met community needs by running “supported playgroups” that meet the special needs of a particular target group. Examples are playgroups for children with disabilities, groups for refugee families, groups supporting parenting skills. While these playgroups may require more skilled leadership or greater resources, it is possible to access grants to support these projects. Playgroup Victoria also provides a Supported Playgroups Manual and offers advice and other support.

Finally, try this exercise. Imagine you have no connection with your local church. How easy is it to find? Are there signposts on strategic street corners? On approaching your church, is it easy to find the entry to the car park? Do the buildings and surrounds look attractive, clean and cared for? Are signs or notice boards up-to-date and inviting? When you have parked

your car is it easy to see the way to the front door? If you were pushing a pram and carrying bags, and you had a toddler hanging off your leg, could you get up the pathway, up the steps and through the doors? Having arrived, how are you welcomed? Are the people you meet friendly, and is the entry clean, bright and uncluttered? If you are having trouble imagining how your church might look to an outsider, ask someone who has not been to your church before to take you for a “visit”, in their car, with no directions from you. How easily do you think your local community would connect?

One of the great potential strengths of playgroups as a local church ministry is the opportunity that they provide to connect with people in the local community. Young families are very open to connecting with groups in their community, and there is the potential to build long-lasting connections, since this is the start of a lifetime journey. The connections that begin in playgroup can be a stepping-stone for other ministries offered by the church.

Parents of young children are at a stage of life that is demanding and full of adjustments. Many parents of young children are feeling sleep-deprived, burdened with a mortgage or higher rents to provide the extra accommodation that they need for their children, overwhelmed by the responsibilities of parenting. Playgroups have so much to offer: a social network for both the adults and the children, an environment that is supportive and the chance to talk with people that understand the highs and lows of parenting young children,

Some churches have developed creative ways of using playgroups to connect with



The connections that begin in playgroup can be a stepping-stone for other ministries offered by the church



Playgroup Conference 2009

Stories of childhood

Saturday 30th May 2009

9.30am - 3pm

Centre for Theology & Ministry, Parkville

A joint activity of Christian Playgroup Network,
UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania
and the Centre for Theology & Ministry, Children & Families Ministry
Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania



Program:

- 9.30am Registration & Resource Viewing
- 9.45am Worship
- 10.00am Children & Spirituality (Speaker)
- 10.45am Morning Tea
- 11.15am Children & Spirituality (Facilitated Discussion)
- 12 midday Electives
- 1pm Lunch
- 1.45pm Electives
- 2.45pm Wrap-Up
- 3pm Finish

For more information:

Children and Families Ministry
Centre for Theology & Ministry
1 Morrison Close, Parkville, 3052

Ph: 03 9340 8815
Fax: 03 9340 8805
Email: explore@ctm.uca.edu.au

Date: Saturday 30th May 2009
Time: 9:30am - 3pm
Place: Centre for Theology & Ministry,
1 Morrison Close, Parkville, 3052
Cost: \$30 per person if registered by 18 May 2009
\$35 per person if registered after 18 May 2009
\$5 discount for CPN members
(Cost includes lunch)
Your registration by 18th May 2009 is appreciated

TAX INVOICE

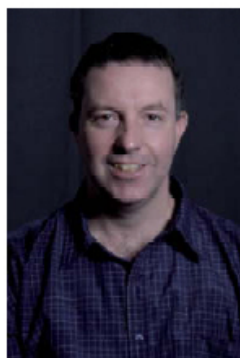
The Uniting Church in Australia ABN 39 703 442 583
Upon completion and payment this document becomes a tax invoice for GST purposes.
Please photocopy and retain for your records.

I enclose \$ _____ \$30 per person if registered by 18 May 2009
\$35 per person if registered after 18 May 2009
\$5 discount for CPN members

I am paying by: cheque money order
(Please make cheque payable to: UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania)

credit card (Visa/Mastercard)
 Credit card number _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
 Expiry Date ____ / ____ Credit card name _____
 Signature _____

Keynote Speaker



Brendan Hyde, PhD is a Senior Lecturer in Religious Education at the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne campus and has taught in the Bachelor of Teaching – Early Childhood course. He is the author of *Children and Spirituality: Searching for Meaning and Connectedness*, and co-author of *The Spiritual Dimension of Childhood*, both recent publications through Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.

Brendan has research interests in children's spirituality, and in Godly Play as an approach to religious education in Early Childhood, and how that process nurtures the spiritual dimension of children's lives. Brendan brings both a practical and theoretical dimension to exploring children and spirituality in the context of families with children 0-5.



Date: Saturday 30th May 2009

Time: 9:30am - 3pm

Place: Centre for Theology & Ministry,
1 Morrison Close, Parkville, 3052

Cost: \$30 per person if registered by 18 May 2009
\$35 per person if registered after 18 May 2009
Cost includes lunch
(\$5 discount for CPN members)

Your registration by 18th May 2009 is appreciated

Electives

Subject to numbers, each elective will be run in each session

- (A) "Connecting with families of pre-schoolers"
Jo Hood - "mainly music" Australia's Director
- (B) "Putting the Play into Playgroup – Messy Play +"
Joy Williams - Uniting Church Victas Synod Early Childhood Consultant
- (C) "Resources for Playgroups – Pulling it all together"
Louisa Raggatt – Baptist Union Early Childhood Coordinator
- (D) "Recruiting, motivating and encouraging your team"
Cassie Gibson – Assistant Chaplain at Oxley College
- (E) "Communicating a missional Playgroup vision to your church"
Dorothy Hughes - Children & Families Ministry Facilitator for the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- (F) "Dealing with Difficult Behaviour – from children and their carers"
Roslyn Elms – Salvation Army Territorial Playgroup Consultant
- (G) "Stepping Stones" – Developing a Worship service for pre-schoolers and their families
Claire Dawe - Families, Youth and Children's Minister at Mt. Eliza Uniting

Playgroup Conference Registration Form

Congregation / Group Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ P/Code: _____

Phone: _____ (BH) _____ (BH)

Email: _____

Dietary Requirements: (eg vegetarian, gluten free) _____

Elective choices (Choose one for each session)

Elective Session 1

Elective Session 2

SESSION #6: Playgroups and the congregation - how do they connect?

copyright 2006 Heather Karrasch

The old....

- The "old model" playgroup is where a Christian parent (often with a child of their own in the playgroup) leads a program focused on the needs of the children
- The majority of participating parents do not have a church connection
- Success is gauged solely on the basis of numbers attending

and the new....

- The "new model" is pitched towards parents and children – the needs of both being recognised and addressed
- A program with an overtly Christian content – valuable as this may be – is regarded as being of secondary importance
- The primary goal is the building of strong and caring relationships with parents and children



The church's leaders get on board

- Given the communication of faith through relationships, it is important for the congregation to become playgroup wise and supportive
- The pastor has a God given opportunity to get alongside leaders and participants, both young and old. All it takes is an active interest.

Getting the word out

- Regular reports to the congregation and church meeting creates interest and support
- Taking time to pray for leaders and participants affirms ownership by the church

Time to talk! Playgroups and the congregation – how do they connect?

What model are we driving – the old or the new?

- Given the above descriptions, which model are we most like?
- What steps do we need to take to become more of a "new model" playgroup?
- And what changes will we need to introduce to become this "new model"?

Are our church's leaders on board?

- How are we keeping our leaders informed? In what ways?
- Have we issued an invitation to our pastor to be a regular visitor and encourager?
- Are we involving other members of the congregation in what we are about – such as providing casseroles where there is illness, or the fixing of toys and equipment?

Getting the word out

- Are we providing regular reports: for our church bulletin, church meetings?
- Are we providing the pastor with our news and prayer needs?
- Are we inviting others to call in and visit our playgroup?

CONTACT DETAILS

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dhughes@melbourne.anglican.com.au

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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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