



The CPN committee has been through a very difficult period, with a number of members facing major illness and life change. We appreciate your forbearance as we have had difficulty getting out newsletters. We would also appreciate your prayers for God's protection of playgroup ministries and the work of CPN.

On the plus side, we can finally confirm the date of our Conference and AGM, and it is going to be fantastic! Please get out your diary now for:

**Saturday November 11, 9.30 am – 2.30 pm**

**EDGE Church, Cnr Blackburn & Woodhouse Roads, Doncaster East**

The Reverend Sue Bluett will be speaking on Ministry to Whole Families, and inspiring us to consider how playgroup can be part of a strategy to bring whole families to Christ. We strongly encourage you to drag... er... invite your minister along to this section of the day at the least (10.00 am)... this session will be FREE for ministers, including morning tea! We really want ministers to hear how playgroup can be a vital component in reaching families with the good news. Sue is well known to many for her former role with Scripture Union, as well as in her current roles in the Baptist Union and as a chaplain at Carey Grammar School. She is an outstanding motivational speaker and trainer.

Following morning tea, Yvette Wynne from Kingsway Community Church will be speaking on "Connecting Families With Jesus". Yvette has launched a book and DVD resource for you to use with your playgroup leadership team, and this will be available for sale on the day. Yvette is a self-confessed "evangelism junkie" who has seen many families come to faith in Jesus. She has learned how to be open with others, to ask "God" questions, to run "seeker" groups, and to train others in evangelism. We know you will be totally inspired to hear her share about what God can do through the ministry of playgroup, and will be touched and "swept away" by her enthusiasm.

After lunch and the AGM, Kaye Plowman, the Executive Officer of Playgroup Victoria and will be sharing her expertise and passion for playgroups. This will be something of a CPN "farewell" to Kaye, who has resigned as CPN President.

CPN will heavily subsidize this event so that it is very accessible to our members! The cost will be \$15 for CPN members, including morning tea and lunch. (\$35 for non members, \$15 for church ministers who register for the whole day. Those who register as CPN members on the day will also be eligible for the discount). Remember that CPN members are eligible for discount Playgroup Victoria membership (insurance) so you won't hear of a better bargain anywhere!

For registration details see the enclosed brochure.

## Web News

The CPN website is currently being revamped and should be back online soon. Apologies for its temporary disappearance from cyberspace.

### Child development: ages and stages

Children are learning and developing all the time. There is no hurry to do this and they need to be given the space and time to do this. There are four main areas of development:

- Social and Emotional
- Intellectual (Cognitive)
- Physically (Motor)
- Language

I will focus on one of these areas in this edition - Intellectual or Cognitive.

Babies up to 9 months are very curious about what they can see. But when the object is out of sight it is also out of mind. They love repetitiveness and games like "Peek a Boo". They can keep going for a good period, and start to laugh and giggle in anticipation. As they continue to grow they continue to be curious about everything. By 18 months they are also very interested in sounds, and will look to where a noise is coming from, and also try and find out where a particular sound is coming from (eg examine a toy or object very closely to try and find the noise.) They now have a limited memory and can follow simple instructions. The instruction needs to be one action only, such as "Put the book on the shelf" It would be more difficult if they were asked to "Go into your room and put the book on the shelf" as this requires two actions and they are not able to remember the two. Children at this age are very curious about everything around them and like to experiment with what is in their environment. It is important to give them time to play in their own surroundings, and be given time to do things over and over as this is a major part of experimenting. Time and Repetition - two very important ingredients for young children.

Over the next year children do start to remember people, place and books. It has been very interesting to watch my grandchildren grow during the past few months they have been staying with us. There is a delightful book titled "Yuk." The three-year-old and one-year-old both wait for the "YUK", and the younger one is ready with his grimacing face every time you turn the page. It is extremely funny to watch, but fascinating to see his anticipation for the part he loves - the YUK!

I often say you can see young children's minds working. At this age they will start to think before they act, and you can see the "brain ticking". They will also point to things especially when asked: "where's your .....?", and they will point to it. They love face parts, and pointing to their own, but also to yours.

By age three / three and a half they can understand most of what is said. There are frequent questions asked over and over until you can nearly be at screaming point. But remember the repetition is needed to learn! They love stories and books and can recognize objects and people and point them out. Simple puzzles are enjoyed and they love the action of tipping them out as much as putting the pieces back together. Remember while it is good to challenge children, if tasks are constantly difficult they will become very frustrated, so make sure that the tasks / games can be completed with relative ease, before moving to a more difficult level.

By the time children are five their attention span is much longer and they notice interesting details, Pictures with much detail can be revisited often and different things as well as familiar things can be pointed out by the child. They are beginning to sort and classify, and will think about a problem and enjoy experimenting to see what will happen if... They do now understand complex sentences, and have a basic understanding of time. I am finding it is easier to teach the time on a clock face with my three-year-old grandson than try to get him to read a digital. We all know Play School is on at half past nine (when the big hand is on the 6 and the little hand is on the 9).

Children love books and this provides a marvelous scope for spending time together: for them to be able to sit quietly in a corner and enjoy their favourite book; and sharing them with their teddy or other soft toys.

This is just a small sample of some of the intellectual/cognitive development happening with young children. The important thing is to be there for them, giving them the time and space and the opportunity to develop in a supportive environment.

HAVE FUN!!

Joy Williams

## Playgroup Profile – Edge Church

EDGE Church Playgroup is a church run Playgroup in Doncaster East, currently maintaining a Tuesday group and a Wednesday group.

Each Monday a kind member of the congregation comes and packs away half the chairs from Sunday, puts barriers across to block off the other half and the stage, and gets out the small tables, chairs, and other furniture and large toys in preparation.

On Tuesday morning Eleanor (grandma), Jenny (grown up kids) and Judy (school kids) arrive at 9 to get out paint, play dough, boxes of toys and if fine set up the swings and sandpit outside. Anytime from 9:30 the children and their carers arrive. Our groups have mainly mothers bringing them, with a few grandmothers, and occasionally fathers. Nationalities are a fun mix. Encouraging the ones who battle English is part of the effort we must make. Numbers are limited to 18 families in order to comfortably fit playing children and babies (with prams), as well as to realistically try to meaningfully connect with each adult who comes, which is one of our goals. We are rapt to have two church mums in this group who also desire to reach out in love and friendship to the women who come.

All the children are expected to have morning tea together. A group singing, story and game time can happen either before or after morning tea at 10:40, depending on whether we are going outside, or going back to the inside toys. If it happens before morning tea we finish with a cute grace song before sending the children off to wash their hands and sit up.

We always start the group time with the same song (Everybody Clap), which works to get attention and bodies involved. Sometimes we sing one of the few “God loves me” songs we have introduced. As the playgroups have been running for many years we are very well resourced physically, except for toddler stories. When Dorothy came to run the Wednesday group last year, she introduced the “Top Tales” books which have been a great resource.

At 11:30 everyone heads off, and the team have a time of reflection and prayer.

The Wednesday group are cared for by Dorothy and Susan, whose children are all at school. They also love to have the few Christian mums in the group, some from EDGE Church and some from other churches. These women are really great at drawing the group together. The routine is slightly different because each group has its own flavour, reflecting the individuals leading and attending it. One of the strengths of this group is an enthusiasm for socialising and often they meet during school holidays at a play centre or park. Women from this group have also organised a few social dinners out on a Friday evening for the groups to mix, which have been really nice times to talk about deeper things such as difficulties and dreams.

I guess a challenge Dorothy brought to the leaders was to have a “roster free” playgroup. The two main reasons she raised were 1. It would be less stressful for us and the carers and 2. We contradict ourselves when we say carers must supervise their children then ask them to wash out paints in the kitchen where children aren't allowed. I have to admit I was skeptical.

The first roster to go was the fruit roster. To do this we asked parents to bring each child's morning tea in their own container ready to eat. A bonus was that Susan could be more involved in the carer's lives instead of spending so much time cutting fruit and washing bowls. Each child also uses their own drink bottle. This just leaves us some coffee cups to wash.

The next roster to go was the washing paints up roster. We decided that we were happy to perform this service for the carers during the morning or at the end if things were busy.

The vacuuming roster was easy to discard as well when we asked the church cleaner to please wait until after playgroup to clean the area. All we do now is a quick spot vacuum if an area gets bad, and sweep under the tables.

The big one – the craft roster. Dorothy said she would be happy to organise the crafts for each term if we would meet for a “cutting night”. We have had several of these at the church or in her home, with 3-6 carers coming to help. This has divided up the work and been a really intimate time of relationship building, always with a super supper for us. (Cutting out burns fat, you know.) I believe she has found the Internet a fantastic resource, and is gradually collating files to build a two-year rotating plan. Sometimes when there is not much preparation, we just hand things around to be taken home by the willing and brought back the next week, or just done it among the leaders. The burden of this has been eased as we have incorporated more “free” crafts such as collage pasting, and had sensory play mornings and done things like just sponge shapes in yellow on a paper covered table on “Yellow Day”. We are gradually keeping less “junk” in the craft cupboard as we work out what we will actually use, too.

Morning tea for the adults is a voluntary affair, with sometimes a feast. To avoid a famine we put some Pura Longlife Milk cartons in the cupboard, and some rice crackers, corn chips and long life dips (Doritos at present). Then if none of us turn up with something, we can use our emergency stash.

Our “big event” is a Saturday morning for Dads to bring the kids to playgroup for an hour, before Mum, the camera and older siblings turn up for a BBQ lunch. We also learn some Christmas songs, which the children can perform at the Presentation Day in December. So far haven’t had many families participate, so we are still working on this one, as it’s a bit of a new concept for the unchurched families. To keep it very comfortable, we encourage them to bring their cameras, and maybe this year we will run an optional crèche for the little ones during the rest of the service, staffed by the leaders they are familiar with.

The challenge we are now trying to meet is to move into relationships which demonstrate genuine love and concern, not just polite interest. We have begun in a small way by phoning, visiting or sending a card to members who are away or struggling. The response from this is delighted appreciation, and well worth the effort. However it means a change of our commitment. Instead of just committing to 3 hours once a week, we need to be willing to put in another 30 minutes on another day just to make that call, write that card, or meet for coffee. Just as real friends do.

Judy Harris

## Kilsyth South BECT/CPN Training Night

On Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> of August a significant crowd gathered at Kilsyth Baptist to discuss playgroup ministries.

Joy Williams spoke on “Ages and Stages”, and how to manage the wide range of ages and abilities that exist in many playgroups. She had extensive handouts to give more detail about how to manage suitable activities for children at different stages of development.

Ruth Kernick spoke on getting the church community involved in playgroup ministry. She also compared the “old” model of playgroup ministry with the new missional playgroup model. This is summarized below:

### **The old .....**

- The ‘old model’ playgroup is where a Christian parent (often with a child of their own in the Playgroup) leads the 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 recognized 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

There was then a time in small groups to discuss ways of helping playgroup to connect with the broader congregation and ministry of the local church. There was much animated discussion on this topic.

Supper was a sensational variety of sweet and savory foods. Discussion and networking continued, as well as browsing the extensive resources on display.

Miriam Stewart then led a session on natural play materials. This was fascinating to consider the engaging (and very cheap!) activities using natural materials that could be used in playgroup. A series of Powerpoint photos and a display table was used to demonstrate the ways natural materials could be set up to engage the play and the imagination of a young child.

Ruth also detailed the extensive resources that could be used to assist in making your playgroup missional. A couple of resources profiled were 'Friends for Life' and "Connecting Families with Jesus". The night finished with a moving segment from the "Connecting Families with Jesus" DVD, featuring interviews with and Baptisms of women who had come to faith in Christ through the Playgroup Ministry of Kingsway Community Church. (Yvette Wynne has developed this book and DVD).

Many thanks to Ruth Kernick who did a completely sensational job of organizing this event.

### Upcoming events:

**21<sup>st</sup> of October** Bendigo BECT/CPN playgroup training day. 9.30 am – 3.30 pm.  
Bendigo Baptist Church, 757 McIvor Highway, Johortoun.  
For more details, contact Ruth Kernick on (03) 8405 3181

**11<sup>th</sup> of November** CPN Conference and AGM 9.30 am – 2.30 pm  
The Edge Church, Blackburn Road, Doncaster  
For more details, contact Judy Harris on [juanha@optusnet.com.au](mailto:juanha@optusnet.com.au)

### More information?

Please contact the editor (Janet Woodlock) at [jwo09826@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jwo09826@bigpond.net.au)