

PLAYGROUP PROFILE: SOUTH VALLEY BAPTIST (INDEPENDENT)

Six years ago, while scrubbing my floors of all things, I thought: “Hmm... there really should be a playgroup at Church.” I wasn’t working at the time and didn’t have children, but I had a friend at church with a child, so I approached her and we started.

We would bring toys, a trampoline, a clam shell (etc.) from home and take them home again afterward. It was a lot for just the 2 children who would come each week, but it was a fun get-together nevertheless. It was a good four months before women from the church began to come, and we now have a waiting list for the first time!

It is always our desire for someone to come to know our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have had one mother who had “graduated” playgroup attend the aerobics / bible study run by the church led through a Christianity introduction study. She apparently decided to follow the Lord, but as I haven’t seen her since, I can only hope and pray!

We are very blessed to have a supportive pastor and church. In our second year of operation, the pastor approached me and said that we would be allocated whatever money we saw fit in the yearly budget and he would be happy for families not to contribute the \$2 any more (our church insurance covers all playgroup events). The church prays for us constantly and is very encouraging.

I have benefited greatly through involvement with CPN with ideas and encouragement to persevere. We have now also joined Playgroup Victoria, and I wish I’d done it ages ago because they offer heaps of resources.

My message to playgroup leaders is:

- Don’t expect perfection: we all learn as we go. After 6 years, I still have to get takeaway nearly every playgroup night!
- It’s not about toys and structure that makes it great, it’s our welcoming smiles and what we remember about people.
- My message to independent churches is: get involved with organizations like CPN and Playgroup Victoria. We really miss out by not having designated playgroup representatives, and these organizations are great.

On Saturday we had our first playgroup for dads - we’re trying to get to know the wider family – and it was really great. The dads actually put the mums to shame with how well they played with the kids and chatted to other dads, and they were quick to help pack up too!

Maybe I'll never see someone come to faith in Christ, but until the end of my time in playgroup I'll continue to pray for someone, and persevere to grow in my faith and reach out in friendship.

Emily Lewis.