

## OCEAN GROVE PLAYGROUP

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Our playgroups are growing - now 16 mums and 33 children on Tuesday's roll and 14 mums and 16 children on Wednesday's roll. We are having babies almost every month and the mums keep coming, so the groups are becoming more multi-aged, rather than the original mothers' groups. This has challenges with programming and fitting in spaces, but the mums are bonding very well. Now when there's a new baby born the other mums make up a "Post Partum Petal", a daily support roster for the first three weeks or so. We started offering a casserole or two, and now they've added to it. We give each newborn a touchy/feely baby's Bible bought at WORD and they've been well received.

We celebrated Christmas and Easter with special Christian messages - a nativity set and story in the chapel, Easter chickens and the planting of sweet pea seeds that grew in time for Easter, and the church made cards for the parents. We (the leaders) decided to think of "playgroup time" to be like "church at playgroup", so if a mum comes early, she joins in our opening prayers. We sing "God is great" and "Thank you for the world" before morning teatime and the children clap along, while it's mostly the mums singing! With increased numbers we find it harder to spend quality time chatting, but we do share with them by praying for their life problems. Linda has offered guidance to professional help when she can, with her maternal

and childcare background - speech pathology, parenting etc. She's also doing a training course to be a facilitator for a parenting program run by a Bellarine Family Network. We hope to run a program in June.

In the Tuesday group we now have 4 mums who come to church maybe 1-2 times a month, and the one church mum we had in the group has invited them to become part of an informal small group - just beginning. Our church has installed tract racks right near the hall door and a little one for Christianity Explained has attracted the eye of one of our 3-year-old boys. He folds and unfolds it like a puzzle, brings it when he comes to playgroup, and his non-churched parents call it his Jesus book. We pray it will open doors.

- Judy Wells

Team leader at St Peter's Anglican Church, Ocean Grove