

CONNECTED IN LOCKDOWN



Christian Playgroup Network
connect • belong • grow

HOW WE'VE KEPT CONNECTED TO OUR PLAYGROUP FAMILIES DURING LOCKDOWN

Inspiration and reflection from Tash Gellert, anqeltash79@hotmail.com, Coordinator of Little Lambs Playgroup in Lara, a small town near Geelong in regional Victoria

FACEBOOK PRIVATE PAGE

Each of our three groups has their own private Facebook group. This is the first year we have done this and little did we know when we made them back in February and invited families to join, that it would become our major means of connection during lockdown. We've used our page to announce children's birthdays (adding a photo of the birthday child), the birth of new babies, to share encouraging quotes, to share ideas and photos of what activities families have been trying with their kids at home during isolation. I posted pre-recorded videos of myself reading a story and singing a song, I also posted a scavenger hunt activity and asked the families to post photos of what they found and a "Guess where my toy lamb is hiding?" photo game where I posted photos of my soft toy lamb hiding in different places in my house for them to guess where it was.



PLAYGROUP PLAYDATES



When the restrictions eased a little back in July and we were allowed to meet outdoors in groups, I organised playdates in the local parks. We have a free wildlife sanctuary nearby and so we would meet at the sanctuary and go for a walk together then have a picnic morning tea at the end of the walk, I would bring my bubble machine for the kids to play with and we would sometimes read a story together and sing some songs. Because the families who came were different each time and there were so few of us, I found that families who didn't connect with each other at our normal Pre-Covid playgroup session would be 'forced' (in a good way!) to chat and interact with each other. It was also a great time for me as a leader to have a good conversation with the mums without the pressure of running a playgroup session.

TEXTS

We texted every family halfway through the first lockdown to check in with them and let them know we were praying for them.

ZOOM PLAYGROUP

We trialled a few Zoom playgroup sessions. I found that these worked best for 3-5 year olds. I chose a theme (Down on the Farm, Under the Sea, Father's Day, Teddy Bear's Picnic) and we sang a few songs and read a story and I would also ask them to show something from their home that went along with the theme. We muted everyone except myself and would unmute a child when it was their turn to show something. I aimed to only run these for 20 minutes but they ended up being 30 minutes long which the 3-5 year olds seemed to cope well with.

PHOTO COMPETITIONS

For Mother's Day and Father's Day we ran photo competitions. You could do this for any occasion – Book Week dress ups, Christmas, Grandparent's Day, etc., where families could enter a photo based on a theme to win a prize. The brief for Mother's Day was to enter a photo of themselves eating their Macaron (Mother's Day gift from Playgroup) either in front of their children without them noticing or in a secret spot. The mums were very creative and the winning mum entered a photo of her eating her macaron in the roof cavity of her house! Our Father's Day theme was "Just Like Daddy". These were heaps of fun to organise and our playgroup leadership team had fun voting for the winners. We posted all the photos in our private Facebook groups so the parents could see them.

CARE PACKAGES



We've done three different care package deliveries for our families this year. Our first was Easter themed with a tea bag, laminated Bible verse and Easter eggs for the mums and then a pack of craft items for the children. Our second was for Mother's Day where we spoilt the mums with a macaron made by a local pastry chef, a poem about motherhood and a pink teabag. Recently when Lockdown 2.0 began we sent a Remote Learning care package to 20 of our families who were remote learning as well as caring for their preschoolers. In this package, the mums got a strong Cappuccino Sachet for breakfast, a Tim Tam bite or mini Kit Kat for morning tea, A Lindt ball for afternoon tea and a 'Relax' Tea bag for after the kids were in bed. They also received an encouraging note to say we were praying for them. For the pre-schoolers we made a craft pack which included some playdough and a cookie cutter, colouring in sheets, scavenger hunt sheets and other crafty items.

It has certainly been a different playgroup year in 2020 but with a bit of creativity and thinking outside the box, I feel we have still maintained that crucial connection with our families.