



**Christian Playgroup Network**  
connect • belong • grow

# MEMBERS GUIDE 2021

Connect—Belong—Grow. We see this as a promise—what we aim to achieve together through the ministry of the Christian Playgroup Network.

As followers of Jesus, we have the perfect model of love, mercy and acceptance. We want to show these to the families in our local community; therefore, our aim is to build relationships with families that show our love and value of them.

The Christian Playgroup Network would love to support you and encourage you as part of our promise to help all CPN members to Connect—Belong—Grow.

## **Christian Playgroup Network Inc.**

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*We are so grateful our Playgroup is part of such a fantastic organisation – CPN member*



## Our purpose

Why do we exist? To equip, encourage and enable healthy playgroup ministry in local churches.

## Our vision

What do we long to see? Playgroups as flourishing expressions of God's Kingdom where

- Families find love, grace and acceptance
- Faith is formed, shared and nurtured
- Fullness of life is experienced

## We value

Loving compassion; Kingdom focus; missional intent; serving churches; resourcing leaders.

## Our history

For many decades now, the value of playgroups in the local community has been identified and appreciated. Hundreds of Christian playgroups are scattered throughout Australia – some meeting in churches, others in local community buildings. As people talked about wanting to be more intentional in their playgroup as a mission to their local community, a need emerged for some cohesion and networking between these denominational groups.

In 2001 a group of people started meeting and praying about how this could happen and develop. After much discussion and prayer, in November 2002, the Christian Playgroup Network was formally launched.

We look back with thanksgiving to God for the inspiration and dedication that launched the Christian Playgroup Network and for all the playgroups and churches that have been a part of the network and continue to minister to playgroup families; and we look to the future trusting that God will continue to shape the Christian Playgroup Network for God's kingdom purposes.



## What our members have said



*Thank you for the chats on the phone about our playgroup. It is always good to have someone to talk over issues with.*



*I like to grab a cuppa and browse through the regular emails to get some fresh ideas for our playgroup.*

*I like to forward it onto others who have a heart for playgroup in the church so they can also be inspired and encouraged.*



*I just read an article, 'Playgroup: no use-by date' on the website – WOW – that is exactly how we feel God is leading our playgroup ministry. Can we chat this over some more?*



# How do I get the most out of my membership?

## Website

Your 2021member login details for the website are:

**Username: CPNPlaygroupmember**

**Password: CPN2021Playgroup123Member**

Having trouble logging in? Email [membership@cpn.org.au](mailto:membership@cpn.org.au)

Some of the features on the website for you to explore include:

- ✓ **24/7 online queries or advice** through the 'contact us' section of the website
- ✓ Keep up to date with **events** to join in with or attend with your team
- ✓ Some **helpful articles on the value of Playgroup** through the 'Why Playgroup' section. Great for sharing with your team or your church leadership.
- ✓ **Resources** for running your playgroup, equipping your team, as well as seasonal ideas for celebrating Easter, Christmas, Mothers Day and Fathers Day
- ✓ **'Find a playgroup' locator**. Once you join the CPN your playgroup details will be entered onto the locator. The Playgroup locator is set up so new families can find you, to refer families to another CPN member playgroup if they are moving to a new area or interstate. It is also helpful to connect with other CPN member playgroup leaders near you over a coffee for encouragement, ideas and prayer support for each other ... CPN members have often said that they value connecting with other leaders in Playgroup ministry.
- ✓ **The Members section** is just for you!

Once you are logged in with the username and password provided above check out this section full of all things playgroup - there are Playgroup forms and document templates, program ideas for your playgroup sessions, 'Connect- Belong- Grow' resources to help your Playgroup continue to be a strategic space of kingdom living and much more. Access these resources in the members menu once logged in.

- ✓ **Details changed? New playgroup leader? Playgroup on a different day?**

Email through the changes relating to your playgroup to [membership@cpn.org.au](mailto:membership@cpn.org.au). This includes if you have a new playgroup leader, new church contact, or finance person. We'd also love to hear if you've changed your playgroup days or times. Ensuring that your details are the most up to date allows us to be able communicate with you about all fantastic resources and information relating to the Christian Playgroup Network and running your playgroup.



## Facebook

- ✓ Join us on Facebook at '*Christian Playgroup Network*' to stay connected with other leaders, keep up to date with ideas, resources, news, events and more.

## 'CPN Connect' E-news

- ✓ Regular email updates with helpful and relevant information, events and resources; full of great articles and information to encourage, equip and inspire.

## Discounted playgroup specific training

- ✓ Discounted or FREE training for Playgroup leaders and teams in rural and metropolitan areas to equip and encourage you and your team. Contact us if you would like to host a workshop in your region.
- ✓ Opportunities to connect with other Christian playgroup leaders

## Local networks

- ✓ Join a local network to connect with other Playgroup leaders and teams in your area. These are listed on the Events page of the website.
- ✓ Not one in your area? Get in touch with the CPN Support Team to start a group in your area. These can be held in your local café, your church, or in someone's home. Some are held once a term, some are twice a year.

## Opportunities to volunteer for the CPN

- ✓ Have you gifts in administration, hospitality or IT and would like to volunteer your time and expertise for the benefit of our members?  
We'd love you to be part of the team that supports and encourages our churches through Playgroup ministry. Drop us a line at [admin@cpn.org.au](mailto:admin@cpn.org.au) if you are able to contribute for a season.









# The CPN Support Team

The CPN Support Team is made up of people from a broad range of denominations that give generously of their time, energy and experience for benefit of CPN members. Some specialized roles are paid for their work done in their area of expertise.

**Alyson Prescott** *Secretary*  
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**Ruth Kernick** *President*  
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## Specialised roles

Jane Lee	Finance Administration (volunteer role)
Merryn Gray	Membership Administration (paid) <a href="mailto:membership@cpn.org.au">membership@cpn.org.au</a>
Evan Englezos	IT support (paid)





*Our church was looking at starting a playgroup that would have an impact on our local community. Thank you for your help in getting started with a playgroup with purpose.*

*- Playgroup coordinator*



# Connect - Belong – Grow

Here are some thoughts and ideas to help you think about how your playgroup can be more intentional in helping families connect, belong and grow. *Consider: What are you already offering at your Playgroup? What could you be doing better?*

As a CPN Committee we want to continue to support you and your church as you return to Playgroup sessions in this uncertain season of 2021. We want to encourage you to have well thought through protocols and procedures so people feel that measures are in place to keep your playgroup safe, healthy and happy for families and your team.

Please refer to the handouts enclosed in this pack as well as up to date information through our website and our Facebook page as we navigate ministry through 2021.

## Connect

✓ **Your team understands that Playgroup is a ministry**, not just a nice activity for the community. You are intentional about getting to know parents, and making them feel welcome and part of the Playgroup community.

✓ **Meet together as a team** to encourage each other as well as sharing the load. Regularly review what is happening in your Playgroup. Start the year well, boost your team through the year and then finish the year well.

✓ **Some ideas to bless your families all year through and help them connect with each other**

- Hospitality during and outside of the playgroup session.
- Name tags for both adults and children so names can be remembered
- Photos of the Playgroup team on the wall with first names
- Information sheet or a flyer with contact details, policy information and services that the church can provide (counselling, family support, kids club/youth, service times, food bank , marriage/parenting course)
- Simple programming/ structure of the Playgroup session to allow plenty of time for adults to chat and children to play with a range of developmentally appropriate activities
- Small birthday gifts for children (e.g. small bottle of bubbles, sticker pad) and parents (e.g. notepad and chocolates).
- Simple and fun occasional theme days at playgroup e.g. colours, teddy bears picnic.
- Listen to what people have to say!

✓ **Collect contact information for each family (email, phone, etc.) and send regular communications** about Playgroup events, invitations to special church events, news and needs, items for sale, book/product/movie reviews, helpful websites, etc. Written permission will be



required from parents to share photos or videos – this can be in the enrolment form. Set up a private Facebook page or What's App group for parents to join and update regularly with news and reminders.

✓ **Establish the 'routine'** Young children feel secure when they know what to expect. Once they are comfortable, then small changes can be introduced without causing distress or insecurity. An example of a playgroup session could be: Arrive , indoors play, then morning tea together, move to some outdoor play (if you have an outside space) or more indoor play, finish with a short mat time to read a story or sing a song or 2 , with a goodbye song at the end.

✓ Have a morning once a term or semester where children can be cared for by adults with a Working With Children Check (WWCC) in the Playgroup space, while adults **have a coffee and connect time to chat or hear a guest speaker** e.g. parenting issues, anxiety & depression , value of mums, faith journeys etc.

## Belong

✓ **Celebrate special events** such as birthdays of adults and children, new babies, etc. This helps create a sense of community and sharing in each other's lives. Be aware of difficult situations families may be facing (e.g. divorce, unemployment, illness, grief) and develop ways to support, help and respond to needs. This may include providing meals, vouchers, cards, flowers, provide a listening ear, counselling referrals or babysitting options from within the church.

✓ **Know the names** of those that attend, and follow up when people haven't been for a week or two.

✓ **Not only listening** but remembering and following up on conversations.

✓ **Create opportunities for parents to contribute to the playgroup** Accept help and involvement by those that attend. This could include preparing craft activities, providing morning tea, organizing a regular child free dinner out for parents, and anything else they would like to help with!

✓ **Be part of community events outside of Playgroup session time.** Play days for the whole family at a park or local play centre; Mums' nights out; Dads' session at Playgroup (on a Saturday or a week night); Grandparents' or Special Friends visit to Playgroup; family film nights at the church; Christmas and Easter Festivals or events

✓ **Family Fun days** where Playgroup children & the families in the broader church community participate (such as Mother's/Father's Days, Christmas, Easter). This may include a BBQ, a jumping castle, kids activities for all ages. Your church may need to be consulted and willing to adapt the service to accommodate unchurched families. Make sure you have team members at the door to welcome Playgroup families and help them find their way around and feel comfortable.



- ✓ **Invitation to Messy church** or other expressions of church.
- ✓ Some playgroups have arranged for **speakers to attend during the Playgroup session to talk to parents on a relevant topic** (e.g parenting issues, faith questions) and team/church members watch the children while the presentation takes place.
- ✓ **Encourage the minister or church leadership to drop into Playgroup on a regular basis** to meet the parents, establish a connection with the church and be available for those who may want to ask questions or seek assistance. Often a yummy morning tea is on offer too for the church leader!
- ✓ **Recruit team members** who can be part of the team without the responsibility of their own children. They can often befriend the parents/carers, listen without distractions, hold babies so parents can spend hands-on time with toddlers, speak from their own experience, etc. Note, it is also important to have young Mums on the team who can provide peer relationships with the parents.
- ✓ **Occasionally go into the main church worship area** – for dancing, to sing with a piano during music time, to participate in a treasure hunt, etc. so families become familiar with the church worship space and will know where to go when they attend a service on a Sunday.

## Grow

- ✓ **Team members to be intentional about developing relationship with the parents/carers** beyond the time they attend Playgroup. This may include following up during the week about things that are happening in their family, meeting up for coffee or at the park, inviting to your home for celebrations or just to catch up over a cuppa or a meal.
- ✓ **Establish a prayer team** in the church to pray specifically for the Playgroup ministry and the children and families involved as well as the Playgroup team. Use prayer stations or boards as a way of offering prayer for families at the playgroup sessions.
- ✓ Find creative ways to regularly **share information about the Playgroup with the church community** to develop and maintain their interest and support throughout the year.
- ✓ A **thankyou song before snack time** offers an opportunity to thank God for the food, family & friends that we have
- ✓ **Investigate and offer parenting courses, marriage enrichment programs** etc. that will provide support for and promote the importance of families. You may need to consider child care options as this is a huge factor for couples.





- ✓ **Continue to recruit team members who are passionate about reaching families** and impacting the local community. Be on the lookout for people who can assist the Playgroup either as team members during sessions, gifted evangelists, support people who help by preparing craft resources, shop for supplies, pray, prepare emergency meals, be a listening ear.
- ✓ **Use times of the year in our Christian faith such as Easter and Christmas** to celebrate and focus on God's perspective to these times of year. Provide child friendly activities and play areas that focus on the theme (e.g. nativity figurines on a small table, songs and stories that share the message.)
- ✓ **Gifts at Mother's day, Father's day, Easter and Christmas** to affirm families in their parenting role as well as affirming the significance of Easter and Christmas. Present each family as they finish or graduate from playgroup with a storybook Bible or a helpful book e.g. '5 love languages of children' or 'The Parenting Book' as a gift.
- ✓ **Have New Testament or Bibles** made available in a basket signed 'Free – please take one', as well as other helpful booklets for those with faith questions e.g. Why Christmas? / Why Easter? / Why Jesus? Booklets (Alpha Course) by Nicky Gumbel. These are booklets that answers key questions on what Jesus, Easter and Christmas is about, and lead into the gospel.
- ✓ When your church runs an Alpha course or a similar **space that presents an introduction to the Christian faith**, encourage your families to attend. Offering to attend with them, arranging for child care, providing a meal, sharing details of what will be presented, creating a nonthreatening environment, may all help with overcoming restrictions on attendance.



## Connecting with us



Support and a listening ear is only a phone call or email away.

You have a number of options to get in touch with us regarding membership queries or any playgroup issues you might have:

**24/7 playgroup online query option through the 'Contact us' page on our website**

**Chat to your denominational representative** (see *CPN Support Team* on p. 9)

**For general queries:** [admin@cpn.org.au](mailto:admin@cpn.org.au)

**For Membership queries:** [membership@cpn.org.au](mailto:membership@cpn.org.au)

*I really appreciate your enthusiasm for helping make playgroup more intentional and missional - CPN member*

