



# TOP TIPS FOR NURTURING FAMILIES

*Some practical ways to be a welcoming and inclusive ministry space that shares God's love with their community ... A reflection and response to Judyth Roberts' workshop, Spiritual Nurture at Playgroup, at Stories of Childhood 2021*

**Share a cuppa/drink or snack** Don't underestimate the power of hospitality to demonstrate God's love to people. If you represent your local church and people of Christian faith, you are the hands and feet of Jesus who can offer a warm and loving welcome.

**Gift choices** You can have a range of options for gifts for people to allow them some choice over their own experience at playgroup. For example, if it is a child's birthday the family could choose from a book about God's love or a book from your local bookshop about love itself. This allows families to read through each one; their child may say they'd like the one about God's love and the parent can be involved in that choice rather than having a book given to them that they won't read or necessarily want. This shows families that you respect their choices and that they are welcome either way.



**Songs** A range of songs can be used in circle time and they don't need to all be explicitly Christian songs to share God's love. Songs that bring families close, speak of love and kindness can be taught too which encourages families. It can be helpful to explain a new song that speaks about God to the families as a way of welcoming them into the song so that they understand its meaning. Families that are not part of the church or Christian faith notice when effort is made to include them and to acknowledge their own background and faith choices.

**Craft options** The craft experiences can have options too – at Easter time for example families may choose to complete the cross cellophane stained glass window, or they may choose the Easter egg or bunny. Choice feels like freedom and sends the message to your families that you know not everyone wants to display a cross in their home and that is respected and accepted in your playgroup.

**Conversations** Get to know people. It means a lot to a person when their individual choices, faith background, language background and interests are known, remembered and considered. Don't be afraid to ask questions about their own beliefs, and to enter into conversations about what their daily life might be like. A good example of this is when our playgroup had a Mother's Day morning tea but one of our mums was fasting for Ramadan. She wasn't eating and drinking with us this day but she felt welcomed and she chose to attend and sit with us anyway for conversation and community.

**Outside opportunities** As well as playgroup, what else might be happening that you could connect families in with? Is there a women's/men's ministry event coming up? Is there a carols service for Christmas time that the playgroup might perform at as way of connecting the playgroup with the local church? Perhaps you might just like to meet a family at the park for a play date. Think outside of the program to build meaningful relationships.

*By Sally Danger, Pastor for Families with Children at Essendon Baptist Community Church,  
[sallydanger@essendonbaptist.org.au](mailto:sallydanger@essendonbaptist.org.au)*