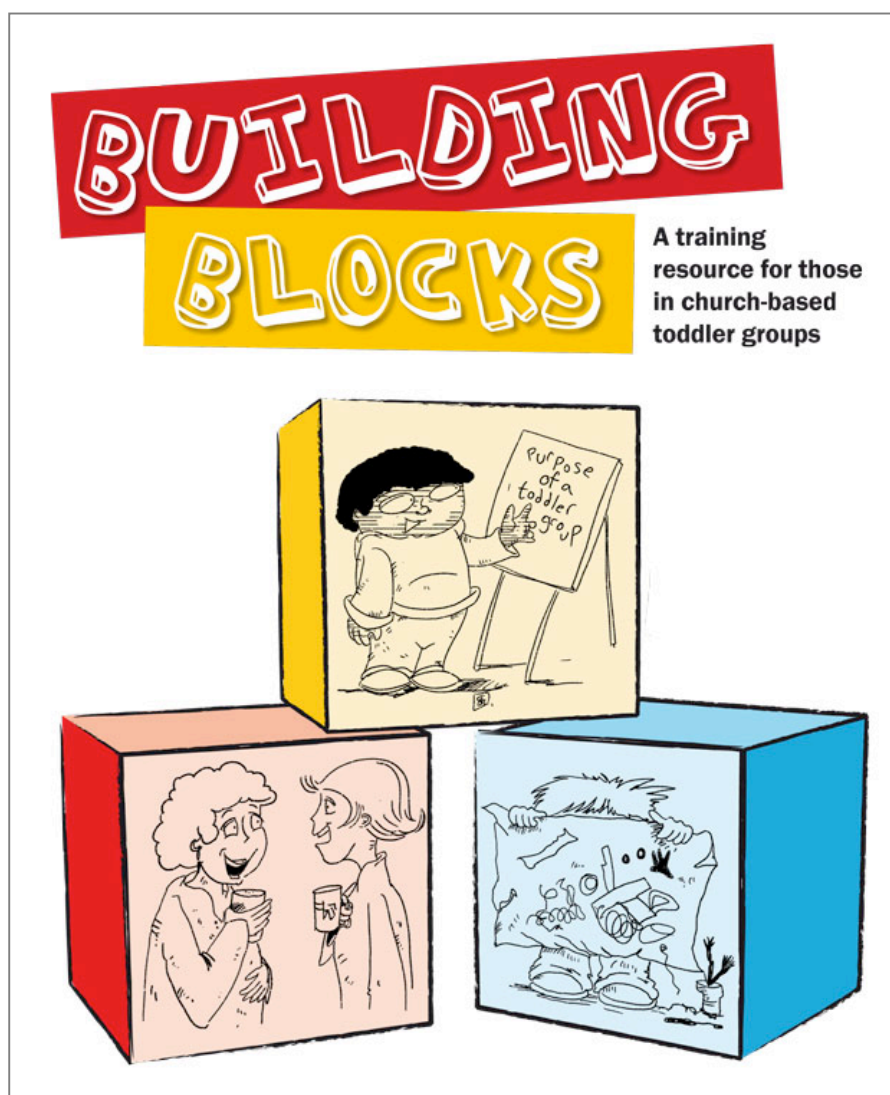


Faith and Society Files: Building Blocks

A training resource for those in church-based toddler groups.



BUILDING

BLOCKS

A training resource for those in church-based toddler groups



Carer And Toddler Strategy (CATS) consultative group:

Baptist Union of Great Britain, Fegans (Parent and Toddler Groups Together), Go Project, Scripture Union, The Salvation Army



COPYRIGHT ETC

Scripture quotations taken from the HOLY BIBLE, TODAY'S NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 2004 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, A member of the Hachette Livre UK Group. All rights reserved. 'TNIV' is a registered trademark of International Bible Society.

Scripture taken from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

All rights and permissions for *Building Blocks* are administered, on behalf of CATS, by Scripture Union, 207-209 Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 2EB England.
Email: info@scriptureunion.org.uk
Website: www.scriptureunion.org.uk

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and attribute items correctly. CATS apologises to any author or organisation whose work has not been properly credited. Please inform Scripture Union, as the administrator of this training resource, and this will be rectified.

Building Blocks is provided free of charge in digital format, from each of the CATS member organisations: Baptist Union of Great Britain, Fegans - Parent and Toddler Groups Together, Go Project, Scripture Union, and The Salvation Army.

All rights reserved. *Building Blocks* may be downloaded and printed for personal and group use without reference to the current copyright legislation or any copyright licensing. This arrangement does not allow the printing of any extract of *Building Blocks* for resale or for commercial use. No extract of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Scripture Union, copyright administrators on behalf of CATS.

Editorial: Scripture Union (Publishing)
Page design and layout: Inspired Media www.inspiredmedia-uk.com
Illustrations by Andrew Gray © 2008 Scripture Union www.scriptureunion.org.uk

DEFINITIONS

The term '**toddler group**' is used in this training resource to refer to any group attended by infants and toddlers with their carers, whether they are parents, grandparents or other carers.

References to '**parents and carers**' refer to any adult accompanying a young child.

The leaders, co-leaders, helpers and anyone else involved in running the toddler group will be called the '**team**' or '**team of leaders**'.

These terms are all intended to be inclusive but are being simplified in this training resource, for clarity.

CONTENTS

Copyright etc	2
Definitions	2
Meet the experts	4
The importance of toddler groups	5
Get the best from <i>Building Blocks</i>	6
TRAINING COURSE	
Section 1 Shaping the vision	7
Section 2 Nurturing spiritual life and faith	16
Section 3 Engaging with parents and carers	21
Section 4 Sharing faith through toddler groups	28
What next?	37
TRAINING EXTRAS	
1 Mission through carer and toddler groups: Nick Lear	A1
2 Faith development: Alison Dayer	B1
3 Sample toddler services: compiled by Adult and Family Ministries, The Salvation Army	C1
4 Music time: Julia Plaut	D1
5 Top tips for storytellers: Vicki Howie	E1
6 Learning through play: Alison Dayer	F1
7 Worship, the under-5s way: Alison Dayer	G1
8 Resource bank	H1

MEET THE EXPERTS

The Carer And Toddler Strategy (CATS) consultative group includes members of Christian organisations and practitioners from across different denominations, including Baptist Union of Great Britain, Fegans (Parent and Toddler Groups Together), Go Project, Scripture Union, and The Salvation Army.

Between them, the contributors have a vast array of knowledge, understanding and bright ideas for running and resourcing toddler groups. More importantly, they share an earnest desire to encourage, equip and support all those who are, or who plan to be, involved in leading such groups.

Even as this document has been prepared, they have learned much from each other and been re-enthused and inspired for this vital work. It is their hope and prayer that you will likewise be inspired, helped and encouraged to discover God's vision for your toddler group.

Naomi Buckler

Naomi has run her church toddler group for more than six years and has worked for Care for the Family as their Parent and Toddler Project Manager, speaking at conferences and editing the 'Playtime' newsletter for toddler group leaders.

Alison Dayer

Alison is an evangelist and under-5s specialist for Scripture Union. She visits toddler groups to provide support and Christian input and co-ordinates Scripture Union's under-5s training programme, regularly training church volunteers working with this age range.

Nick Lear

Until recently, Nick was a Mission Adviser for the Baptist Union of Great Britain where he was responsible for BUGB's National Children's Strategy. He is now Senior Minister at Colchester Baptist Church.

Carolyn McQuaker

Carolyn leads the Go Project founded in 2004 to support and resource God's people to realise and fulfil their own, unique missionary potential, wherever they find themselves, in particular by encouraging collaborative working and partnerships.

Lindy Rose, Rachel Gotobed, Maureen Ross, Jenny Doncaster

Lindy, Rachel, Maureen and Jenny are, or have been, involved with family work within The Salvation Army, Adult and Family Ministries.

Claire Wells and Gaynor Pritchard

Claire and Gaynor set up 'Parent and Toddler Groups Together', a toddler group network in Tunbridge Wells. This has grown into a successful annual conference, and a website (www.ptgroupstogether.org.uk). Claire is a regular seminar speaker on working with under-5s. The network is now part of her role within Fegans.



THE IMPORTANCE OF TODDLER GROUPS

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’

He called a little child, whom he placed among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes a humble place – becoming like this child – is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’”
Matthew 18:1-5 (*Today’s New International Version*)

Toddler groups are amongst the most exciting and significant starting places for mission and evangelism that exist in the United Kingdom today. But, frequently, their outreach importance and potential are undervalued. *Building Blocks* aims to encourage and equip group leaders and helpers (the ‘team’) to be more effective and better supported in this vital ministry.

Are you planning to start a new group? Or looking to review the focus, direction and achievements of an existing one? *Building Blocks* will help you to extend and refresh your vision for the fantastic potential of your group, as well as giving you practical advice, resources and encouragement for moving forward.

Are you longing to inspire church leaders to a better understanding of how toddler groups can, and should be, an integral part of your church’s mission and evangelism? Their active support and participation is of vital importance to ensure the toddler group is part of the mainstream life of the church.

Want to inspire your church leader?

- 1 Read ‘Mission through carer and toddler groups’ (in TRAINING EXTRAS).
- 2 Give a copy to your church leader(s) and urge them to read it for themselves.
- 3 Make an appointment to discuss its implications or invite your church leader to a toddler group planning meeting.

Toddler groups in churches

It is estimated that between a third and a half of all children in this country, aged under-3, attend a toddler group on church premises regularly. That’s around 700,000-800,000 of them! Toddler groups can present a powerful opportunity for sharing faith with all who attend, from the very youngest to the oldest. The mission potential of a toddler group is for both adults and children.

Toddler groups thrive because there are many people dedicated to providing a safe, caring and welcoming environment where parents, grandparents and other carers, along with their infants and toddlers can begin to experience the love and reality of Jesus Christ. There are countless individuals and churches who owe a debt of gratitude to these leaders and helpers for their dedication, love and sheer hard work. Many people in churches today can trace the beginnings of their own journey of faith to an initial contact through a local toddler group. So, ‘Thank you!’ on their behalf!

“*Building Blocks* will help you extend and refresh your vision”



Tom was keen to get his Mum involved in finger painting.

These figures are taken from the Open University research paper *Pre-school Provision in Baptist Churches* by Gill Goodliff, 2006

GET THE BEST FROM BUILDING BLOCKS

When you are busy running a group it can be easy to get bogged down in the detail and day to day tasks of making it all work. This training resource invites you to:

- Take a step back and look again at the bigger picture of what it is that you want to achieve;
- Consider how well you are doing;
- Think about the steps that you might take to get to where you want to be.

Building Blocks will help you and your team develop your skills and provide a reservoir of good ideas and resources to enable you to implement your plans.

We've planned *Building Blocks* so you can use it on your own, or in a team, but you will get the most value by using it as a TRAINING COURSE. There are four short modules, which you could probably cover in a couple of sessions. If you run a group on your own, why not find some nearby church toddler groups and go through it together?

The *Building Blocks* training course

Section 1 Shaping the vision

It has been said that if you aim for nothing you are bound to hit it! This section looks at:

- Defining and shaping the vision for your toddler group, within your team of leaders;
- Defining and shaping the vision for your toddler group, with your church leadership;
- Sharing that vision with others, especially amongst the wider church family.

Section 2 Developing spirituality and faith

Our spiritual life is an essential part of our nature as human beings and we all develop faith in something, or someone, to make sense of our existence and experience. This section introduces:

- An understanding of the different aspects and stages of spiritual and faith development;
- Practical guidelines about how we can nurture children's growth in faith, through learning about and experiencing Christ;
- An opportunity to reflect on your own spiritual growth and maturity.

Section 3 Engaging with parents and carers

This section looks at aspects of building on the relationships that will develop with the adults (parents, grandparents or other carers) attending your group:

- caring for the parents and carers;
- deepening relationships;
- making the transition from toddler group into the wider church family;
- parenting courses.

Section 4 Sharing faith through toddler groups

Is yours a new group, defining your intentions from the outset? Or an established group, wishing to review your position? This section enables you to:

- Reflect on how much specifically Christian input there is in your toddler group;
- Review how effective this is, for your group and community;
- Set goals for the future;
- Consider the importance of relationship;
- Look at the practical aspects for a Christian based programme;
- Think through the most appropriate elements for your group.

The *Building Blocks* TRAINING EXTRAS are exactly that, supplementing and building on the ideas explored in the course.

“When you are up to your neck in alligators it is difficult to remember that your original intention was to drain the swamp.” (old proverb)

Using the sections as a training course

- PLAN to MEET as a team of leaders, over several sessions.
- AIM to EXPLORE one Section each time.
- WORK through the Sections in SEQUENCE.
- TAKE your TIME: only move on to the next Section when you are ready.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20 (*Today's New International Version*)

SECTION 1:

Shaping the vision

The theory of toddler groups

Take a moment...

If your toddler group is run by, or led by, Christians, it is important to remember that you are *already* sharing your faith, just as you are, by showing Jesus' love to the wider community. As we live our lives, we are often being watched by others who may wonder what being a Christian is all about.

Jesus said to his followers, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14–16 (*Today's New International Version*)

So, if you are seeking to bring light to families in your community, you will want to be intentional about sharing Christ with those who come. These questions will help you and your group leaders develop a vision and think through the process of becoming 'intentional'.

EXERCISE

If you already have a toddler group, do you think it runs:

- Mainly for the children?
- Mainly for the adults?
- For both, equally?
- Variably, from week to week?
- Something else...?

EXERCISE

If 'The mission potential of a toddler group is for *both* adults and children' (see page 5), how could this affect:

The vision or intentions of the team of leaders?

The way the toddler group is planned, week by week?

Good news!

You are already sharing your faith, just as you are, by showing Jesus' love to the wider community.

Turn vision into action

To help you plan how your toddler group can develop and fulfil its vision, it's good to go through one step at a time. We've called these steps:

Place → **Purpose** → **Process** → **Personal style**

By the time you've been through these steps, you should know what makes your group unique, what you want to achieve – and how you want to achieve it!

Place

Every toddler group is set in a different context.

Is your group:

- Run by the church, in a church building?
- Run by the church, in the community?
- Run by the community, in a church building?
- Run by the community, in the community?
- Or some other context?

Every group is set in the context of its own particular community and place – whether it's Dover, Anglesey, or John O'Groats. Each community has its own particular needs and profile, with its own particular individuals, and with its own space.

What is special and distinctive about *your* community?

Purpose

Every toddler group has a different purpose.

Is your group:

- Run primarily for the children to improve their social skills, motor skills and so on?
- Run for the parents and carers to meet and interact with other parents and carers?
- Run to impart parenting skills?
- Run to help parents and carers explore the spiritual side of life?
- Run to introduce parents and carers to church?
- Run for some other purpose?
- A combination of these?

Your group leadership team needs to think and pray through this and agree it together. In order to do this you need to ensure that you understand the needs and aspirations of the group members and the community you are seeking to reach, as well as that of the church.

Reviewing your purpose and activities is a great opportunity to involve members of your group and community in shaping and increasing ownership of their toddler group.

“
If you aim at nothing, you are sure to hit it!
”

😊 Good news!

Wherever you are, you are an essential part of that community.



Matthew's plans for more jelly, ice cream and messy play were well-received by the rest of the toddlers.

😊 Good news!

It is OK to have a different purpose to the toddler group down the road!

? THINK!

- Who is the group for? Parents and carers? Toddlers? Church people? The community?
- What is the group for?
- How well does it meet the needs of parents, carers, toddlers and the wider community?
- How does your purpose fit with the church's purpose? (for instance, a vision statement or mission statement)

📝 EXERCISE

On your own write down what you think your group's purposes are.

Compare your list with others in your team.

Consider:

How can we consult existing group members about their needs and aspirations?

How can we consult with others, eg church, community?

Now let's think about how to put your plans into action...

Process

Every purpose needs a process to make sure it happens. Go through 'Taking it further – Process' (page 13) to help you and your group decide what processes you need to put in place.

Once you've been through this, check: does the process fit your group?

Does it fit with your church or organisation's strategy?

Personal style

Every group has its own identity which will change and develop over time. Go through 'Taking it further – Personal style' (page 15) to help you and your group decide what personality you want your group to have.

Putting it all together

As a team, write down your conclusions about

Place

Purpose

Process

😊 Good news!

Just as different groups can have different purposes, so they can have different processes – and that's fine!

- Pray as a church and as a group for God's guidance.
- Remember, it is not down to you to do what only God can do!

Personal style

Review when you next meet and modify, if necessary.
Plan an annual celebration and review to keep your vision fresh and relevant.

Case study one - a developing vision

Busy Bees was a thriving group of around 60 families, meeting in a small independent evangelical church, on a new housing estate. Although it was run by church members, there was no obvious Christian input, other than the chance to get to know people over tea and coffee.

One of the team went to the first toddler group conference run by Care for the Family, and came back with a vision for reaching parents and carers more effectively. From this, a *Parentalk* course was set up, and run in the toddler group leader's home. This meant the group leaders got to know parents from the group on a more personal level.

At the next conference, two of the regular team went together, and this was much more effective in helping them to encourage the rest of the team to make changes. A regular Bible story was introduced, as well as a team prayer time after every session. The team started to meet together regularly to plan the sessions.

With changes to the team, over time, there were opportunities for reviewing the original vision and including fresh perspectives. A welcome pack was put together that made the church-based ethos of the group clear to newcomers from the start.

Busy Bees found training events invaluable in helping to promote good practice and to make changes.

Case study two - Lunch-box Alpha

Consulting existing group members can prove very fruitful as one church found. In reviewing their toddler group, a survey was carried out amongst existing group members to find out what they wanted from the group. From this exercise it emerged that they would like the opportunity to explore faith further in a manner, time and place that fitted their lifestyles.

So the idea of 'Lunch-box Alpha' was developed. This took place following the morning toddler session, for those who wanted it. Other members of the church came in to look after the children for an hour, whilst their parents and carers shared a simple, lunch-box meal and went through an *Alpha* course adapted for their personalities and learning styles.

This proved to be one of the most fruitful outreach projects this church had run for years. It required no additional arrangements of dates, travel, or child care and was run amongst a group of people who already knew each other and were experiencing similar periods of their lives as parents and carers of young children.

EXERCISE

As a team, write a case study of your toddler group. Be encouraged – and challenged!

continue overleaf

“ Plan an annual celebration and review to keep your vision fresh and relevant. ”

continued...

“The key to successful networking is shared vision – otherwise things can drift or lose momentum after a while. Of course it also will need commitment by someone who likes to network in order to keep things going!”

Claire Wells, Fegans - Parent and Toddler Groups Together

You might like to send your case study to the Care for the Family 'Playtime' project, to encourage others: www.engagetoday.org.uk/playtime

Involving others

Your church

Having your church leader involved will make a big difference to your group, as they will be able to help get the rest of the church involved. You will be much more effective when the toddler group *and* the rest of the church share the same vision and are working together, towards a common goal.

Visitors

Getting people along to visit, even if it is only once a year, will be an encouragement to you and an inspiration to your guests. Most people will never come unless you ask – so try asking! If you have a particular task for them to do, maybe making tea and coffee, helping with the clearing-up afterwards, or taking photos, they may be more likely to come: everyone likes to be wanted!

Networking

Meeting up with leaders of other toddler groups for prayer and mutual support will be very beneficial. Many groups operate in isolation, but this means that they miss out on the opportunity to share ideas, discuss troubling issues, and to encourage each other in the vital work of meeting the needs of local families. And the groups, who have joined a network, say that the chance to pray together is a great blessing.

Communication is vital. Take every opportunity to let people know what your group is doing.

Communication ideas

- Regular articles in a church bulletin or community newspaper
- Display photos on the wall
- Display crafts
- Invite people to visit occasionally
- Show short video clips in a church service
- Arrange a prayer partnership between the toddler group and, for instance, the women's fellowship
- Give regular reports to church meetings

EXERCISE

Decide on one thing extra you will do to communicate more effectively. Do it!

“Meeting up with like-minded people was an enormous encouragement, and each occasion spurred me on for literally years.”

Judith Wigley from *Pretty much everything you need to know about working with under-5s*, page 154 (see TRAINING EXTRAS, Resource bank)

Websites with advice and ideas for starting a network:

Care for the Family *Playtime*
www.engagetoday.org.uk/playtime

Parent and Toddler Groups Together
www.ptgroupstogether.org.uk



The church had never realised there were so many uses for a paper plate!

A church leader's perspective

by Richard Hardy

Many church leaders find it hard to engage with their toddler group, perhaps partly because church leaders are often male, and feel ill at ease attending a group of mostly women and small children. Also there can be an incorrect perception that toddler groups exist mainly for the benefit of the children.

As a church leader myself, I found there were great benefits in being involved. Here are my suggestions for encouraging your church leader to come along and support you.

1. Point out the number of families who regularly attend, particularly those with no other connections to 'church'. Most church leaders long for opportunities to reach people in their community, but many fail to see the openings that toddler groups provide.
2. Demonstrate how the toddler group will help the church fulfill its mission statement (if you have one!).
3. Show that getting involved with toddler group events will enable the church leader to:
 - Use their gifts and skills as a communicator, for instance to connect people to the true meaning of Easter or to talk about how the church welcomes new children;
 - Make it easier for you, as the leaders of the group, to have meaningful conversations, since those who attend will feel freer to comment;
 - Be recognised and seen as approachable. It always surprised me how little input it took for me to be regarded in this way.
4. Assure them, if possible, that much of the preparation has been done, and let them know you value their involvement.

Use wisdom about which leader you ask. Some churches have a person responsible for children's work and they may be more gifted and able in this area and easier to relate to than someone with wider responsibilities. Remember that Sunday is not always a good time to ask! You could make an appointment a few weeks beforehand, and then follow that up so they don't forget!

Remember, if you want to inspire your church leader:

1. Read *Mission through carer and toddler groups* (in TRAINING EXTRAS).
2. Give a copy to your church leader(s) and urge them to read it for themselves.
3. Make time, or even a formal appointment, to discuss its implications or invite your church leader to a toddler group planning meeting.



Richard Hardy

Richard is now Care for the Family's Head of Church Relations, but for many years was a church leader involved with his church's toddler group. He is eager to share his tips on how to involve church leaders.

Sowing Reaping Keeping

To find out about this evangelism resource, go to TRAINING EXTRAS, Resource bank

Training extras

Mission through carer and toddler groups – a short resource for you to print off and give to your church leader that shows the effectiveness of mission through toddler groups.

Taking it further - Process



How are you going to deliver the group's purpose?

What resources are you going to need?

What support are you looking for from outside the group?

How are you going to allocate responsibilities within the group?

There is a huge potential through just spending time with people. Section 3 looks at building strong relationships, but what initial ideas come to mind?

How will you find out who needs help?

How will that help be provided?

What resources could be made available?

How will you communicate with:

- The parents and carers?
- Each other in the team?
- Your church and community leaders?

Sections 2 and 4 look at ways to introduce both children and adults to faith, but perhaps initial ideas are already springing to mind that will help you achieve your vision.

How will you encourage people (your team, church members, group members) on their journey of faith? Giant leaps scare people – so what small steps would work?

It is easy to overestimate what can be accomplished in one year; and to *underestimate* what can be accomplished in five! What goals would you like your group to set today?

Taking it further - Personal style

Place



Purpose



Process



Personal style

Every group has its own identity which will develop and change over time. What do you want yours to be like?

What sort of atmosphere do you want to create?

How open and explicit are you going to be about your Christian faith?

What is the style of your group

How do you welcome people?

How often do you have a song time? Craft? A story?

Do you pray in your group?

Do you have visits from a photographer? From the fire service? The health visitor?

How do, or could, you keep in touch with people who have left?

EXERCISE

Write down the things that make your group special and different.

Good news!

Remember, this is **your** group. It is OK for there to be no other group anywhere else, just like yours. As far as your group members are concerned, yours is the best group in the world, so build on that!

SECTION 2:

Nurturing spiritual life and faith

The spiritual life of young children and adults

We are all spiritual beings. God created humans with a desire to search for something greater than themselves. This spiritual aspect can be expressed and explored in terms of:

- Awe and wonder
- Pleasure and delight
- Mystery and wonder
- Awareness of God (or a higher authority)

Spiritual awareness has been described as the 'ooh and aah' element, which may be experienced at various moments, such as seeing a mountain top view, watching a sleeping new born baby, watching a butterfly, walking through a storm.

What makes you respond spiritually, giving you the 'wow' factor?

Young children are seeing many things for the first time. For them, there is a fascination and excitement over the smallest sights – a smooth stone, the switching on and off of a torch, the first daffodil. They express their spiritual awareness by their responses – stopping to stare, collecting objects, repeating an action that gets a response, sharing their discovery with an adult.

When have you seen young children express their spiritual awareness?

As children grow, they become used to all sorts of things around them and our culture tends to dull our spiritual sharpness. By the time we are adults, we need special occasions or exceptional sights to feel this spiritual awareness, unless we nurture it.

Ways to nurture spiritual awareness for adults include:

- Consciously search out the 'wow' factor in daily life
- Look at details – and marvel about them
- Close your eyes and focus on your other senses
- Bring the natural world (God's creation) into daily life: walk outside, have plants or animals in the home, go to special places
- Give yourself space to think in silence or with gentle music
- Meditate on words from the Bible
- Do something creative: sing, paint, dance, write poetry

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart...”

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (*Today's New International Version*)

“A definition of spirituality might be 'an innate sensitivity to things beyond and yet part of everyday life'.”

Gill Dallow *Touching the Future*
BRF 2002 p80



Everyone was thrilled when the Minister turned up!

Young children need opportunities to explore and nurture their spiritual life. You could do this through objects you bring in or activities you engage in. What could you do in your group? Here are a couple of ideas to get you started. See how many you can add to the list!

- Bring in flowers
- Enjoy special foods together

Our spiritual experiences open up our awareness of, and give us a connection with, something greater than ourselves. For Christians, this 'something greater' is God. As we nurture our spiritual selves, we can become more aware and open to God's presence in the world we live in. Our faith enables us to give a form and definition to our spiritual life. Where the spiritual life is weak, there may be a lack of interest in exploring faith. So nurturing the spiritual lives of the families we meet, helps them to become more open to questions of faith.

How faith develops, from baby to adult

Faith is often seen as just being a religious idea, but current thinking is that everyone has faith in something or someone. Faith can be seen as the depending on, or placing trust in, something that is the most important and central concern of an individual. This could be an object, a person or an idea. The individual's thoughts, values, attitudes and aims focus on this central concern, providing a sense of meaning and stability. For some the faith focus is God; for others, family (or even money or football).

Some people have faith in the same thing throughout their lives; some change, as their lives change. But just about everyone has faith in something. For Christians, faith is in God.

But the way people approach their faith changes as they mature. James Fowler suggested a theory of faith development based on how people's attitudes and understanding change as they grow throughout their lives, due to their life experiences, education, personality, friendships and critical events.

Babies' and toddlers' faith

All babies and young children develop their early understandings of faith through the love and care of the adults around them. As their basic needs for food, warmth, cleanliness, comfort and love are met, a baby learns to trust and to receive and give love. This is the basis for healthy emotional development and faith development. At this age faith is based on the relationship with the carers and concepts of God develop from these relationships.

Think about the babies and toddlers you know. How can you help them to:

Be safe?

Have their needs met in your group?

Feel loved?



"A definition of faith might be 'the commitment or belief and resulting actions that we put around our spirituality like a framework'."

Gill Dallow, *Touching the Future*, BRF 2002 p80



Stages of Faith, James Fowler, HarperCollins 1995

Training extras

A summary of 'Faith development'



Karl was worried that the water looked colder than at his last bath time.

Young children's faith

Around two or three years of age, children begin to think about the world around them and what they have been told. This is the time of 'why' and 'how' questions. All that the trusted adults (and some others) tell them will be believed. They enjoy hearing stories and understand them literally and often very powerfully, whilst being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction.

Their reasoning skills and understanding are very limited and symbols are seen to be 'magical' or taken literally. (Think of the implications of communion: 'This is my body'!) So care must be taken to explain in appropriate ways. At this age, the faith of the adults who care for them is very influential on the child's faith. So, most children with Christian parents take on Christian beliefs, seeing Jesus as a friend and God as Father.

Share some of the things that young children have said that show how literal they are. What issues are raised by their literal understanding and lack of reasoning skills, for your toddler group?

Children's and young people's faith

From the age of around seven, children's thinking skills begin to develop. This enables them to begin to distinguish between fact and fiction, whilst still understanding symbols literally. Stories are seen as important, but reflecting on their meaning is not. The views and beliefs of their friends are most important; belonging to, and acceptance by their friendship group is vital. So it is important to have Christian friends if children are to get a sense of belonging to the church. Jesus is seen as a friend, and is beginning to be understood as Saviour.

From around the age of 11, thinking skills and emotional needs change again, allowing for abstract thinking and some reflection on meaning. The questioning that results often leads to conflicts with authority. Increasingly they become able to see other perspectives, but the need to develop their own sense of self means this may not be expressed easily.

Faith is based on relationships with a wider group, including family, school, friends, and influences from the media. (There is a high drop-out from church, prompted when the most influential friendship group includes non-Christian friends at school and in the community.) Where Christian faith remains, the church is seen as an extended family and leaders are held in high regard, with Jesus seen as Lord and God as Almighty. Although many people move on from this stage in their late teens, many adults remain at this stage throughout their lives.

Adults' faith

In late adolescence, the emphasis becomes more focussed on choosing, learning and making decisions for themselves. Earlier faith may be dismissed as 'incomplete' or 'secondhand', with a rejection of the faith group and there may be a search to find faith for themselves. Once faith is 'found', the person may feel they have all the answers and reject other possibilities. Faith is personal, with responsibility taken for what is believed. A personal relationship with God is often seen as important. Some adults move into this stage much later in life, and many also remain in it throughout their lives.

As adults mature they become more aware of their own limitations and less sure of their earlier judgements. Previous attitudes and experiences are reassessed and new understandings reached. There is a greater openness to the views and values of others; there is an increasing ability to accept uncertainty. Symbols, stories and rituals are seen as having new meanings that add depth to the religious experience. God can be accepted as complex and in control whilst allowing free will.



Finally the tunnel opened for the train after the fifteenth attempt.

“...it is important to have Christian friends if children are to get a sense of belonging to the church.”

“In late adolescence, the emphasis becomes more focussed on choosing, learning and making decisions for themselves.”

A few individuals develop their faith further as they reach later life. Their lifestyle may be self-sacrificial with a strong desire to love and help others. Faith is focussed entirely on God and service.

Few people move through these stages smoothly and many remain at one stage for long periods or permanently. Others, due to circumstances, move rapidly between stages. Many people spend long periods in the transition between stages and may have characteristics of more than one stage.

? THINK!

Spend some time looking back to see how you can recognise changes in your own faith, throughout your life. You may choose to share your own faith story with those of others in your group.

In your toddler group, you will have adults at different stages of faith. What aspect of the Christian faith will these people be looking for most?

How can you share that with them?

Helping young children and their carers to grow in their spiritual life and faith

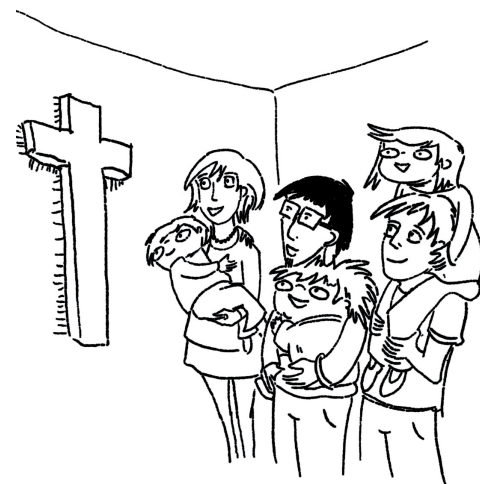
The key way in which we can nurture the faith of both the young children and their adult carers is through being open about and sharing our faith. Taking opportunities to share something of God's story helps people to know what we believe and why we do what we do.

It may be that you would wish to focus on telling the stories of Christmas and Easter or have simple Bible stories on a more frequent basis. Stories that emphasise God's love for his people help young children relate this love to their own experience of being loved. For adults these stories can remind them of things long-forgotten and prompt questions about God.

It is important to remember that the children need to be able to understand the concepts but be prepared to include some elements that encourage the adults to reflect on their understanding and experience. An example would be the story of the lost sheep in Luke 15:1-7. Children will be able to understand that the shepherd loved his lost sheep and wanted to find it. Adults can take on board the idea that God loves each person as much as the shepherd loved the sheep.

? THINK!

How could both children and adults relate to the story of David and Goliath?



"They don't look like 'cymbals' to me!" said a disappointed Phoebe.

“For many young children and their parents and carers, their greatest need is for friendship and companionship.”

Acceptance and love

For many young children and their parents and carers, their greatest need is for friendship and companionship. Being at home all day with a young child can be very hard for many adults. Having a safe and welcoming place to go where the needs of both ages are met is a lifeline for many. A Christian toddler group can provide this. By doing so, the toddler group nurtures the faith of the family.

The young child is met with love and acceptance. They have a safe place to play with adults who care and protect them, bolstering their early development of faith. As they grow they begin to explore their group, trying out new activities and beginning to learn about friendship. The stories they are told, the activities they do and the relationships they form are linked to the people they encounter and the place where they meet. They learn that this is *their* group and they belong to it, taking on the views of the important adults they meet there.

For their parents and carers, the chance to talk with others who understand their experiences is vital. They can be loved and supported and feel that they and their children are accepted. This allows them to feel that they belong and are in an environment where it is safe enough to take risks. These may be to explore faith or to share their worries and concerns. It can be very affirming and value-giving to have someone who gives time to listen, empathise and sympathise, as well as providing opportunities to receive more practical help and support. Friendships made in toddler groups often last for many years and can be part of a longer process of supporting a family and gradually bringing them into God’s family.

As Christians, prayer is a fundamental aspect of all we do. If we want to share our faith, with the families we are ministering to, then we need help from God’s Spirit. We need to pray for ourselves as we work and also for the families we meet. Being available to pray with the families is often very welcome. Many people are grateful for offers of prayer. Ensuring that there is a quiet space for a parent or carer to be prayed for, whilst their child is watched by a trusted adult, can be very welcome and helpful. Even where someone does not want to be prayed for directly, most people are grateful for offers of prayer. Some groups have a prayer box available so that families can request prayer, anonymously if they choose: this can increase people’s awareness of God and the help that is available for them, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

What faith and spiritual needs are you meeting in your group?

What other needs do you feel you should be meeting?

“For their parents and carers, the chance to talk with others who understand their experiences is vital.”



“And please help Bob the Builder find Spud’s hat...”

SECTION 3:

Engaging with parents and carers

The practice of toddler groups

Toddler groups are a fantastic way for the church to start engaging with families in the local community. The adults who come to your group may be the parents of the children they bring, grandparents or uncles or aunts, or they may be nannies, au-pairs or childminders. Many will have children of their own, including older children already at school. Even if the child usually comes with a childminder or a member of the extended family, remember to include their parents. In particular, grasp the opportunity to reach dads. You can include them by inviting them to special events, or by sending them information.

Jesus' call to reach our community

"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" Matthew 9:35-38 (*Today's New International Version*)

EXERCISE

Discuss the following questions, and make a note of your answers.

How many adults do you have contact with?

What percentage of the church's overall contact is that?

Is this reflected in your church's budget?!

Where are the people in your community?

How could you get involved in people's lives?

“People become Christians through knowing people who are Christians.” John Hattam, *Families finding faith*, Scripture Union/CPAS 2000

“Buildings are one thing, but connecting with people and building relationships is the real purpose of the church.” Judith Wigley, *Pretty much everything you need to know about working with under-5s*, Scripture Union 2005

How can your toddler group meet the following needs: for parents and carers; for toddlers; or for the toddler group team?

- A sense of destiny: 'My life is significant, I make a difference.'

- A sense of dignity: 'I'm a person of value, I matter.'

- A sense of intimacy: 'I need to love and be loved, to be missed by people.'

- A sense of security: 'I feel safe and protected.'

Learning from Jesus

Jesus was brilliant at meeting people where they were. Did he confine his ministry to what happened on the Sabbath in the synagogue or special meetings and expect people to come to him? No! He went out and got involved in their lives, loved them and cared for them. He made them feel special. He listened and talked to them about the good news of the kingdom in ways they could understand.

We do not have to look far to find harassed and helpless families! Some may already be part of the parent and toddler family. But many of those who have small children walk up and down the high street or local shopping mall, or worse, have effectively become prisoners in their own homes as they struggle to raise their children. They are often alone in the daytime. It is good to bring such people together and this cannot be denied. But, when a toddler group or church views this ministry through the eyes of Jesus, the results are potentially world-changing. Individual lives – and subsequently the community – can be changed for good!

Making the transition from toddler group to church

Research by Colin Cartwright (*Appreciating the Art of Toddling*) shows that the groups who are able to work with their church are most effective in seeing people who start at the toddler group eventually becoming a full part of the church community. Get your church involved in order to provide resources, vision, and prayer. You may need to guide, equip and even train them – they probably will not know how to help you.

Colin Cartwright identified five factors increasing evangelistic impact in toddler groups:

1. Longevity: the longer a group had been running, the greater the impact.
2. *Alpha* (or a similar group) running alongside.
3. Parenting groups.
4. Christian parents and carers within the group.
5. Size of church played a minor factor (partly because bigger churches are able to run courses such as *Alpha*).

Toddler group work falls into many categories. How do you see your group?

- Children's work?
- Community work?
- Working with families?
- Evangelism?
- A combination of some, or all, of these?
- Something else?

Read Colin's full paper at
[www.cbayouth.co.uk/
artoftoddling.htm](http://www.cbayouth.co.uk/artoftoddling.htm)

Training extras

Mission through carer and toddler groups an article by Nick Lear, for church leaders, to show why toddler groups really matter.

Would others in your team of leaders give the same answer?

Would others in your church give the same answer?

? THINK!

Involvement

- Do parents and carers help with setting up and putting away, making drinks, crafts?
- Are parents and carers involved on the committee, helping with fundraising, feeding back ideas?
- Do you offer activities to parents and carers outside of the toddler group, such as holiday events, trips out, buggy services, special event evenings?

Help and support

- Do you run parenting courses?
- Are health leaflets available?
- Do parents and carers know who to talk to about problems or for advice?
- Do you follow up parents and carers who have not attended for a while?
- Do you have someone nominated to oversee care and support?

There are many things that we can do in toddler groups that will help to deepen relationships with the parents and carers so that we can start to share our faith.

Caring for the parents and carers

How prepared are you regarding the pastoral needs of your group? Would you know how to support a family going through bereavement, perhaps having lost a child to sudden infant death syndrome, miscarriage, or stillbirth? Don't wait for a crisis to prepare yourself. Speak to people with pastoral expertise in your church, local health visitors, social workers and midwives for information. For example, there may be an annual memorial service for bereaved parents. Care for the Family provides resources for bereaved partners and bereaved parents, as well as stepfamilies, single parents, and parents of additional needs children.

There are many ways to show care. You could give out birthday cards – for the adults too! Some groups like to give a small gift of a Bible story book. Homemade cakes and 'real' coffee at snack time show a little extra care. And you can show extra practical support to expectant mums, who will often be struggling to cope with a toddler too.

The best thing you can do for your parents and carers is to love them. And if you love them, it's only natural you will want to pray for them.

Prayer ideas

- Pray as a team before or after each session
- Have a 'prayer box' where people can add prayer needs
- Pray about each person and family represented on your registration list
- Set up a prayer partnership with, for instance, your church's women's fellowship
- Ask and encourage your church to pray regularly for your group at the beginning of each year or term

Deepening relationships

Toddler groups are not always the easiest environment to get to know people well. How could you expand the reach of the toddler group and create opportunities to get to know each other better?

Care for the Family
Tel: (029) 2081 0800
Web: [www.careforthe
family.org.uk](http://www.careforthe
family.org.uk)



“Don't wait for a crisis to prepare yourself.”

Here are some ideas that toddler groups have already tried – and recommended to others:

- **Parenting courses.** Have you run these? What course did you use? Did you find it helpful? Is there a different course which might suit your group better?
- **Debt counselling.** Your local Citizens' Advice Bureau or library may be able to recommend an adviser.
- **Single parent courses or get-togethers.** Arrange for suitably qualified and CRB-checked church members to babysit.
- **Cookery classes.** Vary the programme to include basic recipes with reasonably priced ingredients, or something more exotic and unusual.
- **Family fun days.** This may be a whole church event. It is very easy to invite friends to come along. Hire school grounds if the church is not suitable. Hire a bouncy castle; arrange face painting; organise football, rounders, races and other games; have a barbecue or a picnic. The possibilities are endless. (Remember to plan an indoor programme too, in case the weather is unkind!)
- **Table for two!** Give a weary mum and dad a romantic evening out, a good meal and a baby-sitting service.
- **Marriage support.** Run courses such as *21st Century Marriage* (Care for the Family); or *The Marriage Course* (Nicky and Sila Lee at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton) to help parents sustain good relationships.
- **What's happening in a child's world?** Invite a speaker who is well-acquainted with what is going on in the world of the children and youngsters.
- **Belly dancing!** Such fun! Try *Yellow Pages* or ask at your local library to find a teacher.
- **Pamper evenings.** Bring in a beautician or manicurist to pamper your mums. Indulge with a chocolate fountain and strawberries. Invite someone to give a talk about what is real inner beauty.
- **'Colour me beautiful'.** Find your nearest image consultant on www.colourmebeautiful.co.uk
- **'Daddy and Me' groups.** Run on the same lines as a toddler group but for dads and granddads, with their children and grandchildren, often on a Saturday morning. Don't forget the bacon butties!
- **Preparing your child for school.** Invite a reception-class teacher to advise the new nervous parents! How can they make the move to school a positive time for their children? And what will it feel like for the parents too?
- **Helpful talks on parenting issues,** such as coping with tantrums, children who do not sleep well, avoiding battles over food.
- **Childhood ailments.** Find a sympathetic doctor or health visitor to advise and reassure.
- **First aid courses.** Even qualified first aiders need to learn different skills for babies and children. Invite a trainer from St John Ambulance www.sja.org.uk/sja/ or the Red Cross www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/ to run a course for your parents and carers and group leaders.
- **Raise funds** to support needy parents and carers and toddlers, in your locality, in this country or overseas. Look for a project that will be meaningful to the parents and carers and the children in your toddler group.
- **Contact Centre.** You may be able to facilitate the meetings of children with a (non-custodial) parent. Sometimes such meetings have to be carried out in a supervised setting. Contact Centres are set up through the Family Courts system. They require specific training of volunteers and specific operation of the centre, giving contact time for parents and children requiring supervised access arrangements.



So are you going to try the belly-dancing classes?

Which of these ideas could you try?

Share any ideas you have found to be successful with other toddler groups. We're not in competition with each other!

EXERCISE

Plan out a programme of events that you would like to do for the next couple of years.

What do you need to do to get this off the ground?

Decide to start with at least one extra activity or event. What will it be?

Ask your church what they could do, to support you.

CHALLENGE

If you could make a difference in the life of one of your families, what would it be?

Parenting courses

These provide a wonderful opportunity to get to know parents on a much deeper level, and at the same time offer proven practical help that will be enormously beneficial to both parents and children.

There are a number of parenting courses available on the market that have been used to good effect within churches for many years. For people who are confident in leading small groups and dealing with sensitive issues in an appropriate way, these may be adequate. They have some excellent material contained within them. However, most do not offer training for facilitators.

If you want to run an accredited course in the community, then best practice suggests that facilitators are trained before running a parenting course which meets National Occupational Standards. This means that there is an assurance of the quality of the programme, it will be recognised by statutory and other voluntary organisations, and it can be widely used in the community as a whole rather than solely within the church community. Some courses offer accreditation for parents.

There are many different options, and you will need to choose what is most suitable for your circumstances. Here are some tips from toddler group leaders:

"Realise just how scheduled the lives of preschoolers can be. One group wanted to offer a *Parentalk* Coffee Morning series but the mums and babies were already committed to baby gym, baby French, signing, swimming and various other groups. Timing is critical for events or even interested people will not attend. You really have to know your target group and community - and work with them to find the best option."

"Avoid calling the sessions a 'Parenting Course'. Many parents feel disappointed and inadequate already. They don't want to feel that they are complete failures who need a course to enable them to be better parents."

"A warm comfortable environment will help. Eating together allows people to relax. Providing food helps parents to feel valued."

"A questionnaire beforehand allows you to find out what parents really want to talk about - which can be very helpful for advertising."

Training extras

Reviews of three parenting courses:

- *21st Century Parent*
- *Parentplay*
- *Parentalk Parenting Course*



Laura took her parenting course homework very seriously

“If you are in contact with other toddler groups, ask them what they are doing. Some parents attend several groups so it may not be wise to run a parenting course if there is already something up and running at another group.”

EXERCISE

Spend five minutes sharing your experiences of parenting courses.

What difference did they make?

What things did you have to learn ‘the hard way’ as a parent that a parenting course might have helped with?

How could we reach more parents and carers?

Little Fishes Toddler Group is in an affluent middle class area with busy parents and busy children. Most families appear to be financially secure, with many parents working part-time, and leading busy lives. The toddler group would like to create deeper relationships.

What difficulties can you foresee?

What opportunities?

What research would you suggest they do?

What new ideas could they try?

Repeat the exercise but, this time, consider the toddler group in a poorer area with many families facing varied challenges.

What difficulties can you foresee?

What opportunities?

What research would you suggest they do?

What new ideas could they try?

Repeat the exercise but, this time, consider your own toddler group:

What difficulties can you foresee?

What opportunities?

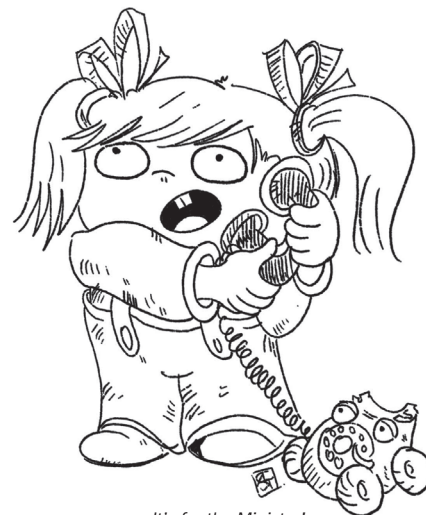
What research would you suggest?

What new ideas could you try?

How are these three groups the same?

How are these three groups different?

Have you found any ideas that would apply to any group?



It's for the Minister!

SECTION 4:

Sharing faith through toddler groups

All groups will be at different stages in the process and methods of sharing their faith. Many groups have been sharing him naturally or intentionally, or both, since their inception. Others may be more tentative in this area. Some choose not to say anything explicitly; others long to be more open about their Christian faith, but are not sure where to start.

Sharing faith naturally

Talking about Jesus in a Christian-led toddler group should be relatively easy. After all, we believe he is already there. The very presence of God at work through Christian leaders, showing his love in action, has a far-reaching effect.

The best way to introduce Jesus is naturally. Don't make a big deal of it. Get to know the children and their parents and carers well, so they are comfortable to share aspects of their lives. Great opportunities to bring Jesus and faith into the conversation can come from these relationships. If respect and trust already exist, what is shared has credibility – even if it is not accepted. Personal experience can never be denied but let your conversations flow naturally and not be contrived or manipulated. Parents and carers must never be made to feel that they are being 'Bible-bashed.'

The natural introduction to Jesus is made through who you are. In our interactions, attitudes, conversations, and the level of interest we show, we are giving an image of what it means to be a Christian. Each of us is a free sample of Jesus!

This attitude means that we will listen actively to parents and carers about their perceived needs, rather than imposing something on them that we think they need. At all times, allow parents and carers to make their own choice about participating in whatever you have planned.

? THINK!

Think about the statement: 'Each of us is a free sample of Jesus.'
What sort of free sample do you think you are?

What sort of free sample do you want to be?

👤 EXERCISE

With a partner or in a small group, share...
What is your experience in sharing faith naturally?

Sharing faith intentionally

When the atmosphere and ethos of a toddler group is focussed on the people who come along, endeavouring to understand who they are, demonstrating real interest and concern alongside a consistent loving attitude, it is right to introduce programme elements to support the underlying Christian beliefs and values. Introducing programme elements of the Christian faith into a toddler group intentionally will only have real impact on the lives of the adults and children when they are shown genuine acceptance, interest, care and concern as individuals. If parents and carers do not sense these attitudes, no amount of well-prepared and presented Christian input will help them in their journey of faith.

Even if you have included specific Christian content in your group for some time, reflect on these questions, as a team of leaders. How ready are you to talk about Jesus with the parents and carers and children in your toddler group?

Do you:

- Provide a safe and happy environment for children to play, learn and interact?
- Provide a welcoming place, of trust and safety, for all parents and carers to make friends and feel supported?
- Offer a listening ear, a lifeline to families in crisis, support for parents and carers having a tough time, empathy with those dealing with the ongoing demands of young children?
- Care about developing long-lasting relationships for young families looking for friendship and support?
- Make people feel special through attention to detail, such as birthdays, remembering special occasions, difficult situations, knowing their names?
- Offer prayer for particular circumstances?
- Pray together before each toddler group session, highlighting any special concerns without breaking confidences?
- Hold regular planning meetings?
- Demonstrate a genuine love for each other as a leadership team?
- Keep church members informed and praying for you and those who attend?
- Inform and involve your church leader as much as possible?



Amelia was wondering whether Mummy had eaten all their shopping.

EXERCISE

Discover your 'readiness rating'

As individual leaders:

On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 as 'completely ready to talk about your faith')

Score your personal feeling of readiness

Score the team's readiness

As a team:

- Compare your scores;
- Discuss the reasons for your decisions.

What can you do to improve the 'readiness rating' of individual leaders?

What can you do to improve the 'readiness rating' of the whole team?

Sharing faith effectively

Many church groups hesitate to introduce specific Christian teaching through lack of courage or over-sensitivity to those who attend. Parents and carers, however, will know the group is run by the church or by Christians. Most are open to Christian themes and activities, especially if they are enjoying what is already being provided. It really depends on how it is offered and presented.

Where do we start?

Groups vary in approach concerning Christian content. These range from including one short aspect of Christian teaching such as a simple one-line prayer at the end of a sing-song, to a 30 minute toddler service involving songs, rhymes, games, craft, story, drama and so on.

One good way to introduce Christian teaching is through celebrating the main Christian festivals and special days such as Christmas, Easter, Harvest, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day. There are sample programmes provided with ideas for some of these occasions in TRAINING EXTRAS.



It wasn't quite 'Ode to Joy' but the children made up for with enthusiasm what they lacked in musical ability.

EXERCISE

Where is your group with regard to including Christian-based activities, ranging from hardly any Christian content to an intentional section of specific Christian input?

Review the list of activities from one of your recent toddler group sessions. Which would you describe as 'Christian'?

Preparation

Plan ahead but be ready for the unexpected: working with young children is unpredictable and there is often a need to go with the flow. It is possible to be well-organised, efficient and flexible.

Build a team of dedicated people to organise, lead and help in the toddler group. This will spread the workload and offer flexibility for those who are, themselves, carers of young children. Involve your church leader, parents and carers and other supporters too, in discussing what is best for your toddler group.

Keep it simple. Prepare and rehearse what you are going to do in advance, however short this is, to avoid the frantic pain of rushing around trying to gather resources at the last minute.

Have people available who do not have specific responsibility for leading, but who are ready to see opportunities and act upon them to help people feel comfortable. Their role can include introducing people to each other, being a friend to those who are shy, offering practical support to a parent struggling with four young children, and so on.

EXERCISE

If you had a 'dream team' of leaders, what sort of person would be in it?

What gifts and abilities would they have?

What personal qualities would they need?

What practical skills would be useful?

How can you become that person?

How can your team become a 'dream team'?

Planning your programme

Programme themes

Plan your own programme around a theme, such as 'Mothers' Day'. Different times of the year can prompt services about the seasons; there may be events in the church calendar to suggest ideas; and early years learning suggests themes such as 'colours', 'numbers', 'growing' or 'moving on'.

Think about your own situation, resources and the atmosphere you want to create. Then choose or create activities that are just right for your toddler group.

Include action songs, instruments, rhymes, craft, simple prayers, a very short Bible story presented with expression (usually as a retold story), and with supporting visual material.

Programme ideas

1. Songs

Introduce some songs with Christian words to well-known tunes so that parents and carers and children are able to join in.

- Choose songs which have just a few words or lines to join in with.
- Use songs that stimulate activity with instruments or movements.
- Choose a mixture of secular songs and Christian songs.
- Make it personal: use children's names in the singing.
- If you use a microphone, allow the children to sing with it, occasionally.
- Don't worry if children lose interest and begin to drift away. Focus on those remaining and draw the session to a close before too many lose concentration.

Try these words to the tune of *Twinkle, twinkle little star*:

God loves you and God loves me,
We are in God's family.
He is with me everyday,
He will hear me when I pray.
God loves you and God loves me,
We are in God's family.

God loves you and God loves me,
We are in God's family.
He is with us everyday,
He will hear us when we pray.
God loves you and God loves me
We are in God's family.

Programme ideas

1. Songs
2. Musical instruments
3. Story time
4. Games
5. Rhymes
6. Prayers
7. Art and craft
8. Circle time
9. Snack time

Training extras

Music time has some general tips on using songs and instruments.

Training extras

Ideas for weekly programmes are given in resources such as *Tiddlywinks* (Scripture Union). Sample programmes and lists of resources for toddler services are contained in TRAINING EXTRAS.

To assist parents and carers in learning the songs in your group and singing them at home:

- Make a giant song book (at least A2 size, for easy reading from a distance);
- Display song words on *PowerPoint* or using an overhead projector;
- Print sheets of song words to take home.

Resources such as *Tiddlywinks: Say and Sing*, Scripture Union; and *Songs for Little Singers* Wakefield Diocesan Resource Centre, contain suitable material. See TRAINING EXTRAS Resource bank.

2. Musical instruments

These are great fun and a good way of introducing songs to praise God. Things can get very noisy and chaotic so be prepared for just about anything, making sure there are enough instruments for all the children to have one each. It is always wise to teach a sign for 'stop', before you get going, such as the leader raising one hand or putting a finger to the lips. Rattles, shakers and flags can easily be made, and involving parents and carers in making them can also increase their sense of belonging and ownership as well as providing opportunities to discuss worship (or anything else!).

Try these words to the tune of *The wheels on the bus* and use musical instruments as you sing:

Listen to the drums go bang, bang, bang,
Bang, bang, bang! Bang, bang, bang!
Listen to the drums go bang, bang, bang,
Praising God!

Listen to the shakers go shake, shake, shake,
Shake, shake, shake! Shake, shake, shake!
Listen to the shakers go shake, shake, shake,
Praising God!

Listen to the bells go ting, ting, ting,
Ting, ting, ting! Ting, ting, ting!
Listen to the bells go ting, ting, ting,
Praising God!

Listen to the trumpets go toot, toot, toot,
Toot, toot, toot! Toot, toot, toot!
Listen to the trumpets go toot, toot, toot,
Praising God!

Listen to us all make lots of noise,
Lots of noise, lots of noise.
Listen to us all make lots of noise,
Praising God!

This next song uses musical instruments in the last verse. If you give out the instruments before the song, make sure the children leave them on the floor until you give them a signal to pick them up and start playing. Sing to the tune of *London Bridge is falling down*:

We are clapping praise to God,
Praise to God, praise to God!
We are clapping praise to God,
For he loves us!

We are shouting praise to God,
Praise to God, praise to God!
We are shouting praise to God,
For he loves us!

Why not write a simple song that is specific to your toddler group that can be used as a welcome or home-time activity?

Invest in a few children's worship CDs. The children can play instruments along with them.

We are playing praise to God,
Praise to God, praise to God!
We are playing praise to God,
For he loves us!

Training extras

See 'Top tips for storytellers'

3. Story time

Use this time to introduce well-known Bible stories. Christian book shops have excellent resources for this. Make sure that any storytelling is visual and interactive and keep it short and sweet. A story will engage the imagination and emotions of the child.

A rule of thumb is that a child is able to concentrate for approximately one minute per year of age, so a two-year old will listen for about two minutes. It is not a hard-and-fast rule but it is a useful estimate when planning the length of your story.

Remember you want to engage the parents and carers as well as the children. Make a general statement at the beginning of the story that catches their attention. For instance, if telling the story of Jesus calming the storm at sea, start with something like: "Sometimes in life there are such big things that need to be done, that they seem just too big. This story is about how, with God's help, we can deal with the big things..."

4. Games

These can be used effectively to teach or reinforce a Bible story or Christian ideal. Again, ideas are given in resources such as the *Tiddlywinks* (Scripture Union) series. Games for very young children need to have few, simple rules that everyone can understand and follow. Keep your games inclusive: do not have games where children are 'out', for instance, in 'Simon says'. Parachute games are especially enjoyed by this age group and are good for emphasising lessons about sharing and working together.

5. Rhymes

Action rhymes can involve everyone. In this rhyme, you can improvise actions to go with each verse or use the rhyme as the structure for your group-time, following each verse with a game, prayer and so on.

God made me and you.
I can jump, how about you?

God made me and you.
I can dance, how about you?

God made me and you.
I can pray, how about you?

God made me and you.
I can sing, how about you?

God made me and you.
I can love, how about you?

(Taken from *Tiddlywinks: The Big Green Book*, Scripture Union, page 51; used by permission.)

6. Prayers

Praying with young children is a privileged opportunity when leaders are able to introduce children to God. Prayer is about two-way communication: it is about children talking to God and about learning to recognise him talking to them. Many young children will build a very real relationship with God through prayer – but it may not look and sound like an adult way of praying.

Children's praying is very immediate. For instance you may like to bring a bunch of flowers to the group and look at them together. You will not need to wait till a formal prayer time to say, 'Thank you, God.' And children will respond naturally and eagerly if you then prompt them by asking: 'What else shall we thank God for today?'



The children all paid close attention to the first point, not realising there were five more.

Drawing simple pictures of people that a child or parent is concerned about; tying ribbons to a prayer tree, putting pebbles on a pile before a cross or in a bucket of water to take care of something worrying are all simple but meaningful ways of allowing children and adults to explore prayer. Lighting candles may not be advisable around toddlers!

Using simple prayers with shouted responses or actions are a great idea. Using a prayer for home time is a simple but effective way of including a Christian element into your group. Each of the *Tiddlywinks* (Scripture Union) books contains pages of 'Welcome time' and 'Home time' ideas or you can create your own.

God helps us care,
And love,
And share.
God is with us everywhere.
Thank you, God,
Amen.

Possible actions for this could be:

God helps us care, (*Bring one arm across your body, to put a hand on your opposite shoulder.*)

And love, (*Repeat with the other arm.*)

And share. (*Uncross your arms; hold arms out in front with hands together; move to sides.*)

God is with us everywhere. (*Make large circles with your arms, to represent the world.*)

Thank you, God, (*Hands together.*)

Amen.

(Taken from *Tiddlywinks: The Big Red Book* Scripture Union, page 94; used by permission.)

7. Art and craft

Creative activities are a stimulating way for children to learn and remember a Christian story or message. The art or craft activity could be used: for retelling a Bible story, such as making a model sheep that could be 'lost' and found again to demonstrate the parable of the lost sheep; or to enable children to link the story with their own lives, for instance decorating cardboard spectacle-shapes to illustrate Jesus healing a blind man.

If the children are encouraged to take the item they have made home with them, then it will remind both the adults and the children of the story and how it related to Christian themes. Also, working on crafts together is a good opportunity to build relationships. Encourage parents and carers to be hands-on with this and act in a supervisory role. Include a short written verse or prayer (written in lower case) on the craft item, as a prompt for the adults.

For a young child, the process of doing and making is more significant than the end result. And it is important that the children do as much as possible themselves: they will remember the topic or message more effectively if they have made the item, rather than sitting alongside an adult who is doing most of the work.

One example would be to paint and decorate a small flower pot and then plant a bulb ready to flower at Easter. This is both creative and colourful and, as the bulb grows and flowers, is a daily reminder of new life and growth. These could also be made as gifts and given to elderly or housebound neighbours, involving your group in connecting with other parts of their community.

8. Circle time

Circle time is all about communication. The 'circle' shape is important as it includes everyone and brings them into a position where they can see and join in with what is happening. Participation by everyone is crucial to the success of Circle time and many groups choose to go to a separate area or clear away the toys beforehand, to avoid distractions. This time is key to developing a sense of belonging and group ownership. Encourage parents and carers to be part of the circle and not just spectators. This can be a real time of sharing if parents and carers want to be involved.

Circle time is an opportunity to share special moments together. Newcomers can be welcomed by name, birthdays celebrated, new births announced and a 'thank you'



"It's Mary and Jesus and the donkey",
said Keiran proudly.

Training extras

Go to TRAINING EXTRAS
Resource bank for details of
craft ideas and resources with a
Christian focus.

Visit these websites for great craft ideas:

www.preschooleducation.com
www.dltk-kids.com
www.enchantedlearning.com
www.daniellesplace.com
www.crayola.com

prayer said. There may also be sad times for which the group as a whole need to find an expression of shock, grief or sorrow.

Occasionally the shared news in Circle time will spill over into conversations afterwards. In one group, following a sudden infant death, parents and carers shared their experiences of stillbirths, late miscarriage and other tragedies. Circle time had developed into one-to-one conversations between supportive adults, while their toddlers were playing with other children.

9. Snack time

Snack time is an opportunity for parents and carers and toddlers to come together, practising social skills, learning healthy eating habits and enjoying eating and drinking together. It can be a way of sharing faith naturally together, too, as everyone thanks God for his provision.

If possible, sit the children at an appropriate-sized table on individual chairs and offer healthy snacks. Say a simple grace on behalf of them all and encourage them to join in. A few words such as, 'Thank you God for my food', are enough.

EXERCISE

Which Christian activities would be most appropriate to introduce into your toddler group?

- Songs
- Musical instruments
- Story time
- Games
- Rhymes
- Prayers
- Art and craft
- Circle time
- Snack time

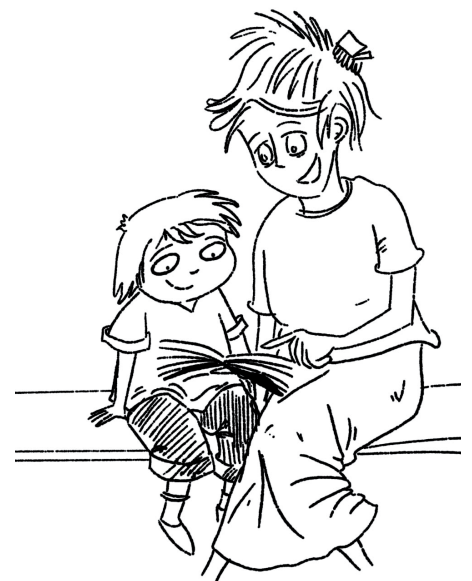
In twos or threes, plan an activity from the ideas given here, or one of your own. Present it to your team of leaders. Choose one new activity to try at your next toddler group.

Toddler services

Toddler services can be part of an existing group or an entirely separate event. They need to be planned carefully and thoroughly. If it is separate from the main toddler group, make sure that posters or literature produced are very clear that this group is a midweek church activity and that it will include a short act of worship. For example: "During this group there will be a short Christian-based service for you and the children to join in with. This will include a little story or thought, craft and some fun songs with instruments and prayers."

How could you timetable a toddler service? What might work for you?

- Once a month, replacing your regular toddler group for that week?
- During or after one of your regular toddler groups?
- For occasional special occasions, such as Christmas or Harvest?
- Something else?



"You missed a page", said Duncan, as his Mum read 'Thomas' for the third time that morning.

Practical tips

Produce a typed service sheet, or use *PowerPoint* slides to present all the songs, prayers and any words for people to say aloud. Parents and carers will feel more comfortable when they know where and how to join in and when they know exactly what is happening.

A simple activity sheet to take home can also be produced to remind both children and adults of the story – for cutting out, colouring, join the dots (no more than 5) and so on. Include a short Bible verse or phrase in bold lower case letters, for the parents and carers to read to the children, such as: 'God loves me all the time.'

Always have a welcome table where families are registered and welcomed in a friendly, unhurried manner. Take the opportunity to catch up on anything significant in the lives of each one.

 EXERCISE

Look at the sample toddler services in TRAINING EXTRAS. Identify the common threads in them. Why do you think they are there?

In twos or threes, plan a sample programme for a toddler service suitable for your group. Take the theme of 'Harvest' and incorporate creative ideas. Make the plan as detailed as possible. Present the plan to your team of leaders.

WHAT NEXT?

Many toddler groups exist from week to week, with no plans for the future, and no idea of what they want to achieve. Yet, as we have identified, toddler groups provide tremendous opportunities for Christians to sow seeds and reach families with the good news of the gospel. Where else in today's world do we see so many families flocking through the doors of church? It truly is a harvest field. But harvests need hard work and active workers.

Now you have used the *Building Blocks* TRAINING COURSE:

- Are you clear about your vision as a team?
- Do you have an understanding of spirituality and faith – both in children and adults?
- Have you decided what steps you will take to engage with parents and carers?
- Have you discussed how your group seeks to reflect Christ?
- What else do you need to know or find out?

You are already showing your deep commitment to showing God's love, through your toddler group. Trust in him, keep praying, and believe that God really can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine!

EXERCISE

Discuss the following questions and make a note of your answers.

What has impressed each of you most deeply, as you used *Building Blocks*?

If there is one thing you would resolve to change, what would it be?

Why not make a note now in your diaries for a year's time, to meet again and review your team's vision for the future?

Thank God for all that he has – and will – accomplish through toddler groups just like yours. It is not always easy, and there are some days when giving up feels like a good option. But be encouraged! Keep going – what you are doing is making an eternal difference.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:3–6 (*Today's New International Version*)

"Every time we think of you, we thank God for you. Day and night you're in our prayers as we call to mind your work of faith, your labour of love, and your patience of hope in following our Master, Jesus Christ, before God our Father. It is clear to us, friends, that God not only loves you very much but also has put his hand on you for something special." 1 Thessalonians 1:2–4 (*The Message*)



The vicar was starting to rethink his plans for a quiet reflective service.

TRAINING EXTRA 1

Mission through carer and toddler groups

The mission opportunities most churches miss

Nick Lear, BUGB

If you count up all the people in contact with your church who do not attend a Sunday service, what percentage of those would be parents and carers who attend your toddler group? It is likely that they would form the single largest group of people with whom your church has contact who do not currently attend a Sunday service. It is estimated that between a third and a half of all children in this country aged under-3 attend a toddler group on church premises regularly: that's around 700,000-800,000 of them! In the 2100 churches in the Baptist Union of Great Britain alone, there are more than 27,500 parents and carers and over 36,000 toddlers, on average, who attend a session each week.

These statistics raise several important questions if your church has a toddler group.

- How much contact does your church have with these people?
- What do these people think about your church?
- How will these people come into contact with the good news of Jesus?
- Do they feel welcomed, loved, supported and are they developing a sense of belonging to the host church?

Many churches have toddler groups that meet on their premises. For many parents and carers these groups are significant moments in their week when they can make friends, meet friends, relax and talk about their week. For the children, the groups provide opportunities to play with different toys and other children. Enabling those activities is a great aim in itself, but there are significant mission opportunities provided by toddler groups with which many churches can engage. The aim of this document is to help explain the opportunities and offer ways in which a toddler group at your church can be a significant part of your church's mission strategy.

Toddler groups as mission activities

Have a look at the diagram opposite. In simple terms it demonstrates the interaction between the church, the children and the carers (often parents, but sometimes grandparents, friends or employed carers) who attend toddler groups run on church premises.

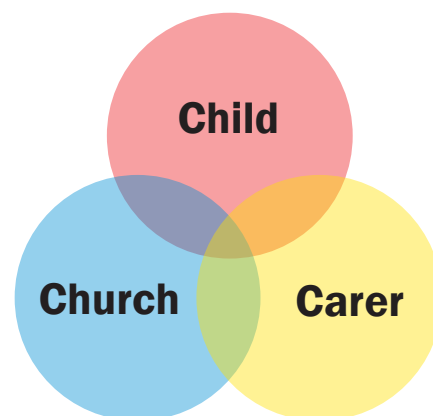
Consider the different reasons that these people attend or run 'traditional' toddler groups. Children come (usually without choice) and will hopefully enjoy playing with toys they may not have access to at home and interacting with other children. Carers will come to meet others, share stories and experiences and commiserate, get out of the house and perhaps enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. It is also a safe place in which their children can start to learn interpersonal skills. Churches will run groups for a variety of reasons: because they want to provide a service for the local community; because they have always done so; because it seems like there is a need for such a group that the church can meet; or a combination of these.

Look again at the diagram. Consider what might happen in the areas of overlap in a 'normal' toddler group. Churches provide the toys for children to play with, and premises and a structure within which the parents can meet. Parents and children interact with each other and the needs for socialisation are met. The shared aim in the middle of the diagram may be as simple (and profound) as 'everyone will have a good time'.

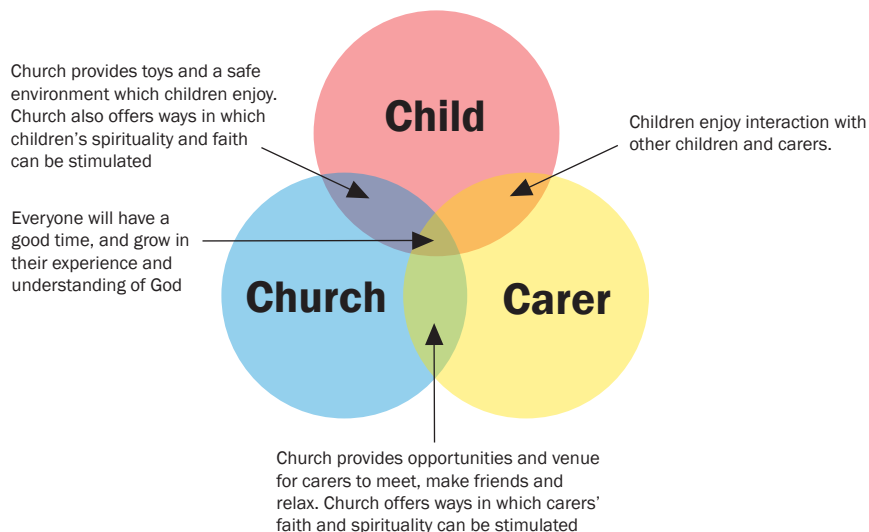
Now consider the same diagram from the perspective of a church that is seeking to share the good news of Jesus with carers and children as part of a mission strategy. The activities

Until recently, Nick was a Mission Adviser for the Baptist Union of Great Britain where he was responsible for BUGB's National Children's Strategy. He is now Senior Minister at Colchester Baptist Church.

These figures are taken from the Open University research paper *Pre-school Provision in Baptist Churches* by Gill Goodliff, 2006



above are the same, but now there are additional aspects of the dynamic relationship to consider. The child's spiritual and faith development would be considered and nurtured, as would that of the carers, and these would be experienced in the areas of overlap between the church and those people. If the church is explicit about the faith-based aspects of the group, then the shared aim in the centre may be: 'everyone will have a good time, and grow in their experience and understanding of God'.



Colin's research can be found at www.cbayouth.co.uk/toftodtoddling.htm

The Carer And Toddler Strategy (CATS) consultative group (with representatives from the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Care for the Family, Fegans - Parent and Toddler Groups Together, Go! Project, Scripture Union, and The Salvation Army) has produced *Building Blocks*, a training pack for those working with young children and adults in church-based toddler groups. The aim of these resources is to help church groups become more explicitly 'Christian-based'. Even if the group makes this transition to become more overt about the faith foundations, however, there is still the crucial question of how this fits into the church's wider mission strategy.

Toddler groups in a strategic context

In 2004 Rev Colin Cartwright carried out a survey among Baptist churches in the Central Baptist Association, asking them about the mission potential of toddler groups. He was very encouraged by the findings: "On the basis of this research, I believe it is not claiming too much to say that church toddler groups could play a vital role in the growth of the church in the 21st Century... I cannot help wondering: Are some churches missing a golden opportunity, essentially out of timidity or lack of strategic thinking?" So what strategic thinking might a church undertake?

People's relationship with a church could be plotted as a journey along a continuum. If you look at the arrow below, **1** represents those who have no real contact with church ('disinterested'), whereas **5** represents those who are integrated into the life and work of the church, and who have a believing faith in Jesus Christ ('believing'). The intervening numbers represent increasing levels of awareness and interest in the Christian faith and the life and work of the church (**2** 'interested'; **3** 'involved'; **4** 'belonging'). A significant part of a church mission strategy must be to help people make the transitions from wherever they are on the journey towards 'believing'.



Most people in our society exist in the 'disinterested' category: they live in a wider community and have little or no contact with church. They may not even be aware of the location of many local churches, and their lives are unaffected by those churches. Some toddler groups are simply run on church premises and have no direct Christian involvement or influence.

Others are run by church members or attenders, and may have different levels of Christian input into the sessions such as singing Christian songs, saying prayers, or telling Bible stories. These toddler groups are relatively unthreatening and 'unchurchy'. They do not challenge directly the disinterest in church of those who attend and span the range of 'interested' and 'involved'.

By contrast, despite Bishop William Temple's assertion that 'the church is the only institution that exists for the benefit of non-members', many church activities are run or designed for those who would be comfortable only as 'belongers' or 'believers'.

Have a look at your church diary and plot the various activities on the scale of 1-5 and you will see this for yourself.

So how can we help people on the journey towards becoming 'believers'? Focusing on using a toddler group as the foundation for such a mission strategy helps us see how a church might reach out to people who are disinterested and help them on their journey of faith.

Below are some brief ideas that may help you see how this may be done in your church. There are many other mission activities that your church may already be involved in, or which you could provide, but the important thing here is seeing where they fit together in a strategic way and how we can help people on their journey of faith discovery towards Jesus.

Activities run in a toddler group

There are many simple things that can be done to help carers and children on their journey from the starting point of involvement in a toddler group. This begins the journey from 'disinterested' towards 'interested' on the scale. For some groups the changes may be simple but they may also make a significant difference to the feel of the group. In those circumstances it is wise to give parents warning of those planned changes so that they do not feel 'ambushed'. Many will not be upset or concerned by this. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are surprised that church-run groups are not more 'Christian'.

“...anecdotal evidence suggests that they are surprised that church-run groups are not more 'Christian'”

Perhaps the most significant thing that can be done is for ministers or vicars to make a point of regular attendance at the group. This sends the message to the group (and the leaders) that this is considered important by the church. It will also start to open up conversations about faith in a natural way, as people are often more comfortable discussing such things with a 'professional' Christian.

Some ideas for making a group more explicitly 'Christian'

Tick those that already take place in your church.

- If you are the minister or vicar, go along on a regular (if not frequent) basis. Perhaps you could lead a brief 'worship' or reflection time. A lower key suggestion would be for the minister to be at the 'welcome' table as carers and toddlers arrive. Don't underestimate how much the group leaders will be encouraged by your regular presence!
- Encourage the group to introduce Christian songs to the repertoire that are sung. These could be sung along to a CD if a musician is not available. They could also play Christian songs or music in the background.
- Give appropriate gifts from the church at the Christian festivals.
- Help the group to celebrate the Christian calendar.
- Run separate 'Toddler Services' after the group ends, particularly if some parents are resistant to worship time within the normal group.
- Experiment with 'Messy Church' for the whole family (www.messychurch.org.uk).

Activities that meet the needs of families

These activities are designed to help people continue the journey from 'interested' to 'involved'. They are designed to meet the needs of parents and families and help support them. They are not overtly Christian, but introduce Christian values and hospitality, helping people to feel warm towards the faith community and start to build a sense of belonging. They will form part of your church's wider mission strategy and will require the wider church to have ownership of the wider mission strategy in order to make them happen.

“...start to build a sense of belonging”

Some ideas for activities to support parents and families

Tick those that already take place in your church and that could be offered to parents and carers as well as others in your church community.

- Run a parenting course or discussion group. Some churches have run classes to help prepare parents for sending their children to preschool/school which are well-appreciated.
- Offer 'baby-sitting' banks. This will require some of your members to hold current CRB Disclosures for this purpose, and it is wise to give them some training.
- Arrange pampering evenings for mums, events for dads, or romantic meals for couples.
- Run keep fit classes.
- Offer professional money advice and debt counselling.
- Run 'first aid for babies' courses.
- Host marriage enrichment programmes.

Activities which introduce people to the Christian faith in a non-threatening way

There are a number of different courses available to help introduce people to the Christian faith, suitable for people from different backgrounds and for churches of different styles. These are useful to help people move from 'involved' to 'belonging'.

Sometimes the expectation is that people will move through these courses directly from 'involved' to 'believing', but if that happens it will still be necessary to help them belong by offering activities to help them belong to the wider community of the church rather than just the small group of people they got to know on the course. *Alpha*, *Essence*, *Start* and *Journeys* are different approaches to introduce people to an understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and of course there are plenty of other resources available for the same purpose.

Some ideas for activities to introduce the Christian faith

Tick those that you run in your church.

- Alpha* courses
- Essence* courses (Share Jesus International)
- Start* courses (CPAS)
- Journeys* (Willow Creek)
- Toddler church
- 'Just looking' or 'Any Questions' discussion groups
- Children's holiday clubs

How can you encourage parents and carers to attend?

How could your church enable toddlers to grow in their knowledge and faith?

Activities that continue the journey of discipleship and faith

Many people find that belonging to a faith community precedes their believing. This has implications for who is entitled to participate in different church activities - and even in sacraments! It also has serious implications for what we do in our services and how we do it.

Many people will have preconceptions about what a church service is like. We need to enable them to see beyond those to a place where they feel like they belong. This is not an easy balance to strike. Some people respond well to a fairly traditional style of service as it resonates with previous experiences of church, perhaps as a child. Others will see that as suggesting that church has not moved with the times. At the same time, lively contemporary services may generate a positive response from some, while turning others off who feel that it is too 'happy clappy'. Consider the balance of your church services and in particular those to which you are expecting visitors.

Some ideas for activities to continue the faith journey

Tick activities that your church currently runs

- Services (not just on Sunday, which may not be the most convenient day)
- Home groups
- Discipleship courses
- Christian festival weeks (such as Spring Harvest, denominational holidays or Bible weeks)
- Church weekends (away or at home)
- Children's clubs and groups

What next?

Please go back through this document and see which boxes you have ticked. Ask yourself:

Are there any sections in which there are no (or few) ticks? These may be areas in which your church is already doing other things, or they may be areas in which your church outreach strategy is weak.

Are there any areas in which there are many ticks?

Are these areas in which your church is placing too great an emphasis in your mission strategy?

Is your church using resources (people, time, money) that could be more wisely used elsewhere? Would that provide a more balanced mission strategy, enabling people to make easy transitions in their journey of faith?

Discuss these findings with your leadership team and wider church. You may be surprised at what latent gifts are brought to light through this exercise.

In a wider context you should also consider the following issues:

How does your church support the toddler group, given that they may be in contact with more non-Sunday church attenders than any other group in your church?

What pastoral support does your church offer to toddler group leaders?

It is likely that the parents and carers will have significant pastoral needs. How does your church offer them the care and support they need?

What sort of budget allocation does the toddler group receive? What training have the helpers had in skill-related issues as well as in building confidence to share their faith? Can the church support these people by paying for them to receive the relevant training that will support and enhance their ministry and mission?

How often are the needs and opportunities of the toddler group shared with the wider church, in order that they receive the prayer and support of the whole church family?

What publicity does the church provide that advertises the group and makes the link with the church explicit, as well as links to sources of more information about the Christian faith?

Toddler groups are not the answer to all of the church's mission difficulties and needs. They are not the only way of reaching out into the community. They are, however, places where people who would not otherwise be in contact with your local church are willingly (and usually keenly) coming along on a regular basis. These are people whose attitude towards church is at least ambivalent. But this is a positive place from which to start. As they come into contact with the loving service of people from your church, week by week, they will probably grow towards a sense of belonging. If they ever articulate this sense it might be by saying, 'This is the church I don't go to'.

From that starting place, we have the opportunity to help them understand more of who Jesus is and why we follow him.

Will we continue to keep discreetly quiet about our faith and neglect this mission opportunity? Or will we seize this God-given opportunity to fulfil our Great Commission calling?

© 2008 Baptist Union of Great Britain, used by permission

TRAINING EXTRA 2

Faith development

The following handout gives a summary of the way that faith can be seen to develop in children and adults. It is not definitive. The age ranges indicated are a guide only. Some people move through the stages faster and some much slower. Not everyone will move through all the stages and many people will remain throughout the rest of their lives at the stage of development expected from young adulthood or even adolescence.

The statements in italics give an indication of how each stage of faith development might look in a Christian context.

Nursed faith – 0–2 years

- Trust is learned by basic needs being met and love given and received
- Good relationships with carers important for future faith development
- Faith is based on relationships with carers
- *Concept of God develops from parental relationships*



Chaotic faith – 3–7 years

- Highly imaginative with literal, powerful and unconnected images, not yet reasoned thinking
- Active with lots of questions of 'why', 'how' type
- Symbols are taken literally or as 'magical'
- Believe what they are told
- Significant adults very important to faith
- *Begin to see Jesus as friend and God as Father*



Ordering faith – 7–11 years

- Thinking is more reasoned, but still literal, including understanding of symbols
- Stories are important and the difference between fact and fiction understood
- Others' points of view begin to be understood
- Belonging to a group of peers is important
- Faith is linked to the need to belong
- *Can understand Jesus as Saviour*



Conforming faith – adolescence onwards

- Thinking is abstract and reflective. Questioning 'why' can lead to conflict with authority
- More developed ability to understand other perspectives
- 'Who am I?' and 'How do I fit in?' are key questions
- Faith is relational, taking on beliefs of wider group
- *Church can be seen as extended family and leaders held in high regard*
- *Jesus seen as Lord*



Choosing faith – young adult onwards

- Thinking involves choosing, making decisions and learning for themselves
- Often see a need to 'find faith for self' and reject earlier experiences and faith as 'second hand'
- Identification with faith group weakens
- Can have sense of having all the answers
- *Faith is made personal, with responsibility for what one believes*
- *Relationship with God seen as important*



Balanced faith – older adult onwards

- Greater awareness of limitations of self and less sureness about earlier judgements
- Greater openness to views and values of others
- Prepared to accept ambiguity more readily
- *Faith accepts God as being complex and being in control whilst allowing for free-will*



Selfless faith – later life

- Strong desire to love and help others with little regard for self
- Lifestyle is self-sacrificial
- *An example is Mother Theresa*
- *Faith focussed entirely on God and service*

This handout is a summary of James Fowler's Faith Development theory, with the addition of some possible views of God, developed by Alison Dayer. Stage headings from *Touching the Future* Gill Dallow, 2002, pp88-89

© 2008 Scripture Union, used by permission

TRAINING EXTRA 3

Sample toddler services

The four seasons: Autumn

Welcome song

Tune: *She'll be coming round the mountain*

Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you,
Very good to see you,
Very good to see you here today!

Discussion

Talk about changes in nature at Autumn. What can the children see around them? Talk about colours and the weather.

Story: God makes plants

When God was making the world, he had all sorts of good ideas about how to use colours. He was very keen to use all the colours he could possibly think of - to show just how much he enjoys giving us everything!

God started to go through all the colours, from white all the way through greens and purples to a deep, deep shade of black. "Mmm", said God, "I must use up all my colours. I don't want any left over. I'll start with the big trees. They will use up lots of colours, especially if I make sure flowers grow on some of them."

So God made trees. When God had finished that bit, he was pleased to have used up lots of brown, especially on the bark of trees, and green on their leaves. But God still had lots of greens left over. What should he do with that? "I know," said God as a terrific idea came to him, "Plants, I need plants. That will use up more shades of green."

So God made plants. All shapes and sizes. And even more shades of green! Just for fun! Then, some of the plants needed flowers on them. "Great," said God, "I can invent more bright colours for flowers. Oh what fun! This is marvellous!"

So God made flowers. Pinks and reds and purples, blues and greys and yellows. Even black! Even green! Just then a happy thought came to him. "Why not have some trees and plants which have bits on them to be eaten?" said God. "Good! Another chance to use up my bright colours. I'll make oranges, pineapples, pears, apples. Yes, that is what I'll do." So God made fruit and vegetables and all sorts of plants to eat.

Soon, God had used up all the colours he could think of (and don't forget he had even made shades of all the colours too). God was very pleased with how his world was shaping up. He danced around the trees and flowers looking at each one he had made. And, they all looked great.

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Green Book*, Scripture Union page 26; used by permission.)

Craft ideas

- Make simple hedgehogs with air hardening clay and coloured matchsticks for spines.
- Draw a large simple tree outline. Let the children stick or paint on leaves, in Autumn colours.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and attribute items correctly. CATS apologises to any author or organisation whose work has not been properly credited. Please inform Scripture Union, as the administrator of this training resource, and this will be rectified.

Song

Tune: If you're happy and you know it

The leaves are falling down – Autumn's here!
The leaves are falling down – Autumn's here!
We scrunch them with our feet as we walk along the street,
The leaves are falling down – Autumn's here!

The animals go to sleep – Autumn's here!
The animals go to sleep - Autumn's here!
The hedgehog curls up small as he rolls into a ball
The animals go to sleep – Autumn's here!

Prayer

Thank you, God, for the beautiful colours of Autumn – red, brown, and gold. Please keep all the animals safe as they go to sleep for winter. Amen.

Instrument songs: Gather round

Tune: This old man

Gather round, gather round,
See if you can make a sound,
With a tap, tap, tapping, in a happy way,
We are praising God today.

Gather round, gather round,
See if you can make a sound,
With a drum, drum, drumming, in a happy way,
We are praising God today.

Gather round, gather round,
See if you can make a sound,
With a jingle, jingle, jingling, tapping, in a happy way,
We are praising God today.

Gather round, gather round,
See if you can make a sound,
With a shake, shake, shaking, in a happy way,
We are praising God today.

Gather round, gather round,
See if you can make a sound,
With a clap, clap, clapping, in a happy way,
We are praising God today.

Play your instruments

Tune: Wind the bobbin up

Play your instruments, play your instruments,
Praise, praise, praise the Lord.
Play your instruments, play your instruments,
Praise, praise, praise the Lord.

Play them high and play them low,
Play them fast and play them slow,
Play them all together – one, two, three,
Put them down very quietly. Shhhhhhh!

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Purple Book*, Scripture Union 2004; used by permission.)

Prayer

God helps us care and love and share,
God is with us everywhere.
Thank you, God. Amen.

(From *Let's Sing and Shout!* Scripture Union 1998 op; used by permission.)

The four seasons: Winter

Welcome song

Tune: She'll be coming round the mountain

Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you,
Very good to see you,
Very good to see you here today!

Discussion

Talk about changes in nature in Winter. What can the children see around them? Talk about the weather.

Craft ideas

- Make simple snowflakes using white finger painting on circles of black paper.
- Draw a simple tree outline. Let the children stick or paint on snow, frost and ice, using blue, white and silver paint and collage scraps.

Story: C-c-c-cold outside...

Explain about the woman in Proverbs 31 making clothes to keep her family warm. Read verses 13, 19 and 21 from a Bible. Ask the children to listen for what she does (weaves cloth, makes clothes, gives her family warm clothes for cold weather). Explain what these processes are and today's equivalents. Is anyone wearing anything hand-made? Can you bring a knitted garment to show?

When might we need clothes to keep us warm? Tell the children you're going to tell a story about a little boy like them. Tell the story once. Repeat it and this time ask the children to count the 'keeping warm' things in the story:

When Danny got out of bed that morning his feet felt cold. He looked under his bed for his **slippers** and put them on. Danny went downstairs to find Mummy in the kitchen. She made him some **warm porridge** for breakfast. Danny put on his **clothes**; his **digger jumper** and fleecy green **trousers**. Mummy called him over to the window. "Look at the frost, Danny." Danny saw funny icy squiggles and spikey patterns. He tried to touch them but they were outside. Then he saw the snow! It was lying all over the garden. Danny couldn't see the grass or mud. It was all white!

Mummy helped him to put on his **boots**, his **coat, hat, scarf** and **gloves**. She opened the back door and Danny clambered out into the snow. His foot went right down through it! He saw his footprints in the snow and his breath in the air! It was like steam! The snow was hard to walk in, so Danny stopped and picked up a handful. Brrr – he shivered. It was cold. His **gloves** were getting wet. The snow in his hand was turning to water.

Danny lay down on his back in the snow. He dragged his arms up and down then stood up to look. "Mummy," he called, "I've made a snow angel!" His arms had made a picture of wings. Mummy brought Danny **inside**. She took his outdoor clothes off, then she gave him a **warm drink** and a **cuddle**. They looked outside at the angel. It had started to snow again. The big white fluffy flakes floated down and covered the angel. Soon it was gone but Danny didn't mind. He had had a lovely cold day.

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Yellow Book*, Scripture Union page 82; used by permission.)

Song

Tune: Sing a song of sixpence

Sing a song of winter,
Fog and wind and rain,
Ice and frost and snowflakes,
Falling down again.
Never mind the shivers,
Jump and run and slide,

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and attribute items correctly. CATS apologises to any author or organisation whose work has not been properly credited. Please inform Scripture Union, as the administrator of this training resource, and this will be rectified.

Hats and coats and gloves and scarves
Will keep the cold outside!

Prayer

Thank you, God, for winter time
For snow and ice and rain.
Thank you God, that just as each snowflake is special,
So I am special to you. Amen.

Instrument songs: Happy song

Tune: If you're happy and you know it

If you're happy and you know it clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know it clap your hands,
If you're happy and you know and you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it clap your hands.

If you're happy and you know it stamp your feet,
If you're happy and you know it stamp your feet,
If you're happy and you know and you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it stamp your feet.

If you're happy and you know it play along,
If you're happy and you know it play along,
If you're happy and you know it and you really want to show it,
If you're happy and you know it play along.

Praising God!

Tune: The wheels on the bus

Listen to the drums go bang, bang, bang,
Bang, bang, bang; bang, bang, bang,
Listen to the drums go bang, bang, bang,
Praising God!

Listen to the bells go ting, ting, ting,
Ting, ting, ting; ting, ting, ting,
Listen to the bells go ting, ting, ting,
Praising God!

Listen to the shakers go shake, shake, shake,
Shake, shake, shake; shake, shake, shake,
Listen to the shakers go shake, shake, shake,
Praising God!

Listen to us all make lots of noise,
Lots of noise, lots of noise,
Listen to us all make lots of noise,
Praising God!

Closing prayer

God helps us care and love and share,
God is with us everywhere.
Thank you, God. Amen.

(From *Let's Sing and Shout!* Scripture Union 1998 op; used by permission.)

The four seasons: Spring

Welcome song

Tune: She'll be coming round the mountain

Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you,
Very good to see you,
Very good to see you here today!

Discussion

Talk about changes in nature in Spring. What can the children see around them? Talk about baby animals and new birth in Spring-time.

Craft ideas

- Make lamb masks using paper plates and cotton wool balls.
- Draw a simple tree outline. Let the children stick on scrunched tissue paper, as blossom.

Song

Tune: Here we go round the mulberry bush

This is the way the bunny hops,
Bunny hops, bunny hops,
This is the way the bunny hops,
On a Spring time morning.

This is the way the little chick walks,
Little chick walks, little chick walks,
This is the way the little chick walks,
On a Spring time morning.

This is the way the little lamb runs,
Little lamb runs, little lamb runs,
This is the way the little lamb runs,
On a Spring time morning.

Bible story: David the shepherd

This story lends itself to a leader taking the part of David and the children being the sheep. Narrate the story as if you are David telling everyone how you care for your sheep. Encourage the children to follow the 'stage directions' in your story – perhaps another leader or willing parent would help out. If you can find a wooden walking stick with a curved handle, you could explain that it looks like a crook and that a shepherd uses his crook to lift sheep out of tricky places. You may wish to cover the following points in your story:

Tell everyone how you (David) would care for your sheep during the day. You'd take the sheep out, looking for the sweetest grass there was. (*Children follow on hands and knees.*) Talk about how you would play your harp and sing songs to God while the sheep were eating the grass. (*Children pretend to graze.*)

Say that you would find pools of fresh water for the sheep to drink so that they wouldn't be thirsty. (*Children follow again, and then pretend to drink.*)

Show how you would search for any sheep that got lost and how pleased you'd be when you found them. Explain how you would carry the youngest lambs if they got tired. (*Pick up one of the smallest children whom you know well enough to do so.*)

Talk about taking the sheep back to the sheepfold and showing them inside where they'd be safe for the night. Show how you would sleep across the doorway so that you would be close to them all night. (*Huddle the 'sheep' into a corner, as a sheepfold; sit or lie down in front of them.*)

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and attribute items correctly. CATS apologises to any author or organisation whose work has not been properly credited. Please inform Scripture Union, as the administrator of this training resource, and this will be rectified.

If a wolf or bear attacked, tell everyone that you would be ready to fight them. (*Look around, on guard.*)

Conclude by saying that you always look after your sheep very well because you care about each one. You want them all to be safe and happy. You want to look after your sheep as well as God looks after us.

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Orange Book*, Scripture Union page 46; used by permission.)

Prayer

Thank you, God, for Spring time. Thank you for all the new things growing all around us. Thank you for all the new animals being born. Thank you for fluffy, yellow chicks, furry baby rabbits and little spring lambs. Amen.

Instrument songs: Praise for everything

Tune: Row, row, row your boat

Clap, clap, clap your hands,
Clap your hands and sing,
We can clap to praise you God,
Praise for everything!

Wave, wave, wave your hands,
Wave your hands and sing,
We can wave to praise you God
Praise for everything!

Play, play, play the tune
Play the tune and sing.
We can play to praise you God,
Praise for everything!

(From *Let's All Clap Hands!* Scripture Union 2001 op; used by permission.)

In God's family

Tune: Twinkle, twinkle little star

God loves you and God loves me,
We are in God's family.
He is with me everyday,
He will hear me when I pray.
God loves you and God loves me,
We are in God's family.

Closing prayer

God helps us care and love and share,
God is with us everywhere.
Thank you, God. Amen.

(From *Let's Sing and Shout!* Scripture Union 1998 op; used by permission.)

The four seasons: Summer

Welcome song

Tune: She'll be coming round the mountain

Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you,
Very good to see you,
Very good to see you here today!

Discussion

Talk about changes in nature in Summer. What can the children see around them? Talk about things we can do in the summer sunshine.

Craft ideas

- Make a pair of simple sunglasses.
- Draw a simple tree outline. Let the children stick or paint on leaves; add a bright sun as well.

Songs

Tune: Twinkle, twinkle little star

Now that Summer time is here,
Let's all clap and give a cheer!
Holidays and trips to the zoo,
Seaside fun and picnics too.
Now that Summer time is here,
Let's all clap and give a cheer!

Special treat

Have an ice cream factory or eat ice-lollies!

Prayer song

Tune: Heads, shoulders knees and toes

Holidays are lots of fun, lots of fun,
When we're playing in the sun, in the sun, so
Thank you God for all our holidays,
We can have a happy time, happy time.

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Blue Book*, Scripture Union 2002, page 57; used by permission.)

Bible story: God's special day

Invite the children to join you to sit on a story mat. You may like to use a large picnic blanket. Explain that you need help to tell the story and the children can help you by joining in some actions to special words in the story. They will have to listen very carefully to hear the special words.

A very long time ago, before you or I were born, God was busy making the whole world. God worked for six days. (*Let's count the days together: one, two, three, four, five, six.*) God could see (*Can you point to your eyes?*) everything he had made. He was very happy. (*Can you smile?*)

God said, "I've worked for six days." (*Let's count the days together: one, two, three, four, five, six.*) God said, "I can see everything I have made." (*Point to your eyes.*) God said, "I like it very much. I am very happy." (*Smile.*)

So, on the next day, the seventh day (*Let's count the days together: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven*) God has finished making the world. (*Let's give God a clap and shout: "Hooray!"*)

God said, "Today is the seventh day" (*Let's count the days together: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven*) "I have finished making the world. (*Make a circle in the air, with your arms.*) It is very good." (*Clap and shout: "Hooray!"*)

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and attribute items correctly. CATS apologises to any author or organisation whose work has not been properly credited. Please inform Scripture Union, as the administrator of this training resource, and this will be rectified.

God said, "Today is a special day." He took a break from making things and spent his time enjoying all the beautiful things that he had made in his world. (*Make a circle in the air, with your arms.*)

I wonder what he did? (*The children may have some suggestions here.*)

What do you like to do when you have a day off from going to nursery or when you go on holiday?

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Blue Book*, Scripture Union 2002, page 56; used by permission.)

Instrument songs: Praise to God

Tune: London Bridge is falling down

We are clapping praise to God,
Praise to God, praise to God!
We are clapping praise to God,
For he loves us!

We are shouting praise to God,
Praise to God, praise to God!
We are shouting praise to God,
For he loves us!

We are playing praise to God,
Praise to God, praise to God!
We are playing praise to God,
For he loves us!

Let's praise God!

Tune: Do you know the muffin man?

Let's praise God with instruments,
With instruments, with instruments,
Let's praise God with instruments,
He loves to hear us play!

Let's praise God with happy smiles,
Happy smiles, happy smiles,
Let's praise God with happy smiles,
He loves to see us smile.

Let's praise God with lots of noise,
Lots of noise, lots of noise,
Let's praise God with lots of noise,
He loves to hear our noise.

Let's praise God so quietly,
So quietly, so quietly,
Let's praise God so quietly,
Quiet, quietly.

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Purple Book*, Scripture Union 2004; used by permission.)

Closing prayer

God helps us care and love and share,
God is with us everywhere.
Thank you, God. Amen.

(From *Let's Sing and Shout!* Scripture Union 1998 op; used by permission.)

A toddler service for Mothers' Day

Welcome song

Tune: *She'll be coming round the mountain*

Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you,
Very good to see you,
Very good to see you here today!

Discussion

Talk about people who love us. Talk about Mothers' Day: refer to all female relatives, mums, grandmas, aunties, sisters and so on.

Bible story: Sarah is a mum

Have a glove puppet on your hand (Johnny). Get him to communicate in your ear and then tell the children what he has said. You'll also need a Russian stacking doll with just the smallest one inside; and three simple stick puppets to represent the visitors.

We're going to say thank you for our mummies today. What do our mummies do for us? Can you think of anything, Johnny? (*Puppet rubs his hands across his face and whispers "washes my face".*) Can anyone else think of anything? (*Pause for the children to suggest things.*) End up with the puppet putting his arms across himself and whispering, "Mummy gives me hugs".

(*Show the children a Russian doll.*) This is a woman called Sarah. She loved God but she was sad because she hadn't any children. She would like to be a mummy and give hugs and (*include the list of things that the children shouted out*). She thinks she is too old to be a mummy now.

One day three men (*three circles with faces, stuck on flat craft sticks*) passed the tent where Sarah lived. Abraham, her husband, wanted to look after them. He asked them to stay for dinner. Sarah went inside the tent and started to cook and bake. Soon a lovely dinner was ready. (*What would you like for your dinner?*) They ate some meat and some lovely fresh bread and drank some milk.

Sarah did the clearing up in the tent. She could hear the men talking outside. Suddenly she had a big surprise! She heard one of the men say, "Sarah is going to have a baby!" Next year Sarah would be a mummy! Sarah thought they were joking. She laughed and laughed and laughed. (*Can you laugh loudly?*)

"I'm too old," she said, "I can't have a baby."

The men said that it was not a joke. God was going to make her a mummy. God had promised Sarah would have her own baby to look after.

And do you know what? Next year Sarah had a baby boy. (*Open Russian doll to find the smallest one inside.*) She called him Isaac. She loved him very much. I think she carried on laughing because she was so happy.

Chat about how names often have meanings: you might be named after someone in your family or someone famous. Isaac's name means 'laughter' because Sarah laughed when she heard he was going to be born and she was so happy to have her own baby.

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Yellow Book*, Scripture Union page 44; used by permission.)

Craft idea

- Make Mothers' Day cards or gifts.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and attribute items correctly. CATS apologises to any author or organisation whose work has not been properly credited. Please inform Scripture Union, as the administrator of this training resource, and this will be rectified.

Song

Tune: Twinkle, twinkle little star

Mummy, Mummy I love you,
Thank you for the things you do.
For making my breakfast, dinner and tea,
For being my friend and loving me,
Mummy, Mummy I love you,
And I know that God does too!

Prayer

Dear God,
My mummy washes my clothes, (*Mime washing clothes.*)
My mummy cooks my dinner, (*Mime eating.*)
My mummy gives me hugs. (*Wrap arms around.*)
Thank you, God, for all the things my mummy does for me. Amen.

Instrument songs: Praising God!

Tune: The wheels on the bus

Listen to the drums go bang, bang, bang,
Bang, bang, bang; bang, bang, bang,
Listen to the drums go bang, bang, bang,
Praising God!

Listen to the bells go ting, ting, ting,
Ting, ting, ting; ting, ting, ting,
Listen to the bells go ting, ting, ting,
Praising God!

Listen to the shakers go shake, shake, shake,
Shake, shake, shake; shake, shake, shake,
Listen to the shakers go shake, shake, shake,
Praising God!

Listen to us all make lots of noise,
Lots of noise, lots of noise,
Listen to us all make lots of noise,
Praising God!

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Purple Book*, Scripture Union 2004; used by permission.)

Play your instruments

Tune: Wind the bobbin up

Play your instruments, play your instruments,
Praise, praise, praise the Lord.
Play your instruments, play your instruments,
Praise, praise, praise the Lord.

Play them high and play them low,
Play them fast and play them slow,
Play them all together – one, two, three,
Put them down very quietly. Shhhhhhh!

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Purple Book*, Scripture Union 2004; used by permission.)

Closing prayer

God helps us care and love and share,
God is with us everywhere.
Thank you, God. Amen.

(From *Let's Sing and Shout!* Scripture Union 1998 op; used by permission.)

A toddler service for Christmas

Welcome song

Tune: She'll be coming round the mountain

Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you here today!
Oh it's very good to see you,
Very good to see you,
Very good to see you here today!

Craft idea

Give each child a small cake and use coloured icing and sweets to decorate. Put a single birthday cake candle in each cake.

Story in song: The first Christmas

Use this simple action song to tell the story of the first Christmas.

Tune: The wheels on the bus

The star in the sky says follow me,
Follow me, follow me,
The star in the sky says follow me,
At Christmas time.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem,
Bethlehem, Bethlehem,
Jesus was born in Bethlehem,
At Christmas time.

The shepherds heard the angels sing,
Angels sing, angels sing,
The shepherds heard the angels sing,
At Christmas time.

Wise men from the East came riding in,
Riding in, riding in,
Wise men from the East came riding in,
At Christmas time.

Christmas is our favourite time,
Favourite time, favourite time,
Christmas is our favourite time,
Thank you God.

Bible story: Jesus is born

You will need: soft toys or puppets of the animals who may have been in the stable the night Jesus was born, such as a donkey, hen, cat, mouse, spider.

If you have trouble finding soft toys of these animals, ask the parents of children in the group. Otherwise, make puppet animals by drawing simple animal heads on card; paint or colour them; and stick them to a wooden spoon.

Use your soft toys or puppets to tell the story:

"What's that noise?" clucked the hen, sitting on her nest of warm brown eggs. The donkey, munching hay at the back of the stable, answered her: "It's a baby. He's brand new – only born tonight! He's called Jesus. Isn't he lovely?"

The cat, who had been sleeping in the hay, crept closer. She thought it sounded like a kitten, mewling in the manger. She jumped onto a pile of hay, and peered into the manger. The donkey was right – it was a baby! As the cat gazed at the tiny fists, waving in the hay, she started to purr. 'Isn't he beautiful?' she sighed.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and attribute items correctly. CATS apologises to any author or organisation whose work has not been properly credited. Please inform Scripture Union, as the administrator of this training resource, and this will be rectified.

A tiny brown mouse, hiding in the dark corner of the stable – because she was a little bit afraid of the cat – ran silently to see what the fuss was about. She scurried up onto the edge of the manger and looked inside. “It’s a baby!” she squeaked. “Look at the light that seems to shine on his face. Isn’t he wonderful?”

A tiny black spider, spinning a web in the corner, dropped down for a closer look. “What a lovely boy!” she cried as she dangled there.

The stable was peaceful. The light from the star overhead lit up the faces of all the creatures in the stable. Jesus would have many visitors – shepherds, and even wise men from the East. But for now, everything was quiet. The cat did not want to chase the mouse. The hen did not want to gobble up the spider. The donkey watched proudly over Jesus. For now, they were all content just to gaze at the very special baby born among them.

(From *Tiddlywinks: The Big Red Book*, Scripture Union 2002, page 26; used by permission.)

Birthdays

Find out who has a birthday in December? (Give out cards.) Link to the birthday of Jesus. With careful adult supervision, light the candles on the decorated cakes. Sing ‘Happy birthday to Jesus’.

Prayer

Christmas is such an exciting time! Thank you, God, for sending Jesus as a baby that very first Christmas. Help us to remember to celebrate his birthday, as we open our presents. Amen.

Instrument songs

Jesus came to earth

Tune: Do you know the muffin man?

Let’s praise God for Christmas-time,
For Christmas-time, for Christmas-time,
Let’s praise God for Christmas-time,
For Jesus came to earth.

Let’s praise God with happy smiles,
Happy smiles, happy smiles,
Let’s praise God with happy smiles,
For Jesus came to earth.

Let’s praise God with lots of noise,
Lots of noise, lots of noise,
Let’s praise God with lots of noise,
For Jesus came to earth.

Let’s praise God so quietly,
Quietly, quietly,
Let’s praise God so quietly,
For Jesus came to earth.

Let’s praise God with lots of noise,
Lots of noise, lots of noise,
Let’s praise God with lots of noise,
For Jesus came to earth.

Christmas time

Tune: Jingle Bells (chorus)

Christmas time, Christmas time, Christmas time is near,
Bang the drums and shake the bells and clap and give a cheer!
Christmas time, Christmas time, Christmas time is near,
We’re so glad that Jesus came for everybody here!”

Closing prayer

God helps us care and love and share, God is with us everywhere. Thank you, God. Amen.

(From *Let’s Sing and Shout!* Scripture Union 1998 op; used by permission.)

TRAINING EXTRA 4

Music time

Music time is one of the best ways to have group time in a toddler group setting. Not only does it develop a child's musical, language, co-ordination and sequencing skills, but it also builds a relationship between carer and child. And as a whole group we can also enjoy creating something musical that we couldn't create on our own.

Confidence in leading a music time can only really be gained by, yes, you guessed it – leading a music time. Everyone has their first time, but by your third or fourth week you will be able to begin to relax enough to see what the children enjoy, and build on what you see is working well.

Preparation is essential. Make a short list (five or so) of the songs you want to sing. Take it to your bathroom and sing each three times, as high as you can. Most of us sing too low when nervous, so practising them high gives a more confident sound and a better lead for the children, whose voices are higher anyway. Practising in the bathroom just makes it sound better. Be sure you know the words off by heart.

Create a circle space with carpet squares, kneelers or seats. Ideally, it's better to have everyone on the floor so that children can sit on their carer's lap and the adult is free to bounce and rock with their child. Try to avoid having any toys in view.

Under-5s love knowing **what happens next**, so build a framework into your music time. Start with the same 'welcome' song, perhaps one that greets each child by name. Have a finishing song which remains the same each week. I like to finish by turning off the lights and singing a quiet rocking song, like 'Row, row, row your boat'. This generally leaves the children quiet and calm and having a nice cuddle while I give any notices in a gentle voice.

Percussion instruments are not toys. Treat them carefully and the children will too. Get them out just for specific songs, and see if the children can put them back 'as quietly as a mouse'. Play starting and stopping with a puppet hiding. Blow some bubbles and stop playing as the last bubble pops.

A steady beat is the principal building block of music. Any song that encourages children to move to a steady beat, by marching, walking, bobbing up and down, clapping, rocking, swinging from side to side, nodding, blinking or playing percussion is brilliant.

Singing for under-5s comes when they know a song really well. They are like mp3-players, downloading songs for a long time and only playing back in their own time - usually in the supermarket trolley! So don't be put off when they don't join in. They might just be staring at you, but this is their 'downloading' and an essential part of their learning. Pick songs which have just a small bit to join in with, for example Mother Duck's 'Quack, quack, quack, quack!' in 'Five little ducks'. Animal noises and fire engine sounds are a good way to enable children to find their singing voice.

Explore musical elements like start and stop, loud and quiet, fast and slow. You could use for example 'Wheels on the bus'. The children will show you what they enjoy and give you ideas. Repeat songs as many as 5-6 times in a row if they are enjoying it and don't worry about doing the same thing week in, week out – that's how under-5s love it!

Julia Plaut is a musician, songwriter and mum of three who has led music time in toddler groups as well as playing in orchestras worldwide. She has also produced several well-loved CDs of Bible-based toddler songs.

Training extras

Find out about Julia's music CDs in TRAINING EXTRAS Resource bank

© 2007 Care for the Family, used by permission.
This article first appeared in *Playtime*, Autumn issue 2007.

TRAINING EXTRA 5

Top tips for storytellers

Telling a story to the children at your group can be a nerve-wracking experience. Not everyone is a born storyteller or likes to be in the limelight! Here are some ideas to ensure that you tell a story competently and retain the children's interest from beginning to end!

Some practical tips

- Signal 'story time' in the same way each time, for example by rolling out a story mat or ringing a bell and putting away toys which might prove a distraction.
- Storytelling involves communication between teller and listener, so sit on a low chair to allow everyone to see the different expressions on your face.
- If you are reading from a book, look up often and involve the children in the story: 'What do you think happens next? Shall we turn the page and see?'
- Hold everyone's attention by varying the volume and speed at which you speak. Denote excitement or danger by speaking quickly; a whisper to tell of a wonderful surprise; a booming voice for a giant or a bear!

Practise your story

Your story should only last a couple of minutes, so practise it out loud several times the day before. Say it as you sit in the bath; tell it to the cat; sit on a chair and imagine the children listening at your feet. Are you really telling the story in a way that they can understand and enjoy?

A child's experience

Young children have a limited vocabulary and experience of life. In the main, use words and situations that are familiar to them. However, they do love to hear and repeat new fun-sounding words, as long as the meaning is clear from the context; a 'hullabaloo' in Old MacDonald's farmyard, perhaps!

If your story involves an unfamiliar situation, lead into it with something they will recognise. For instance, if the story is designed to introduce the children to baptism, you could begin with a small child helping to bathe and dress a baby brother or sister in readiness. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the children discover the unfamiliar Kingdom of Narnia through a familiar piece of furniture - the wardrobe.

The main character

As adults, we often enjoy a story more when we identify with the main character. Children are no different. That's why so many children's books feature stories about a young child or a baby animal (which really represents a small child!).

If you are retelling a Bible story, tell it from the point of view of a child or animal. That might be the boy who shared his picnic in the *Feeding of the five thousand*; or the little donkey in the story of *Palm Sunday*. If no such character exists in the original, you can always make one up!

Using a soft toy

If you don't much enjoy being the centre of attention, bring along a soft toy such as a teddy bear, and tell a simple story about him each week. Everyone's eyes will be on teddy rather than on you! You only need to practise a few simple actions with him in front of a mirror at home.

Storyteller and conference speaker Vicki Howie is the author of *Easy Ways to Bible Fun for the Very Young* and *Easy Ways to Seasonal Fun for the Very Young*, as well as several picture books.

Training extras

Find out about Vicki's books in TRAINING EXTRAS Resource bank

Your stories could cover a range of first experiences such as teddy's first swim, day at school or visit to hospital. Teddy could ask all the questions which the children might be too shy to ask.

Using a story basket

Visual aids are a great help in keeping the children's attention, so pack an old picnic hamper with a few colourful items that you can bring out to illustrate your story. Intrigue the children! 'Teddy has brought one of his friends along to meet you today. Would you like to see him? He has pointed ears ... and a long, long tail ... and look, he's peeping out of the basket. He's a mouse!'

© 2006 Care for the Family,
used by permission.
This article first appeared in
Playtime, Autumn issue 2006.

TRAINING EXTRA 6

Learning through play

Imagine the scene. It is Sunday morning in a small room off the church hall. Inside, there is a group of young children playing. Three children are playing with a toy medical set and some dolls. Two more are building houses with bricks. At a table, a small group sits with an adult, drawing and colouring, making models. In another corner, two boys sit on cushions sharing some storybooks, including a story Bible. Is this really what the parents bring their children to church for? To play?

In a few minutes the leader will call the children to come and listen to this week's Bible story. This week's story is of the man lowered through the roof by his friends for Jesus to heal him (Mark 2:3-12). The playing that the children have been engaged in will help them relate to the story and start to process their learning, beginning to live with it and working it through in their minds. Having played at doctors and nurses the children can be helped to contrast normal healing and miraculous healing. The brick building will have helped them to understand how a simple building is made and damaged! The children sharing books have been helping each other and enjoying the Bible. And the model makers have made moving figures to represent the healed man jumping up.

Each child has been playing, but the play has helped them to understand more about the story and begin to process and what they have been doing, making, learning, hearing, trying, experiencing, asking or wondering. They have been learning about God's power and how that relates to their lives.

What is play?

For adults, play is something we do for fun. It is not something that we usually take very seriously. But for young children, play is a very serious business. When children play they will concentrate for long periods, sometimes repeating one thing many times. All young mammals play – it is a natural activity. Wildlife programmes show us lion cubs play fighting, elephant calves waving branches around. What these young animals are doing is practising skills that they have seen the adults using – skills they will need to survive on their own. "God provided a wonderful way for young creatures to learn: we call it 'play'." For young children play is work. It enables them to practise skills that they will need for their role in the world.

Play involves children in learning in every area of their growth and development: intellectually, emotionally, socially, physically and not least, spiritually. It allows them to absorb and understand what they have heard and seen. It gives them a safe way of trying new ideas. It allows them to let off steam and it is fun.

Activity

Try watching young children of different ages (perhaps a 2 year old and a 4 year old). What can you see that the 4 year old can do that the 2 year old cannot? They will almost certainly have better social skills and better control of their fingers when handling small objects. These are just two examples of learning over this short space of time.

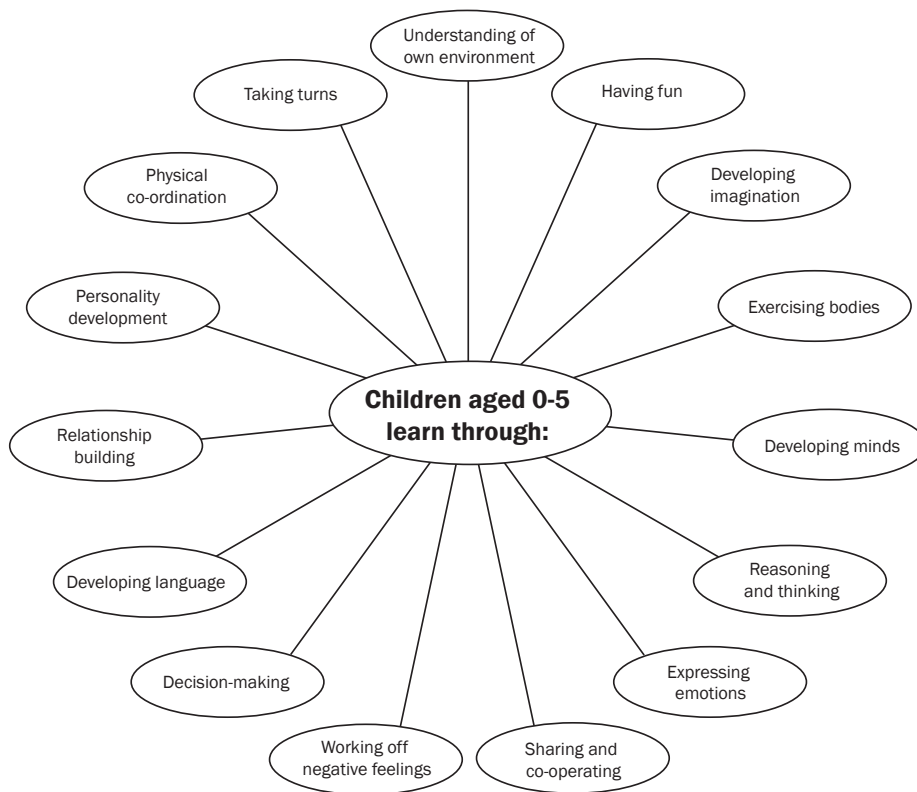
What are they choosing to play with – and *how* do they play? What do different children do with the same toy? Do they play on their own, alongside other children who just 'happen' to be around – or is there more purpose in their social play? Do they choose to co-operate or seek certain other children to play with?

What do children learn when playing?

Children can learn many things through play. Just some of them are shown in the diagram overleaf.

Alison Dayer is an Under-5s specialist and Evangelist for Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire for Scripture Union England and Wales. She has a wealth of experience of working with 5s and under and helping them to learn through play.

Working with Under 6s, Val Mullally, Scripture Union, 1997 op



As you can see, children can learn a great deal through play, but what is the adult's role? Initially children need to be able to play spontaneously in order to explore the materials, encouraging self-esteem and confidence. Adults need to provide a variety of equipment and play materials and allow the children time to play. But if children are left entirely alone to play, their play may not develop the skills that we want to encourage.

The adult needs to come alongside the children to add some structure to the play so that certain skills develop. Such adult input may be very low-key or very structured depending on what it is the children are to learn. The children will need to have time to play more freely with this new information in order to absorb it and understand it.

Example

In order for the children to understand the role of a shepherd caring for his sheep, the leader has provided some toy sheep. Initially the children play with the sheep, moving them around and pretending they are eating. The leader then begins to structure the children's play, teaching them special words, which she explains (flock, shepherd, lamb etc.) With the children, she acts out the role of being a shepherd, leading the children through the processes of rounding up the sheep, taking them to water, protecting them from wild animals and counting the flock. The children can later play shepherds and sheep using their new vocabulary and these ideas. When the leader tells the story of the lost sheep (Luke 15:4-7), the children have a much clearer understanding of it.

Types of play

There are a number of different ways of describing types of play. The following table gives one summary of what children learn through different types of play and what sorts of activities these involve. Obviously this is not an exhaustive list.

Type of play	Learning	Possible activities include
Creative play	Encourages children to experiment and explore, discovering through their senses. Understanding the properties of various materials.	Sand and water play, painting and drawing, play dough, collage, junk modelling.

Type of play	Learning	Possible activities include
Physical play	Use and control of large and small muscles, developing co-ordination and burning off excess energy.	Walking, running, jumping, hopping etc, action songs and rhymes.
Manipulative play	Developing hand-eye co-ordination, using fingers and thumbs (fine motor control) and using whole hands and arms or legs (gross motor control).	Finger rhymes, construction toys, puzzles, doll play, musical instruments, sorting objects, crayons, pens and pencils, modelling, painting and printing, sand and water, home corner, dough, ball play, 'small world' toys (cars, animals etc).
Imaginative play	Gives the children the opportunity to pretend they are different people or are in different situations. Developing manipulative, social, emotional, sharing, language skills and self-confidence.	Home play, doctors and nurses, journey play (eg, pretend boats), dressing up, 'small world' play, puppets and dolls, sand and water, painting and drawing, play dough etc.
Language play	Develop language skills, communication, increase vocabulary, expression of ideas, listening skills, early reading skills, social skills.	Listening to stories, looking at books, action songs, learning and repeating rhymes, role play (home play etc.), puppets and dolls.

Why do we need to bother about all these other skills?

Adults have a great capacity for dividing their lives into separate boxes – home, work, church etc. This is a skill that children learn as they grow. Very young children do not separate their learning into different areas of their lives. Learning, working and playing for 5s and under are all different ways of describing the same processes and can happen at home, on the way to the park, at nursery, in a *Bubbles* group, while watching television – anywhere. We need to recognise this. We also need to recognise that this is something that we can learn from children. It is all too common for adults to listen to a great sermon in church, but not apply it to their home or work lives. Children do this naturally. What they learn at church, they take home and to nursery or playgroup.

If we encourage them to be learning about God in activities that they do in other environments, then we are helping them to apply the Christian attitudes and values to the rest of their lives in the most natural way.

“We may tell them the Bible says, ‘Be kind’. As two children take turns with the same toy they are learning how to relate this Bible truth to life... Play gives them the opportunity to practise what we have said.” The children are then learning how to behave in other situations (home, nursery etc.) as well.

What is it we want young children to learn whilst they are with us?

- Learn Bible stories
- Learn about God (Father, Jesus and Holy Spirit)
- Learn Christian attitudes and values
- Develop a relationship with Jesus (including worship and prayer)
- Learn that church is a fun place to be!

All these things can be learnt by young children playing. It is their God-created way of learning. Using this enables us to help our young children have the best start in their Christian lives.

Sharing Jesus with Under Fives
Janet Gaukroger, Crossway
Books 1994

Training extras

Find further products to help the children in your toddler group learn through play in TRAINING EXTRAS Resource bank

© 2004 Scripture Union, used by permission

TRAINING EXTRA 7

Worship, the under-5s way

In the church, the adult worship is in full swing. As the congregation sings, they raise their arms to God; some clap and others dance, although restricted by the pews. The mood shifts to something more reflective and some choose to kneel during the singing. The people are completely focussed on worshipping God. They have stopped thinking of what other people think and the music fills the building.

In a side room of the same church building, the under-5s group sit, while their adult leaders sing a complex song, with the old piano jangling. The children fidget, bored. They don't know or understand the words, and they don't have anything to do. Some get up and wander away – the toys are much more attractive! The children are not thinking about God, but are waiting for the adults to finish so they can have a drink and a biscuit.

How can a church, where adult worship is well developed and varied and is inspired to enable everyone to reach God, help their young children to worship?

What is worship?

Worship is always God-focussed. The origin of the word is 'worth-ship'. In other words, worshipping means showing how much you value something or someone. For Christians, worship means showing God how much we love and value him. In our churches, we often relate worship only to the singing time, but worship (for any age) is more than that. It is the words we speak, the prayers we say, the music we listen to, the way we sit or stand, the way we dance or move. It is all that we do, that is God-focussed. And that applies to the under-5s, just as much as to the adults. So, for our under-5s, what can we use to help them worship? For this article we will look at four areas – music, movement, singing and prayer – not a definitive list, but a useful one to start with.

Music

When we use music in church, we usually sing to it, but we can also listen to it. Music creates a particular atmosphere and young children are very receptive to this. Playing a quiet piece of music, whether it has lyrics or not, can help children focus on a prayer or a story and can add depth to the experience. Playing a short piece of reflective music can also allow children to have a short, quiet time of reflection. (Don't try to make this long as their attention and concentration spans are very short – one or two minutes is plenty!) Playing music can also aid other responses, such as drawing and movement.

But how do you know which music to choose? Choosing appropriate music is important. Music for young children needs to be fairly simple with a simple melody and arrangement. Heavily orchestrated and multi-layered music is too much for young children and they will be unable to focus. But be careful not to choose oversimplified music as this won't catch their attention well. Use pieces that are fairly short. Any piece will need to sound complete in a short section. If the music has repeated phrases, the children will pick these up quickly and enjoy anticipating them. You don't need a huge library of music for this – just one or two tracks are sufficient and will last many weeks.

You may well find that, if you use the same music each time you ask the children to participate in a reflective activity, they will come to respond appropriately with the music as a cue to help them into this style of worship.

Don't worry that the children won't know what to expect, if they don't respond well the first few times. Begin with just a few seconds and gradually increase the time you spend in reflective activities. You may find it helpful to use an active listening approach early on,

Alison Dayer is an Under-5s specialist and Evangelist for Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Northamptonshire for Scripture Union England and Wales. She has a wealth of experience of working with 5s and under. Here she helps us discover that worship is more than singing – and that under-5s can worship God in their own unique way.

Have a look at the *Baby Einstein* range of music; visit www.babyeinstein.co.uk to see the range. The short musical tracks are specifically arranged for young children including classical and traditional favourites.

such as drawing or movement, as they will have something to focus them. Encourage them to be quiet, speaking yourself in a quiet voice – they will have to be quiet to hear you!

Using percussion instruments is great fun for the children and for the adults, if they are brave! The children will enjoy using them to accompany music or songs. They can also provide a non-verbal way for the children to express emotions or ideas.

The children will need time to play with the instruments before you can use them productively in worship. They need to explore what sounds the instruments can make and get over the novelty. It may take several sessions of play, before you can actually use them for worship.

Try this activity

- 1 Teach the children a simple stop signal. For example: say 'Stop' as you move your hand sharply across your body with the palm towards the children. Practise this!
- 2 Spend some time asking the children to make different types of sounds, such as happy or sad sounds, to show different feelings. Tell the children that they are going to use the instruments to show God how they feel.
- 3 Tell them to listen carefully to the prayer and use the instruments to show God how they agree with it. "Dear God we are sorry for all the wrong things we do. We are sorry for hurting people. (*Give the children time to play their sad sounds.*) Thank you for all the wonderful things you have given us – families, friends, the warm sunshine and beautiful plants." (*Give the children time to play their happy sounds.*)

Movement

When adults worship, they usually stand to sing, but may choose to kneel or sit for certain songs. Usually they sit or kneel for prayer but many adults prefer to move – to walk around – particularly when they are on their own. The posture they use helps them to respond more effectively to the type of worship. Children are just the same. Whether we ask children to sit or stand or move makes a difference. Sitting will help a child to be quiet and more reflective. There are fewer distractions and it is easier to be still for a short time. But standing allows the children to be more active and use movement, which is great for action songs. But the children are more likely to be distracted and fidgety.

Many of the songs we sing with young children are ideal for using actions. This can mean that the children don't need to learn the words. Children who are non-verbal (whether that is because of their age, special need or shyness) can be involved. If you use Makaton signs, children with learning difficulties will be fully involved.

Find out more about Makaton
at www.makaton.org

Actions and signs can be very expressive when chosen carefully, and may help understanding when used to illustrate more difficult concepts. The fact that you use actions provides a visual stimulus for the children as well as an aural one. And when the children join in they have the physical stimulus to help them concentrate. Often we use actions for songs, but we can also use them for prayers, allowing non-verbal children who cannot write or draw to join in and express their emotions.

When teaching a new action song, teach the words and actions separately. Encourage the children to join in with the actions as you say the words and then use the actions as you sing the song. Don't try to use too many actions. Choose the key ones for each phrase and the ones that will be repeated during the song. Teach the words on another occasion.

Dancing allows the children to use their whole bodies to express their feelings. Few adults dance in worship, although King David famously did so (2 Samuel 6:14), but children are much more natural about this. Putting on a piece of worship music, asking the children to listen to it and then dance to show how it makes them feel, allows them freedom to respond to God. Dance can also be used as a response to Bible stories or teachings and during prayer times. Small flags or streamers will allow a range of movement and can often encourage the most reticent child to begin moving.

The children need time to play with flags and streamers. They need to explore what they

can do with them and feel confident about how to use them. Spend some time showing them ideas of different movements and allow them enough opportunities when the novelty factor dies down.

Singing

This is the aspect that comes to mind first, whenever we talk about worship. We are always keen to ensure that the quality of our worship is good. This applies to under-5s just as much as to older children and adults. So we need to make sure that we provide quality songs to be used in their worship.

When choosing songs, there are several things to consider. Make sure that the songs are theologically sound. Everyone learns a great deal of their understanding of God and the Bible (their theology) from what they sing. It is important that the children don't learn something from a song that they will need to unlearn later. Choose songs that use Biblical truths and focus on God.

Remember too, that young children need words and concepts that are suitable and understandable. New words and concepts can be introduced through songs. Explain them first to the children which will help them to move forward. Too many difficult ideas and words will stop them understanding. Be aware too, that under-5s are very literal, so think carefully about non-literal images. For a young child, Christian jargon about asking Jesus into our hearts or being washed in blood can be confusing and even frightening.

As for music itself, songs need to have a fairly simple melody and rhythm. Children have quite a narrow singing range (those that can sing in tune!) and cannot make lots of jumps in pitch. If the tune is too complex, the children will get lost. Fast songs can be great fun, but the children need to be able to keep up, whilst songs that are too slow will bore them. Many songs written especially for young children make good use of repetition, allowing the children to join in easily and feel secure.

If you are using songs for worship time (rather than just for fun singing time), then ask yourself the question: 'Is this worship?' Worship needs to be God-focussed. There are lots of good children's worship songs, and also lots of fun Christian songs, which are not ideal for worship. As you read the words, ask these questions:

- Does it show God how much we love him?
- Does it talk to God?
- Does it state truths about God?
- Does it praise the attributes of his character?
- Does it act as a response to God or the Bible?

If you can answer 'yes' to any of these questions, then it is right to use this song for worship. If you can't, then a worship time is not the place for this song. There are other times to use it.

Try this activity

- 1 Spend some time looking at your own adult Christian music collection. Which albums and songs are for worship? Others are songs written from a Christian perspective and reflect a Christian lifestyle and a Christian response to issues. Which help you to worship God?
- 2 Now look at your collection of children's Christian music. Which of these are worship and which are songs written from a Christian perspective. Which will help the children worship God?

Choosing your accompaniment to singing can be a worry. Singing with just voices (*cappella*) is the simplest option. If you sing with enthusiasm and confidence (even if you don't feel it), the children will follow. They won't notice if you are tuneless! Having a go can be very freeing and may be much better than poor leading from a musician or CD.

Musicians can be a great resource to lead your under-5s worship. Make sure that they keep the speed of the music down (without dragging) and that it is simply performed. Most musicians will need to concentrate on their playing, so someone else will need to lead the

singing and the actions. If the musician is very good they may be able to lead the singing, but they cannot do actions as well as play an instrument, so someone else must do this. If your musician is good and aware of the children's needs, then you can have a brilliant time. If they are not good musically or are unaware of the children's needs, then it can be a disaster. You're better off saying, 'Thank you, but no thank you.'

Compact disks have made life much easier for children's leaders. Music and a tuneful lead voice give volume and a bit of 'oomph' to your singing. But you do need to be selective. Some CDs, although sold as suitable for under-5s, are not. The music and words may be too complex. (Some well known children's worship leaders simplify their arrangements of songs written for older children resulting in the music being unexciting and the words too difficult.) Some CDs are too simple and can be 'twee'! If you can, listen to a CD before you buy it. Look for CDs specifically produced for under-5s from groups known for their expertise in this work (not just children's work) – such as Spring Harvest and New Wine. When playing CD tracks, think flexibly. Think about what you can do during a musical interval – dance, tell someone God loves them, do the actions without words. If you feel the track goes on too long, then turn it off at a suitable place, perhaps reducing the volume as you do so in order to maintain the atmosphere.

Choosing which songs to use in a worship sessions is important. Always try to have a mixture of familiar songs and new ones. The familiar songs will make the children feel secure and confident and help them worship. Whenever possible, introduce only one song in any session, teaching it carefully (actions first, then words) and try to repeat it later in your worship time. Allowing the children to choose which songs to sing is great for helping them respond and feel involved. But don't overdo this, as you need to be their worship leader and help them to worship God.

Link your worship to the theme of the day wherever possible, so that the worship grows out of the teaching. Having several general songs in your repertoire would help this. Over a period of time, such as a term, choose a small number of songs that fit the themes and repeat them often. A small repertoire of five or six songs allows the children to be familiar with the songs, giving them the freedom to concentrate on worship rather than concentrating on remembering the words and actions. Include a mix of quiet reflective songs and more active ones, so that you can calm the atmosphere or raise the excitement, in order that the children can respond to God appropriately.

Above all, make sure that you know the songs yourself! Other adults can have the words available on a screen or in a booklet so that they can join in. However, the leader needs to be confident and lead, whilst keeping eye contact with the children and having the freedom to use the actions properly. Remember the children will copy you. If you do actions one-handed because you are holding the sheet with the words, then the children will do one-handed actions as well!

Prayer

Prayer is simply another name for communicating with God. Any method that children can use to communicate can be used for prayer. Don't be afraid that children won't say anything. With space, encouragement and experience, children can be amazing in their prayers. They get straight to the point and expect God to answer!

Encourage children to pray, using various forms. Try different methods in order to encourage all the children to find a way that suits them and to keep prayer fresh. If you use one style for a few weeks the children will grow in confidence as you model prayer and give them space to try it for themselves. Using music will enable songs to be used as prayers or as a background to set the mood; instruments can be used to express feelings.

Most prayers in church are spoken and, with confidence, young children can pray freely. Start them off with one-word prayers, such as, "Thank you God for..." Children love to use different volumes, so whispered and shouted prayers will involve them. Try choosing a simple phrase to be repeated; start in a whisper and gradually increase the volume, until it is shouted out. Don't forget that the children can pray silently for a very short time. This allows them some privacy in their relationship with God and encourages them to listen to God. Quiet music can help this be less oppressive and mask outside noises.

“When I first started leading an under-5s group I had two musicians offer their help. The pianist banged out the songs with gusto and the children couldn't keep up. The guitarist never prepared and on one occasion tried to work out the chords as the children waited. I decided to manage without. From then on we sang unaccompanied and had great fun worshipping God, although I'm tone-deaf and cannot hold a tune!”

“During a prayer and worship time we were praying for children around the world. We talked about children without clean drinking water. Kim prayed, 'Dear Jesus, thank you for water. Please help children who have dirty water to have clean water and not get ill. Amen.' What else needed to be said?!”

Older under-5s will be able to draw their prayers which can be kept private or displayed as a group prayer. It does not matter if the adults cannot recognise the drawings. The children are not communicating with them, but with God and he is big enough to know what they have drawn! Many adults remember learning prayers as a child. (Can you complete this? 'Thank you for the world so sweet, ...') There is value in doing this, as it models prayer. You could also teach the children a short phrase which can be used as a response, whilst the adult leads the prayers. If you have an active group, you may have difficulty getting them to sit still, so harness their energy by using dance or actions to pray or have simple prayer-stations around the room.

"But how do I get their attention?" This is a frequent cry from many people with a group of lively young children. There are plenty of ways to do this. For example, going straight from another activity, such as singing or a story can make this much easier. The old classic of "hands together, eyes closed" has its place. It reduces distractions and can create a good atmosphere. You could also try holding hands in a circle or praying with hands outstretched or raised. A prayer drill involves a short series of actions which get the children's attention and can focus them. For example: Shake out the fidgets (*shake hands and legs*), reach up to get God's attention (*reach up like a child grabbing a parent's hand*), and bring his hand down to your heart (*bring hand down clenched to chest*). Using a picture or an object as a focus of attention (especially if it is linked to your theme), can also provide a stimulus for prayer.

Knowing what to pray about can be worrying for leaders. Using the TSP format (Thank you, Sorry, Please) is good on occasions, but needs to allow space for the children to be involved. Pictures and objects related to your theme can help prompt the children. You could put pictures between the pages of the Bible for the children to open up and then pray, or put them into a bag and draw out one at a time, or place them around the room for children to go to and pray independently. It is important that we teach the children that prayer is not a 'wish list' to God. Encourage the children to listen to God and expect him to communicate with them. Use music, pictures or your voice to create the atmosphere for short quiet times when the children can be aware of God talking to them.

What will good worship do for the children?

If we give the children quality worship opportunities, what will be the benefits? Worship will enable the children to develop their relationship with God and give them opportunities to express their feelings about God. Worship which connects with the theme of the teaching reinforces the learning and gives them a chance to respond. It helps them to relate the learning to their lives through their responses and prayers.

None of these ideas are rocket science. Some of them are easy and some take courage from the leaders. Many will gain in effectiveness as the children get used to them and grow in their experience and confidence in worship. Under-5s deserve the chance to worship God and he revels in their worship. "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise." Psalm 8:2. Go and be inspired by their unrestrained love for God!

Training extras

Find further products to help you worship the under-5s way in TRAINING EXTRAS Resource bank

© 2008 Scripture Union, used by permission

TRAINING EXTRA 8

Resource bank: *Building Blocks* TRAINING COURSE recommendations

Section 1

Sowing Reaping Keeping, Laurence Singlehurst, IVP 2006; ISBN 9781844741380.

An analysis of 'evangelism strategy' that helps to explain how and where toddler groups fit in to the church's mission – and also how toddler groups need the church and the leadership behind them in supporting the strategy to be effective. An inspirational read.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain has some worksheets and a *PowerPoint* presentation relating to *Sowing Reaping Keeping* at:

www.baptist.org.uk/resources/resource_downloads/327.pdf

www.baptist.org.uk/resources/resource_downloads/328.ppt

Section 2

Touching the Future, Gill Dallow, BRF 2002; ISBN 9781841011400.

Mixes theory and reflective exercises to encourage thinking for those working with children in the church.

Top Tips: Encouraging Faith to Grow, Ruth Hassall and Piers Lane, Scripture Union 2008; ISBN 9781844273218.

A short booklet to help churches and parents understand and nurture children's faith.

Children Finding Faith, Francis Bridger, Scripture Union 2000; ISBN 9781859993230.

A classic book, now in a revised and updated edition, to help understanding of how faith develops, and can be hindered or nurtured in children.

Sharing Jesus with Under Fives, Janet Gaukroger Christian Focus 2001, op; ISBN 9781857926729 (out of print but available as 'used' from online booksellers).

Lots of practical ideas for working with young children and their families including a mix of how and why.

Pretty much everything you need to know about working with under 5s, Judith Wigley, Scripture Union 2005; ISBN 9781844271146.

Theory and practical ideas for working with young children in a range of Christian settings.

Under Fives and their Families, Judith Wigley CPAS 1990, op; ISBN 9780551022645 (Out of print but available as 'used' from online booksellers).

Lots of practical ideas as well as covering the 'why' of toddler groups. With detailed chapters on parent and toddler groups, toddler services and faith sharing.

Families with Faith, Richard Patterson, Scripture Union 2007; ISBN 9781844272471.

Easy to read discussion about, and ideas for, developing faith as a family. Lots of common sense on managing life and developing a family's spiritual life and faith. Aimed at Christians, so nurture your family's faith and then share suitable ideas with your group.

Stages of Faith, James Fowler, HarperCollins 1995; ISBN 9780060628666.

Detailed information on faith development from a key thinker in the area. Not an easy read, but fascinating descriptions and discussion of real people's faith.

Will Our Children Have Faith? John Westerhoff, Thomas More Press 2000; ISBN 9780819218360.

In-depth discussion on how churches can nurture the faith of children (and adults). Not an easy read, but fairly short.

Section 3

www.engagetoday.org.uk

Online resources, from Care for the Family, to help churches engage with their community, including conferences and an e-newsletter.

21st Century Parent DVD and Workbook. A course to help you be an even better parent. From Care for the Family, this has eight short sessions on aspects of parenting including: setting boundaries, the testing child, and the power of acceptance. It also comes with a workbook that helps you think through the issues in your own family. To support those already running courses, or to help you set up a new course, Care for the Family provides a wide range of additional material. You can access great ideas to assist you in planning your course, material to help you promote your course, and even press releases to enable you to advertise your course in local media! To watch a clip of the DVD and view a sample chapter from the workbook go to: www.careforthefamily.org.uk/21Cparent

Also available from Care for the Family is *21st Century Marriage and Workbook*. To find out more about Care for the Family, call (029) 2081 0800, email mail@cff.org.uk or write to Care for the Family, Garth House, Leon Avenue, Cardiff CF15 7RG

Parentplay, Rachel Murrill and Rachel Bright, Authentic Media; ISBN 9781860245923. This 7-week parenting course is designed especially for parents of children under-5. It comes with detailed session outlines, containing icebreakers and questions for discussion, as well as a 'Messy Play' activity with the children that concludes each session; plus a CD with extra material such as registration forms and weekly handouts. There is detailed information on setting up and running the course, but session leaders will need to be prepared to be outgoing enough to get group discussions going. Parenting principles are only outlined briefly, however the ideas for discussion are simple and thought-provoking, and illustrate the principles well.

Parentalk Parenting Course. This comprises eight flexible video-led sessions, each featuring: a Rob Parsons session opener; 'Growing Pains' - a dramatic video introduction; discussion starters; video diary for discussion by the group; expert advice session; suggestions for practical activities. Each complete pack contains one Group Leader's Guide, one video and ten magazines - all you need to run the course for up to ten people. Find out more about this and other Parentalk resources, courses and products at www.parentalk.co.uk

Activate. An organisation for helping women to use friendship evangelism. *Activate* has produced *Unlocking the Door - Evangelism in the Real World*, Ruth Adams and Jan Harney, Authentic Media; ISBN 9781850786450. The *Activate* website is full of fresh, practical ideas for evangelism: www.activateyourlife.org.uk

MOPS. Mothers of Pre-Schoolers has loads of resources for bridge-building groups to run alongside toddlers groups. Originally from America, MOPS is now setting up groups worldwide. You can subscribe as an individual or set up a 'chartered' group. Find out more at www.mops.org or go to www.mopsineurope.org

Section 4

Wakefield Diocesan Resource Centre. Wakefield Diocese has two resource centres, at Wakefield and Mirfield. For details of opening times and an online catalogue, including a series of packs called *Sticky Fingers*, visit www.wakefield.anglican.org
Write to Church House, 1 South Parade, Wakefield WF1 1LP. Tel: 01924 371802.
Fax: 01924 364834

Scripture Union. *Tiddlywinks* is Scripture Union's comprehensive range of resource books for use in any early years setting. Each *Big Book* gives you 25 multi-purpose outlines providing

ideas for play, prayer, craft, stories and rhymes from which you can pick and choose to meet the particular needs of your group. There's also plenty of practical advice on setting up and running a pre-school group, as well as ideas in every session to help you include adult carers. These high quality, Bible-based resources are specifically designed to help you encourage children in their earliest years to grow in faith. Clearly linked with Early Learning Goals, they will equip you to provide a firm, fun foundation for life. For more information, to view sample pages or to visit the online shop, go to www.scriptureunion.org.uk/shop
Write to Scripture Union, 207-209 Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2EB. Tel: 01908 856000. Fax: 01908 856111.

Tiddlywinks: The Big Red Book, Scripture Union, 2002; ISBN 9781859996584.
Themes covered in *The Big Red Book* are: Christmas is coming (10 outlines); People we meet; Stories Jesus told; God gives us food.

Tiddlywinks: The Big Orange Book, Scripture Union, 2004; ISBN 9781859997161.
Themes covered in *The Big Orange Book* are; God's BIG book (10 outlines); All creatures great and small; Friends of God; Stories of Jesus.

Tiddlywinks: The Big Yellow Book, Scripture Union, 2003; ISBN 9781859996928.
Themes covered in *The Big Yellow Book* are: Easter (10 outlines); God gives us families; Friends of Jesus; What's the weather like?

Tiddlywinks: The Big Green Book, Scripture Union, 2003; ISBN 9781859996959.
Themes covered in *The Big Green Book* are: God's wonderful world (10 outlines); God gives us people; Let's find out about Jesus; God knows when I am feeling... happy, cross, sad, shy, scared.

Tiddlywinks: The Big Blue Book, Scripture Union, 2002; ISBN 9781859996577.
Themes covered in *The Big Blue Book* are: All about me (10 outlines); God gives us homes, clothes, food, parties, holidays; People who knew Jesus; Friends of God.

Tiddlywinks: The Big Purple Book, Scripture Union, 2004; ISBN 9781859997192.
Themes covered in *The Big Purple Book* are: Jesus loves me (10 outlines); God loves it when... I make music, sing, dance, look at books, I'm me; Friends and followers; Materials and technology.

Also in the *Tiddlywinks* range:

Tiddlywinks: Glitter and Glue, Annette Oliver, Scripture Union, 2002 ISBN 9781859995990.
Here are 101 craft ideas which are Bible-based, and tried and tested on the age group. The crafts themselves include photocopiable templates where needed, how to prepare, what to do with the children, and a Bible link and idea for talking about it with the children.

Tiddlywinks: Make and Do, Scripture Union, 2007 ISBN 9781844272723.
Art and craft ideas give young children opportunities to express themselves, build confidence and skills, solve problems and explore their emotions. But most importantly, these are ways in which children are able to meet with God and discover the truths of the Bible. With more than 30 types of art and craft, and more than 100 Bible-based activities.

Building Blocks TRAINING EXTRAS recommendations

Music time

God's Wonderful World/Thank You God For Snails, Julia Plaut, Kingsway Music 2003; Ref KMCD2472. Re-release on a double music CD. Featuring Julia Plaut, *God's Wonderful World* is one of the most popular worship albums for toddlers and pre-school children and has a real mixture of original songs and innovative modern arrangements of old favourites on the themes of God's character, creativity, praiseworthiness, friendship and reliability. *Thank You God for Snails* has appealing arrangements featuring classical instrumentation, and a mixture of well-known songs.

Jumping for God, Julia Plaut, Kingsway Music 2007; Ref CHMCD043.

A new music CD from Julia Plaut. Including appealing arrangements and 16 tracks with some extra backing tracks.

Top tips for storytellers

Easy Ways to Bible Fun, Vicki Howie, BRF 2001; ISBN 9781841011356.

Twelve themed sessions for under-5s, including story basket suggestions, an interactive read-aloud Bible story, music and mime, simple craft and prayers.

Easy Ways to Seasonal Fun, Vicki Howie, BRF 2004; ISBN 9781841013428.

A sister title to *Easy Ways to Bible Fun*.

Learning through play

Play with a Purpose for Under-Sevens, EM Matterson, Penguin Books, 1989; ISBN 9780140104936.

Sharing Jesus with Under Fives, Janet Gaukroger Christian Focus 2001, op; ISBN 9781857926729 (out of print but available as 'used' from online booksellers).

Diploma Child Care and Education, Penny Tassoni, Kate Beith, Harriet Eldridge, Alan Gough, Heinemann, 2002; ISBN 9780435401702.

Just Playing?, Janet R Moyles, Open University Press, 1989 (foremost author on the subject, an in-depth look) ISBN 9780335095643.

If you want to read further, many books on child development include chapters on play. Simply have a look in your local library.

www.bbc.co.uk/parenting/play for articles and ideas for great play.

www.scriptureunion.org.uk/light for a feature on 'Play and creativity' by Jackie Harding

Worship, the under-5s way

For further training features on worship, music and singing go to www.scriptureunion.org.uk/light and click on 'Bubbles/web resources downloads'

Books

Children CAN worship, Nick Harding, Kevin Mayhew, 1999; ISBN 9781840034349.

Pretty much everything you need to know about working with under 5s, Judith Wigley, Scripture Union 2005; ISBN 9781844271146.

Tiddlywinks: Say and Sing, Maggie Barfield, ed, Scripture Union, 2006; ISBN 9781844272457.

Music CDs

Songs for Little Children, Ishmael, Kingsway Music, 2004; ISBN/Ref CHMCD024.

A 3 CD set of 43 much-loved songs written and performed by Ishmael.

I know Jesus loves me too, Ishmael, Kingsway Music, 2003; ISBN/Ref CHMCD039.

With simple tunes, friendly accompaniments and carefully-selected vocabulary, these songs inspire praise and worship as well as teaching simple Bible truths to little ones.

God's Wonderful World/Thank You God For Snails, Julia Plaut, Kingsway Music 2003; ISBN/Ref KMCD2472.

Jumping for God, Julia Plaut, Kingsway Music 2007; ISBN/Ref CHMCD043.

Pre-school Praise 3, Spring Harvest, ICC Records 2008; ISBN/Ref ICC1163D

This collection of top songs for pre-schoolers features fun and energetic anthems with

simple scriptural messages.

Also available:

Pre-school Praise 2, Spring Harvest, ICC Records 2007; ISBN/Ref ICC1043D

Pre-school Praise 1, Spring Harvest, ICC Records 2006; ISBN/Ref ICC0943D

Little Angels, New Wine, ICC records Ref: 5 ICC0963D

Little Angels 2 Joyful Worship For Pre-Schoolers, ICC records Ref: ICC1177D

Designed for a tiny-pop generation, these are Christian worship songs full of energy and fun.

Further recommended resources (not already listed above)

From Scripture Union

www.scriptureunion.org.uk/shop or call the Mail Order department on 0845 0706 006

Bubbles for Leaders and *Bubbles for Children* (part of the *Light* family of resources)

Light is Scripture Union's range of Bible-based learning resources for children, young people and adults. *Light* provides a great mix of tried and tested Bible teaching which is flexible, dynamic, fresh, relevant and fun.

Choose *Bubbles* for 5s and under because it gives leaders the right tools to nurture young children's faith, as they meet God in the Bible; and it uses methods based on play and story to help children develop a personal relationship with God. Published every 3 months, *Bubbles for Leaders* provides 13 Bible-based sessions for groups; *Bubbles for Children* gives you a full-colour A3 activity sheet to go with each session plus bonus sheets of Bible stories and posters.

LightLive

LightLive provides exciting online Bible-based resources for children's, youth and all-age ministry, and puts a wealth of activities and ideas for your work with children and young people at your fingertips. *LightLive* is designed to help you tailor the material available to the specific needs of your group(s). You can:

- Plan and manage your group like never before!
- Access activities and ideas.
- Enrich your programme with multimedia resources.
- Search, save and print – all from one website.
- And so much more...

Through *LightLive* leaders can be inspired and equipped with excellent Bible-based material so that children and young people can meet with God. Over 650 new activities are added to *LightLive* every three months on top of over 10,000 activities already stored in the archive. It is still developing and will keep evolving.

The Big Bible Storybook, Maggie Barfield ed, Scripture Union, 2007; ISBN 9781844272280.

Winner of the CBC 'Children's Book of the Year' award 2008.

Start at the beginning of the world and take a wonderful journey, through the Old and New Testaments, to the city of God in Revelation. Meet new friends, travel to exciting places and discover some of the greatest stories ever told. 188 Bible stories for young children and adults to enjoy together.

NEW in September 2008

The Big Bible Storybook audio book, Maggie Barfield ed, Scripture Union, 2008; ISBN 9781844273799. Listen to all 188 stories, read by actor Russell Boulter, on 6 CDs with a total running time of 330 minutes.

The Little Bible Storybook, Maggie Barfield, Scripture Union, 2007; ISBN 9781844273188.

The Little Bible Storybook contains 24 stories from both the Old and New Testament including Adam and Eve, Joseph, and Jesus welcoming the children. This is a chunky multi-page board book that will delight the discerning toddler or young child.

The Jesus Bible Storybook, Maggie Barfield, Scripture Union, 2008; ISBN 9781844273515.

24 brief stories in a board book format to help very young children learn about Jesus.

A companion book to *The Little Bible Storybook*, using the same format and style, telling the stories of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection in a few words, with full-colour photographic illustrations.

Get Ready, Go! Marjory Francis, Nick and Clare Harding, Scripture Union 2005; ISBN 9781844271320. A brilliant book for those about to start primary school. Using simple words, colourful artwork and fun activities *Get Ready Go!* explains what school is going to be like during the excitement of their first term together. But that's not all, *Get Ready, Go!* comes with a companion guide for parents, packed full of advice on: choosing the right school, parents' evenings, working with your child, looking at school through the eyes of a child, dealing with bullying, leaving your child at the school gates, and much more so that you can help them on their way to primary school.

Listen with the Bible, Maggie Barfield, Scripture Union, 2006; ISBN 9781844272433. A double audio CD of 26 lively retold stories from the Bible for children under 8. Ideal storytime listening for: children's groups, any day and every day, home or even on the move. The stories are read by actor Russell Boulter.

From Children's Ministry

www.kingsway.co.uk or www.childrensministry.co.uk

Children's Ministry, 26-28 Lottbridge Drove, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6NT UK

Tel: +44 (0)1323 437749

Fax: +44 (0)1323 411970

Email: office@childrensministry.co.uk

TotZone Year 1: God is so big, Children's Ministry; ISBN 9781842912737.

Suitable for children eighteen months to three years, this Leader's Guide contains stories, discussion materials, pictures, songs, activities and craft templates that are appropriate for toddlers and pre-school children.

TotZone Year 2: Thank You God, Children's Ministry; ISBN 9781842912782.

A second volume of sessions that are ideal for your toddler group, preschool group or under 4s on a Sunday. Each session has a Bible passage at its heart. Includes the Christmas and Easter stories.

Children's Ministry Guide to Working with under-5s, Sue Price, Children's Ministry; ISBN 9781842910870. This book encourages churches to assess and improve their under 5s ministry – motivating them to consider how they guide their youngest church members along the first steps of their faith journey, support their church families, and reach out to young families in their community.

Baby Bible Stories about Jesus, Robin Currie, FaithKidz; ISBN 9780781402521.

These specially selected stories and brightly coloured illustrations provide an age-appropriate, simple approach to teaching toddlers about Jesus. Each story includes activities that will involve your child in the story, and a brief prayer to pray. Learning about Jesus will be fun!

The Baby Bible Storybook, Robin Currie, FaithKidz; ISBN 9780781400763.

Here are 23 favourite Bible stories in which children can enthusiastically participate using hand motions and other fun activities. Use it in Sunday school, children's church, at home—any time you want to present the appealing concepts and values that form the foundation of faith in kids' hearts.

More Baby Bible Stories, Robin Currie, FaithKidz; ISBN 9780781435284.

Young children will enthusiastically participate in learning about the twenty two Bible stories found in *More Baby Bible Stories*. Hand motions, and other activities as well as full colour illustrations will help reinforce each Bible story.

Nursery Time, Children's Ministry; ISBN 9780781440554.

Designed to give babies and toddlers the comforts of a safe Christian environment from the

very beginning. *Nursery Time* includes: 30+ reproducible pages for easy training; practical, stimulating posters for easy reference in the nursery; parent take-home materials to build foundation of faith; answers to over 180 questions; themes with age-appropriate Bible stories and activities; music CD with endearing, soothing Christ-centred lullabies.

Baby Bible Teach Me to Sing and Pray, Robin Currie, FaithKidz; ISBN 9780781435161.

This board book introduces toddlers to songs and prayers that will help them learn how to express worship to God. Verses are simple-to-learn verses and the fun activities are geared to the child's age level. Brightly coloured illustrations demonstrate how other children sing and pray, too, providing an example of how we worship God in everyday activities, not just on Sundays.

Children's Praise and Worship for Under-5s, Kingsway Music; CD Ref: CHMCD012.

A CD of 18 well-loved and new songs that are particularly appropriate for preschoolers. Includes songs by Ishmael, Julia Plaut and others. With under 5s you will probably want to sing along to the full version, but the CD includes bonus backing tracks that you can use during praise times as well!

From Wakefield Diocesan Resource Centre

www.wakefield.anglican.org Church House, 1 South Parade, Wakefield WF1 1LP;
Tel: 01924 371802; Fax: 01924 364834

We welcome you, Pam Priestley and Judith Wigley

A training resource pack for parishes who wish to take seriously their commitment towards baptism families.

Ideas for Christmas, Judith Wigley

Ideas for Easter, Judith Wigley

Ideas for Pentecost, Judith Wigley

Ideas for Harvest, Judith Wigley, Moira Burns and Pam Priestley

These booklets are full of ideas for Under-5s groups everywhere. Each contains different ways to tell the festival stories, songs and rhyme ideas, creative prayer ideas, craft ideas (and templates) and much more!

Songs for Little Singers, compiled by Judith Wigley

More Songs for Little Singers, compiled by Judith Wigley

Both booklets are easy to pick up and use. The songs are based on nursery rhyme tunes so very easy for everyone to learn. They cover all the major festivals plus have sections on songs about Bible stories, Jesus and God, Praise, Thanksgiving and prayer. Both have ideas to sing with instruments. With songs and ideas from the parishes of the Diocese of Wakefield (with permission granted).

Diocesan Resource Centres

Wakefield is one of many Diocesan Resource Centres around the UK. To find a centre near you, put 'diocesan resource centre' into an Internet search engine such as *Google*. Also check out the Resource Centres Network (www.recentres.org.uk) which includes schools and county centres as well as church-linked ones.

Faith and Society Team, Baptist Union of Great Britain, Baptist House, PO Box 44, 129 Broadway, Didcot OX11 8RT

Tel: 01235 517700 Email: faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk Website: www.baptist.org.uk

BUGB operates as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) with registered Charity Number: 1181392

May 2013