INTRODUCTION

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Faith Enrichment in Playgroup
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10. A kind of clothes: Blue jeans
11. Two special words: Please and thank you

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Ideas are seldom truly original. Some of the same ideas can be found from many different sources. The ideas in this resource may have their origin in a whole range of personal experience, observation, printed resources or electronic resources. They have been filtered through memory and modified to meet specific needs. Some poetry has been included where the ‘original writer’ is unknown.

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INTRODUCTION

This resource is designed to help leaders of church-based playgroups in planning their program.

This resource is not a set curriculum; it provides ideas that you may pick and choose from or adapt to your own situation. The themes and activity ideas can fit into whatever format you establish for your playgroup.

A Uniting Church SA Playgroup Manual is also available at www.missionresourcingsa.org.au

The manual is a comprehensive resource that includes: Starting a playgroup, Administration, Safety and property, Leaders and volunteers, Finances, Getting the church involved, Promotion, Frequently asked questions and Useful contacts.

PLAYGROUP THEMES

Working with themes: Free play and a regular, predictable program in surroundings that become familiar are primary ingredients of playgroups. Repetition and predictability help children (and their parents) develop a sense of comfort, belonging and control.

From about 18 months, children will begin to be able to comprehend the theme ideas. They may look for, enjoy and benefit from new experiences and challenges. Exact repetition may become a bit too familiar and perhaps boring for older children.

Session themes allow you to introduce some variety into a familiar format. New, themed songs and rhymes, for example, can be added to favourite songs and rhymes that are used regularly.

The suggested theme ideas in this resource can help you to plan a program that will stretch children in their experiences as well as their comprehension, language skills, relationships with one another and with a variety of adults, gross and fine motor skills, music and movement.

Playgroup Program Ideas gives you ideas for a wide range of themed sessions. You can use a different theme each week, or you may use themes only once or twice a term as special occasions. Themed sessions allow your playgroup team to use their creativity. They can provide excitement and some enjoyable surprises for all involved.

Scheduling themed sessions: Playgroup age children live in the moment. They have limited capacity to consciously remember what happens from week to week, so each theme suggestion in this resource is a stand-alone session. The themes can be used in any sequence. Obviously you are likely to schedule holiday themes (eg Christmas) just before the holiday they relate to. Other themes may be scheduled to coincide with events in your community (eg you may have a cricket theme when siblings or parents are involved in cricket competitions). Still other events may be scheduled to suit the availability of special guests. One suggested theme each term may involve an outing; this may be the first thing you schedule because it may require the most coordination both within the playgroup and also with the management of the venue you visit.

NOTE

Throughout this resource the term ‘parent’ is used for the parent, relative or other carer who brings a child to playgroup.
# A Scheme of Themes

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Playgroups organised by churches and staffed by Christians serve young families in many different ways.

Some church-based playgroups serve primarily the families of their own congregation and introduce Christian content into playgroup as part of their faith-nurturing or Christian education program.

Most playgroups cater for a wider cross-section of the community.

Some church-based playgroups have an agreed policy that the playgroup is simply a service to their community. Their Christian character is shown through the development of caring relationships. Team members do not mention anything specifically 'Christian' unless the question is raised by a parent or child.

However, many church-based playgroups are more evangelical in their intent; their playgroup teams look for ways to go beyond service and developing relationships. In some cases a playgroup may actually function as an alternative ‘church’ for families who have no other church contact. It can be a place where families explore the Christian faith.

Parents who choose to come to a church-based playgroup will not be surprised if there is some Christian content, however it’s good to make this clear in your advertising literature and in conversation with prospective playgroup families.

Playgroup Program Ideas provides a range of Faith Enrichment Ideas related to each topic. They are a resource for introducing ‘Christian’ content into a playgroup program through activities, songs and stories. These may be used as a block within the regular playgroup time or scattered throughout the session.

Or the Faith Enrichment ideas may be used in an optional ‘Faith Talk Time’ after the session. Families are invited to stay, but may choose to leave before it begins.

Some church-based playgroups have a short parents-only ‘Faith Talk Time’ in a separate room while the playgroup team supervises the children. A leader helps parents to think about the suggested theme, the wondering question and the Bible story or Bible verse. The leader may also help parents find ways of introducing or reinforcing these to their own children at home.

Playgroup leaders can use one or more of the Faith Enrichment Ideas to introduce a faith dimension into the session in a natural way.

For example:

- **Key faith concept** can be written on a poster and displayed in playgroup where parents may see and comment on it (or not). It can be announced in a group time at the start of the session. It can be listed along with the theme title on playgroup program schedules. It can be written on children’s artwork and crafts that are taken home. Bible verses and prayers can be used the same way.
- **Christian songs** can be used along with other songs.
- **Bible stories**: age appropriate versions of the suggested stories can be used as part of a range of books/stories for parents to read to their own children, or for a playgroup team member to share with children in small groups.
- **Wondering comment** can be raised by playgroup team members at any time it seems appropriate or it can be a follow-up to any other Faith Enrichment activity.
- **Prayer and Bible verse** (and song) can be used as a simple closing ritual, perhaps followed by blessing each child as they leave.

**BEYOND PLAYGROUP**

Families leave playgroup when children are old enough to enrol in other educational programs. If playgroup is the only place where a family experiences a Christian community, that connection is severed when they move on. Congregations that have invested into families through playgroup need to consider how they can serve them beyond playgroup. Some families will fit comfortably into existing worship and children’s ministry programs. Others will see this as an alien environment and avoid it.

Alternatives for playgroup ‘graduate’ families may be:

- monthly Messy Church-style programs (for more details see www.messychurch.org.uk/)
- school holiday programs
- a family day (or evening) during each school holiday
- a sequence of milestone family events which target families of children at specific developmental milestones, for example: starting kindy, starting primary school, starting organised sports, entering ‘double digits’, puberty, starting high school
- parenting support newsletters and invitations to special events (eg all-age worship services) of the congregation.
Mathematical and scientific reasoning is vitally important for living in our culture. Though a significant number of playgroup mums may say they can’t do maths or didn’t like science in school, they use these skills every day.

Playgroups can give children the opportunity to engage activities that will give them an edge as they prepare for more complex math and science in school and in life.

Pre-mathematics activities that can be part of your playgroup program include working with concrete objects, understanding basic concepts and developing vocabulary to describe their understandings.

Playgroup children can begin to develop the following skills (and vocabulary) that support further development in science as well as mathematics:

- recognise basic flat shapes: circle, square, triangle plus oval, star and diamond
- recognise basic three-dimensional shapes: balls, cubes and pyramids
- understand the concept of more and less
- compare numeric relationships: more and less, fewer
- sequence groups of objects that are more or less
- group and sort objects by size, shape, amount
- work with size and volume relationships: big/small; empty/full; holds more/holds less
- compare items that are the same, like or different
- form and recognise patterns, eg by stacking blocks or threading beads
- estimate and guess amounts and sizes
- understand and work with size relationships: long/short; tall/short; light/heavy; wide/narrow
- understand and work with comparative size relationships: longer, shorter, taller, heavier . . .
- understand and work with positional relationships: inside/outside; left/right; middle, above/below; top/bottom.

Children may also count objects and recognise written numbers.

While doing these activities children are also using basic science skills of observing, describing, predicting and experimenting.

IN PLAYGROUP

In playgroup, all of this is play.

Playgroup leaders can provide opportunities for children to play in some of these ways as part of a wide range of activities, and encourage parents to do the same.

Children as young as six months may already understand simple concepts like more or big and little; children approaching preschool should be able to do all the activities with limited amounts of items.

With a range of children in playgroup, try to arrange activities that can be engaged in at different levels according to the development of each child.

For example, with a set of balls and blocks like those pictured below, children at different developmental stages may:

- ignore them
- observe others playing with them
- simply play with one, some or all of them
- separate balls from blocks, or find something that is the same shape as another
- group items of the same colour
- find the big things or the small things
- arrange items from biggest to smallest
- discover which items roll and which can be stacked
- devise their own patterns for arranging items, or copy another pattern.
- count the items in small groups or the entire collection
- predict and verify what happens when you add or take away an object.
- and enjoy doing it!
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

MUSIC

Songs and rhymes identified in this resource as ‘Useful Book’ are found in The New Useful Book (Songs and Ideas from Play School by Henrietta Clark). It contains words and melody lines for many popular children’s songs. Songs and related activities are arranged by themes. It is a very ‘useful book’!

BOOKS

A variety of story books and non-fiction books are suggested that support each theme. You can use whatever books suit your group and are available on family bookshelves or from the local library.

You may also want to build your own playgroup library with purchased or donated age-appropriate books that children and parents may look at during playgroup — and/or borrow to use at home.

In addition to theme-specific books, your collection could include some books relating to general theme areas such as colours, animals, transportation, occupations, bodies, food, sports, holidays.

Your collection may include books that expose children to languages other than English and cultures other than European/Australian, for example:

This set of three books (Body Parts, Counting and Colours), teach children some basic words in the Kaurna language. The beautiful photographic illustrations can be used to foster discussion of these topics in any language. See www.fishpond.com.au

Your collection may include age-appropriate Bible story collections, for example:

and prayer books, for example:

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Playgroup Program Ideas deliberately limits references to electronic media because, even in this day and age, you can comfortably run a playgroup with a minimum of technology. However you may want to use recorded music as background music, to accompany activities such as dancing, or to support singing.

An internet search engine like Google is an easy way of finding images that you can use to illustrate themes. Many of the stories and songs we suggest can be found as electronic books (Kindle) or even on YouTube.

Use these resources if you feel they will contribute to the relationships you want to establish and the experience you want to provide in your playgroup, and if you have someone on your team who understands how to make technology work smoothly and effectively.
MOTHERS DAY

A SPECIAL DAY

You can’t do much to surprise mums at a playgroup where the mums actually participate. You might, though, give each mum/carer a token that affirms the importance of their role. Mothers Day tracts are available from Lutheran Tract Mission (www.lll.org.au) for about 20c each.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** An older person visits playgroup and talks to the children about their memories of things they did with their own mother. They might bring a photo of their mum to show.

- **Find my mum:** Mums stand (or sit) in a tight circle facing inward. Children take turns going around the outside of the circle and finding their own mum. When a child finds their mum, Mum holds them inside the circle.

- **Playing mum:** Children can pretend to be parents of dolls in your collection. As they do this, parents can talk with children about what parents do (and why they do it).

- **Dress up like mum:** Have a collection of clothing from which children can choose the kind of clothing their mum wears. They may consider what mum wears for different activities, for example, working in the garden, going to work . . .

  You may provide clothes hangers and a bar for hanging clothes, so that older children can fold or hang up the clothes ‘like mummy does’.

- **Painting of my mum:** Ask children what their mummy does for them and then encourage them to paint a picture of something their mum does for them. An adult may write on the paper what the child said about their mum.

- **Animal mothers and babies:** Have pictures of animal mothers and children (use ‘animal mothers’ in Google images for a wide selection). Print the pictures on card, or print on paper and glue onto card. Cut each picture into a two-piece jigsaw puzzle. Children match baby animals with their mothers, joining the puzzle pieces. Parents and children can talk about how the babies are the same as and different from their mothers.

- **Flower wreath:** Children make a flower wreath as a gift for their mum, grandmother or other adult friend. Begin with a paper plate. Children glue coloured patty cake cups as flowers around the outside of the paper plate. Possible extras: add scrunched-up small pieces of green tissue paper between flowers as leaves, a ribbon for hanging the wreath, a message in the centre of the wreath, such as ‘I love you Mum.’

BOOKS TO SHARE Find books in your library or parents’ collections about mums and Mothers Day, eg

- **A Ride on Mother’s Back** by Emery Bernhard
- **Are You My Mother?** by PD Eastman
- **Mother’s Mother’s Day** by Lorna Balian

SONGS AND RHYMES

- **I love her and she loves me**

  and mummy is her name—o
  M-u-m-m-y, M-u-m-m-y
  And mummy is her name.

- **It’s so nice to have a cuddle** (Useful Book)

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us and gives us parents to take care of us.

- **Talk about** how people celebrate Mothers Day

- **Wonder:** I wonder why God gives us mums.

- **Story:** Hannah prays for a child. (1 Samuel 1)

- **Song:** God loves you and I love you and that’s the way it should be.

- **Prayer:** Mothers Day is a special time to thank you, God, for mums. Amen.

- **Bible verse:** God gives children and makes a happy mother in her own home. (Psalm 113:9)
ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Visitor:** Invite someone who has actually seen/met Queen Elizabeth to talk with the children about the experience and possibly show some photos.

- **Picture gallery:** Display several pictures of present day kings and queens; include a picture of Queen Elizabeth II. Parents help children to recognise the picture of ‘our real’ queen, and to know her name.

- **Dress ups:** Provide some ‘fancy clothes’ so children can dress up as they think kings and queens should dress. (Your local Hungry Jack’s store may supply you with paper crowns or at least one sample that you can use as a pattern. Children could wear the crown for the whole session.)

- **Cards:** Look at the pictures of the kings and queens in a regular deck of playing cards. What’s strange about the pictures? You can look at them upside down. Play a game of ‘Memory’ using two kings and two queens. Repeat the game adding a pair of number cards, so children have six cards to choose from. As children become familiar with the game add more pairs of cards.

- **Upside down picture:** Print a card pattern (see the next page) for each child. With parents’ help children fold the card along the dotted line. Reopen the card and drip paint (or make spots with glitter gel pen) on the top half of the card to colour in the king/queen’s clothing. Then quickly, but carefully, refold the card on the dotted line (clean half over the painted half) and press down to make an ink print impression. Open out and allow to dry.

- **Pussycat, Pussycat:** You can do this with three finger puppets (cat, queen, mouse). Flick off the mouse puppet at the end of the rhyme for children to retrieve.

  Pussycat, Pussycat, where have you been?   I’ve been to London to visit the Queen.
  Pussycat, Pussycat what did you there?   I frightened a little mouse under her chair.

- **‘God save the Queen’:** Explain that this is a special song that people sing for Queen Elizabeth and that they stand up when they hear the song, just as they would stand up if the Queen came into the room. Play a recording of ‘God save the Queen’. All stand and listen; those who can, sing along.

**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find stories in your local library or parents’ collections about queens and kings, eg

- The Queen's feet by Sarah Ellis
- Good, illustrated collections of Nursery Rhymes are full of pictures and rhymes about queens and kings.

**SONGS AND RHYMES**

- Old King Cole
- Lavender’s Blue, Dilly, Dilly
- Happy Birthday . . . Queen Elizabeth — sing this to recognise the Queen’s Birthday.
- The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts

**FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS**

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us and gives us special things to celebrate.

- **Talk about** how people celebrate the Queen’s Birthday

- **Wonder** why God gives us kings and queens . . . what God expects kings and queens to do for us.

- **Story:** The Queen of Sheba visits King Solomon and sees what a great ruler he is. (1 Kings 10:1-13)

- **Song:** God save the queen

- **Pray:** The Queen’s Birthday is a special time to thank you, God, for our country. Amen.

- **Bible verse:** The king [queen] is God’s servant to do you good. (Romans 13:4, modified)
GREEN
A COLOUR

Encourage leaders, parents and children to wear something green. As children arrive, ask each child to tell you about the green item they are wearing. If any child is not wearing green, tie a green ribbon on their wrist. In fact, you might give everyone a green ribbon so no one is excluded.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Green wool web**: Groups of four to six parents and children sit on the floor in a circle. The group has a ball of thick green wool. One adult ties the loose end of wool around their waist and rolls (or passes) the ball to another person. That person can wind the wool around the back of their body and roll or pass the ball to another person. Watch how the green web develops. To end the activity you may rewind the wool or, cut it and use it for ‘green art’.

- **Green art**: Put out several shades of green paint, each in a different shallow container. Children hold a short piece of wool (about 15 cm) and drag it through one container of paint. Then they run the coloured end of the across a sheet of white paper forming any pattern they choose. Repeat with different shades of green.

- **Green search**: Take a walk (outside, if possible) to look for things that are green: tree leaves and grass, houses, cars, birds . . .

- **Kinds of green**: Children and their parents look at the colour samples on a chart from a paint shop. Find different kinds of green (olive, emerald, jade, turquoise, lime, teal, chartreuse, forest, hunter). Children do not need to know the specific names, but they can take colour samples and try to match them to ‘green’ items in the room.

- **Pick the green**: Display a number of collections of items. Each collection has something that is green and several items that are other colours, for example a bunch of leaves; a bowl of fruit and vegetables (include a green apple and a bean), a string of various coloured beads, a pile of books, a collection of soft toys, a box of crayons. Children with their parents look at the various collections. Children pick the green item and talk about it.

- **Green is for ‘go’**: Attach three paper plates (red, yellow and green) to the wall with Blu Tack or Velcro so they can be removed easily. Ask children where they see these colours. Explain that in traffic, red means stop; yellow means get ready to stop and green means go. Children can move in a circle when you hold up the green circle and stop when you hold up the red one.

BOOKS TO SHARE
Find books in your library or parents’ collections about colours, specifically green, eg

- **Little Blue and Little Yellow** by Leo Lionni
- **Green Eggs and Ham** by Dr Seuss
- **Colour** by Doran, Goodman and Miller

SONGS AND RHYMES

- If there’s green on your t-shirt stand up quick, (x2) (Tune: If you’re happy and you know it)
  If there’s green on your t-shirt (x2)
  If there’s green on your t-shirt stand up quick! (Change items of clothing and actions.)
- I can sing a rainbow (© Arthur Hamilton)

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept**: God made a colourful world.
- **Talk about** things in nature that are green.
- **Wonder** why grass is green.
- **Story**: God gives green plants for food. (Genesis 1:30, 9:3)
- **Song**: God gives . . . (green things) (God Gives songbook)
- **Prayer**: Thank you, God, that we can see so many beautiful colours. Amen.
- **Bible verse**: God made the world and everything in it. (Acts 17:24, adapted)
FROG
AN ANIMAL

Playgroup children can begin to understand that (1) people can live gently among all living things and not harm them (2) some animals can harm us.

If any of the families have frog collections, ask them to bring along some non-breakable items for children to see.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** A guest who knows about frogs or who has frogs for pets visits playgroup and talks briefly about frogs — possibly emphasising how different parts of their body function. If possible, have a live frog that children can see up close. Don’t force children with major fears, but allow parents to give children the experience of a close encounter to overcome mild fear. Your guest may help you in planning other activities.

- **Share and compare frogs:** If children have brought toy frogs, ask them to place all the frogs on a lily pond (round rug in a safe corner). Children and parents find their own frog in the shared collection. They find other frogs that are the same colour; the same size; larger; smaller than their own.

- **Jump like a frog:** Think about how frogs move. Children (and parents) try jumping around like frogs. With older children, you could try a modified game of ‘leap frog’. If you have child-size swimming flippers, let older children try them on and try walking with them on.

- **Frog puppet:** Parents help children make a frog puppet from a sheet of green paper. Fold the paper in thirds forming a long strip. Fold the strip in quarters (zig-zag fashion). Draw eyes on the top or stick on round hole reinforcements and fill in hole with black texta. Cut a long tongue from red paper. Glue into the frog’s mouth. To operate, put thumb in the lower ‘pocket’ and the other fingers in the upper ’pocket’. Use the puppets to croak like a frog or to act out froggy singing rhymes.

- **Croak like a frog:** Demonstrate a frog sound — ‘ribbit’. Let the children practise making the sound. Think of how the frog might say ‘ribbit’ when he’s happy. Children try a happy ‘ribbit’. Think how the frog might say ‘ribbit’ to tell someone to be careful . . . when they’re hurt . . . to tell someone they like them . . . Note: ‘Ribbit’ is a rough copy of the frog’s call. To hear some actual frog noises, go to www.allaboutfrogs.org/weird/general/songs.html

BOOKS TO SHARE Find books in your local library or parents’ collections about frogs, eg

- **A Frog Thing** by Eric Drachman
- **Any of the Frog and Toad stories** by Arnold Lobel
- **Finklehopper Frog** by Irene Livingston

SONGS AND RHYMES

- **Five little speckled frogs were sitting on a hollow log**
  Eating some most delicious bugs: Yum, yum.
  One frog jumped into the pool, where it was nice and cool
  Now there are four little speckled frogs: Glub, glub. (Repeat in descending order.)

- **‘Ga-lumph’ went the little green frog one day** (Play School’s Bus Songs)

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God made animals and wants us to take care of them.
- **Talk about** places animals live — by ponds.
- **Wonder** what a frog would say to God.
- **Story:** Adam, in the garden, names all the animals. (Genesis 2:19,20)
- **Song:** All things bright and beautiful (www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/a/allthing.htm)
- **Prayer:** Frogs are fun to watch. Thank you, God, for frogs and other animals. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God made . . . all the animals in the world. (Jeremiah 27:5 modified)
ZACCHAEUS

A STORY

This session is based on the Bible story of Jesus meeting Zacchaeus found in Luke 19:1-10). Speak of Jesus as a special person, but do not try to explain his divinity.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Bibles:** Show children the largest, most impressive Bible you have available. Explain that it is a very special book and has lots of stories about God. The Bible is a book for grown-ups. Show a colourful children’s Bible (or several children’s Bibles) and explain ‘The stories about God are for little people too. We can find the stories in books with words written for children and pictures to help children understand the stories.

- **Storytelling:** Tell the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus in one or more ways, for example: use your own words (possibly using pictures from a children’s book or puppets), read it from a children’s book, or watch a video. Storytelling can be a whole group activity or a small group activity or each parent can read it to their own child.

  - **Re-tell the story:** Children can play act the story using play dough. Use one blob of play dough to hold a branch upright to be the tree. Shape other blobs of play dough as people. You’ll need at least two people (Jesus and Zacchaeus), but you may have lots more.

  - **Tall and short:** Zacchaeus was a short man. Have groups of three or four people stand side-by-side. Children note who is tall and who is short. They may arrange the people from shortest to tallest.

  - **Invitations:** Jesus invited Zacchaeus to come down, Zacchaeus invited Jesus to come to his house. Display some printed invitations (party, wedding, special event) on a low table. Parents and children look at the invitations and talk about who does the inviting, who is invited, what they are invited to.

  - **Tree climbing:** Zacchaeus had to climb a tree to see Jesus. If you have a suitable tree nearby, parents can hold children up on a low branch and talk about what they can see from up there that they can’t see from the ground. Without a tree, parents hold children up on their shoulders so they can see over barriers and other big people.

  - **Money to give away:** After Zacchaeus met Jesus, he gave away money. Give each child a square piece of cloth (20 cm) and a piece of gold-coloured paper. Children cut or tear the paper into coin shapes (round or whatever they can manage). Parents may make $ sign or write the child’s initials on each coin. Parents help children tie up their coins in their cloth with a string. Encourage children to give some of their ‘coins’ to someone else.

BOOKS TO SHARE: Find individual books of the Zacchaeus story, or children’s Bibles containing it, e.g.

- **Zacchaeus Meets Jesus** by Diane Stortz
- **Tiny Readers Zacchaeus** by Juliet David
- **The Toddler Bible** by Bethan James

NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he. (kidsongs.wordpress.com/2006/08/04/zacchaeus)

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** Jesus loves to be with his friends: we can be his friends.

- **Talk about** people who are friends of Jesus.

- **Wonder** why people like to be Jesus’ friends.

- **Story:** Show children a complete Bible and the location of the story of Zacchaeus. Read out: ‘Zacchaeus, come down at once’ from verse 5.

- **Song:** Jesus loves me, this I know

- **Prayer:** Thank you, God, for the good stories in your special book. Amen.

- **Bible verse:** Give thanks to God, because he is good. (1 Chronicles 16:34)
BICYCLE AND TRICYCLE
A WAY TO TRAVEL

Invite several parents to bring tricycles that the children can ride.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Guest: Someone who rides/races bikes comes to playgroup with their bicycle and dressed in riding gear to talk about riding and road safety.
- Bike talk: Each child has the opportunity to tell an adult other than their parent about experiences they have had riding on a tricycle or bike.
- Count and group: Have a table with several kinds of counters for children to group and count in twos and threes. Look at pictures of cycles or actual cycles and count wheels: bicycles (two wheels) and tricycles (three wheels), a bicycle with training wheels (four wheels) a stroller (three, four, six or eight), a wheelchair (4 wheels).
- Ride a tricycle: Children ride a tricycle with parent holding on. If a parent has a bicycle with a safe child’s seat, that parent might give each child (with their own parent’s permission) a ride around an enclosed yard or other safe area.
- Pedal exercise: Children and parents lie on their backs and pedal their feet. Play a recording of ‘The Pushbike Song’ (The Mixtures) to set the pace. Parents and children can join in on the ‘shhh, oo’.
- Road safety: Provide time for parents to discuss rules they have for children when they ride bicycles and tricycles, to explain why the rules are important and to make up short statements to help children remember the rules. If parents have brought vehicles from home, you might have a mechanic check them for safety and point out to parents and children what to look for.
- Make a tricycle or bicycle: Parents help children to examine a tricycle or bicycle and think about the parts: wheels, seat, handlebars, pedals, and frame. Parents help children make their choice of tricycle or bicycle from bottle tops and pipe cleaners. The cycles can be either freestanding or glued to card or paper.
- L or P plates: Parents talk with children about the ‘L’ (learning to drive) and ‘P’ (permitted to drive with special rules) plates they see on cars when young people are learning to drive. They help their child decide whether they should have an ‘L’ or a ‘P’ plate for their tricycle. Make the ‘L’ or ‘P’ plate by cutting out a square of plastic (eg from an ice cream container) and drawing the letter with texta. Punch two holes for a string to attach the plate to the child’s tricycle or bicycle.

BOOKS TO SHARE: Find stories in your local library or parents’ collections about bicycles and tricycles, eg

- Mama Zooms by Jane Cowen-Fletcher
- Curious George rides a bike by H. A. Rey
- The Magical Bicycle by Bertie Doherty and Christian Birmingham

SONGS AND RHYMES

- The wheels on the bike go round and round  (Tune: The wheels of the bus)
- Watch me ringing on my bike, bike  (Tune: I’ll take you riding in my car, car)

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- Key faith concept: God loves us and takes care of us wherever we go.
- Talk about why people ride bicycles.
- Wonder how God takes care of people on bicycles.
- Story: There were no bicycles in Bible times, but God told Paul to go to a faraway place and God took care of him on the way. God helped him during a shipwreck. (Acts 27)
- Song: God will take care of you all through the day. (chorus only)
  (www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/g/w/gwilltake.htm)
- Prayer: Thank you, God, for bicycles and for taking care of us when we ride on them. Amen.
- Bible verse: God says: ‘I will be with you wherever you go.’ (Joshua 1:9)
**Activity Ideas**

- **Guest:** A cleaner (e.g., of buildings, homes or public areas or a car detailer) visits playgroup and talks about what they do and how what they do helps people. They may bring along and demonstrate some of their cleaning equipment. They may talk with children about what we can do to make their job easier and what kinds of actions make it more difficult to keep things clean.

- **Clean and dirty:** Have a few pairs of items — one clean and one dirty, for example two carpet tiles, two towels, two plates, two boots. Place the items on a low table. Children and parents look at and talk about the items. Which is clean? Which is dirty? Which is better? How do you think the dirty one got dirty? Can we make the dirty one clean? How could we do that?

- **Yard pick-up:** Child and parent go outside and look for pieces of litter (things that don’t belong where they are), pick them up and put them in a litter bin. (Provide rubber gloves if appropriate.) Talk about how litter can spoil the environment.

- **Vacuuming:** Use a vacuum cleaner with a hose and soft-brush attachment. Parent runs the hose over the child’s chest. Talk about how it feels. Ask child what other parts of their body to ‘vacuum’. Talk about using a vacuum cleaner at home.

- **Baby bath:** Have a baby bathtub one quarter full of warm water with bubble bath, one or more washable baby dolls and some towels. Children wash and dry the dolls. Parent and child talk about bath time at home. Why do you have a bath? What do you like about it? Alternatively, children can wash plastic dishes or wash pieces of cloth and peg on an airer to dry; or they could wash plastic playgroup toys and equipment.

- **Wiping walls:** Give children rags and a spray bottle containing water with ⅛ cup white vinegar. They use the spray on washable surfaces, walls, doors, windows and wipe it off with the rags.

- **Playgroup clean up:** At the end of the session, ask each child to find one item and take it to the place (box or cupboard) where it is kept. See how quickly you can clear the whole area. (This may be a regular playgroup practice.)

- **Soap scribbling:** Children use a child fist-sized piece of hand soap to scribble on paper, then brush over the whole paper with water-based paint in their choice of colour. The soap will ‘resist’ the paint and show through. (Have a practice to make sure your combination of soap and paint works easily.)

**Books to Share:** Find books in your local library or parents’ collections about cleaners and cleaning, e.g.,

- *Mouse Cleaning* by Rose-Marie Provener
- *We Are Extremely Very Good Recyclers* by Lauren Child
- *What Do People Do All Day?* by Richard Scarry

**Songs and Rhymes**

- A cleaner is a person in your neighbourhood ([Tune: Who are the people in your neighbourhood](http://www.metrolyrics.com/people-in-your-neighbourhood-lyrics-sesame-street.html): see www.metrolyrics.com/people-in-your-neighbourhood-lyrics-sesame-street.html;

- This is the way we wash our clothes . . . vacuum the floor . . . scrub in the tub, etc. Let children suggest various ‘cleaning’ activities and the actions to do for each one.

- Care for our world (Playschool)

- Wash your dirty hands (Playschool)

**Faith Enrichment Ideas**

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us and gives us people who help us.

- **Talk about** how cleaners help people.

- **Wonder** why God wants us to be clean and healthy.

- **Story:** Jesus washes his disciples’ feet. (John 13:1–16)

- **Song:** God’s Helpers everywhere (Sing to Jesus #205)

- **Prayer:** Thank you, God, for people who keep the world clean and healthy. Amen.

- **Bible verse:** Each person is given something to do that shows who God is. (1 Corinthians 12:4, Message)
POST OFFICE

A PLACE TO VISIT

If possible, organise an outing to a post office. Alternatively, explore the post office theme in your regular playgroup venue.

Ask families to bring along any Postman Pat books or paraphernalia they have.

BEFORE THE SESSION: Set up a corner of your space as a post office, with a counter/low table, and a posting box. The box can be as simple as a shoebox with a slot in it. A volunteers will act as postmaster in the post office.

- Prepare a sheet of Playgroup Post stamps by printing on sticky labels.
- Prepare an encouraging note (or friendship card) for each of your parents.
- Put it in an envelope with the parent’s name, and place a Playgroup Post stamp on the envelope.
- Prepare an envelope with the name of each child on it.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** A postman or someone who works in a post office visits playgroup and talks about how we get our mail.

- **Letter writing and posting:** Give each child an envelope with the name of another child. They will make a letter for that child. First, parents check to see that they know who the other child is. Parents help children write on a sheet of writing paper ‘Dear [name of the child the letter goes to]’ at the top and ‘Your playgroup friend [name of child writing the letter]’ at the bottom. Children can then use crayons to scribble, draw and/or write something for the other child. Parents help their child fold the letter and put it in the envelope. Each child takes their letter to the Post Office, where they get a Playgroup Post stamp, put it on the envelope and put it in the posting box.

- **Letter talk:** Give each child an opportunity to tell an adult other than their parent about letters, cards, or parcels they have received in the post or sent at a post office.

- **Mail call:** Near the end of the session, the ‘postmaster’ empties the posting box into a bag. When everyone is seated together, the postmaster takes out one envelope at a time and says: ‘You’ve got mail, [Name of child or parent].’ Each person stands when their name is called and gets their letter.

- **Stamp sorting:** Save envelopes of different sizes, shapes and colours from the mail. Place them in a clear plastic bowl. Children and parents sort the envelopes by size, shape or colour. Older children can look at stamps, postmarks and addresses on the envelopes.

BOOKS TO SHARE: Find stories in your local library or parents’ collections about post offices or letters, eg:

- **Postal Workers**
  
  (My Neighbourhood Series)
  
  by Paulette Bourgeois

- **Letters from Felix**
  
  by Annette Langen

  (stamps and postmarks from around the world)

- **Will Goes to the Post Office**
  
  by Olof and Lena Landstrom

SONGS TO SING

- The Postman Pat theme song. You can find it on YouTube. If you have the equipment, kids can sing along with the video. This is set in UK and is somewhat different from Australian postal services.

- **A tisket. a tasket, a green and yellow basket**

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us and is with us wherever we go.

- **Talk about** how good it is to get letters and parcels in the mail.

- **Wonder** who you would like to send a letter to.

- **Story:** Paul wrote letters, telling people about Jesus. Read from a letter. (I Corinthians 13:8)

- **Song:** In our work and in our play, God is with us every day. We are loved and we can sing, God takes care of everything. Stay at home or go away, God is with us every day. (Tune in www.cyberhymnal.org)

- **Prayer:** Thank you, God, for letters and for people who send them and people who deliver them. Amen.

- **Bible verse:** God says: ‘I will be with you wherever you go.’ (Joshua 1:9)
MOUTH
A PART OF MY BODY

Young children can begin to understand that: each part of the body is important and helps us do different things; we need to take care of our body. Our senses help us discover and understand the world around us. Mouth care for littlies involves cleaning the gums and teeth.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** A dental hygienist visits playgroup and talks with the children about what they do and why they do it. They may also talk with children and parents about gum and tooth care and demonstrate proper techniques. The guest may help you plan other activities.
- **Brushing teeth:** Provide inexpensive soft toothbrushes, toothpaste and cups. Parents take children to a basin and help them brush their teeth.
- **Mirror:** Parents and their child look in a mirror. Look at the different things they can do with their mouth. Together they open it, open wide, stick out tongue — straight ahead, up, to the side — shut it, smile, smile bigger and bigger. While looking in the mirror, the parent points to and counts the child’s visible teeth.
- **Mouth sounds:** experiment with different sounds that can be made with mouth: ahhh; eeee, uhuhuh, sssss, tsk. (Others are hard to write here. Just let kids experiment.) You might want to record the child’s sounds and play them back. See if the child can repeat them.
- **Mouth print:** Parent puts lipstick on their child. Then have the child ‘blot’ their lips on the fold of a paper. Open the paper and see the mouth print. The child can kiss the paper in different places, making more prints until the lipstick has worn off.
- **Mouth puppet:** Parents use a sock to make a simple puppet. Tuck the toe and about half the foot of the sock to the inside. Put one hand inside the sock. Four fingers go on top of the toe section to form the top of the puppet’s mouth. The thumb goes under the toe section to be the lower jaw. Open and close the mouth as if the puppet were talking or singing. Parents help their child make similar puppets from smaller socks. They may add round stickers as eyes. They pretend to have a conversation, with the two puppets speaking to one another and making funny faces to one another.
- **Tasting:** Tongues are the site of our sense of taste. Let children explore several different tastes. Use pureed pumpkin as a base. In one bowl put some plain pumpkin. In four other bowls mix the pumpkin with a generous portion of: (1) honey, (2) salt, (3) cinnamon. Have a supply of small spoons; as children taste the samples in sequence they can tell their parents if they like it, if it is sweet or sour, what it tastes like.

BOOKS TO SHARE: Find books in a library or parents’ collections about human bodies, particularly mouths, eg:

- Little Rabbit’s Loose Tooth by Lucy Bate
- Brush Your Teeth, Please (pop-up book) by Leslie McGuire
- My Five Senses by Aliki

SONGS AND RHYMES

- Arms were made to hug and squeeze (Peter Combe) Sing about teeth, tongue and lips.
- Brush, brush, brush your teeth, brush your cares away (Tune: Row, row, row your boat) up and down, up and down, plaque goes down the drain

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us, and made us with wonderful bodies.
- **Talk about** the many things we can do with our mouths.
- **Wonder** why God wants us to speak and eat.
- **Story:** Jesus heals a man who could not speak. (Mark 7:32-37)
- **Song:** Two little eyes to look to God . . . (mouth) (http://sundayfolder.com/)
- **Prayer:** Thank you, God, for loving us and giving us mouths and teeth for eating and talking. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God says: I made you to bring glory to me. (Isaiah 43:7)
Encourage everyone to wear jeans today. Consider having information about Jeans for Genes Day and allow people to make a donation to the Children’s Medical Research Institute if they wish (see www.jeansforgenes.org.au).

**ACTIVITY IDEAS**

- **Jeans on parade**: Children and adults have a ‘fashion parade’ in which they model the jeans they are wearing. An MC uses comparative descriptive words comparing pairs of people and their jeans: bigger and smaller; darker and lighter; tighter and looser...
- **Denim collage**: Visit your local op shop and purchase several items made of different kinds of denim. Cut the denim cloth into small pieces of various shapes. Children glue the denim shapes onto card to make a denim crazy-quilt. Save back pockets for making beanbags. Save zippers and other fasteners.
- **Pocket beanbags**: Carefully cut out the distinctive jeans pockets from old jeans (see above). Make them into beanbags. Put a handful of dried beans in the pocket and use a sewing machine to stitch the opening closed. Children can help with the filling or the beanbags can be made ahead of time. Parents and children in groups of four toss and catch the beanbag.
- **Dressing dolls**: Have dolls of different sizes with jeans to fit each doll. Children choose the jeans that will fit and put them on the doll. Children practise using the zips or press stud fasteners.
- **Find the blue jeans**: Have some clothing catalogues. Parents with their children look through the catalogue and find blue jeans. Who is wearing the blue jeans (boy, girl, man, woman)? Can you find any red, green or black jeans?
- **Denim**: Children use a microscope to look at a piece of denim fabric. Notice that there are lines going up and down and other lines going side to side because the material is woven. Then they can look at their own jeans to see if they can see the lines of thread. They may also examine the stitching. Is it blue like the denim or another colour? Is there one line of stitches or two? Why do you think there might be two lines of stitches?
- **Weaving**: Children try their own weaving. Begin with a sheet of blue paper in which you cut slits (two slits for two-year olds, three slits for three year olds...). Parents help children weave strips of paper of a different shade of blue through the slits.

**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in a library or parents’ collections about clothes, particularly blue jeans, eg:

- **Caillou: My Clothes**
- **Fish Sticks, Books and Blue Jeans!** an activity book by Caryn FitzGerald and Sami FitzGerald (age 6)
- **Levi Strauss gets a bright idea** by Tony Johnston

**SONGS AND RHYMES**

- **We’re all wearing blue jeans; our blue jeans, our blue jeans.**
  We’re all wearing blue jeans, our blue jeans today. (Tune: *Frere Jacques*)
  (insert children’s names: Kathy’s wearing blue jeans...)

**FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS**

- **Key faith concept**: God loves us and gives us what we need.
- **Talk about** why we wear clothes.
- **Wonder** how God gives us clothes.
- **Story**: Hannah makes clothing for her son. (I Samuel 1 and 2:18)
- **Song**: Put on love *(Mary Lu Walker, MP3 Music, from the album *The Frog’s Party*)
- **Prayer**: Thank you, God, for giving us jeans and other clothes we need. Amen.
- **Bible verse**: Don’t worry about what to wear. (Matthew 6:28)
PLEASE AND THANK YOU
TWO SPECIAL WORDS

It’s never too soon to start instilling good manners and respect into children’s behaviour. ‘Please’ and ‘thank you’ are not just topics for one session. They are words (and signs of an attitude) that the playgroup team models all the time, among themselves, with parents and with the children.

The session may include a thank-you to playgroup volunteers related to SA Volunteers Day on Queens Birthday (the second Monday in June)

ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** Invite an older person to visit playgroup and to talk about good manners: how ‘magic words’ like please, thank you, you’re welcome and excuse me, make everyone’s life happier. Manners show respect. Manners are more than just words; they are kind, respectful actions too. The guest may demonstrate and ask children to repeat some forms of good manners.

- **Please and Thank You puppets:** Children make two hand puppets. Begin with child-size socks that children can fit their hands into, two different colours for each child. Parents help children draw on eyes and a mouth (or glue on paper shapes for form eyes and mouth.) With the child’s hand in each sock, parents note the location of the base of the child’s thumb and little finger. Parents cut small holes that will allow children to push their thumb and little finger out and use them as the puppet’s arms. Parents may attach a ‘Please’ sign to one puppet and a ‘Thank you’ sign to the other puppet with safety pins.

  Playgroup volunteers may wear please and thank you puppets during the session and use them as reminders to children to use their special words at the appropriate times.

- **Please and Thank You theatre:** Volunteers present the Please and Thank You puppet skit (next page). Children can use their own puppets and make up their own skits.

- **Saying please and thank you:** In groups of four to six people, play a game similar to the second scenario on the next page. Encourage parents and children to use the words ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ as they pass a ball or other objects from one person to another.

- **Thank you prayers at mealtime:** Encourage parents and children to use the words ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ as they share food at snack time. Use a thank-you prayer at playgroup snack time. Give parents a card with the words and suggest that they use the prayer at home at mealtime to say thank you to God.

BOOKS TO SHARE: Find books in your local library or parents’ collections about manners, eg:

- **Richard Scarry’s Please and Thank You Book**
- **May I? Please? Thank You!** by Joy Wilt Berry and Ernie Hergenroeder
- **The Berenstain Bears say Please and Thank You** by Jan and Mike Berenstain

SONGS AND RHYMES

- Two little magic words can open any door with ease:
  one little word is thanks, and the other is please.

- If you have manners and you know it, just say please, (x2) (Tune: If you’re happy and you know it)
  If you have manners and you know it, don’t be afraid to show it,
  If you have manners and you know it, just say please.
  If you have manners and you know it say, thank you . . .

FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God gives us everything we need.
- **Talk about** things we need.
- **Wonder** how we can say please and thank you to God.
- **Story:** The exiles rebuild God’s special house and thank God. (Ezra 3:7–13)
- **Song:** Praise and thanksgiving let everyone bring (Sing to Jesus #28)
- **Prayer:** Thank you, God, for everything you do for us. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+104:21&version=NIRV Give thanks to the Lord because he is good. (Psalm 107:1)
PLEASE AND THANK YOU PUPPET SCRIPT

Characters: Please, Thank You and Jackie the monkey.

You can use commercial hand puppets or see the ‘Please and Thank You puppets’ idea. Or three actors can present the skit.

Have fun with the script, exaggerate, ‘clown it up’.

SCENARIO 1: Puppets introduce themselves.

PLEASE: Hi. My name’s Please. Please say my name.
THANK YOU and CHILDREN: Please.
PLEASE: Thank you. It makes me happy to hear that word.
THANK YOU: Hi. My name’s Thank You. Please say my name.
PLEASE and CHILDREN: Thank You.
THANK YOU: Thank you. It makes me happy to hear that word.
JACKIE: Hi. I’m Jackie. Say my name.

(PLEASE and THANK YOU keep quiet themselves and gesture for children to stay quiet.)

JACKIE (louder): I said: say my name.

(Please and THANK YOU keep quiet themselves and gesture for children to stay quiet.)

JACKIE: Why don’t you do what I say?
THANK YOU: You forgot something.
JACKIE: I want to play.
PLEASE: Oh!?
JACKIE: (louder) I want to play.
THANK YOU: So?
JACKIE: (shouting) I want to play.

[You could have an aside to children: ‘What did Jackie forget?’ or . . .]

PLEASE: You forgot me.
JACKIE: Oh, you, Please. Aaaaaahh, I get it. Please let me play with you.
PLEASE: Sure. Here you go.

(Please gives the ball to Jackie.)

JACKIE: Who’s next?
THANK YOU: You forgot something.
JACKIE: What?
THANK YOU: You forgot me.
JACKIE: Oh, you, Thank You. Aaaaaahh, I get it. Thank you for saying my name. It makes me feel good to hear my name.

Encourage children to share similar dialogue with one another: My name is . . . Please say my name. Thank you. It makes me feel good to hear my name.

SCENARIO 2: A ball game

(PLEASE and THANK YOU are playing ball; handing it back and forth.)
PLEASE: Please pass me the ball.
THANK YOU: Please pass me the ball.

(Please hands the ball to THANK YOU.)
THANK YOU: Thank you.
JACKIE: I want to play.
PLEASE: Oh!
JACKIE: (louder) I want to play.
THANK YOU: So?
JACKIE: (shouting) I want to play.

(You could have an aside to children: ‘What did Jackie forget?’ or . . .)
PLEASE: You forgot me.
JACKIE: Oh, you, Please. Aaaaaahh, I get it. Please let me play with you.

PLEASE: Sure. Here you go.

(Please gives the ball to Jackie.)

JACKIE: Who’s next?
THANK YOU: You forgot something.
JACKIE: What?
THANK YOU: You forgot me.
JACKIE: Aaaaaahhh, I get it. Thank you for letting me play. I like to play ball with you, Please, and you, Thank You.

Encourage children to play a similar game with one another: Please pass me the ball. Thank you.

You could improvise other ‘Please’ and ‘Thank you’ scenarios.