



hands on

Stories, ideas & news from Kids Friendly | ISSUE 13 | April 2009



Sowing Kids Friendly Seeds

I have just returned from beautiful Taranaki where we held our first Kids Friendly Focus Group followed by our second Kids Friendly Coaching Clinic. It was my privilege and joy to spend time with representatives of 14 Presbyteries exploring what it means for churches to truly value, embrace and serve the children of our community.

The focus group is made up of 6 passionate Kids Friendly champions from around the country. Each of these people have advocated for and promoted Kids Friendly in their regions and their contributions and support have been invaluable to me and to growing Kids Friendly. We met to look at how Kids Friendly has developed and plan our future strategy. Some of the things we grappled with is how do we ensure Kids Friendly is embedded into the PCANZ culture so that it is sustainable in the long term. The Council of Assembly's decision to fund Kids Friendly is a positive move in this direction but there is still more work for us to do. We also talked about planning our first Kids Friendly training and networking event – an opportunity for our people to meet and share their passion and expertise. You can read the full report of this first focus group meeting in the Kids Friendly News and Resources pages on the website.

Then as the focus group departed, passionate people from 9 Presbyteries arrived to learn more about Kids Friendly. Over the next two days we explored the Kids Friendly vision to inspire and equip our churches to value, celebrate and include children and encourage

and train the people who work with them. Our time together included lots of ideas and personal stories of what it means to be Kids Friendly. We also had time to connect with our spirit in one of New Zealand's many beautiful spots on the Taranaki coast. We prayed, laughed, ate, swam in the sea, walked on the beach, made new friends and opened our hearts to God's intent for our work with his children. This time together is a Kids Friendly seeding exercise, and I know from experience that as the "light" feeds the seeds, they germinate into wonderful species that bear much fruit not just in the participants but in me. And the seed that is germinating right now is: what if we could re-create something of these bi-annual events for more people in every Presbytery. Feedback is that this time away from their churches and families is a wonderful retreat that allows them time to reflect on their ministries, calling and spirituality and a real "advance" as they learn new ways of being the church to children and families. And so I'm wondering if Kids Friendly could create more opportunities for our children's leaders to be blessed this way and instead of organising one large national event, we organise many small regional events that nurture, encourage and equip you, our people. It's a seed but I can feel its energy. I think it might sprout sooner than expected. Let me know your thoughts on this – they will be like water and light to its germination. Thank you to the Presbyteries who supported our second coaching clinic by sending "champions". And thank you to the Presbyterian Foundation whose funding enabled us to dream and sow seeds of mission.

Blessings. Jill

Welcome Lorraine

I'm excited to welcome Lorraine Morgan to the Kids Friendly team. Lorraine is the very competent and passionate children's minister from St Andrew's Geraldine. She will be working 20 hours a week for Kids Friendly and will be invaluable in contributing to new developments including Transformers, a Kids Friendly initiative to help churches encourage leadership in young people (see Kids Friendly pages on the PCANZ website for more on this). Lorraine will also be organising regional training events and developing a website for resource sharing. Her enthusiasm for and experience in community outreach is a great asset to Kids Friendly.



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Kids Friendly in Communities

At a recent Presbyterian Support/Auckland Presbytery seminar on facing the community, I shared some of the many inspiring stories of the way our churches connect with and serve their communities. Pohutukawa Coast's dinner for single parents, Flagstaff's Nitbusters conquering nits in their local school, Waitara's impact

on the lives of their local community. At this event, Rev Andrew Norton challenged our churches to immerse themselves in their communities. I am so blessed to hear your stories of immersion and so privileged to be able to share them. Please keep sending me your stories. They are like sunshine on a grey gloomy winter's day.

Doing church differently

By Lorraine Morgan, St Andrew's Geraldine

Too often we sit waiting for the community to come to us, its church. We run many outreach programmes for children and then become disillusioned because they don't come to church on Sunday. So last year our church decided we would go to our community one Sunday instead of waiting for them to come to us. On Father's Day we cancelled church as we know it, and did "church" by running a free event for all families. We worked together to host a fun day of free bouncy castles, sausage sizzles, face and hair painting, argo rides down the river, entertainment and more. The community (church and non-churched) were so inspired by the idea that we were inundated with offers of products - an argo for river rides, a sider truck that became the stage for our band and dancers,



petrol, touring motorbikes for children's rides, and food. As this was the first time that we had done this as a church we weren't sure how many people would come along so were pleasantly surprised when we ran out of the 400 sausages and had to rush to our local supermarket to buy more. We made it clear that it was a day for the whole family. It was wonderful to see single mums and dads bring their children. One solo mum said with tears in her eyes, "what a great thing for this to be free, I am a mum and dad to my kids and this is just an amazing day." And a community person not associated with the church, wrote to the local paper congratulating the church. We debated whether we should include a "religious" component at our family event but decided that being salt and light was the greatest way to share our faith that day.

Still on the road



Kids Friendly is a journey not a destination. When churches pledge to work to become Kids Friendly, they agree to ongoing review of how they minister to and with children. As Rev Brian Walker of Balclutha Presbyterian said: "Kids Friendly will always

be a work in progress, as we continue to review everything we do with Kids Friendly eyes." Many of our Kids Friendly churches are coming up for their bi-annual review where they are invited to once again form a Kids Friendly "dream team" and review themselves using the Kids Friendly self-review resource. This is a bit like a stock take where churches will be able to see if they achieved the goals they set themselves. It will also seek comments from new and different members.

It is important for the minister or leader of the church to keep the congregation informed of this process so all have a chance to give feedback. I was impressed by Rev Steve Jourdain's process when recently visiting the Manawatu Wanganui Presbytery. Steve wrote in his weekly order of service: "Becoming Kids Friendly has been a valuable process for us and we are due to do our two-yearly review in term 4. We do have a Kids Friendly Church but there are always things that we can do better. We will be seeking your feedback in a survey next term. If you ever have any concerns about our church's attitudes or practices with children, please tell us." Steve ended with two challenges to the adults of St Alban's Presbyterian: "Do you know the names of three children in our church who are not related to you? Do you speak to some children every Sunday about things that interest them? Great Work St Alban's!

Building bridges



While many churches realise the importance of connecting with children and families through outreach initiatives, they sometimes neglect to strengthen these relationships through pastoral care. If you want your playgroup, music and movement or kids club to be more than just a club for children and their caregivers, you need to intentionally undergird your outreach with prayer and pastoral care. St David's Union in Timaru grappled with how they could deepen their friendship with the children and families attending their Arty Crafty holiday programme and invite them to worship. They came up with the idea of creating a calendar for families featuring photos of their church's people and activities including some of the Arty Crafty children. "We wanted to create a visual reminder of our presence in the community," says Rosie Staite, lay minister at St David's. "We thought a personalised calendar with our church name at the top of every page would be something that would keep us in every home for 12 months."

Daunted by the cost of printing, the church had to think laterally about how to achieve their goal.

A parishioner found DIY calendars at the \$2 Shop and a creative all-age project commenced. "We invited all our congregation to two very busy and interactive evenings spent cutting, sticking and decorating these calendars. We used photos from Arty Crafty Day, our Children's services, the Christmas Pageant and even one of the Parish Council and every calendar was individually decorated to create a unique collector's item!" Once completed the calendars were blessed at St David's all age worship and delivered to families. Our parishioners loved receiving them too! "The project was lots of fun with something for everyone to contribute. It's our way of giving a bit of love to others in our community."

Caring for our community

By Helen Croukamp, Knox Christian Centre, Hamilton

Kidsplay is our playgroup for under 5's. We started with one day a week in February 2007 but the demand for it meant we soon needed to increase it to two days. Parents love Kidsplay, kids love Kidsplay and the Ministry of Education (our funder) loves Kidsplay. It's a success, isn't it? Recently I started to question why we do what we do? Our dream is for Kidsplay to be a vehicle for introducing families to Jesus, but our reality is that despite two years of "success" and a growing waiting list, not one family has come to know Jesus. There seems to be a kink in the hose. We are not getting Jesus' love and forgiveness through to the families. I took this to God in prayer and was given a resource that introduced me to the power of friendship evangelism. We discovered that while our team was running a successful playgroup, we were not factoring in time for friendship evangelism. Our busy programme did not create time for leaders to chat, drink coffee, walk, share the love of Jesus



with our participating families. Yvette Wynne's book "Connecting families with Jesus, Building a Playgroup Ministry on Purpose" really challenged our leaders to discover the power of friendship evangelism and practice it. Yvette suggests that we need to start with ourselves. So four of our leaders committed time to do the study in her book to help us become authentic disciples of Christ. We are excited about growing our own relationship with Christ so that we are better equipped to reach out to others. Thanks to a grant we now have three hours for pastoral care of our families. We are open to hearing the needs of our families and making time to cater for them –

whether it be cooking a meal, going for a walk or praying with someone. So our goal this year is not how many converts we make, but rather how authentic our own relationship with Jesus is and how we respond to his promptings to care for our community. To borrow this book contact Kids Friendly.

Are we losing the next generation?

The Next Generation DVD is a powerful and challenging tool for sharing with our church leadership and congregations. To order this 3 minute DVD and user guide produced by the Children's Ministry Network in Australia, contact jill@sthelierschurch.org.nz. Costs \$10.

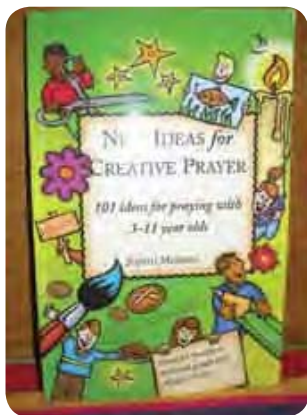
Must-have books

By Cheryl Harry, Dunedin Kids Friendly Coach

"The Very Essential Must-have Really Useful Guide to Working with Children" is written by Scripture Union for an Australasian context where less than 5% of our children attend church. It emphasises the need for churches to connect with their community's children and families through outreach and gives heaps of tips and checklists for effective ministry. It's a great little resource for only \$5.50 and is full of practical tips on ways children learn, behaviour management, working in large and small groups, opening the Bible with children, praying, storytelling, music etc. You can buy this book online from www.scriptureunion.org.nz.

Also available from the Scripture Union online bookshop is: "A Church for all Ages" a practical approach to all age worship by Peter Graystone and Eileen Turner. The first section gives advice and the second section suggests resources and easy to implement ideas for involving all ages in every part of a worship service. "Pick 'n Mix" by Judith Merrell gives over 100 ideas to create programmes for children of all ages. Just as it suggests, you pick and mix! There are 10 sections with 10 ideas in each including icebreakers, telling a Bible story, memory verse, easy experiments, creative prayers, things to do, mini-sports, games etc.

Conversations with God



When I was 8 years old my teacher Sister Judith told me that I could talk to God about everything, anywhere and at anytime. She told me Jesus lived inside and all around me, so he could always hear me even when I spoke in my head. My conversations with Jesus have sustained me all my life and have given me a passion for inspiring children to pray. Prayer

is a good habit to form early in life. And while there's nothing nicer than a one on one chat with your best friend Jesus, prayer can take many creative forms, after all we are communicating with the greatest creator. "New Ideas for Creative Prayer" by Judith Merrill is packed with 101 ideas for engaging children in prayer through writing, drawing, song and actions.

When we engage and involve children in prayers we value them and hopefully inspire them to start a life-long habit of conversing with God. Available from Scripture Union's online store. Another great prayer resource for children's programmes is the prayer ball. I purchased ours from Mediacom (www.mediacom.org.au @ \$14.95).

We throw it to a child and ask them to respond with a prayer on the topic closest to their left thumb. At first they were a bit shy but their enthusiasm for catching the ball soon inspired them to come up with prayers. You could buy your own blow-up beach ball from the \$2 shop – get kids to come up with some cool prayer ideas and write them on each colour panel. Throw the ball around from child to child with music playing and when music stops the child who catches ball reads the prayer

closest to his or her left hand.

We also created a prayer wheel by writing the children's suggestions for prayers on the back of a round tray and creating a spinning hand. Again the kids' eagerness to spin the wheel overcomes their reticence to offer a prayer.



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