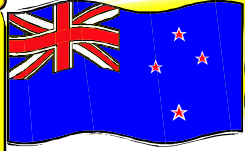


hands on

Stories, ideas, & news you can use from the Kids Friendly project



Kids Friendly networks across the ocean!

ISSUE 6: JULY '06

Networking churches to receive inspiration, ideas and resources is one of the aims of Kids Friendly and I have just returned from a wonderfully inspiring networking opportunity. I received an unexpected invitation to a conference of the Australian Lutheran Children, Youth and Families Ministries Board in Adelaide. How a Presby managed to gatecrash this event is a long "God" story, but thanks to God, the Lutherans and presenter Rich Melheim of Faith Inkubators, I am firing on all cylinders. Faith Inkubators (www.faithink.com) develops a range of incredibly creative resources to nurture faith from birth to death. Rich Melheim, founder of Faith Inkubators, introduced us to Finkthink (versus old think) - a new way of thinking about Christian Education that includes small groups, parent involvement, pastoral care, home devotions and drawing out faith. We learnt how to teach the way the brain learns and explored Faith Inkubators' confirmation resource "Head to the Heart". We sang

crazy, catching songs based on scripture, my favourite being "go to the ant you lazybones, go to the ant...". We experimented with multidimensional mental models of teaching and tested them successfully on local youth. We explored new ways of all-age worship and shared in Faith Inkubators' eight "Faith Stepping Stones" - parenting courses catering for 0-18 years aimed to facilitate and empower parents to practise faith with their children at home. Faith Inkubators challenges us, the church, to respond creatively to God's command to parents to teach their children about their faith. "Parents are the primary faith teachers, mentor and role models for their own children with church as reinforcement not replacement of the parent's duties," says Rich Melheim. I look forward to sharing some of these resources and ideas with Kids Friendly churches. Faith Inkubators is keen to develop a partnership with New Zealand, so we will be looking for churches willing to trial some of their products. I'll keep you posted. God bless. Jill

Welcome to the Kids Friendly family

We welcome 13 more churches to the Kids Friendly family. First Church Papakura, Massey, St David's Palmerston North, Whakatane, Waiareka Weston, St Paul's Wanganui, Wadestown and St David's Ashburton have all signed up to become Kids Friendly. And St James' Wanganui, St Ninian's Wellington, Knox Lower Hutt, St John's-in-the-City Wellington and Khandallah have joined the Kids Friendly Network. Churches joining the Kids Friendly Network receive the Kids Friendly resource manual and regular "Hands On" newsletters, information about Kids Friendly events and advice on Kids Friendly ideas, resources, issues and requirements. Churches contracting to become Kids Friendly, work with the Kids Friendly coach to review their Kids Friendly status, achieve goals and brand their church Kids Friendly. There are currently 9 branded Kids Friendly churches and 17 churches working to become Kids Friendly. Our Kids Friendly Coach will be introducing Kids Friendly to churches of Matura, Central Otago, Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa over the next few months. If you would like to join the Kids Friendly Network or find out more about becoming Kids Friendly, phone or email our Kids Friendly Coach.

Our heartfelt thanks



To Auckland Presbytery for recognising the value of Kids Friendly and donating \$10,000 to our operating budget. This means that Kids Friendly will now be able to work with any church in the Auckland Presbytery to help them become Kids Friendly. While Kids Friendly is exclusive to PCANZ, it receives no Assembly budget. We thank our funders Presbyterian Savings Development Society, Presbyterian Foundation, Auckland and Dunedin Presbyteries.

Contact Kids Friendly:

Jill Kayser
Kids Friendly Coach
Jill@sthelierschurch.org.nz
Phone: (09) 585 0959
Fax: (09) 575 4827
C/o 100 St Heliers Bay Rd,
St Heliers, Auckland 5





Kids Friendly Ministers



When churches work to become Kids Friendly they review themselves and set goals against 10 Kids Friendly ideals. One very necessary prerequisite for these churches is to have a Kids Friendly minister. Kids

Friendly is a way of being and as such, needs to be intentionally embraced and promoted by the ministry and leadership team. Not every minister feels instantly comfortable with children, but "Kids Friendly-ness" can be learnt and practise makes perfect! Ministers (and children's ministers), could try these Kids Friendly suggestions to build good relationships with the children of their church.

- ☺ Pick up the phone. Children love to get phone calls. Phone them to wish them happy birthday, to invite them to be your worship assistant or to help with the service.
- ☺ Learn names. Start with knowing three names of children attending your church this week and add another three next. If your memory doesn't serve you well, make sure all the children have name badges like the adults.
- ☺ Have your picture taken with the children and allow them to display it on their notice board.
- ☺ Participate in children's events or initiate an outing to a Kids Friendly movie or musical.

- ☺ Attend your children's programme every now and then. Rev Ian Guy of Kaikorai spent two weeks sharing lessons on communion and baptism with their kids.
- ☺ Listen to children. Be interested in what they have to say and get down on your knees so you are at their eye level.
- ☺ Introduce some Kids Friendly elements to your office. A drawer full of balloons, a lolly jar, a special puzzle or a friendly puppet to sit on your shelves.
- ☺ Become a patron of your children's art. Display their work on noticeboards, in your office, on the front page of the bulletin, as a powerpoint backdrop to kids songs.
- ☺ Write notes to thank them for their help in church, send birthday, get well and congratulatory cards.
- ☺ Share children's sermons that relate to their worlds. Use symbols and characters they understand and love. Rev Martin Baker captured adults and kids attention for years with his Ken and Barbie parables.
- ☺ Pray for your children and children's leaders regularly and by name.



Small is beautiful

Do you have small groups as part of your children's ministry? Research shows that developing deep relationships with children strengthens their faith. If you think back to your childhood, you can probably remember one adult who really took an interest in you, made you feel special and influenced your faith. Mine was my nun teacher when I was 8. I don't remember much of what I learnt in large group time at my Sunday School, but I do remember experiencing the love of Christ through my small group leader. These people spoke into my life. Small groups create an environment where all children, not just the extroverts, are able to open up and share. Small groups provide kids with opportunities to engage in healthy relationships with adults and their peers; and they enable more adults to contribute to children's ministry, as people who'd never offer to lead Sunday School, often make great small group leaders.

Some guides to creating successful small groups: Keep your small groups small. The ideal size for a small group is no more than 6 children to one leader. Start off with a smaller number so kids are able to invite friends to join them.

Determine group types. Some believe single sexed groups are less distracting, while others think mixing genders enhances our understanding of each other. It probably depends on the age of the children.



Clarify the purpose. Decide what you want to achieve in small groups and share this with the kids. For example: "In our group we are going to have fun and make good friends while learning about God and the bible. We are also going to care for each other." Find the right leaders. Look for people who love children and are able to connect with them. Define the small group leader's role. The group leader's primary role is to make sure kids feel loved, accepted, and connected. Guarantee confidentiality. If children are to feel safe about sharing information, they need to know that what's been shared remains within the group. Developing caring friendships between the group members strengthens the bond and results in a sense of belonging. One way to enhance intimacy is to start your small group with a sharing of the week's highs and lows. Put children in two's and give them a couple of minutes to share with each other their week's high and low. Invite each child to share his or her partner's high and low with the group and include these in a group prayer. Children learn best when exposed to the teaching in a variety of ways. The lesson can be introduced in many creative ways in a large group setting and further emphasised and explored in small groups through discussion, bible reading and prayer. Small groups enable children to experience Christian community and the love of Christ firsthand. So if you want to grow your children's ministry, think big and small.

Welcome to our Table

Would you include your toddler in Great Grandma's 90th birthday lunch? Would she be seated in her high chair around the family dining room table? Would she be offered the celebratory fare? Would she understand everything that was happening? While she may not understand how many years Great Grandma has been alive, or comprehend that this may be one of the last family celebrations with Great Grandma, she probably senses that this is a time of special celebration and that she is a valued and loved member of the family unit.

The most common argument for excluding children from communion is "they shouldn't take it until they understand it." Renowned theologian John Westerhoff suggests "faith is caught not taught" and asks how children will learn the culture and traditions of our faith if they are excluded from one of the most important celebrations.

I suggest that people object to children receiving communion because they fear children will not respect and may even disrupt this sacred sacrament. The reality is that most children love ritual and tradition and just need some guidance from us as to what is meant by and expected at communion.

The minister plays an important role in educating the congregation about Jesus' intent for all to be included at Christ's table and in helping children to know how to respond.

Kids Friendly Church Kaikorai in Dunedin prepared their children for communion by presenting a Communion play one Sunday and a Passover play the

next. Says Rev. Ian Guy: "We believe it is important for children to be included in Communion and wanted to ensure that they had opportunity for learning and asking questions about this expression of our faith." One of East Taieri's responses to their Kids Friendly review, was to commit to involving children more fully in communion. "We had always invited children to receive

communion, but decided that to make this sacrament even more meaningful to and inclusive of children, we should invite them to serve communion with our elders," says Rev Michael Schwass. Children were prepared for this important sacrament by receiving a briefing from their parents and meeting with the minister the day before communion. "All the children were invited to the front to ensure they were fully engaged and involved in the prayers, words and actions of the institution," says Michael. "Our congregation are still talking about how memorable our last communion was."

So if children aren't participating in your communion service, talk to your ministry and leadership team about inviting children to communion and preparing them and the congregation for this important Kids Friendly decision.



Wonderful Websites

www.faithink.com
www.christianitytoday.com
www.funtrivia.com
www.kidsnewspress.com



Kids@GA 06

Children are a vital part of our Presbyterian Church "body" and a valued part of General Assembly 2006. Kids Friendly is running a children's programme alongside General Assembly in Auckland from Thursday 28 September to Monday 2 October. Children from Presbyteries from the top half of the North Island (Northland to Bay of Plenty) are invited to apply to be a K@GA Body Builder. The programme will offer fun ways to explore and plan a church that is "Christ-Centred and Community Facing". Kids will also visit other churches in the Presby "body" to see how they share Jesus' love with their communities. Kids@GA will have opportunities to share their insights, experiences and activities with assembly participants. Commissioners are invited to register as a friend of K@GA and share lunch with kids and visit the programme. To find out more and encourage your kids to apply to become a K@GA Body Builder check out www.presbyterian.org.nz under General Assembly.



Kids in Mission



"Charity" is an ancient word that means to help others for the sake of love. The spirit of charity exists in children naturally, but as they grow older, they get the message that they shouldn't feel so deeply for strangers or be quite so charitable with their "things."

Let's encourage our kids to express their empathy and serve in ways pleasing to God. It is important for children to see the results of their good deeds, so design local and global mission projects that are tangible.

For global mission, consider sponsoring a World Vision child. When the offering is taken in church each Sunday encourage the kids to put their offering into a special box decorated by kids, displaying the name and photo of your sponsored child. Pray for your child each week and take time in the children's programme to learn a bit about the place and lifestyle where he/she lives. Ask children to write letters to send to your child with photos of your group. Or contact Global Mission on globalmission@presbyterian.org.nz to explore needs overseas that your children may be able to respond to.

The shoe box ministry is a popular Christmas mission project run by Samaritan's Purse. Children are invited to contribute specified items to fill shoeboxes to be sent to children in third world countries at Christmas time. Says Shelley Marks of Kaikorai Presbyterian in Dunedin: "All year we collect shoeboxes and then see how many we can fill during the month of October. Each week kids are invited to bring an item from one of the categories specified. We promote this overtly over 4 weeks and find kids and their families respond

really well to it." This is a great Advent mission project to remind us that many children in the world don't receive Christmas presents. See www.samaritanspurse.org.au.

Mission projects are a good way to connect kids with the meaning of key Christian seasons. For Lent this year, St Heliers Presbyterian participated in the Heifer project (www.heifer.org). Children and members of their families were encouraged to give up one indulgence during lent and put the money normally spent on this into the Heifer pot. Each week children emptied their week's collection from their family into the big Heifer jar. Minister Pauline Stewart sacrificed her regular visits to a local café for her caffeine fix! At the end of lent \$685 was donated to Heifer to purchase animals for a needy community in Africa. Everyone in the congregation got to vote what animals to purchase from a list supplied by the Heifer organisation.

Leprosy is something children may think only happened to people in the time of Jesus, but it still plagues many in disadvantaged parts of the world. To develop awareness of this and to sponsor a child with leprosy see www.risingstaroutreach.org.

Encourage your church's kids to respond to the needs of their world, by exploring them and developing ways to take action.

If you have examples of involving kids in mission email kidsfriendlyjill@sthelierschurch.org.nz so others can read about them. In our next issue of "Hands On" we will share ideas for involving kids in local mission.



Angels on Earth

Do you remember how comforting it was when you believed (or still believe) you had your very own personal guardian angel to watch over you day and night? Well soon this will be a reality for children of Highgate Parish in Dunedin. The ministry team are introducing a scheme where children can have their very own guardian angel. Children wanting a guardian angel will be allocated to interested adults who will pray for their child every day. The guardian angel will be given a laminated photo of their child to put on their fridge as a reminder of this important task. Guardian angels will remain anonymous, but children can communicate with them by posting letters in the designated Angel Post Box in the foyer of the church. At 14 children can opt to meet their guardian angel. "The reason we decided to have anonymous angels is to prevent children getting too attached to their angel and to ensure continuity by nominating a

replacement in the event of the angel no longer being able to perform his/her task," said Jane Davis, Highgate's Kids Friendly Coordinator. The ministry team decided to introduce this scheme (which ran successfully in St David's Union Parish, Ashburton when Highgate Minister Martin Stewart served there), to encourage older members of their congregation to take an interest in and pray for younger members. "We hope it will generate a real interest in the children of our church and help them feel truly valued," said Jane.

