



hands on

Stories, ideas & news from Kids Friendly | ISSUE 21 | January 2012



Practising Kids Friendly

When I get introduced to Church congregations and meetings as the Coach of the Kids Friendly programme, I hold my tongue just until I deem it appropriate to politely correct my host with: "Kids Friendly is a "practise" NOT a programme!" Being truly "Kids Friendly" IS a challenging practise. It requires an ongoing commitment to thinking "how can our church be a welcoming and meaningful community for children and families?"

The Kids Friendly self-review resource is developed to facilitate a process for churches to assess their "practise" with children and families. Some churches have suggested that it's just too hard!

Yes, it is hard to minister effectively to children and families and to be open to constantly reviewing what you are doing and how well you are doing it, but it's worth it!

It's a real treat for me these days to sit back in my own church (where I was children and families minister for 7 years) and just enjoy the children's Christmas pageant. My spirit was lifted as over 80

beautiful children shared that all-time favourite story of Jesus' birth in prose and song. I suspect every heart in the congregation, young and old, was bursting with joy. Certainly every face was beaming with delight at being part of such a wonderfully "Kids Friendly" worship service.



In this issue of Hands On Carolyn (Flagstaff, Dunedin) shares their story of working to become a Kids Friendly church. Sharon's (Wadestown, Wellington) story reminds us that ministering to children and families requires constant review and innovation. And Kaila (Somervell, Auckland) helps us to think outside the square when planning our children's Christian education.

Being "Kids Friendly" requires commitment, vision, passion and persistence! I thank and honour all of you who minister to children and families for the way you demonstrate these qualities. Your ministry is inspiring and is truly making a difference. Be encouraged as you enter this new year of 2012 and keep up your wonderful work.

Blessings. Jill

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Teaching that kids love!

by Kaila Pettigrove



During a trip to the United States I stumbled upon a new way to organise Sunday School and it's worked a treat for our "Triple S" children.

The **Workshop Rotation Model (WRM)** is based on the Multi-Intelligence educational theory that teaches in a variety of fun and engaging ways. The

same Bible story or theme is taught for several weeks using different learning styles. Groups of children participate in workshops to engage with the story in creative ways. For example, when we taught the story of Joseph, we rotated the children through workshops as below:

Age	5-8 years	8-10 years
Week 1	Art	Drama
Week 2	Drama	Art
Week 3	Games	Cooking
Week 4	Cooking	Games

The beauty of it is that each teacher/workshop leader only has to prepare one lesson and adjusts it for the age groups. We ran two workshops at a time with leaders teaching two weeks in a row.

I was originally worried about needing more teachers, but because they only have to teach two weeks in a row AND they are teaching the same lesson and using their strengths, it's a lighter and more appealing commitment. For the first time people are coming up to me and offering to lead a workshop using their gifts. It's a wonderful way to get to know the adults in our congregation and the children have more adult friends now too. John Kernohan our session clerk and keen gardener ran a nature workshop where he taught children how to prune and talked about pruning our "bad habits" to make room for the fruit of the Spirit.

What do the children say?

"I like the way we all get to do so many cool things. I like that it is not like school lessons. We do fun activities not activity sheets," says David.

What do the teachers think?

"It's fun and manageable so we now have far more volunteers involved in the Sunday children's ministry and better bonds are being created between Triple S children and our congregation," says Dorothy. "I loved illustrating how God uses crushing times (like in Joseph's life) to bring about blessings. I gave each child a ziplock bag of Oreo cookies and asked them how they felt? As expected they expressed joy. I then took a wooden spoon and crushed them and asked the children how they felt. They said sad. We then used crushed Oreos to make icecream sundaes. The children LOVED it and it made the other group of children determined to come back the next Sunday!"

Are the children actually learning?

"I like that it's really clear what we are learning about. We have been learning what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and that the best way to "fish for people" is to share God's love," says David.

This way of teaching has positively impacted our attendance with children wanting to return the next week to do the activity their sibling did the week before!

What type of commitment is required?

This model does ideally require a coordinator. However, if your church doesn't have a children's minister or Sunday School coordinator then it could be managed by a very competent committee.

Although this is an American curriculum, it is available online and can be downloaded in minutes. The initial outlay is inexpensive, but there are photocopying costs and other creative materials to gather. If other churches are interested in trying this teaching method we could swap our units. The possibilities are endless.

If you think your church would like to try it out, download a free sample curriculum from:
www.potters-publishing.com/servlet/the-template/freesampled/1/Page.

Or for more information go to:
www.rotation.org/outlook.htm.



Talking with God's Children

by Prue Francis

We've recently reintroduced a time with the children in our worship service despite some initial resistance. Kids and adults are enjoying it and a recent experience confirmed our decision to prioritise this.

I chose to share the verse in Isaiah (61:1) about Jesus being able to bind up a broken heart to fit with the children's teaching theme of "God as Healer". I found the word 'bandage' in one version so used that as a more Kids Friendly word. We had a big cardboard heart torn in two and the kids got to bandage it up to represent what God does for us when we are hurting inside.



At the end of the service I was walking through a side-room, when a young Mum who has recently moved here from South Africa, came running towards me, weaving her way through an obstacle course of people holding cups of tea. She couldn't wait to tell me how she had nearly stayed at home that morning as she was feeling so 'down'. She arrived at church feeling the same way and then heard God speak to her through the children's talk and immediately felt a load lift from her. She was like a child herself, bubbling over and grateful that God had spoken to her so directly. It confirmed to me the importance of making time to chat with "all" God's children.

Mission can be Messy

by Rev Sharon Ensor



Providing welcome and belonging for children and families has been a priority of Wadestown Presbyterian for many years. We are committed to being "Kids Friendly" and our mainly music ministry of 11 years is a key expression of this commitment. Our two weekly sessions are well attended by community families. Our team works hard to welcome and care for participants and our programme is lots of fun. Our sessions have some Christian content, with more intentional Christian sharing at Easter and Christmas. We provide information and invitations to church activities, including worship services that we believe could appeal to families and their children. Despite all of this we have very few mainly music families attending Sunday morning worship. Some parents have expressed interest in coming to church...but the reality of actually walking through the door at 10am rarely happens.

This came to a head for us last year when the numbers of children and their parents attending church on a Sunday morning dropped to a worryingly low level. We prayed and reflected on our practice of children's ministry, conscious that if the numbers of children attending on Sunday morning dropped too low it could be difficult to turn it around.

Despite grappling with this situation, we did not find any easy answers on how to minister to secular New Zealand children and families. Some of us were interested in exploring Messy Church, a Fresh Expressions church started in the UK by Lucy Moore who believed that traditional forms and times of

worship no longer appealed to most families (www.freshexpressions.org.uk).

In 2011 we invited Sue Fenton, Wellington Presbytery Pioneer Mission Ministry Co-ordinator to come and speak to our congregation about her experience in establishing Messy Church at St Marks, Lower Hutt. Her story excited us and a group of us started to talk and pray about how we might start Messy Church at Wadestown. In July 2011 we launched our first monthly Messy Church. We've been delighted at the response, with 12 mainly music families having now enthusiastically participated in the two hours of craft activities, worship and a meal. Around 50 people attend Messy Church each month and the feedback is that 'this pushes all the right buttons' in regards to time (Sunday 4.30-6.30pm), style and content.

We are excited at the opportunities Messy Church offers for connecting with our community. Running Messy Church is labour intensive as it requires teams to organise the activities, worship and meal. Holding it monthly is more sustainable, but it poses challenges for building relationships and commitment. We are keen to deepen connections and build a sense of community for our Messy Church congregation by offering Toolbox parenting and Alpha marriage courses and faith-based discussion groups to grow disciples of Christ.

Building the team is also a challenge, as most of those involved are also committed to our Sunday morning service. However we are pleased by the offers of help from newer participants and this is something we will encourage this year. We are also thrilled to have received Press Go funding for the appointment of a Community Minister who will focus on growing and caring for our Messy Church.

Becoming Kids Friendly

by Carolyn Sims

Flagstaff Union in Dunedin was well on the way to being a 'Kids Friendly Church' before committing to a self review. A small dedicated team of people planned and ran Kids.Com our Sunday programme and contributed to our community programmes including Hilltop Kids, an after school club, Supakidz, a lunchtime programme in our local school, Music and Movement and Iconz.

We'd heard that Kids Friendly offered a good process for reviewing a church's children's ministry so in September 2008 we decided to do it! We gathered a 'dream team' to look at the first two ideals of the Kids Friendly self-review resource. As the Parish Community Worker (and key leader in several of our children's ministries) I was asked to coordinate our first meeting attended by our minister, leaders and some parents. It felt awkward leading the self-review when children's ministry was something I was so involved in.



Some useful things came out of it, but the next 8 Kids Friendly Ideals got shelved because we were just too busy DOING great things with children and families!

Then in late 2010, Kids Friendly Advisor Cheryl Harray joined our parish and persuaded us to "have another go" at the review. Cheryl offered to facilitate the process and five meetings later in July 2011 the documentation was ready to send away for assessment by Jill Kayser, the Kids Friendly National Coach. Within days we received a congratulatory letter and Kids Friendly certificate and branding resources from Jill stating that "Flagstaff Parish is most definitely a Kids Friendly Church."

The dream team at Flagstaff found the Kids Friendly self review process invaluable, even though it was a little hard to set aside the time in the midst of 'doing it.' They appreciated that being Kids Friendly is a journey not a destination and so ongoing reviewing and goal setting is necessary.

Some tips from the Flagstaff "dream team":

- The self-review document can seem daunting but if you break it down into 'bite sized' chunks (tackle 1 or 2 ideals at a time) and limit the meeting times to no longer than one and a half hours it's very do-able. Make sure you have some treats to snack on!
- Not all the suggestions in the Self Review document need to be adopted. They are there to generate conversations and help you decide what would work best in your context.
- We began by identifying our strengths, challenges and opportunities and then brainstormed our vision and imagined what THIS Kids Friendly Church would 'look like, sound like, feel like.' People were buzzing!
- Minutes were taken at each meeting by one of the team who could type as we spoke. Reviewing those and our vision before the start of the next meeting was helpful.
- From our meetings we developed a fantastic ACTION PLAN documenting what we wanted to do and who would be responsible for it. It's a working document that we refer to at our leaders' meetings. It keeps us on track with achieving our Kids Friendly goals. (This is now available from the Kids Friendly office as a template for other churches who would like to use it.)
- We created a folder of photos, flyers etc to send to Kids Friendly as evidence of our 'heart for children'. This folder gives a really good picture of what is going on. It won't stay the same, so it's a great historical record of what the parish was doing in 2011.
- Having an independent facilitator was helpful for the Flagstaff team. Cheryl was not one of the key ministry staff so could more easily ask questions, make observations and offer suggestions.

To view the wonderful ministry of the Flagstaff team see "A day in the life of Carolyn Sims" on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVzi--eyRpo