

KIDDLIWINKS INFORMATION MANUAL

**A Partnership Project
of
Anglican Diocese of Tasmania
Scripture Union of Tasmania**

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KIDDLIWINKS NETWORK

Kiddliwinks is an interdenominational network promoting the value of playgroups as a valuable ministry for Christian churches seeking to connect with children under five and their families.

Kiddliwinks has been established as a joint project of Scripture Union Tasmania and the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania.

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CORE PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN GROUPS

- Christian team leadership
- Building and nurturing positive relationships
- Supported by prayer
- Building personal skills
- Introducing and integrating Christian faith and values
- Linking your group with people and events in your Christian community
- An understanding and application of child development principles
- Open and effective communication
- Provision of a welcoming environment for children and adults

Kiddliwinks is committed to groups being:

- A recognised ministry of a local church
- Intentional about understanding their Christian purpose
- Led by Christians who are committed to
 1. Talking about Jesus
 2. Being welcoming and respectful of all families
 3. Clearly informing prospective members of the Christian emphasis of the group
 4. Providing safe, developmentally appropriate play experiences
 5. Fostering positive relationships with and between all adults and children
 6. Modelling Christian values of love, grace and care
 7. Celebrating Christmas and Easter

AIMS OF THE NETWORK

- Link church playgroup leaders
- Facilitate training for playgroup leaders
- Share church playgroup information
- Help launch new groups
- Strengthen existing groups
- Encourage and support team members
- Share resources and discover new ideas
- Facilitate special events
- Provide safety and care information

WORKING WITH BABIES, TODDLERS, PRESCHOOLERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Children are spiritual

It is wise to provide appropriate play facilities, resources and materials for young children. The Bible tells us that they are very special, a gift from God.

*You are the one who put me together inside my mother's body;
And I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me.*
(Psalm 139:13, 14)

God's mark is upon each person right from the beginning.

Children are spiritual beings in their own right. They can be more in touch with their spirituality than adults through their senses, feelings and their sense of wonder. Their experience of God doesn't always need words.

Relationships

Good relationships between young children and their carers encourage healthy growth and development. Children who experience love, trust, security and forgiveness in their closest relationships are more likely to understand something about the God who also loves, protects and forgives them. When they become part of a community that lives those values, the impact is even greater. Their experiences will help them make sense of the things they learn through Bible stories that reflect those same values and truths. When a group both practises and teaches these values, it becomes a place of spiritual learning for all who are part of that community.

When we share experiences with children, teach and guide them appropriately, and encourage them to grow in body, mind and spirit, adults too can benefit. We can grow in our understanding of God and his relationship with us. As we seek to provide the best for our children, we too will learn.

Fulfilling a need

Kiddliwinks groups cater for both adults and children. Carers stay with their children throughout. It can be a meeting point for parents and carers who have children under school age and is a way of building community.

Kiddliwinks groups fulfil a real community need. Parents of young children need support. They need the chance to get out of the house, the opportunity to meet new friends, to talk about their children with others and to learn about parenting in an informal way in a caring Christian environment.

Kiddliwinks groups provide a variety of play opportunities with other children from which they can learn and develop. The group provides a valuable place for social interaction where carers who come to church can get to know each other better. The Kiddliwinks group is a place where the team and other Christians can share the love of Christ in a very natural way.

Your aims should be clear from the start. Your ministry should provide the best Kiddliwinks group you can to serve the community and to share the love of Christ.

Your Vision

Before you commence your ministry with under 5s and their families, you need to have a clear picture in mind of what you want to achieve. The following questions may guide your thinking and planning.

- What is your church mission statement? What does your church want to see happening?

- What is your vision for your Kiddliwinks group? Keep in mind the church vision.
- What will make this Kiddliwinks group distinctly Christian? How will it differ from a community playgroup?
- What strategies will you use to achieve this?

You will need to work through these questions as a team and remain passionate about your vision.

Learn to value the process of reaching your vision. Don't be discouraged if it's not as easy as you thought. Learn to be creative in looking for solutions to problems as they arise.

Your Strategies

Seek to be efficient and effective in all you do.

- Create an interesting name for your group to help with promotion in your church community.
- Show love to all carers and children.
- Promote peace at every opportunity, especially within families.
- Offer help when it is most needed—an invitation for coffee, a food parcel, a meal after a new baby is born.
- Actively promote other church activities such as *Alpha* or *Introducing God*.
- Hold a get together/barbecue once a term and invite the wider family (fathers, siblings, working mothers, grandparents)
- Pray with your team of leaders and helpers.

WHAT DOES A KIDDLIWINKS GROUP OFFER?

Social contact

Kiddliwinks groups have many benefits for all who are part of the group. They offer regular social contact for both children and their carers in a welcoming and safe environment. There is opportunity to meet and make new friends.

Links with wider church

Each group offers positive and creative activities for children, and provides ideas for adults and children to try together at home. Kiddliwinks groups are suitable for families already linked with a church and also those with no church contact. Because there is opportunity to develop strong relationships within the group, it is also important to extend that relationship-building with others in the church or wider Christian community. Kiddliwinks groups should seek to link their families with wider church activities and families.

The following are some different contexts in which preschool activities can be included in the wider church community.

- *Special church services* – short services aimed specifically at preschoolers offering, for example, a time for games, story, prayer, rhyme and song.

- *Sunday groups* – crèches and preschool groups for children who come to church with their families.
- *Informal settings* – such as coffee mornings and family picnic days.
- *Special events* – occurring at suitable times such as Saturday tea or Sunday lunch and making the most of festivals such as Christmas and Easter.
- *MOPS groups* – Mothers of Preschoolers groups

Making connections

There are many ways in which you can connect with Kiddliwinks families.

- **Friendship evangelism** –being part of a Kiddliwinks group gives Christians an opportunity to share the love of Christ in a very natural way. Given thought and care, the group can become a very effective part of the church's strategy for evangelism.
- **Family events** –games nights, barbecues, shared meals, picnics
- **Information sheets** –make available information on positive parenting. These could be used as discussion starters.
- **Parenting courses** –run a parenting course. Invite both church and Kiddliwinks families.
- **Girls' night out** –creates community and builds friendships. When people are relaxed they are inclined to talk about many things including Christianity.
- **Follow up baptismal families** –share a meal or a friendly outing.
- **Courses** –*Alpha, Introducing God, Christianity Explained* or another of the many that are available. Invite Kiddliwinks carers. Make sure the time suits those you wish to invite.

Keys to Connecting

- **Pray**—Prayer is vital. It should be happening in the lives of team members, at planning meetings and in the wider church community.
- **Love and serve the carers and children**—Jesus came not to be served but to serve and he calls and challenges his people to be servants too. The parents and carers who are part of your group will have many needs. Think about how you can serve in wider ways. This may mean listening in a non-judgemental way, offering a lift, babysitting, or putting in touch with people who can help.
- **Provide pathways**—As friendships develop, opportunities will come to share your faith in words as well as actions. But many carers will still be a long way from being able to come to church or take part in a group to learn about faith. By providing activities that are non-threatening but which still introduce the person to issues of faith, you may build pathways that eventually lead to their own faith response. You could arrange coffee mornings with a testimony included. Offer invitations to family services and special events at your church. If your church offers child baptism, include an introductory course about the Christian faith. Loan books. Arrange special events with visiting speakers. Provide short courses and offer crèche facilities.

- **Provide a place where people can learn more**—When people are reaching the point where they want to learn more about Christianity, the church as a whole should provide a place where that can happen. Nurture groups can be very effective. As people begin to become Christians through the life of such a group, they can be established in fellowship and ministry through serving as part of the Kiddliwinks team as well as in other ways.

GETTING STARTED WITH A KIDDLYWINKS GROUP

If you have a vision for setting up a Kiddliwinks group, first pray about it. Look around your local area to see what is already provided. If there is another playgroup in the area, talk with the leaders and plan to open on a different day.

Talk with your church leadership. Explain the basic principles of the group before discussing practical details. Suggest that the whole church take this on as a part of its ministry to support under fives and their families.

Aim to run for just one morning or afternoon a week to begin with. Collect a team of like-minded people to work with you.

If a group which is not part of the church is already meeting in your church building, get involved with that group. Go with the attitude of a servant. Practise friendship evangelism and provide pathways for them to connect with your church community.

When setting out to run a Kiddlywinks group for preschool children and their carers there are some practical things to consider which are essential, others that are recommended and others still that are optional.

Essential

Health and safety

Check heaters, floor surfaces, furniture, power sockets, secure entry and exit points, fire exits, toilet and baby changing facilities and kitchen hygiene and safety. Be aware of the different allergies that could affect children. Encourage leaders to attend a First Aid course. Ensure that a first aid kit is available and accessible at all times. Leaders should know where it is stored. Aim for the highest possible standards of health and safety at all times.

Child protection

Because parents and carers remain with their children for the duration of the session, they are responsible for their own children. Many churches have their own guidelines for leaders working with children. Familiarise yourself with these and ensure you abide by them.

Insurance cover

Ensure that you have appropriate and adequate insurance cover for your group. Existing church policies should always be checked.

Teamwork

There are many tasks to be shared in running a Kiddlywinks group. Where teamwork is fostered, it becomes a training ground for future leaders. Try to create an atmosphere where people are free to learn and you will grow your own leaders naturally. As part of your team include at least two parents/carers from your church. This is necessary to retain a Christian presence in your group. Include also at least one Christian person who does not have responsibility for a playgroup child. This 'Kiddlywinks friend' fills an important support role for both team members and parents/carers who attend.

Recommended

Storage facilities

You can never have enough storage. Use boxes, shelves, cupboards and storerooms that are easily accessible and that make setting up and clearing away as easy as possible.

Keeping records

Information such as names, addresses, phone numbers and birth dates help to inform members in the event of unexpected postponements due to sickness and to acknowledge birthdays of children. These both demonstrate care and concern. Ensure however that confidentiality is maintained with all personal details kept on file. Always gain permission before sharing any personal details with others.

Example of details for a Registration Form

Name of child:

Home Address:

Home Telephone:

Date of Birth:

Special Needs (including allergies, dietary needs)

Name of parent/carer:

Home address (if different from above)

Home Telephone:

Mobile:

Budgeting

Christian playgroups involve spiritual nurture of children as well as outreach to carers and families. Be sure to remind the wider church of this role and ask for ongoing financial support to fund the work. Training leaders, publicity, resource books, craft materials, play equipment, refreshments and various other items can be costly. Keep a record of expenditure and income, with proof of purchases at all times. Don't be worried about making a charge for attending the group as many parents and carers are more than willing to contribute towards something from which their children will benefit and that they will enjoy.

Children with Disabilities

We need to welcome and provide for children and adults with disabilities and learning difficulties. Consider how the premises can be made accessible for people with disabilities. Wherever possible obtain special equipment and also cater for any specific needs.

Morning Teas

It is recommended that children have their own plate of food, preferably fruit. Drinks are best provided by parents/carers.

Optional

Helpers

There are many people in our churches who love to be involved in children's work. Publicity, programs and newsletters can be designed and produced, craft materials can be cut and prepared and prayer offered for support. By sharing such tasks with others, the work load for busy team members is reduced.

An information sheet for parents/carers

It is important to keep everyone who attends your Kiddliwinks group up to date with information.

Clearly advertise the dates that your group will be running. Decide as a leadership team whether you will have a break during school holidays and don't forget to take public holidays into consideration. Then let everyone know. If you decide to continue during school holidays, make sure you have something planned for older siblings.

Make sure you let newcomers know that yours is a Christian group. Have this clearly displayed on your information sheet. Be clear about the content of your sessions. Newcomers can then make an informed decision about whether your group will suit them or not.

Let newcomers know your expectations regarding food and drink for children and the cost of each session.

Do you have a policy related to children who are sick? How soon after an illness can they return to your Kiddliwinks group? Decide these details and make sure that parents and carers are informed.

Don't forget to advertise other church events or special events for children and families

Resources

Kiddliwinks network

The network is available to help you. It aims to

- Link church playgroup leaders
- Facilitate training for playgroup leaders
- Share church playgroup information
- Help launch new groups

- Strengthen existing groups
- Encourage and support team members
- Share resources and discover new ideas
- Facilitate special events
- Provide safety and care information

Playgroup Tasmania

Phone: 6228 0362 or 1800 171 882
www.playgroupaustralia.com.au
Offers a toy library, conferences, newsletters

Scripture Union Tiddlywinks Series

www.scriptureunion.org.uk

Good Beginnings

www.goodbeginnings.net.au

Focus on the Family

www.families.org.au

Useful Books

Raising Kids with Faith: useful information and practical tips for parents of kids 0-12 years

published by Scripture Union

The Five Love Languages of Children

by Gary Chapman

Boundaries at Home

by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

The PlaySchool Useful Book

PLAY WITH A PURPOSE

Young children learn through playing. As a guide, they are able to listen for only one minute for each year of life so 'listening only' activities should be kept to a minimum. Both children and adults learn more through what they do and experience than through what they hear.

By providing a range of activities, including both small and large group experiences, on a theme, you can help young children to gather understanding as they play. Ensure that each activity is accessible and meaningful for the children.

Unstructured play

Unstructured play activities can connect children with every day life. They are easy for children to get involved in as they arrive and should introduce the day's theme. These activities should help children to explore concepts (such as the effects of water) as well as laying the foundation for the Christian story or Bible truth that will follow.

Cooperative play

Young children generally play alone but simple, non-competitive games can develop awareness of others and a sense of belonging to a group. Children will learn to share, take turns, watch and imitate others, delight in their own achievements and respond to each other. Physically active games stimulate physical development including coordination and balance. Games can strengthen relationships within a group.

Engaging play

Story time should involve more than just listening. Many Bible stories lend themselves to visual, sound and action aids. Try to engage as many senses as possible. Involve ears, voices, hands and legs and also emotions. Children should be able to imagine, feel, sense and explore as the story is told, and as they engage with it they will be learning.

Creative play

Learning takes place in the process of making, not in the end product, even though it will be treasured and a reminder of the day's theme or story. Children will learn about size, shape, texture, colour and patterns as well as learning new skills and techniques.

Musical play

Young children respond to music, rhythm and movement in many positive ways. They will learn to listen, follow actions, take turns, recognise each other and be part of a group experience. They will remember songs long after Kiddlywinks has ended.

Adults

Adults will learn through the children's play too. Some will simply be learning to play themselves. Others will learn through the Bible stories and may even want to develop that learning through other adult groups. Friendship evangelism is an important part of Kiddliwinks ministry.

THE STRUCTURE OF A KIDDLYWINKS SESSION

Children under 5 thrive on routine and structure. They learn through repetition of activities. It makes them feel secure and safe and helps them to identify people, situations and experiences. This does not mean boring repetition or inflexibility. It is determined by the basic needs of the children.

Each session should include a clear welcome and goodbye time. They should produce familiarity and security for both carers and children.

Welcome time

Providing a welcome is all about creating a sense of belonging, being part of community. The key to doing it lies in being ready.

The room or area being used should act like a magnet to every child so that they are immediately drawn into a play activity of some kind. Children

under 5 are not able to sit around waiting for everyone to arrive. They need to play.

Goodbye time

A clear routine at the end of the session is very helpful for both children and adults. It indicates the close of activities and can assist carers to prepare their child for departure. It may include a simple song or packing up routine.

Structure

Choose a style of playgroup that suits your group and leadership team. You may choose for your sessions to be:

- Unstructured, no set activities
- Semi-structured, a range of activities set up for children to choose
- Structured, one or more activities set up, story is told, finish with a song

A structured program will require more planning but when the load is shared amongst the leadership team, this is quite achievable and rewarding.

Make sure all craft activities are properly supervised and make displays of finished creations where possible. Provide refreshments, preferably fruit, part way through the session.

Encourage everyone to be quiet during the story time. Some carers may choose not to participate or listen to the Bible story. This is quite acceptable as long as others are not disturbed or distracted.

Christian input

Plan to include a Bible story in your program each session. Some groups avoid this in the fear that it will deter families from attending. This has been proved not to be the case. As long as you let people know in your promotional material that yours is a Christian group, it is perfectly acceptable (and accepted by parents) to include a story from the Bible as well as Christian songs for children. Some groups may also include simple prayers.

Explain that the Bible is God's special book and have a child-friendly Bible with you as you tell the story. Don't read directly from the Bible but 'tell' the story to the children.

Make prayers short and simple and encourage action, rhyme and song prayers. You can also include written prayers in the craft material for the session.

Have available Christian picture books and storybooks, including board books, for children to read and borrow to take home.

BUILDING A TEAM

Why Teams?

Teamwork is essential. We can't run a Kiddliwinks group on our own. We all have different gifts, styles and passions. As part of a team we can achieve so much more for God and reflect so much more of who God is.

Teams:

- Provide balance
- Improve planning and follow through
- Increase people's abilities to accomplish tasks
- Generate energy
- Provide opportunities to learn leadership skills
- Provide opportunities to develop friendships
- Honour God through working together as a 'body'

You can build into your team by encouraging them, taking a personal interest in them and equipping them for their task. God calls us first to a relationship with Him and then to ministry. As adults we need to be in meaningful relationships with caring people who love God. A Kiddliwinks team provides an opportunity to work with others who love and serve God. Invest time in your team and spend time together both in planning and in bonding in other ways.

Have fun together.

Gathering your Team

Talk with potential team members. Tell them about your vision for a Kiddliwinks group and listen to how they react. Choose a diverse group for your team with a range of points of view and abilities. There are a range of tasks involved in running a Kiddliwinks group so share the roles with your team. Roles include coordination, programming, welcoming, promotion and finance.

Coordination - The coordinator is the team leader. They will oversee the running of the group.

Program- At least one member of the team will organise the regular program. It is good to establish routines in your Kiddliwinks group but each session will have its own theme that needs to be developed and planned.

Welcome – nominate at least one team member with the responsibility of welcoming newcomers.

Promotion – you will need to decide as a team how you will advertise your group. Some groups rely solely on word of mouth. Others may choose to advertise in their church and local community. Possible places include child health centres, local libraries, doctor's waiting rooms.

First aid – one member of the team should be trained in first aid.

Pastoral care – an important role is caring for the carers and children who attend Kiddliwinks. Visiting new mums with a casserole or keeping in touch when a family member is ill are effective ways to show you care.

Kiddliwinks friend – include in your team at least one or two people who do not have the responsibility for a preschool child. This 'Kiddliwinks friend' fills an important support role for both team members and parents/carers who attend. Their role can include comforting crying babies, minding a baby while a parent's attention is with an older sibling, offering a drink to parents or just spending time chatting to parents and carers and generally making them feel welcome.

KEEPING SAFE

Risk assessment

When you start your Kiddliwinks group, it is necessary to anticipate needs and plan for them. In the area of health and safety, there should never be any compromise. Assess your situation realistically and prioritise your needs. Think of possible dangers that exist and decide, as a team, how you can minimise or eliminate those dangers. Decide what you will do in case of an accident or incident. Work out a fire drill and practise it at least once a year.

Premises

- Do they meet fire regulations? Are doors and fire exits clear, unlocked and identified? Are fire extinguishers checked regularly?
- Can prams and strollers access premises and be easily and safely stored?
- Is there access to a telephone for emergency contact? All team members should know the location of the nearest phone and first aid kit.
- Is the floor covering safe for babies and crawlers?
- Are the rooms warm, light and clean?
- Toilet doors should not be lockable by children.

Equipment

- Is there a clean, safe and comfortable floor covering for babies and toddlers?
- Are there safety guards for heaters and plug protectors for sockets?
- Are there safety gates for vulnerable doors or steps? Children should not be able to escape from the building or into other parts of it.
- Is there a first aid kit?
- Are there clean and hygienic toilets and baby changing areas?
- Are climbing frames properly erected and do they have safety mats?
- Children should not have access to handbags.
- Rubbish bins should not be accessible to children.

- **People**
 - Is there suitable insurance cover for the group?
 - Is there a Child Protection Policy in place?
 - Are rules of basic hygiene followed in food preparation?
 - Is at least one team member trained in first aid?

CHILD PROTECTION

Accreditation

Parents stay with their children and should be responsible for them at all times. It is not necessary to screen or accredit all parents.

However, Kiddliwinks friends, who do not have a preschool child with them, should be accredited according to your church's safety and care policy. A minimum standard of screening should include a police record check and at least two references.

Reporting

If a team member becomes concerned about the physical or emotional welfare of a child in the group, it is important that the appropriate authorities are informed. Make sure that you are familiar with your church's reporting protocols and follow them.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

What is acceptable behaviour?

Every community needs to agree on community rules or boundaries if it is to live and grow together. A Kiddliwinks group is no different. Discuss and establish boundaries to suit your group and to create a culture of understanding and mutual support.

Whatever is decided should be presented in a positive manner. 'Thank you for supervising your child during morning tea'. 'Please help your child to listen during story time'.

Managing Behaviour

- Make sure that parents and carers know they are responsible for their children.
- Offer support to a parent/carer whose child is going through a difficult stage.
- Don't discuss the behaviour of their child in front of others.
- Develop positive strategies for dealing with common behaviour patterns in young children such as biting, pushing, tantrums, dirty nappies.
- Encourage parents and carers to deal with difficult behaviour.
- Don't intervene unless a child is in danger.

Managing difficult behaviour

- Try to remain calm at all times.
- Control the tone of your own voice when handling a situation.

- Intervene when a child is at risk. Explain later to the parent/carer of the child what happened. Try to avoid making an issue of it but emphasise the safety of children.
- Take a distressed child away from the upsetting scene.
- Remember to think in terms of 'difficult behaviour' rather than 'difficult children'.
- Pray for individuals going through challenging times.

Group guidelines

Encourage sharing and taking turns.

Only bring toys from home if they are for sharing.

Encourage learning.

Encourage children to try new activities.

Discourage:

screaming

grabbing things

fighting

slamming doors

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.playgroup.org.au

www.abc.net.au

www.sundayschoolcrafts.com

www.enchantedlearning.com

www.daniellesplace.com

www.hummingbirded.com

www.theideabox.com

www.preschooleducation.com./index.shtml

THEMES

Ideas for activities should be based on the observed interests and developmental abilities of the children. Children sometimes like to do the same activity week after week building their understanding of concepts and skills over time. Some children need encouragement to try different things. Not all children are interested in the same things.

The following themes should get you started. Scripture Union's *Tiddlywinks* series also provides a wide range of biblical themes.

Alphabet

Animals – cats and dogs / ducks and frogs / birds / fish / bears / spiders / dinosaurs / native animals / farm / jungle

Babies

Bathtime / water / moats and boats

Bedtime / night time / dreamtime

Body - hands and feet / faces

Clothes – dressing up / disguises / masks / hats / junk jewellery

Colours

Communication

Cooking

Doors and windows

Family / friends

Feelings – happy / sad

Festivals / celebrations / Mothers and Fathers Day / Christmas / Easter

Flowers

Food – cookery / recipes / nutrition

Growing things

Hello / welcome

Home

Games

Machines

Make believe

Music – instruments / songs / nonsense songs

Nature

Our world / the farmyard / the sea / the zoo / the bush / the circus

Painting / drawing

Puppets and plays

Seasons / the weather

Shapes and patterns

Television

The sky / space

Time / clocks

Transport – trains, / planes / cars / bikes / buses / traffic / road safety

Trees

Useful day – box creations / junk models / cardboard creations

GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE HANDLING OF FOOD

Preventing Food Contamination

1. Practice good personal hygiene. If you are unwell, avoid food-handling
2. Do not taste food with your fingers
3. Foods must be covered at all times
4. Any cuts & wounds should be covered with waterproof dressing before food-handling
5. Wear protective clothing, avoid dangling jewellery
6. Wash hands thoroughly using soap, running water, and dry hands on disposable paper towelling.
7. Choose to use liquid soap for cleaning hands. After breaks and when returning to more food handling, ensure hands and wrists are washed again. Use running water.
8. Do not handle food with bare hands. Wear gloves, use tongs, fork, serving tray.
9. Avoid cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods.
10. Air dry dishes – avoid tea towels. Avoid dish mops and dish cloths.
11. Ensure work areas, all surfaces and utensils are clean.
12. Practice pest control. Ensure all rubbish is wrapped and disposed of in outside bin.
13. Use hot water for all dishwashing.