

# Pray and Play Corners



## WHY PRAY AND PLAY?

Maybe your church already has an area specifically created for parents and children to use during worship. Perhaps you are looking to redevelop it or maybe you want to start from scratch. This short factsheet will help you to consider some important questions.

Firstly, any children's area which involves moving church furniture or fixing anything to walls **will need permission from the Diocesan Advisory Committee**. Consider:

- What age group is this area for?
- Is it primarily for children and parents to use during worship? Where is it best positioned to afford security for parents and children yet also allow them to feel welcome and included in worship?
- Will it be used by visitors to the church for weddings, funerals, and other services where children are present?
- What will it say about welcome to children and to their families?

It is important that such an area speaks of Christian faith in its welcome, generosity and in its quality. An area with toys, books and puzzles that relate to Christian faith and to the worship of the Church will enable children to play with things that are important in the worship of the Church and the stories of the Bible.

When children play they work out their thoughts, emotions and feelings. They discover the chance to be in control of a world when usually their actions and routines are controlled by others. Through play they explore the world about them and the roles that they see adults fulfilling so they will play mummies, daddies, school, builders, doctors, nurses... and church!

- What is the budget for toys?  
The ideas which follow can be started simply and on a small budget, though some toys are more expensive and obtained from specialist stores. Examples are held at the Diocesan Resources Centre for inspection or to borrow. Some may be gathered from eBay, charity shops, or using the skills of handymen/women in your own churches. Start small, grow slowly. Resist any offers of old, worn and totally secular toys. Provide your children with a corner that is different to any other environment that they might encounter in the secular world.

## BIBLE STORIES

Prepare baskets for different stories and arrange them in Biblical order, moving from Old Testament through to New Testament:

A Noah basket might contain rainbow puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, zoo and farm animals, several small Bible story books of Noah and some fact books on animals. Other baskets can be made for Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Jonah.

A box or shelf of different children's Bibles and other Christian picture books or stories.

A Good Shepherd basket containing sheep, shepherd, green felt circle, fence panels, story book of The Good Shepherd and maybe a story book of David, the shepherd King, book of Psalm 23.



Simple dressing up clothes for children to dress up as Biblical characters.

## CHURCH YEAR

- Why pack away the crib after Christmas; provide a child friendly crib set and leave it available all year for children to handle and retell the story – a reminder that each Sunday we remember the cycle of Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection.
- Provide an Easter basket with Ukrainian or painted wooden eggs, a cross and some purple ribbons, butterfly puzzles and soft toys, an Easter Cube, soft chicks or cockerels and Bible story books of the Easter story.
- A Pentecost basket could contain: soft toy doves - hand stitched from felt, windmills, streamer toys, story books of Pentecost.



## LITURGICAL PLAY

Bible stories and the cycle of the Church Year can be supplemented with toys that help children play through the liturgies and services of which they are a part.

A **Baptism** basket may contain a bowl, baby doll, baptism cube/book, candle, dove, all stored in a basket

A **Holy Communion** basket might contain some small dolls dressed as priests, a small table and a chalice and plate, a Lord's Prayer cube and some Children's Holy Communion cubes.

Dressing a small focal table as an altar at which children can play will also act as a reminder to all that this corner is as much a "Sacred Space" as any other part of the church. The table can hold a play sized chalice (wooden egg cup) and paten (small wooden plate), a small holding cross and some icon pictures.

Also good to have are Clergy Dolls and Play Churches.

A children's area like this is a great help to children and adults alike - for parents with children in the Pray and Play corner it encourages an awareness and sensitivity towards the spiritual, reflective nature of their play and an awareness of being part of the worshipping community. If it is to remain a place which encourages spiritual awareness it will need to be kept tidy and ordered ready for each time that it might be used. A small team of volunteers who will pop into church during the week, or stay after a service to check that everything is tidy and back in its proper place will mean that the Pray and Play corner remains as a welcoming and special place which speaks to the whole community of the presence of God.

## BEGIN ON A BUDGET

Involve members of your congregation:

- Knit Noah's Ark, Nativity Set, Last Supper set, lambs, chicks
- Sew simple dressing up costumes, hand puppets, doves etc
- Visit ebay and charity shops for good quality plastic animals, dress up dolls as Bible characters, Noah's Ark
- Collect items and make up baskets with suitable books
- Small table with altar cloth plus wooden chalice and paten
- Laminate photos of parts of your church: font, altar, pulpit, lectern
- Ask members of your congregation to sponsor one of the specialist toys.

Provide a craft activity that is relevant to the liturgical season or the theme of the day.

**Start with one or two items:**

Rug

Nativity set: £20

One or two Bible story baskets/bags: approx. £10 each

A Jesus doll: £18

An altar play table: £15

Bible story jigsaws: £12

Cost: £85

(dependant on shop)

Photo courtesy of St George's,  
Campden Hill



Ideas inspired by the Spiritual Child Network

(<http://spiritualchild.co.uk>) & St George's, Campden Hill

(<http://stgeorgescampdenhill.com>)

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## Suppliers List - where to find suggested toys

*All prices approximate*

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| <a href="http://www.amazon.co.uk">www.amazon.co.uk</a>                               | Noah's Knits, Knitivity   |
| <a href="http://www.articlesoffaith.co.uk">www.articlesoffaith.co.uk</a>             | Jesus Doll (18), Clergy Doll (£32.95)   |
| <a href="http://www.bakerross.co.uk">www.bakerross.co.uk</a>                         | Wood chalice and paten, Wooden Eggs (from £9.90-£16)  |
| <a href="http://www.beulahenterprises.org">www.beulahenterprises.org</a>             | Jesus Doll (\$65 plus customs)  |
| <a href="http://www.eden.co.uk">www.eden.co.uk</a>                                   | Lord's Prayer Cube (£9)   |
| <a href="http://www.notonthehighstreet.com">www.notonthehighstreet.com</a>           | Boats (£5.95 for 4)   |
| <a href="http://www.revruth.files.wordpress.com">www.revruth.files.wordpress.com</a> | Last Supper Knitting Pattern  |
| <a href="http://www.stmichaelsworshop.co.uk">www.stmichaelsworshop.co.uk</a>         | Godly Play (various)  |
| <a href="http://www.schleich.org.uk">www.schleich.org.uk</a>                         | Schleich animals (or source from Early Learning Centre, Toys R Us etc)  |
| <a href="http://www.trusttoys.co.uk">www.trusttoys.co.uk</a>                         | Wooden Shepherd (£11), Small Wooden Noah's Ark (£20)  |
| <a href="http://www.tts-group.co.uk">www.tts-group.co.uk</a>                         | Bible Jigsaws (approx. £6), Bible story play pieces (£14), Easter Doll (£40), Soft Church (£32), Wooden Church (55), Church Jigsaw (£7) |

*This covers most of the toys available commercially, although extensive web searching will probably uncover more.*

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