

Come to God's House to Play

The purpose of this project is to get children and their parents into the church where they can play, and learn through the process more about what it means to be part of the family of God. This will hopefully get some families back into church and if it is a regular event, back into church often. Junior Church members will also have the opportunity to explore through play what is happening during the parish mass. Parents can meet one another and hopefully build a new support network for one another.

The first event focuses on the House of God. Why are there churches? What is in them? What happens in various areas of the church and why? If children and their parents are comfortable being in the building, they are more likely to come back. Should this become a regular event, future sessions would focus on a particular Biblical story or theme; for instance, Creation – which could also link into St Agnes' environment project; Noah's Ark; the Nativity; etc.

Play Stations

Baptismal Font: Baptism. An introduction into what it means to be part of the family of God. Have a child-sized font and dolls.

Vestry: dress-up clothes. Everyone gets dressed-up. An explanation of liturgical vestments.

Music: musical instruments. Make a joyful noise. Teach a song with instruments.

Scripture: children's Bible stories. For the first session, perhaps have several children's Bible stories that can be read to the children. Future events could then have a one-story focus. What are scripture readings? Why do we read scripture? What is the 'Old Testament'? What is the 'New Testament'?

Altar: Biscuits and juice. Here there will be a child friendly explanation of the Eucharist. What do we mean by Christ's body? What do we mean by Christ's blood? Why do we celebrate the Eucharist?

The service sheet for the first service would describe each of the play stations in a storybook fashion with pictures that can be later coloured in by the children.

Format

- 3:00 pm Parents and children arrive. A member of the St Agnes' community will welcome and explain each station. The children are free to roam, explore and play. The parents are encouraged to ask questions and play with the children. As the service sheet will also explain each station and the parents will be encouraged to take this with them, the children do not have to visit all of the stations for the parents to leave with an understanding of what happened at each.
- 3:15 pm Welcome, introductions and prayer.
- 3:30 pm Encourage people to move into the church hall, which will be decorated for the children's tea party. Children and parents free to continue playing, have tea or both.
- 4:00 pm Thank you, closing prayer and blessing.

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To Do:

Order of Service

- This will be in a colouring book format. Each station will have a picture that the children can colour and will explain each station in a child friendly way, supplemented with an explanation for adults.
- There will be an insert in the form of a simple feedback form, which we will ask the parents to complete before they leave. This will gauge whether the event is worth repeating again.

Stations

- **Baptismal Font:**
 - Small font
 - Dolls or something for the children to play with in the water
 - towels
 - Explanation will include becoming a member of the family of God; receiving the Holy Spirit
- **Vestry:**
 - Go through the vestments, wash and repair; other 'dress up' clothes also needed.
 - Explanation: why an altar party dresses up
- **Music:**
 - Organ and other instruments (tambourines, rattles, drums, etc)
 - Teach a simple song
 - Explanation: Make a joyful noise unto the LORD
- **Lectern:**
 - Bible stories
 - Explanation: Bible readings and sermon
- **Altar:**
 - Small table and chairs
 - Explanation: Eucharistic feast

Also needed:

Pillows, carpets, wands

An adult to host each station

Proposed format for first service:

- As people arrive, greet them in the decorated Church Hall with juice and biscuits. Have storybooks and felt boards available here, as well as at the lectern. [15 minutes]
- Once most have arrived, walk the families through the stations, allowing them to follow in their order of service.
- Allow the children to dress up in the vestry; teach a simple song (Jesus loves me?) at the organ; read a short Bible story at the lectern
- Allow the children to explore the stations as they wish. Members of St Agnes' congregation available to answer questions / encourage conversation / show hospitality