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Uniting Church **Playgroup**

# Playgroup

# Ideas

## Term 4, 2011

Compiled by the Children & Family Ministry Team  
Uniting Church SA



Uniting Church. **Uniting People.**

**Mission Resourcing SA**

# PLAYGROUP IDEAS — TERM 4, 2011

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Dear reader or browser,

We are happy that you have opened this resource; and we hope it will be a help to you in planning a program for your church-based playgroup.

In order to continue producing this kind of resource, we need to hear from you. So please take the time to let us know how you are using the resource and to give us your suggestions for future editions. Send your response — you can use this feedback form if you wish — to **children@sa.uca.org.au**

Thanks, and God's blessings to you and the families you support,

*Mary Jo and Melissa*

Children and Family Ministry Team  
Uniting Church SA

## FEEDBACK FORM

Name and location of **your playgroup** .....

Your name and your role in the playgroup.....

Number and ages of children attending your playgroup .....

Special features of your playgroup .....

.....

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How many **Playgroup Ideas** documents have you looked at before this? .....

What have you found useful in **Playgroup Ideas**? .....

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What improvements can you suggest for **Playgroup Ideas**? .....

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Any other comments?.....

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**Term 1, 2012** Here are the themes we expect to be featuring. We'd love your contribution of ideas and suggestions.

Creation: Sun, moon stars

An animal: Cats

A story: Three little pigs

Transportation: Boats

An occupation: Teachers

A place: Bushland

My body: Legs

My home: Bathroom (cleanliness)

Seasonal: Welcome to Playgroup

Seasonal: Easter

# INTRODUCTION

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## Term 4, 2011, Playgroup Ideas

This resource is designed to help leaders of church-based playgroups in planning their program.

This resource is not a set curriculum; it provides ideas that you may pick and choose from or adapt to your own situation. The themes and activity ideas can fit into whatever format you have established for your playgroup.

A **Uniting Church SA Playgroup Manual** is also available at <http://mnrn.sa.uca.org.au/childrens-ministry/playgroups.html>

The manual is a comprehensive resource that includes: Starting a playgroup, Administration, Safety and property, Leaders and volunteers, Finances, Getting the church involved, Promotion, Frequently asked questions and Useful contacts.

## Faith Enrichment Ideas

Playgroups organised by churches and staffed by Christians serve young families in many ways. Their Christian character is shown through the development of caring relationships. Some church-based playgroups also introduce Christian concepts into their program through activities, songs and stories. A playgroup can be an alternative 'church' experience *if* the playgroup provides opportunities for the family to explore the Christian faith.

We respect the view of some churches that playgroup is only pre-evangelical, with a policy not to mention anything 'Christian' unless the topic is brought up by the parent or carer. However, the greatest gift we have to offer people is Jesus. Let's not hide him from those that we care about simply because we are afraid to offend.

The parents and carers who come into the church for playgroup know that the organisers are Christian, so they would find it reasonable to have some appropriate faith discussion or activity. It's important to state in your playgroup information posters and brochures that you do have some Christian content in your playgroup program.

This **Playgroup Ideas Resource** provides a range of Faith Enrichment Ideas related to each topic. Playgroup leaders can use one or more of these suggestions to introduce a faith dimension into the playgroup session in a natural way. You know the families who attend your playgroup, so you can best decide what is appropriate for their situation.

## Themes This Term

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Arms</b>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Pink</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Computer technicians</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Mall/shopping centre</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>'Solomon asks for wisdom'</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Advent</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Wheat and bread</b>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Hinges</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Birds</b>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Christmas (Angels)</b>

**Note:** Throughout this resource the term 'parent' is used for the parent, relative or other carer who brings a child to playgroup.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PAGE

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## MUSIC AND RHYTHM DEVELOPMENT

### Typical development stages

Children experience rhythm in their bodies before they can successfully understand rhythmic sound in their minds.

**In the womb** fetuses respond to sounds and music and move to the beat of their mother's heart.

### Infants

- discriminate among differences in sound, frequency, rhythm and melody
- sway, bounce, or move their hands in response to music they hear
- have a wide vocal range
- can imitate and experiment with their vocal instruments
- can be calmed and soothed with music

Purposeful singing can begin at around twelve months.

### Toddlers

- love to dance and move to music
- enjoy the repetition of songs
- laugh at silly songs and nonsense rhymes
- are able to sit attentively for a short performance or recording
- make up songs and sing to themselves as they play
- enjoy singing just to be singing, with no self-consciousness
- like songs that repeat words and melodies, rhythms with a definite beat, and words that ask them to do things
- like nursery rhymes and songs about familiar things like toys, animals, play activities, and people
- sing with or without musical accompaniment.

Children age four and five may be adept at using musical instruments (alone and in a group) and are more aware of the messages in song lyrics.

God has created a universe that is organised in patterns, vibrates with rhythm and expresses itself in sound.

'One of the best choices you can make for your children is giving them the gift of music.' (*The Benefits of Music on Child Development*, Jovanka Caires and Paul Borgese)

Music is a way of understanding God's creation that is just as significant as logical/mathematical, linguistic, spatial, bodily/kinaesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences (Howard Gardner). Music can have a profound influence on the other intelligences.

'Making music is as much a basic life skill as walking or talking' (Peery and Peery). 'It is a birthright for all people to be able to sing in tune and march to a beat' (Levinowitz and Guilmartin).

There are two primary aspects of music: (1) hearing and processing rhythmic sound and (2) performing and using an instrument (which may be the voice). Both, ideally, begin in early childhood years.

### Benefits of music

Music (particularly musical experiences in childhood) provides a huge range of benefits.

Through song, dance, and instrumental music we express the full range of human emotion and pass on ethnic beliefs and values.

Music ignites all areas of development: intellectual, social and emotional, motor, language, and overall literacy. It helps the body and the mind work together and strengthens memory skills.

Music listening and music making can improve creativity and learning (language, reading and mathematics). Singing is a healthy lung exercise that helps children learn sounds, improve pronunciation and develop vocabulary.

Making music together provides the joy and value of group activity.

### What does this mean for our playgroups?

The simple answer is: provide as many musical experiences as you can in playgroup and encourage parents to share music with their children at home. Specifically, we can:

- sing and dance — **forget** our own inhibitions
- **play background music**
- use music clues to introduce different activities
- mix music with games that require body movement, such as clapping, waving, jumping and dancing, finger games
- make noise by singing and chanting together, clapping, playing percussion instruments
- introduce children to various sounds and rhythms, both natural and instrumental: have children guess a sound they hear or where it comes from; invite them to reproduce it
- provide a range of shakers, whistles, bells, tambourines, drums, harmonicas for children to use in free play and in special music times. Let children make their own instruments
- dance with children, encourage them to move freely with music or percussion.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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## MUSIC

Many songs we suggest are from Play School. Many parents are already familiar with them and this helps with the sing-a-long! Play School CD's are available at the ABC stores and often at department stores, they include

- *Musical Fun* (includes *Oomba Baroomba* and *There's a Bear in There*.)
- *Sing-A-Long Songs*
- *Double Pack* ( includes *Play School Favourites* and *Hullabaloo*)
- *The New Useful Book* contains melody lines for many popular songs and activities arranged by themes. It is 'a very useful book'!

## BOOKS

For each weekly theme we suggest a variety of story books. You can use whatever books suit your group and are available on family bookshelves or from the local library.

You may also want to build your own playgroup library with purchased or donated, age-appropriate books that children and parents may look at during playgroup — and/or borrow to use at home. Your collection could include

Bible story books such as

- *God Loves Me Bible* (Candle Books)
- *The Ralph Milton Family Story Bible*

Children's prayer books

- *I imagine* by Rivett & Moriuchi (Lion)

You may also consider giving books to children/families on special occasions, eg for Christmas, consider:

- *\*The Baby Jesus Story,\* The Shepherds and Me,* or *\*The Present* by Sally-Anne Atchin

\*These books are available from the Mission Resourcing SA Resource Centre. Contact Beth Freeman (82364243; bfreeman@sa.uca.org.au)



**MediaCom** is a good source for Children's Bibles and other resources.

Website: <http://www.mediacom.org.au> — for online orders and browsing

Visit: 14 Eton Rd, Keswick 5035, South Australia

Phone toll free: 1-800-811-311

Email: [admin@mediacom.org.au](mailto:admin@mediacom.org.au)

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## COPYRIGHT

Ideas are seldom truly original. Some of the same ideas are available from many different sources. The ideas in this resource may have their origin in a whole range of personal experience, observation, printed resources or electronic resources. They have been filtered through memory and modified to meet specific needs. Some poetry has been included where the 'original writer' is unknown.

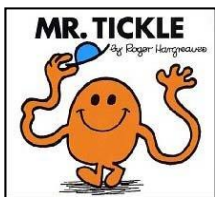
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# ARMS

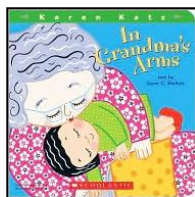
## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Puppet:** Children make a spoon puppet. Use a plastic spoon and draw a face on the back of the spoon. If you wish, add a shirt by using a rectangle of fabric. Cut a small hole in the centre of the fabric that will allow you to put the handle of the spoon through it and push it up towards the head. Twist a pipe cleaner around the spoon just under the 'head' and neck hole of the shirt. The pipe cleaner is the 'arms'. Use a rubber band to fasten the shirt around the waist of the spoon puppet. Children can arrange the puppet's arms in various ways and perhaps arrange their own arms the same way, eg 'way up high', 'out to the side'. Parent and children talk about why they can't bend their own arms as many ways as the puppet.
- **Arms for holding:** Parents hold their child in their arms. Talk about how this feels to parent and child. Have some dolls and/or large soft toys that children can hold in their arms like a baby.
- **Parts of the arm:** Have some dolls (preferably jointed dolls). Parents help children identify the arms of several dolls and their own arms. Older children can learn to name and identify: shoulder, upper arm, elbow, lower arm, wrist and hands. You may also have some toys animals (four legged and two legged) and ask children to group the ones that have arms and the ones that do not have arms.
- **Pass the hug around:** Children and parents stand in circles with 8-10 people. A leader or another adult begins: 'I've got something special for [name of another person]. It's a hug.' The starting person hugs the person named. And asks: 'Who would you like to pass the hug to?' Name another person and continue until everyone in the group has had at least one hug.
- **Arm circles:** You'll need a musician with an instrument (or a recording) for this one. Children and parents stand with arms extended straight out at their sides. When the music plays softly they rotate their arms slowly. As music increases in volume, they make larger circles. Keep changing the volume of music and size of circles.
- **Linking arms:** People form pairs of two people about the same size. Link arms at the elbow and walk together around the leader. Do the same with three people and four people. You may use music for this exercise.
- **Armed with scarves:** Use scarves from your closet, second-hand shops or make your own from inexpensive light-weight fabric. Have the scarves in a basket. Children can select a scarf and play with it as they wish. Then play 'follow the leader', demonstrating various different ways of waving scarves. You may use words like 'over', 'under' and 'around' as you describe what you are doing.

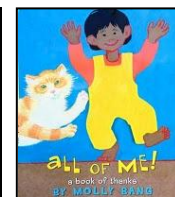
**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in your library or parents' collections about human bodies, particularly arms, eg



**Mr Tickle**  
by Roger  
Hargreaves



**In Grandma's  
Arms** by Jayne  
C. Shelton  
Illustrated by  
Karen Katz



**All of Me**  
by Molly Bang

## NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- Shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand (Tune: Head and shoulders)  
Shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand, Point to each part of the arm as you sing about it.  
They're the parts that ma-ake my-y arm 'Walk' fingers down the arm from shoulder to hand.  
Shoulder, elbow, wrist and hand. Point to each part of the arm as you sing about it.

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God made every detail of our bodies.
- **Talk about:** the many things we can do with our arms.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God wants people to have arms.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for loving us and giving us arms. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be. (1 Corinthians 12:18)

# PINK

You may link this theme with the observance of Pink Ribbon Day, Monday, October 24, 2011. For more information and ideas, see <http://www.pinkribbonday.com.au/about.htm>

Encourage leaders, parents and children to wear something pink. As children arrive, ask each child to tell you about the pink item they are wearing. If any child is not wearing pink, tie a pink ribbon on their wrist. In fact, you might give everyone a pink ribbon so no one is excluded.

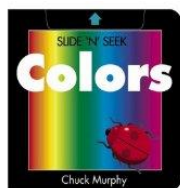
## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** Invite someone to come to playgroup and explain to the children the significance of pink ribbon day and why they are involved with it.
- **Pink balloons:** Give each child a pink balloon. Parents can write the child's name on the un-inflated balloon with texta. As parents blow up the balloon, children watch what happens to their name. Parents and children play with their balloons, eg sit facing one another and pat the balloon back and forth, or parents bat the balloon into the air and children try to catch it.
- **Pick the pink:** Display a number of collections of items. Each collection has something that is pink and several that are other colours, eg a vase of flowers, a bowl of fruit and vegetables, a string of various coloured beads, a pile of books, a collection of soft toys, a box of crayons. Children with their parents look at the various collections. Children pick the pink item and talk about it.
- **Pink snack:** Serve pink food on pink plates or serviettes. Possibilities include: pink grapefruit may need to be sugared to appeal to young palates, pink cake, biscuits with pink icing. Pink lemonade as a drink. You might like to use pink bowls, cups and serviettes.
- **Pink, the singer:** What should you do about the obvious connection between this colour and Alecia Moore, aka Pink? She generally projects an image and attitude that we may not want to promote. The easiest thing to do is to ignore her. However, your children may already recognize her by picture or by name. You may want to show a 'conservative' picture of Pink and talk about her using her celebrity to support causes like RSPCA and Red Cross Bushfire appeal in Australia. Ask children what colour they would pick if they wanted to have a name that is a colour.
- **Pink stack:** Challenge children to make as tall a tower as they can of pink plastic drinking cups. Half the fun is knocking down the stacks and collecting cups that roll around the floor.
- **Mixing colours:** Give children red and white paints to finger paint with and let them see how when they mix those colours it becomes pink. Alternatively make white play dough. Give each child a ball of white play dough. They make a hole in the ball with a thumb. An adult places a drop of red food colouring in the hole (use a medicine dropper to prevent spills). Child plays with the play dough as it gradually forms red and white swirls and then becomes solid pink.

**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in your local library or parents' collections about colours, especially pink, eg



**I Don't Like Pink**  
by John  
Peterson



**Colors  
(Slide 'n  
Seek)**  
by Chuck  
Murphy



**Pink Carnival!**  
by Joanne Gail  
Johnson

## NURSERY SONGS AND GAMES

- **Pink clothes song** (Tune: If you're Happy and You Know It)  
If there's pink on your t-shirt stand up quick, (X2)  
If there's pink on your t-shirt (X2)  
If there's pink on your t-shirt stand up quick! (Change items of clothing and actions.)

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God made a colourful world.
- **Activity:** If children make pink paintings, write the faith concept or verse on them to take home.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God made so many colours.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for the beautiful world full of colours. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God made the world and everything in it. (Acts 17:24, adapted)

# COMPUTER TECHNICIAN

Most of our Playgroup Ideas are 'low-tech'. However, technology is a part of the lives of children and their parents. This session has an emphasis on technology, which will be an introduction for some children and reinforcement for children who are already comfortable using i-Pads and forms of technology.

## ACTIVITIES

- **Guest:** Invite someone who works as a computer technician, an IT specialist or a similar role. The computer tech visits playgroup and talks to children about what they do and how what they do helps people. It would be good if they have a PC or laptop computer that they can use to teach children the names of key parts of the computer.

It would also be good if they use some simple computer activities to introduce children to using a keyboard and/or mouse. (See [kidspot.com.au](http://kidspot.com.au) for suggested children's activity websites.)

- **Base 2:** The binary, or base-2 number system, represents numeric values using two symbols, 0 and 1. The binary system is used internally by all modern computers. Parents help children count and physically arrange the items in groups of two.

Have a number of objects (eg blocks, sticks) on a table.

'Show me no sticks.' 'Show me one stick.' 'Show me two sticks.'

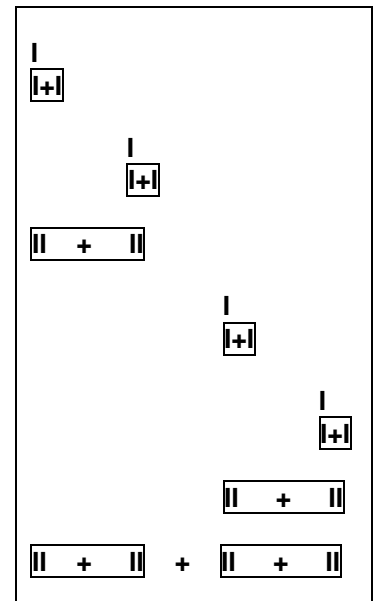
'How many groups of two sticks do we have?' (1)

Repeat.

'Now how many groups of two do we have?' (2)

You may extend the exercise by putting aside the grouped sticks and repeating. Then look at how many groups of groups of two sticks you have.

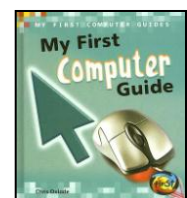
- **Open/shut:** Computers using the binary system are also driven by a simple on/off, open/shut system. Challenge children to look around the room and point out things that can open and shut. Is it open or shut now? Who can open it? How can they open it? Where it is safe, have children open and shut the device. Do the same activities for on/off.



- **Computer craft:** Children can make a computer aided craft. (See <http://crafts.kaboose.com> for computer themed crafts.)
- **Who can fix it:** Use the familiar song 'Humpty Dumpty' to introduce a discussion about fixing things (putting them together again). Show pictures of some items that may need fixing (eg a car/auto mechanic; a scraped knee/mum with bandaid; table/carpenter. End with a computer/technician). Ask children when this is broken, who fixes it?
- **Make a computer.** For each computer you'll need a manila file folder. Lay the folder lengthwise in front of the child. The child can open and shut it like a laptop computer. On the inside top, parents can draw a frame for the screen. Children can write or draw anything they wish as a screen saver. On the inside bottom, glue a keyboard form (see appendix). Punch a hole on the side of the folder and tie on a length of string with a jar cap attached as a 'mouse'.

**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in your local library or parents' collections about computers, eg *My First Computer Guide* by Chris Oxlade.

AND/OR, give children the experience of looking at a book on a hand-held electronic device. Titles available from Amazon for Kindle include: *It could be anything*, *Too much TV* and many favourite children's stories.



## NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

Older children may sing the alphabet song locating letters on their computer keyboard as they sing.

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God gives us people who help us.
- **Talk about** how computers can help people.
- **Wonder:** I wonder what God thinks about computers.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for computers and people who make them work for us. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** Use the wisdom your God gives you. (Ezra 7:25)

# MALL/SHOPPING CENTRE

You may want to hold your playgroup in a mall or shopping centre, particularly if it has a dedicated children's play area. Plan the trip as early in the term as possible to avoid the Christmas rush.

Let parents know your plans, and exactly when and where to meet. Perhaps you can walk there as a group. Otherwise make sure everyone has transportation.

Your session could be as simple as a play in the mall's play area and a snack in a food court. Consult the mall management for other suggestions.

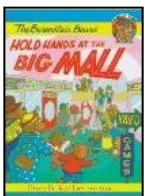
**OR:** Make your session primarily a teaching session for parents, looking particularly at safety issues: how to safely manage an escalator/elevator with a pram or toddler; how to discourage children from exploring/ touching displays; dealing with tantrums, how to keep children from wandering — what to do if they go missing, etc. Check out [www.parents.com](http://www.parents.com) for some helpful hints.

You can also have a playgroup session about shopping in your usual venue. Use some of these activities.

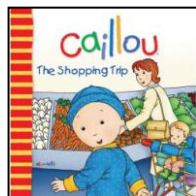
## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** Invite someone whom children might encounter at a mall, eg security guard, concierge, salesperson or check-out person. The visitor talks to children about what they do and how what they do helps people. The guest might also be willing to act out with the children some pretend mall encounters, with an emphasis on safe and polite behaviour.
- **Make believe mall:** Set up three or more low tables. Each table represents a type of store children might find at a mall: grocery store, clothing store, toy store, shoe store, electronics store . . . Identify each table with a picture and word (or even the logo of a particular store).  
**Stocking the shelves:** Place items appropriate to each store in a pile on the floor. Challenge children to work together to take the items to the correct stores.  
**Shopping:** Children and parents each have a shopping bag and a limited supply of tickets. At each 'store' they talk about the things that can be bought there. Each family can buy one item from each store with a token and put it in their shopping bag.
- **Catalogue collage:** Parents and children examine catalogues from shops at your local mall. Children cut or tear out pictures of items they already have at home and paste them onto paper to make a collage. Parents may introduce older children to the concept of 'need' vs. 'want/like'.
- **Parking lot safety:** A leader works with one or two families at a time. Take them to the area where you park cars and demonstrate appropriate/safe behaviour for the mall parking lot.
- **A cumulative story:** Sit in a circle. A leader begins the story by saying: '[Name of a child] is going to the mall. He/she's looking for . . .'  
The named child calls out something they would look for at a mall, eg 'book'.  
The leader repeats the first part of the story 'Simon is going to the mall. He's looking for a book.'  
Then gives another child a clue to add to the story: 'And Chelsea is going to the mall. She's looking for . . .'  
Leader begins from the start of the story again. Continue adding to the story.

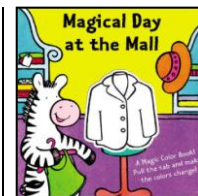
**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in your local library or parents' collections about malls or shopping, eg



**The Berenstain Bears Hold Hands at the Big Mall**  
by Stan and Jan Berenstain



**Let's Go Shopping**  
a Caillou book  
from Chouette Publishing



**Magical Day at the Mall**  
by Shaheen Bilgrammi

## SONGS AND RHYMES

- Let's go shopping at the mall, mall (Tune: Let's go riding in the car, car)
- Consider using the YouTube song 'Let's go shopping, you and me;' (Maple Leaf Hashma)

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God loves us and keeps us safe.
- **Talk about** the many places we go and how God keeps us safe.
- **Wonder:** I wonder how God wants us to be safe at the mall.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for places where we can buy the things we need. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God says: I will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

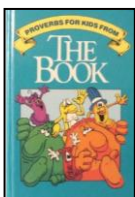
# SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

This session is based on a story from the Old Testament of the Bible: Solomon asks for wisdom. The concept of 'wisdom' (a discerning heart) is probably beyond the understanding of playgroup children, but the session can be used to introduce the idea of prayer as talking to God.

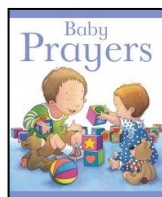
## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** A guest who is a Christian and who is experienced in prayer may visit the children and share with them in a simple way about why they pray and how they pray.
- **Story telling:** Tell the story (2 Chronicles 1:7-12) in one or more different ways, eg use the script and pictures from the appendix, use your own words, read it from a children's book. Story-telling can be a whole group activity, or a small group activity or each parent can read it to their child alone.
- **Re-tell the story:** Children can re-tell the story using the story pictures from the Appendix.
- **Talking and listening:** We speak with our mouths. Make a 'speak' sign by putting your hand in front of your mouth and opening and closing fingers against your thumb. We listen with our ears. Make a 'listen' sign by cupping your hand behind an ear (or both ears). When the leader says 'speak' (or 'talk'), children make the speak sign. When the leader says 'listen', children make the listen sign. Parents work with their own children to take turns speaking and listening. Use phrases like:  
Parent: I love you / Child: I love you, too.  
Parent: You are special to me / Child: and you are special to me.  
Parent: I thank God for you / Child: I thank God for you, too.
- **Prayer crown:** Show a sample crown with the words on it: '. . . Solomon listened to God listened to . . .' written around the circle of the crown. Read it to children so they get the idea of it going on and on. Children can make their own paper crowns. Parents write on them, using either the Solomon sentence or '[the child's own name] listens to God listens to . . .' An easy crown is simply a strip of paper. Children can decorate it by gluing on bits of coloured (shiny, if possible) paper. Parents measure the strip around the child's head and tape it into a circle.
- **Closing eyes:** *Sometimes when we talk to God we close our eyes so we don't see something else and forget what we wanted to say. Show me how you close your eyes. But we don't have to close our eyes. God listens to us whether our eyes are open or shut. Sometimes it's better to open our eyes and look at all the wonderful things God has given us, and to say thank you to God for the things we see.* Encourage children to point to or name the things they see and form a prayer: Thank you, God, for mus. Thank you, God, for toys.
- **Folding hands:** *Sometimes when we talk to God, we fold our hands so we don't use them to touch other things and forget what we want to say.* Follow the same pattern as for 'closing eyes'.

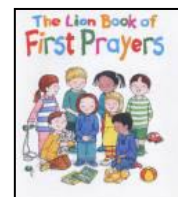
**BOOKS TO SHARE:** Find Bible story collection books in your local library or parents' collections or a single story books of 'Solomon prays for wisdom'. Alternatively have available several children's prayer books.



**Proverbs for Kids  
from the Book**  
(Tyndale)



**Baby Prayers**  
by Sarah Toulmin



**The Lion book  
of first prayers**

## NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- God answers prayer in the morning, God answers prayer at noon.  
God answers prayer in the evening. He'll keep your heart in tune.  
Add verses, eg God hears your prayer . . .', ' Whisper a prayer . . .'


## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God listens when we talk to him.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God listens to us.
- **Prayer:** Thank you for listening when we talk to you. Just like you did for King Solomon. Thank you for giving us what we need. Just like you did for King Solomon. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** . . . tell God about everything. Ask and pray. Give thanks to him. (Philippians 4:6)

# ADVENT

Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas. In Church tradition, Advent begins on the Sunday, four weeks prior to Christmas day (November 27, 2011). For ease, most people treat Advent as the days of December prior to Christmas. For children under three, this year is likely to

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

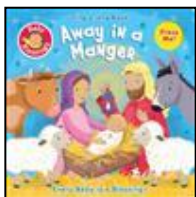
- Day and night:** Playgroup leader can do this with a group or parents can do it with their own children. Use 14 pieces of paper: 7 black and 7 light blue. Also have pre-cut 7 yellow sun shapes and 7 white moon shapes (and stars if you wish).
 

Show a blue paper. What makes light in the sky when the sky is blue? (Children paste on a yellow sun.) What do we call the time when the sky is light and the sun is shining? What do we do in the daytime?

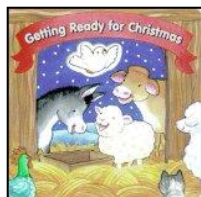
Show a black paper. What makes light in the sky when the sky is black? (Children paste on a white moon.) What do we call the time when the sky is dark and the moon is shining? What do we do when it is night-time? Repeat, if you wish, for seven days and nights.

With older children, use the cards to introduce the names of the days of the week and the way they appear on a calendar
- Waiting experiences:** Parents can talk with their children about times when they have to wait: wait 'til dinner is ready, wait 'til it's time for a favourite TV show, wait 'til it's playgroup day. What's good about waiting? What's bad about waiting?
- Waiting game:** Use large balls or cards: Red for 'stop'; green for 'go' and yellow for 'wait'. Have children move (eg around in a circle) while you are showing the green signal. They watch and stop when you show the red signal. Immediately after they stop, show the yellow signal. Children must wait until you show green again before moving on. Begin with very short waiting periods; gradually make them longer.
- Advent calendar:** Use the form in the appendix. Add notation of special playgroup (community or church) events to the calendar before copying. Parents help children fold up the bottom. Then turn the paper over to the blank side with the narrow strip at the top. Children decorate the strip with their name or another design. Then fold it to the front and glue the ends to form a pocket. Give each family/child a sheet of 24/25 star stickers to put in the pocket and use one-a-day during Advent. Make a calendar (perhaps a larger version) to use in Playgroup during Advent.

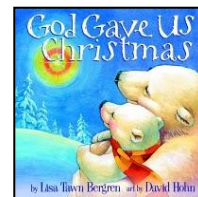
**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in your local library or parents' collections about Advent or Christmas. eg



**Away in a manger**  
sing along book



**Getting ready for Christmas**  
From ZonderKids



**God gave us Christmas**  
by Lisa Tawn Bergren

## NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- Days of the week (clap hands) (TUNE: The Adams Family)  
 Days of the week (clap hands)  
 Days of the week x 3 (clap hands)  
 There's Sunday and there's Monday, There's Tuesday and there's Wednesday, There's Thursday and There's Friday, and then there's Saturday.  
 Days of the week (clap), days of the week (clap) Days of the week x 3 (clap)
- Begin learning a Christmas song, eg Away in a manger or see Christmas session and sing it each week through Advent.

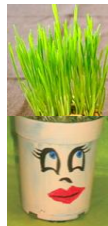
## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- Key faith concept:** Christmas is coming; it's Jesus' birthday.
- Talk about** waiting and how it feels to wait.
- Wonder:** I wonder why God lets us wait for some things.
- Pray:** Thank you, God, for the fun of waiting for special things. Amen.
- Bible verse:** We are waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in all his glory. He is our great God and Saviour. (Titus 2:13)

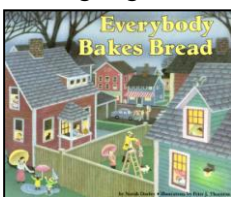
# WHEAT AND BREAD

Be aware of the possible gluten intolerance in the children (or parents) in your group. Coeliac disease is a life-long condition. The incidence is increasing, affecting 1 in 100 people. It rarely occurs before the introduction of solid food around 12 months. Symptoms (often mild) can include: abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation, irritability. Screening is initially done with blood tests, but confirmation of the diagnosis requires a biopsy from the surface of the small bowel.

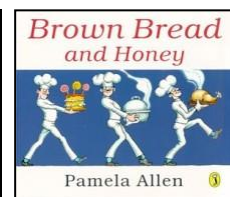
## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest:** Invite a wheat farmer (or a baker) to visit playgroup and tell the children about what they do and how what they do helps people.
- **Wheat to bread:** Have a display in three parts: (1) a picture of wheat growing or some actual wheat stalks, (2) some ground flour (preferably whole grain), (3) a loaf of bread (and/or other flour based foods). Parents look at (touch and smell) the display items with their children. Name the items. Sequence the items: which comes first? Which comes next?
- **Story-telling:** Tell the story of 'The Little Red Hen' and help children act out the various bread-making activities that are included in the story.
- **Plant the wheat:** Pre-soak wheat kernels the night before. Prepare growing soil in a large pan or box: one part sandbox sand with two parts potting soil. Give each child a polystyrene cup. They can write their name and draw a fun face on it. The sprouting wheat will be the hair. Spoon and pack the soil into the cup about 2/3 full. Children press a bout ten kernels of pre-soaked wheat into the soil, spacing evenly. Cover with 1 cm more soil. Sprinkle the soil with water, just to dampen. Children take home cups, keep in a sunny location. Keep the soil moist (not wet). Seeds sprout in 6 to 8 days. 
- **Grind the grain:** Children rub some wheat kernels between their hands and see how they can rub off some of the outer skin. Put kernels of un-soaked wheat into a blender or home flour mill or grind them between stones just to show how the kernels turn into whole wheat flour when they are crushed.
- **Bake the bread:** Parents help their children to make a small loaf of damper (or another bread form of your choosing). **Simple damper recipe:** Wash hands. Place 1 cup of self-raising flour into a bowl. Rub in 1 tablespoon of butter (margarine) with hands until mixture looks like fine crumbs. Make a well in the centre. Pour in 3 tablespoons milk and 2 tablespoons water. Mix lightly until dough leaves sides of bowl. Gently knead on a lightly floured surface. Shape into a round. Put on a greased oven tray. Brush top of dough with milk. Bake in a hot oven for 10 minutes, reduce heat and bake another 20 minutes.
- **Wheat box:** Get a bag of clean wheat from a farmer or grain store. Put it in a plastic bin. Children play with sandbox toys in the wheat, becoming familiar with the smell and feel of it.

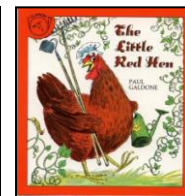
**STORIES TO SHARE** Find books in your local library or parents' collections about wheat farming or bread making, eg



**Everybody Bakes Bread**  
by Nora Dooley



**Brown Bread and Honey**  
by Pamela Allen



**The Little Red Hen**  
by Paul Galdone

## SONGS TO SING

- This is the way we . . . (use the various wheat/bread activities you look at in the session: plant the wheat . . . eat the bread)

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

If you plant wheat, write the Bible verse on the container.

- **Read and talk about:** the Bible verse.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God gives us food this way.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for bread that tastes good and makes us strong.. Amen.
- **Bible Verse:** God makes plants for people to take care of. That's how they get food from the earth . . . And there is bread to make them strong. (Psalm 104:14,15, adapted)

# HINGES

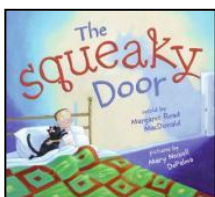
Children under five are particularly prone to finger injuries, with one-year-olds the most likely to injure themselves on doors and hinges. This could be a good time to check the 'hinge-safety' of your playgroup area.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

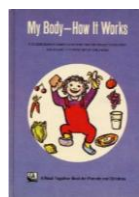
- **Hinge hunt:** Parents take children around your playgroup spaces and see how many hinges they can find: Look at doors and cupboards. Also consider the fridge, toys and toilet seats, boxes with lids. Book spines are hinges. Even mum's handbag and jewellery may have hinges. Wherever possible, children operate the hinge and notice how it allows things to move and also stay connected  
Parents can use this time to remind children that they need to be careful around things with hinges; eg keep their fingers away from the hinge side of doors
- **Body hinges:** Parents with their children explore their bodies: where are the 'body hinges' that allow them to move. Children bend legs at knees and arms at elbows and mouth at jaw. Older children may also look at smaller 'hinges', eg wrists, ankles, and between bones in fingers.  
Put a cardboard tube around a child's arm, covering the elbow. Let children discover what happens when that body-hinge doesn't work.
- **Latch-and-hinge board:** Ask a parent or friend of playgroup who has some basic carpentry skills to make a latch-and-hinge activity board. Simply attach several different latches and hinges to an off cut of wood. Make sure the edges of the board are smooth and splinter-free. Have the board available for children to play with at this and other playgroup sessions.
- **Hinge display:** On a table or on a mat on the floor, display several hinges — different shapes and sizes. Children with parents look at the items on display. Children can experiment with them to see how they work. Parents can help children group the hinges by size, colour or shape and to arrange them littlest to biggest. You might include Lego hinges, but be careful with small parts and small children.
- **Play dough and hinges:** Have play dough and a variety of different shaped hinges available for children to play with as they choose. Show children how they can press the play dough onto the hinge and pull it away carefully to see the imprint of the hinge. Then the fun is to tug the play dough to stretch and bend the imprint.



**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in your local library or parents' collections about how things work, specifically hinges and doors. eg



**The squeaky door**  
by Margaret MacDonald



**My Body — How It Works**  
by Jane Watson



**See Inside; How things work**  
edited by Conrad Mason  
Has (hinged) flaps to lift

## SONGS AND RHYMES

- I can bend my arm right here (tune: 'London Bridge is falling down')  
Arm right here, arm right here.  
I can bend my arm right here, (Repeat for leg and knee)  
at my elbow.

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Key faith concept:** God made people clever to make lots of different things.
- **Talk about** the many helpful made objects we use.
- **Wonder:** I wonder why God made our bodies with hinges.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for hinges and other clever things people make. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** Use the wisdom your God gives you. (Ezra 7:25)

# BIRDS

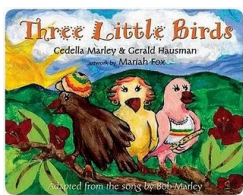
This session will focus on a guest pet, a bird. Adapt the ideas to suit the pet.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Guest pet:** The owner of a bird brings their pet for a visit to playgroup. They tell the children about the pet and how they care for it. Depending on the nature of the pet, children may be allowed to touch or feed it. Don't force children with major fears, but allow parents to give children the experience of a close encounter to overcome mild fear.
- **Hop like a bird in a cage:** Encourage children to observe how the bird moves around and to copy their hopping movements.
- **Spread your wings and fly:** When birds have enough space, they can spread their wings and fly. Encourage children to spread their arms like wings and fly as the leader gives instructions: Spread your wings, fly up in the sky, fly higher and higher, fly down, down, down to the ground. Fold your wings and rest.
- **Bird watch:** If you have a safe outdoor area, parents take their children outside and look for birds and/or evidence of birds (eg feathers, footprints or poo on the ground, nest in a bush). Talk about the birds they see, colour, size, number, what they are doing, what sounds they make.
- **Birds and me:** Parents name and point to parts of the child's body. Children consider whether birds have these same body parts. 'This is your head. Do birds have heads?' 'This is your hand. Do birds have hands?' 'These are your ears. Do birds have ears?' (Yes, but we can't see them.)
- **Bird dance:** Parents get nostalgic and do the bird (aka chicken) dance ('With a little bit of this and a little bit of that'). Encourage children to join in.
- **Bird puppets.** Children make two hand puppets to use with the story rhyme 'Two little black birds'. Photocopy the pattern (Appendix) on coloured paper. Children choose a colour. Seal a DL (business letter size) envelope and cut it in half. Children decorate their birds, using coloured pencils or crayons. Parents cut out the bird shapes and help children paste the bird front and back onto the envelopes. Children tape on some feathers for wings.
- **Feather painting:** Children paint a picture using a feather as paintbrush.
- **Name that bird:** Older children and parents can look at a 'What bird is that?' type of book or a web site such as <http://birdsinyourbackyards.net/finder>. They look for birds they can identify with specific names, eg cocky, willy-wag-tail, lorikeet, owl . . .



**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find stories in your library or in parents' collections about birds, eg



### Three Little Birds

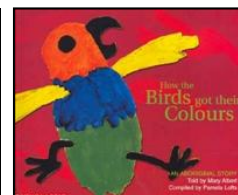
by Gerald Hausman,

Based on the Bob Marley (don't worry) song.



### How to heal a broken wing

by Bob Graham



### How the birds got their colours

by Mary Albert (Australian Aboriginal legend)

## NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

Two little black (or yellow, pink, blue . . .) birds sitting on a hill. . . . . Hold bird puppets side by side  
 One named Jack and the other named Jill. . . . . Jiggle each the bird when named  
 Fly away Jack. Fly away Jill. . . . . Fly each bird away when named.  
 Come back Jack. Come back Jill. . . . . Bring each bird back when named.

- All things bright and beautiful

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

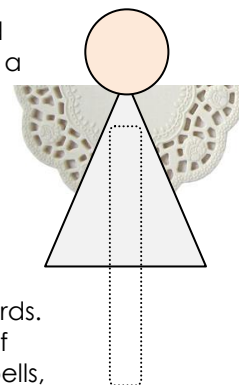
- **Key faith concept:** God made and takes care of birds and people.
- **Wonder:** I wonder how God takes care of birds.
- **Pray:** Thank you, God, for making beautiful birds. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** Look at the birds in the sky! . . . your Father in heaven takes care of them. (Matthew 6:26)

# CHRISTMAS (ANGELS)

The Bible story of the birth of Jesus is the basis for our celebration of Christmas. There are four angel stories in the Bible account of Jesus birth. An angel visits Mary (Luke 1:26–38); an angel visits Joseph (Matthew 1:18–25), an angel and a choir of angels visit shepherds (Luke 2:8–21); an angel warns Joseph of danger (Matthew 2:13,14). For this session concentrate on the story of the angels visiting the shepherds.

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

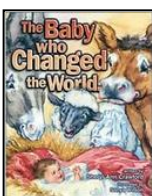
- **The story:** Tell or read the Bible story of the angels on the first Christmas. A good technique is to use a children's picture book, show the pictures to the children and use the pictures as cues for telling the story in your own words. An alternative would be to have an angel puppet tell the story.
- **Make an angel puppet:** Each child will need 2 circles (head front and back) and 2 triangles (body front and back) cut from craft foam, a paper doily (wings) and a craft stick (for holding the puppet). Use craft glue to hold the pieces together. Parents talk with their children about the shapes as they assemble the puppet. The wings are for flying. You may want to draw on a mouth (for singing) and other features. Write the child's name on the stick.
- **Act out the story:** Children use angel puppets to act out the story. They can do this as free play or they can act it as an adult re-tells the story.
- **Sorting cards:** Provide a large selection of cover pictures from used Christmas cards. Encourage children to sort through the pictures and find the ones with pictures of angels. They may also sort the cards by size, background colour or picture (eg, bells, people, candles . . .)
- **Nativity scene:** Have a store-bought or hand made nativity scene for children to look at with their parents. Parents help children identify the figures in the scene and their role in the Christmas story. You may want to take photos of children looking at the nativity scene and use the photo as the cover for a Christmas card.



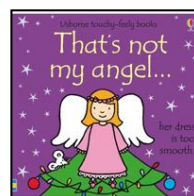
**BOOKS TO SHARE** Find books in your local library or parents' collections about the Christmas story, especially the angels at Christmas, eg



**The Angel and the Lamb**  
(A Story for Christmas)  
by Sophie Piper



**The Baby who Changed the World**  
by Sheryl Ann Crawford



**That's Not My Angel** by Fiona Watt

## NURSERY RHYMES AND SONGS

- Angels sing, angels sing: Jesus born today! (TUNE: Jingle bells)  
Shepherds run to see him there in his little bed of hay.
- Away in a manger
- In a little stable, far across the sea

## FAITH ENRICHMENT IDEAS

- **Activity:** take photos of children looking at a nativity scene. Use the photo as the cover for a Christmas card with the faith concept as the inside message.
- **Key faith concept:** At Christmas we celebrate the birthday of God's Son, Jesus.
- **Wonder:** I wonder what Christmas is about.
- **Prayer:** Happy Birthday, Jesus. Amen.
- **Bible verse:** God loved us so much he sent us his Son. (John 3:16)

## If this is your last playgroup session for the year:

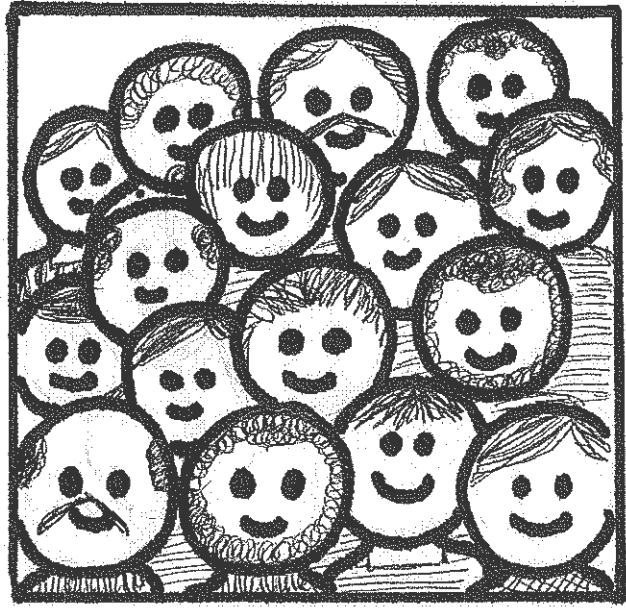
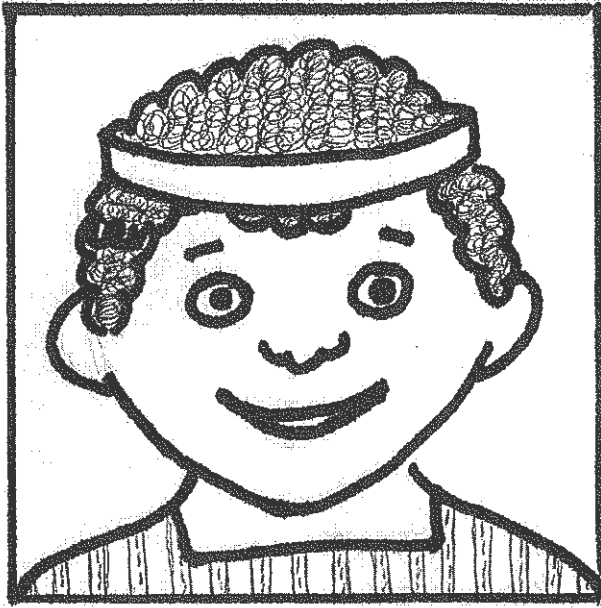
- You may want to give special recognition to children who will be 'graduating' from playgroup and moving on to preschool (or another stage of life) next year. Thank them for being part of playgroup.
- Give each family a card with the Bible story of Christmas and/or an invitation to any family-friendly Christmas events planned by the congregation.
- As families leave, give each one a Christmas blessing: God bless you and keep you at Christmas time.

# APPENDIX

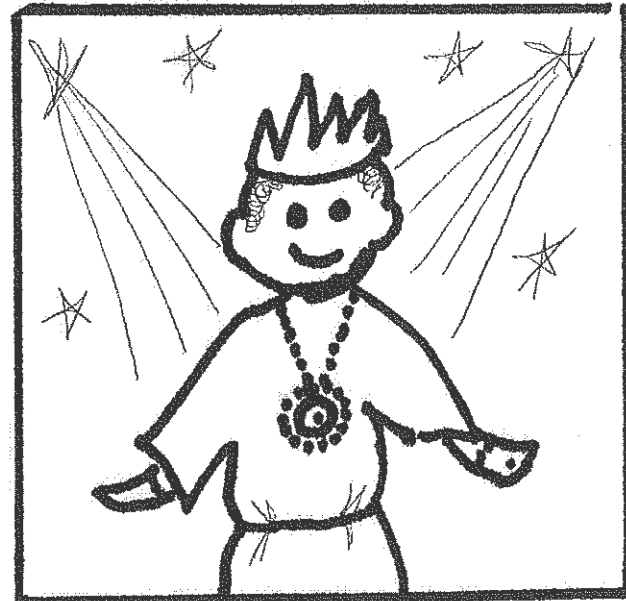
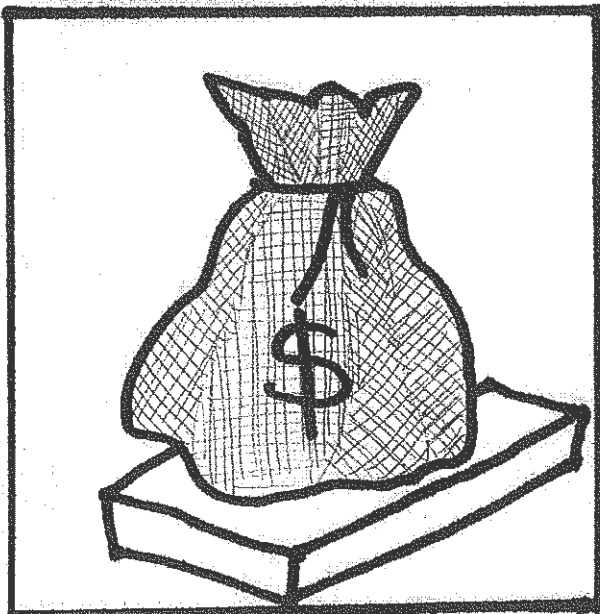
## A STORY OF KING SOLOMON (Based on 2 Kings 20; 2 Chronicles 1)

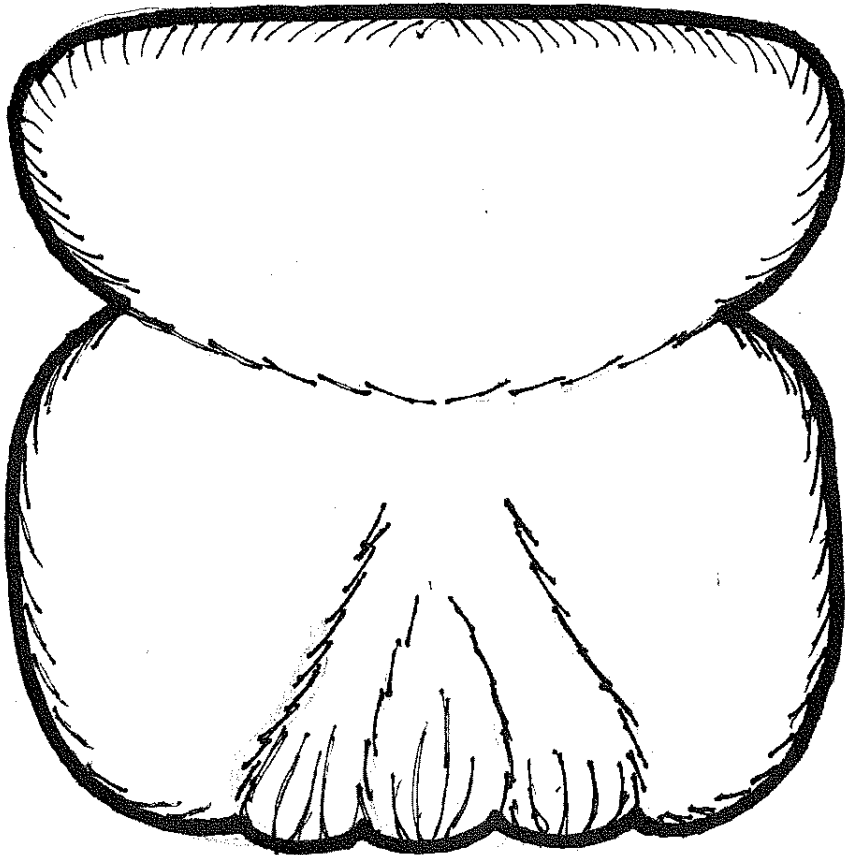
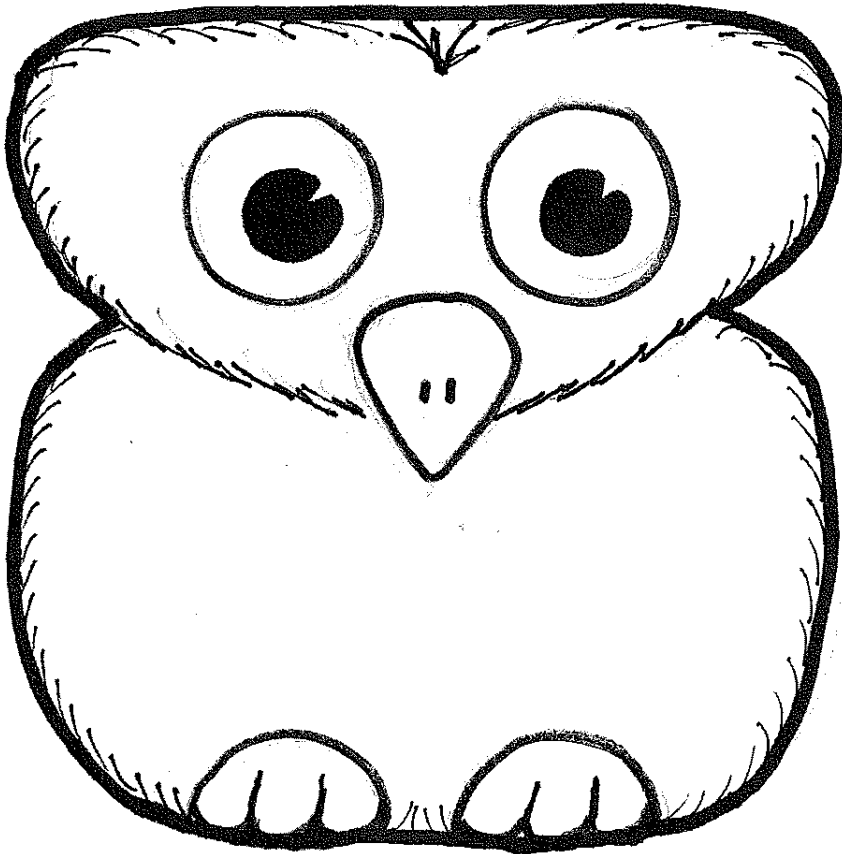
Have a set of story pictures in your Bible. As you tell the story, remove the pictures and lay them out where children can see them, as indicated.

This is a story that comes from God's special book — the Bible.	Show a Bible
The Bible has stories about lots of people.	“
The wisest of all the people in the Bible is King Solomon.	Take from your Bible and show Solomon picture
Solomon wasn't always a king, and he wasn't always wise.	Point to Solomon picture
When Solomon first became king he was worried.	Make a worried face and point to Solomon picture.
King Solomon knew his people depended on him to take good care of them.	Show people picture.
He was afraid that he couldn't do that — not by himself, anyway.	Point to Solomon picture
What do you think he did?	If children respond, accept and comment positively on their suggestions.
King Solomon prayed.	Place your hands, folded in prayer, on the Solomon picture.
He didn't ask to be strong.	Show 'strong' picture. Shake head, turn it over, face down.
He didn't ask to be rich.	Do the same for 'rich' picture.
He didn't ask to be famous.	Do the same for 'famous' picture.
King Solomon asked God to make him wise so that he could take good care of his people.	Place your hands, folded in prayer, on the Solomon picture.
God heard him when he prayed.	“
God was happy about King Solomon's prayer.	“
God gave King Solomon what he asked for.	“
God made him the wisest king ever.	“
King Solomon took good care of his people.	Point to Solomon picture
And, you know what?	
God also made King Solomon strong.	Turn over the strong picture and put it close to Solomon picture.
And rich.	Do the same for 'rich' picture.
And famous.	Do the same for 'famous' picture.
Most of all, God made King Solomon a very good king. His people could depend on him, because he depended on God.	Point to Solomon picture.
There are lots more stories like this one in the Bible.	Gather up all the pictures and put them back in your Bible.



Pictures for Solomon story





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	A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	;	'			▼	■	▶	4	5	6	
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# ADVENT



## WAITING FOR CHRISTMAS

December 2011

Put a star sticker on the calendar each day as you wait for Christmas.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 	2 	3 
4 	5 	6 	7 	8 	9 	10 
11 	12 	13 	14 	15 	16 	17 
18 	19 	20 	21 	22 	23 	24 
25 CHRISTMAS DAY 						

We are waiting for Jesus Christ to appear in all his glory. He is our great God and Saviour. (Titus 2:13)

Fold on dotted line and glue the ends to form a pocket for a sheet of star stickers.