



GETTING MISSIONAL at NYORA

Today I would like to introduce you to Joy from Nyora and District Church. I first came across their Playgroup ministry a few months ago and have been inspired by Joy and her team ever since! I'll let Joy tell you their story...

Nyora is a small town about 100km South East of Melbourne, in South Gippsland shire and is one of the fastest growing areas in the shire. **We are a very small congregation, currently having only 12 members, most of whom are in their 50's or above.** Over the years most of our



church families have lived outside the Nyora community, some travelling up to 40km to worship and other church activities each week. As a church we have always felt the call to be involved in the community, and have in the past had a very active youth group, but as is the case in many rural towns, as youth finished secondary school and moved away for tertiary schooling or work so our youth work gradually diminished.

We sought God's direction for what we should be doing, and in 2005 we became aware of the need for a community playgroup. Our church building can in no way accommodate such an activity - we have outdoor toilets, a tiny room that doubles as our store room and our kitchen is a sink with running water and a bench top fridge!

In previous years, there had been a playgroup operating in the Public Hall, but it had folded due to a lack of people willing or able to run it. A very good supply of toys and equipment was simply sitting in a small store room at the hall waiting to be used! In 2005 two of our members, Pauline and Charmaine, felt the call to re-commence this playgroup as a ministry of the church. **The first six months were hard going; about 5 or 6 families were coming on a regular basis, but forming relationships with them was not an easy task.** The hall is quite large, and very cold in winter, and finding the best way to set up took quite a bit of trial and error. The only secure outdoor play area is a small concrete tiled courtyard with an uninviting sandpit. **However, our God is greater than all our difficulties** and Pauline and Charmaine's faithfulness and perseverance was rewarded.

CHRISTIAN PLAYGROUP NETWORK AGM

The CPN AGM is coming up on the very relevant theme of "Unpacking Mission Through Playgroups"

Sat 24th Oct
9.30am-1pm

Holy Trinity Anglican Church
Cost \$10

RSVP by Oct 16 to Ruth Kernick

UPCOMING TRAINING:

Toolbox Parenting Course training is coming up.

Saturday 7th November
New Hope Baptist, Blackburn
9am - 3.30pm

Cost is \$100 inc GST to train and includes a manual for the age group you train in.

If you would like more information about Toolbox please let me know and I can arrange for a promotional DVD and information pack to be sent to you free of charge.

CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA

Get prepared for Christmas at this training day hosted by the Uniting Church and featuring the BUV's own Beth Barnett!

Sat 17th Oct,
10am-1pm

Centre for Theology & Mission
Cost \$10

By the end of 2005 the playgroup was established and the mums were beginning to relate to the leaders and to each other. None of the member families have any church connection, but are quite accepting of a "Church-run" playgroup.

As for our "team" of four, none of us, or our church families have small children. Joe, our Pastor drops in from time to time to chat and **all** members of our church take an active interest in how playgroup is going. It is frequently mentioned in our worship services, and the ministry prayed for. We also know there are some others who faithfully pray for our playgroup families on a regular basis. **There is a great deal of commitment involved in a playgroup such as this, as everything needs to be brought out of storage each week, (including tables and chairs), used for the couple of hours and completely packed away afterwards.**

We have been absolutely delighted to see the progress of some of our children, who come at first shy but gradually feel at ease and blossom as they grow. We are also aware that Mums (and Dads) appreciate having somewhere to take their children, where they can relax and chat to each other, while the children play together in safety. We, the leaders simply provide the warm, caring environment, (tea/coffee and a biscuit!) and often a listening ear to mums just wanting to talk to other adults! **Many families are facing real difficulties in their daily lives, and giving them the opportunity to share their struggles is a major part of why we exist.**

We don't often have opportunities to talk about Jesus to our families, but we have plenty of opportunities to show His love to them. **Our prayer is that each participant will know he/she is loved, and when mums, dads or other carers are beginning to question, we will see these opportunities and use them wisely.** It is an unfortunate fact that some of our parents have been seriously hurt by church connections in their past, and we need to regain their trust before they are willing to investigate Jesus for themselves. What we as a church, and playgroup team, would love to see are some other Christian families move to Nyora, to be part of the Nyora community, and join our small band!

Lessons from Nyora

- You can run a Playgroup even if you don't have lots (or any) young families in your church.
- Pray, pray, pray and ask your church to pray!
- Seek God's will for your church and ministry and trust Him to reveal it to you.
- It might involve sacrifice, but you CAN make a huge difference to your community

Nyora's story is a reminder that our great God works through willing people, regardless of how great their number!

If you'd like to send Joy a note of encouragement you can send it via Louisa.Raggatt@Buv.com.au and I will be sure to pass it on.

I am grateful to Joy for taking the time to share her story with us.

Louisa Raggatt
Early Childhood & Families
Facilitator

Baptist Union of Victoria
M: 0438 068 548
P: 9880 6100
E: louisa.raggatt@buv.com.au

PO Box 377
Hawthorn Vic 3122

www.buv.com.au