

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY SUGGESTIONS

The Challenge

Many smaller congregations seek to welcome and support children, but don't have them every week, and/or they may visit at unexpected times. Here are a few ideas to help your church be ready for children, without high costs or creating unnecessary work.

1. Create a Simple Children's Area

A welcoming space shows families they are valued, even if children aren't present every week. Consider children-sized tables and a few chairs along with a mat or small carpet where babies can play to delineate the area. If the space is inviting, children will immediately recognise this as their area, and which helps them to feel like they have a place at your church.

Promote the Space:

- Mention that this space is available your service sheet, website, and Facebook page.
- Announce verbally at larger services, e.g., Christmas, Baptisms.
- One Ballarat Congregation uses the words: "Please sit anywhere you wish in the church and/or use our children's area at any time. If you have young children, know that they are always welcome at church. You are making an important effort by attending as a family."

Keep it Simple & Uncluttered:

- **Silent toys** – Ideally a felt or knitted nativity set or Noah's Ark if you have one, but if not a few washable good quality toys like beanie bears or teddies works too. Clean and complete toys communicate that you take this area seriously – if it is out-dated, broken, incomplete or potentially unsafe – just remove it.
Avoid noisy toys or those that encourage running (e.g. race cars with sound effects). Even wooden or plastic toys can be noisy in little hands, and parents may not be able to worship as they are worried about their children disrupting the service.
- **Twistable crayons** are a great option to provide permanently (avoiding blunt pencils, broken crayons, or dried-out textas).
- **Christian stickers** for special occasions.
 - The *Faith That Sticks* series (<https://koorong.com/search?q=faith%20that%20sticks>) is a great option. Consider purchasing a few sets that appeal to you and keeping a few complete sheets in the priest's prayer desk (excellent if a child unexpectedly announces it's their birthday!), and some others available for the Sidespersons or volunteers keeping an eye on the children's area to bring out for special occasions or if a larger number of children arrive.
 - If you are looking for professional Christmas or Easter stickers, Illustrated Ministry (<https://www.illustratedministry.com>) create high quality vinyl stickers with downloadable backgrounds - they even easily peel off pews without damage! However do be note that they have a progressive focus in some of their other materials – so focus on the Christmas and Easter stickers, and colouring-in sheets.

Books for Quiet Time:

- Authentic Media make a great series of Christian Touch and Feel Board books for younger children: <https://koorong.com/search?q=Authentic%20Media%20touch>
- For older children *My Illustrated Prayer Book* contains excerpts from A Prayer Book for Australia – Holy Communion and is available from Garratt Publishing: <https://www.garrattpublishing.com.au/product/9780980663495/>
- Any children's Bible that you prefer.
- Consider carefully the books that are provided and limit the options on a Sunday morning. You do not need to provide many options and they should facilitate the worship, not distract from it.

2. Seasonal Colouring Sheets

If your parish does not regularly have children attending, consider colouring-in sheets based on church seasons rather than needing to change them weekly if no children attend.

To assist you with this ministry, the Ministry Development Committee of the Diocese of Ballarat has produced a document that collects ~40 sample colouring sheets, which is available through the Diocese.

Season/Event	Possible Colouring Sheets – but use what matches your parish and use your imagination!
Advent	Advent Candles
Christmas	Nativity Scene
Epiphany	Arrival of the Magi / Jesus in the Temple
Lent	Cross, Palm leaves etc.
Good Friday	Crucifixion
Easter	Empty Tomb Garden
Ascension	Jesus Ascending
Pentecost	Upper Room with Disciples
Ordinary Time	Noah's Ark, 10 Commandments, Lord's Prayer
Baptisms	Baptism-themed sheet (keep a stack ready)
Blessing of Animals	Animal Blessing sheet

Note: If you do end up with children weekly, then lectionary-based colouring sheets are a sensible option (and provide variation while keeping the rest of the children's area the same week by week). Various options are available for example: <https://sermons4kids.com/colorpg.htm>, or <https://store.illustratedministry.com/collections/coloring-pages>

3. Special Services – Be Prepared!

When you know that extra families and children may attend (e.g., Baptisms, Easter, Christmas):

- Offer a short children's talk – but be careful not to put children or their parents on the spot to participate if they prefer not to. E.g. Newer children may prefer to stay with their parents rather than come to the front or answer questions.
- Remind families the children's area is available, and that they may use it anytime.

EXTRA TIP! If you are regularly leading services, consider drafting two or three short 2 minute children's talks that you can use on any occasion if children visit unexpectedly –keep one typed up and available with your prayer book – Good topics that can work on any Sunday include – What is the Lord's Prayer? What do the priest's vestments mean? What Colour and Season are we in this Sunday?, Why do we have a Sanctuary lamp or Gospel book? Etc.

4. Extra Practical Touches

- **Baby Change Table:** Let visitors know where it is—include this info in the service sheet.
 - **Child-Friendly Morning Tea:** Keep long-life items handy like Milo or Juice Boxes—simple, affordable, and helps children feel welcome.
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Estimated Costs (once-off or annual):

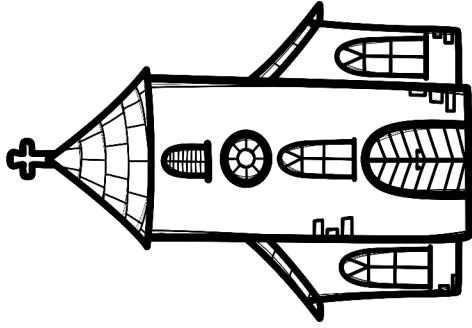
- Twistable crayons: \$10
- Quiet toys (e.g., 2–3 beanie bears): ~\$30
- Stickers for special occasions: ~\$30
- Books: \$50
- Colouring printouts and morning tea options: Minimal ongoing cost

Total: **Approx. \$120, plus B&W printing and morning tea.**

Even the smallest churches can be ready to bless our youngest visitors and their families. Welcoming children doesn't need to be complicated or expensive —just intentional.



Church

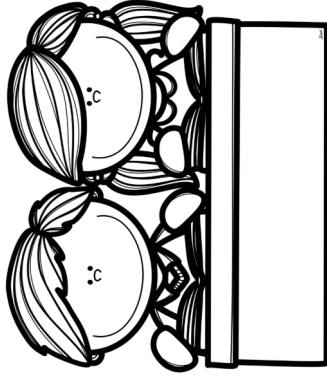


4. Prayers of the People



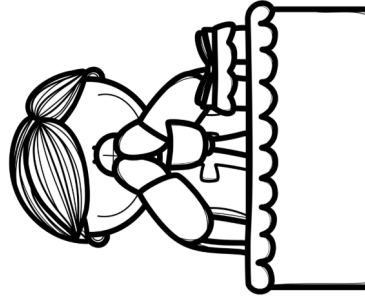
We pray for the world
and for the church

1. Meeting in God's name



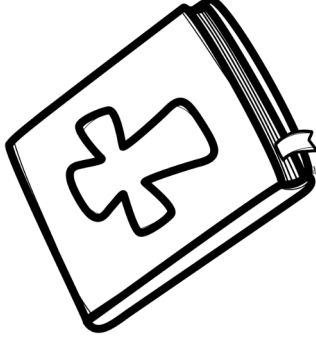
We prepare to be
with God

5. Great Thanksgiving



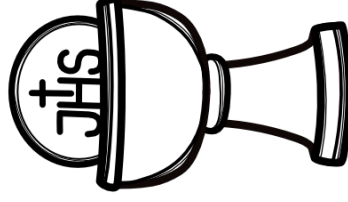
The bread and wine
are blessed in
remembrance of Jesus

2. Ministry of the Word



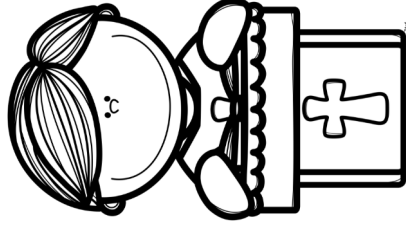
We listen to the word
of God.

6. Communion



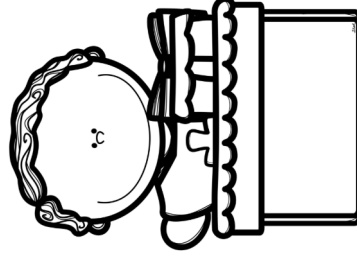
We receive the bread
and wine or receive
a blessing

3. Sermon



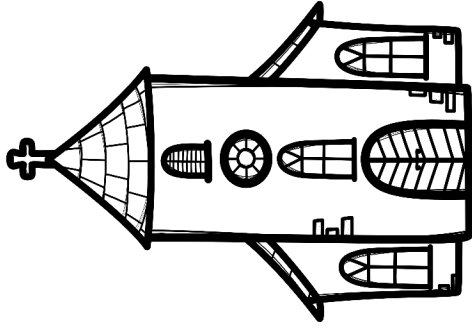
We listen as the
readings are explained

7. Blessing and Dismissal



We are blessed to go
and spread the
Good News of Jesus

Church

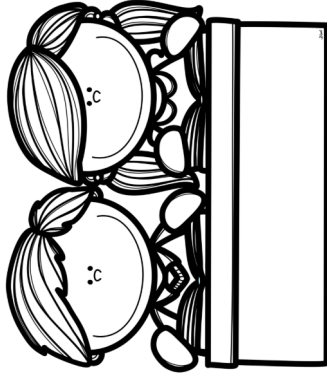


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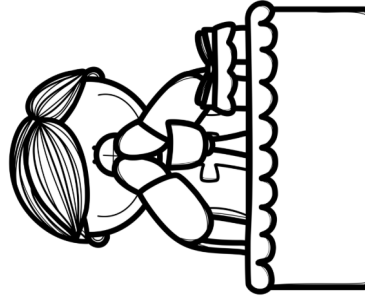
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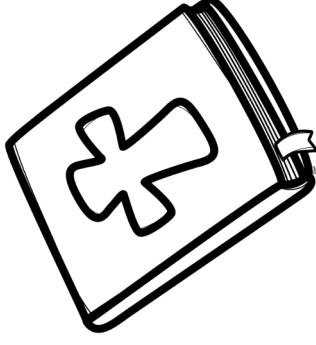
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5. Great
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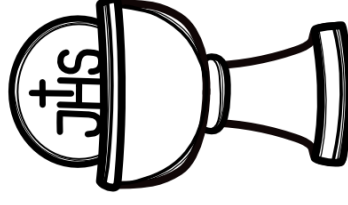
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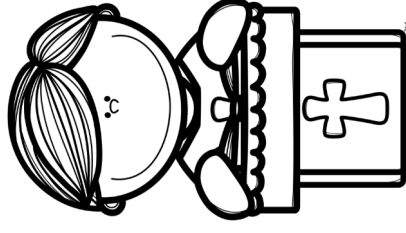
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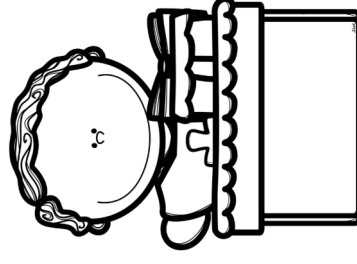
We receive communion
or a blessing

3. Sermon



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