



faith journeys
with children and families

Phil Day
suvictoria 



Children and Families Ministry Specialist

I have a passion to see parents, schools & children's workers and church leaders equipped and resourced to join children on the faith journey so that they come to & grow in faith in God as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Villages raise children; faith communities make disciples!

These words are gaining importance for our understanding of how churches partner with families (and vice versa) in our faith journeys with children. They will be the main title of our Training Partnership Events next year. Denominations and organisations operating in regional areas are combining again to present cutting edge training. More about this below!

CRE Christmas Services and Community Carols ...

The underlying missional theme of my involvement in events celebrating Jesus' birth is that of 'transformation'. From the story enacted at St. Mary's Toorak for the South Camberwell Primary School to the Community Carols at Buninyong, the idea coming through is that meeting Jesus results in change in all sorts of ways. The one I like the best is the retelling of *Jesus' Christmas Party* by Nicholas Allan. Like the inn keeper in the story, as grumpy as we can be at this time of the year, the story of God coming near to us needs to engage us in ways that make a difference to our lives. When this happens, how can we help but share this experience with others? May this be so!

Tess and I have been to the Northern Territory ...

It has been a while since I have written to you but in that time Tess (my 15 year old daughter) and I joined Captains David and Jennie Shrimpton (Flying Padres with the Salvation Army in the NT) in a number of short holiday programs in remote parts of the NT. It was great for Tess as part of her Yr 9 home schooling year and a great mission opportunity for both of us as we shared God's Good News with others. One of the highlights was seeing the faith in indigenous children responding to the stories of Jesus. One boy went out to a nearby dam and spent time praying. I had the impression he hadn't done this before. He was also a standout in dramas of the Bible stories we produced and donated back into the communities as small booklets. The experience was a full-on, mind-blowing adventure for Tess as she experienced the vastness of Australian outback from a small Cessna aeroplane (including flypasts of Kakadu's JimJim and Twin Falls) and the lifestyles of remote indigenous and cattle station communities. Mission trips for our children are nearly always transformative experiences. Tess came back and threw herself into being a group leader in our church for World Vision's 40-Hour Famine.

As a reminder to pray, please cut off the top third of this letter for your fridge or notice board. Thanks!!



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Networks & Training: Children & Families Ministry

My prayer is for the highest quality of effective Children & Families Ministry for Victoria.

Recently, Dave Tolputt (SU State Director) wrote to all the SU staff which included:

Phil, I just want to thank you for the quiet, yet essential work you are doing amongst churches to promote excellent children's and families ministries. Your passionate heart for this ministry field has been a blessing to so many over so many years. My prayer is that as you continue to grow in wisdom and knowledge, that God will be pleased to use you to profoundly shape those involved in working with children and families.

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A Toolkit for Growing Great Kids

Recently I have been conducting a course for parents based around the idea of giving parents 'tools' for the understanding and implementation of helpful strategies with their children. I have made a deliberate effort to create learning environments based around participants' stories and contributions. The results have been stunning as people have discovered community around a range of common issues. The feedback has been most encouraging:

"I really enjoyed the parenting course. It was so helpful to talk about positive strategies to take home and to discuss personal experience with other parents. Some of the strategies that have stayed with me are:

- teaching and practicing meaningful ways of saying sorry so that the other person feels the relationship is mended;
- 'what's next' with a picture/ list of things that need to be done before school;
- intentional time with each child at separate times. ... Thanks to all who made the parenting course happen & I'd be up for more!"

"Firstly, I enjoyed chatting with other parents in a non-judgemental group ... and hearing stories and insights from their lives. It's always good to feel less alone in the struggle to be perfect/good/decent parents ... I remember mostly, the stuff about apology and forgiveness, ... & also about being deliberate in helping kids' space to be welcoming, kept clean ... and their 'own'. It helped us think about moving house recently and how to help the move be positive/empowering to [my daughter]. ... Food is still tricky with [my daughter], but I feel a bit less stressed about it these days, and give things a try without everything hanging on it! ... Some of the families' kids were a bit older, and I keep thinking about their examples/issues as [my daughter] approaches school etc ... nice to have some fore-warning (-: ... The framework overall was really good ... and there's loads of good clues to go back & read in the materials provided."

"I liked the format of the sessions and found them easy to engage with. It was a good number of people to have and I liked breaking into smaller groups for discussions. I really appreciated the conversations and shared experiences between group members. ... It was really useful to hear what others are dealing with and get some advice from parents in the 'next stage'. One thing that struck a chord with me was the importance of kids having their own space that's nice and not cluttered. I'm very aware that I haven't done what I would like to in [my daughter's] bedroom yet, but I haven't forgotten the need.

I HAVE INCLUDED THESE RESPONSES IN THE HOPE THAT YOU WILL PRAY! Please pray for even more opportunities to develop, market, present and multiply this 'toolkit'. This is only a part of my ministry, however it represents a culmination of about three decades of teaching and raising my own children (now 13 & 15). It is different to the other courses available as it centres around storytelling and building community with other parents. It is an ideal outreach program to complement with other outreach programs in the community. A local state primary school together with a local church has looked at the material and is more than happy to cosponsor this activity! This was a rewarding outcome this year. I look forward to delivering it in the new year.

Please let me know if such a course would be helpful in your community.

Project Orange

My prayer is for the highest quality of effective Children & Families Ministry for Victoria, Australia.

The first 20 minutes

Recently I was asked to go to Launceston to speak to ministers and Children & Families workers about how to engage children even more effectively in the first 20 minutes of church. This is particularly relevant if children are merely waiting in this first period of church for Kids' Church to start. Whenever this is the case we are in danger of losing children. We tackled this issue in regard to: the welcome children receive; the way we invite participation of children and families in Bible readings; and possibilities for engaging children to a greater extent in the music and singing. A big challenge ... but we found some principles and a variety of examples to trial.

The Child in our MIDST: Worshipping & Learning Together

I have a passion to see a re-imagination, a re-definition and a re-organisation of the way we are church with The Child in our MIDST.

Consultations continuing ...

One story ... In one of the churches I am seconded to for up to a day a week, we are exploring ways to Engage Our Community on the way to establishing a new faith community of children and families. For Advent we are inviting after-school participation in creating four large angels to suspend high in the church. Understanding the demographic and the context we are in has led us to trial a visual arts project. I have become an 'artist in residence' and conduct my art on the sidewalk and invite after-school participation from people of all ages. The response has been extraordinary as people find their point of participation ... including one mum, an artist, who will have a major input into The Angel of Peace. The friendship and evangelistic conversations have been very special in this developing context. Please pray for further opportunities to grow out of this.

Shalom & Happy Christmas ...

Thank you once again for your prayerful and/or financial support ... Phillip