



**MU Australia**  
Part of the World Wide Mothers' Union

# Programming Ideas

for MU Groups



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## DEDICATION (sing together)

1. Take my life and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my moments and my days,  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.
2. Take my hands, and let them move  
at the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my feet, and let them be  
swift and beautiful for Thee.
3. Take my voice, and let me sing  
always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips, and let them be  
filled with messages from Thee.
4. Take my silver and my gold,  
not a might could I withhold.  
Take my intellect, and use  
every power as Thou shalt choose.
5. Take my will and make it Thine;  
it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Thine own;  
it shall be Thy royal throne.
6. Take my love: my Lord, I pour  
at Thy feet its treasure-store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for Thee.

Often we want to serve God, but we want to choose the time, place and the way we serve. Have you ever found yourself in this situation?

“I stood before God like a willful child with my hands tightly clenched around the people I’d chosen and the work I was doing.

He said to me “Open your hands and let them go.”

And I said “No, I can’t, I don’t want to, there will be nothing left.”

He didn’t leave me, He firmly took my hands and waited while I opened my fingers one by one, and I cried each time. Then finally my hands lay before Him with nothing left – but He placed His hands around mine and cupped the fingers up so He could fill them with Himself and with His will for me NOW.”

It was because of Jesus’ obedience in suffering death on the cross that God gave Him a name that is above every other name.

God cannot give us the blessings He wants to give us, unless we are prepared to be obedient and to serve Him the in way He has planned for us. Are you serving God your way, or His?

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4. So let us learn how to serve  
and in our lives enthrone Him.  
Each other's needs to prefer,  
for it is Christ we're serving.

Chorus

### Bible Reading - *Philippians 2 v 4-11*

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### Prayer

Lord, we know you said you came not to be served, but to serve. Help us to reflect this willingness to serve others in our lives. Help us to follow your example of love and service, compassion and care, in our families and to those we meet.

We marvel that you should trust us with this responsibility. Help us not to treat it lightly, but with dedication and responsibility, and in true obedience to you.

**Amen.**

**Reflection:** *To be read aloud by one person*

Jesus came to serve in whatever ways His Father asked. He became tired and weary but He knew the importance of refreshing Himself by spending time alone with God. Even in Gethsemane, in His desperate wish to avoid the suffering He knew He faced, His prayer was still "not my will, but yours".

Eyes that will perceive your love for us in the flickering candles,  
the bright decorations of celebration and the joyful carols,

So that I may at last take time to come to the manger and worship the greatest  
gift of all, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*(Music may be played for a time of reflection at this point.)*

**Leader:**

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever  
believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. *John 3 v 16*

**Leader:** We serve our Lord, the Bread of Life, through following His example.

**CAROL 3 (sing together)**

1. From heav'n you came, helpless babe,  
enter'd our world, your glory veil'd;  
not to be served but to serve,  
and give your life that we might live.

*Chorus:*

This is our God, the Servant King,  
He calls us now to follow Him,  
to bring our lives as a daily offering  
of worship to the Servant King

2. There in the garden of tears,  
my heavy load He chose to bear.  
His heart with sorrow was torn,  
'Yet not my will but yours,' He said

Chorus

3. Come see His hands and His feet,  
the scars that speak of sacrifice,  
hands that flung stars into space:  
to cruel nails surrendered.

Chorus

## About Time

Display of family heirlooms, with attached descriptions and  
details. Members could be asked to (briefly) talk about their  
heirloom.

### Devotions

Thanks for past generations and the handing on of the gospel

### Speaker

- ☛ History of local church and encouragement to continue  
in the faith
- ☛ What message are we handing on to future generations?  
What is cultural and what is Biblical?
- ☛ Missed opportunities, the importance of sharing the  
gospel NOW.

## Aged Care

Find out about what is available in your area for aged care  
– the local community centre or hospital could have speakers  
who could come and talk, or a group of members could  
investigate by themselves.

Assistance such as meals on wheels, home care – cleaning,  
bathing etc, home maintenance.

Residential options – hostels, nursing homes, facilities to  
keep people in their own homes. Make up a list or brochure  
containing all the information and have it available for future  
reference – either in the church office or MU group. (The  
details will need to be updated regularly.)



## *All By Myself*

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Invite some members of the parish who live by themselves to talk about the problems/ joys etc they experience in their lives.

The topics to cover: widowed, divorced, always single.

Things that others could do to help in each situation should be included.

From this meeting, our MU group put together a Parish Support Network of volunteers who were able to do small household chores (changing light bulbs, cleaning gutters etc), easy gardening, transport to church, doctors etc, friendship phone calls, and sorting out details of things like meals on wheels etc when needed.

## *Blended Families*

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Ask some of the members or people in the parish to talk about their blended families – it may be their own, or their children's.

The problems and joys can be shared, and ways in which others can be aware of the special needs in these situations. With so many second marriages in our society today, there are many blended families around. This can also highlight the importance of grandparents as a stabilising influence when so much changes for the children, and also the problems when grandparents are not allowed to be in contact with the children.

### **Reflection:** *To be read aloud by one person*

I wonder what it was like for Jesus as He left heaven, to become human, those 2000 years ago.

Leaving the perfect unity He had experienced with the Father and Holy Spirit from before creation, stepping out of the heavenly glory into the now flawed world He had created as perfect.

How long did those 33 years seem to the Timeless One as He experienced all the consequences of humanity's sin?

How could He bear the total separation from His Father that occurred when the sin of the whole world: past, present and future was placed on His sinless soul? He was cut off from God so that we need never be.

When we find the changes in our lives hard to take, we can go to the Unchanging One who became one of us for the love of us.

He surely understands.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

*John 1 v 14*

Dear Lord,

Each year after Christmas I promise things will be different next year.  
I'll start my Christmas shopping earlier; I'll cut back on the extra frills;  
I'll go to fewer functions and give more time to thinking about you.  
I'll have a simple, more Christ-centred Christmas.

Now another Christmas is coming - and once again I'm caught up in all the pressures that seem to be so much a part of our modern Christmas.

I need new eyes, Lord, eyes that will see the love we have for one another in the gifts given and received, the meals prepared, the letters and cards laboured over.

## Bible Reading - Matthew 2:1- 12

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.

He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus, we come before you as the wise men did, in reverence and worship. Lord, we have no treasures of gold, incense and myrrh, but we offer you ourselves - all that we are - all that we can be - through your presence, your example and your love. Help us to live our lives as an act of worship to you each day. **Amen.**

## Blessing Boxes

Bunbury Diocesan MU set up a program of ‘Joy Boxes’, and then North West Australia MU added their own ideas in ‘Blessing Baskets’. Wentworth Falls MU have set up ‘Blessing Boxes’.

These are greeting card boxes covered in pretty wrapping paper, with 7 small gifts inside, one for each day of the following week. The boxes are given to anyone who is lonely, depressed, sick or in need of any sort, and who needs some encouragement.

The gifts are mostly made by members and include: small felt teddy bear brooches, felt needle cases, decorated tea-light candles, handkerchiefs in a cardboard folder, teabags in a cardboard teapot, bookmarks, fridge magnets, small soaps, a note card and envelope, a couple of wrapped sweets. Each gift has a little card enclosed which gives a scripture verse or other Spiritual greeting. Other cards are also included separately in the box.

Hold a meeting to prepare some of these boxes as a group, using the different talents of group members to cover boxes, make simple gifts, write cards.

### Speaker

A talk could be given on ‘Bearing each others’ burdens’  
(Galatians 6:2)



## Brave Enough to be a Parent

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Form a Panel of local Christians, preferably of different ages, who are prepared to share their stories of parenting.

To keep time under control, it is a good idea to have a leader who interviews each person on the panel. That way if time gets away on one question, other questions can be cut out to keep to the assigned time.

Ask each person to be prepared to speak for a set time, say 5 mins total.

### Questions could be chosen from:

- ☝ How many children do you have and what are their ages now?
- ☝ What are they doing at present?
- ☝ What do (or did) you enjoy most about being a parent?
- ☝ What do you find particularly challenging?
- ☝ Are there any things that you've changed your mind about, since you started parenting?
- ☝ Things you've learnt, traps to avoid

(Final question, make sure you ask them to prepare this one ahead of time)

- ☝ Could you share one particular thing you think would be helpful for others?

### Prayer

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father, we praise you for the precious gift of your Son. We praise you, Father, that you cared about us so much you were willing to send Jesus to live and die for us. We praise you that through Him it is possible to have peace with you and with each other.

Thank you, Lord, that we can celebrate each Christmas with great joy.

### Amen.

*(Music may be played for a time of reflection at this point.)*

**Leader:** Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. *Luke 2 v 11*

**Leader:** We Worship Jesus our Saviour, the Light of the World

*(If you are lighting candles, light them now)*

### CAROL 2 (sing together)

1. Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Scriptures say  
Mary's boy child, Jesus Christ, was born on Christmas day  
Hark, now hear the angels sing, a new king born today  
And man shall live for evermore because of Christmas day.
2. Now Joseph and his wife, Mary, came to Bethlehem one night  
They find no place to born the child, not a single room was in sight.  
Hark, now hear the angels sing, a new king born today  
And man shall live for evermore because of Christmas day.
3. At last they find a little nook in a stable all forlorn  
And in that manger, cold and dark, Mary's little boy was born  
Trumpets sound and angels sing, listen to what they say  
That man shall live for evermore because of Christmas day.

## Bible Reading - *Luke 2 v 1-19*

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register.

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

## Devotions

Centred on God's love for us as our Heavenly Father

## Speaker

A short summing up talk on the theme 'God can turn our mistakes into learning experiences which draw us closer to him'.



Snips and snails and puppy dog tails ... What are little boys made of?

Bringing up boys has different problems to bringing up girls – fostering their adventurous spirit while containing their risk-taking is only one of them!

There are many books available on this topic by Christian authors which could be used as a basis for discussion. Focus on the family's James Dobson has written a book called *Bringing up Boys* (available from Amazon.com)

**www.bringingupboys.com.** Australian Steve Biddulph has written a book 'Raising Boys' and you can see clips of both these men talking on the topic on the internet.

Have one or two people give book reviews of these (or other) books, and then have a discussion on the points they raise.

Compare Biddulph's secular approach with Dobson's Christian approach, what extra dimension does Dobson add?

### Devotions

Thank God for making us different, male and female. Pray for men and boys as they work out their roles in today's society. For husbands and fathers and grandfathers, that they will look to God for the way forward.

### Speaker

Find a Christian speaker who has had experience in her own family, or ask a man to come and give his perspective on raising sons.

### Leader:

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angels, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests." Luke 2 v 13,14

**Leader:** We join with the angels in praising God as we sing carols together.

### CAROL 1 (all sing together)

1. Look to the skies, there's a celebration;  
lift up your heads, join the angel song;  
for our Creator becomes our Saviour; as a baby born.  
Angels amazed bow in adoration,  
glory to God in the highest heaven,  
send the good news out to every nation for our hope has come.

#### *Chorus:*

Worship the king, come see His brightness.  
Worship the king, His wonders tell.  
Jesus our king is born today, we welcome you Emmanuel.

2. Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Father for ever, the Prince of Peace.  
There'll be no end to your rule of justice, for it shall increase.  
Light of your face, come to pierce our darkness;  
Joy of your heart come to chase our gloom.  
Star of the morning, a new day dawning, make our hearts your home.

#### Chorus

3. Quietly He came as a helpless baby,  
one day in power He will come again.  
Swift through the skies  
He will burst with splendour, on the earth to reign  
Jesus I bow, at your manger lowly,  
now in my life let your will be done.  
Live in my flesh by your Spirit Holy till your kingdom comes.

#### Chorus

## Carols, Candles, and Cake - A Celebration

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### *Notes on the choice of Carols*

Although we have printed the words for particular carols in this service, groups may choose to substitute other carols in their place.

Below we recommend alternatives taken from The Australian Hymn Book, however, you may wish to choose others, or listen to tapes or records of appropriate carols for one or more of the songs, depending on your group's resources and preferences.

#### **Carol 1**

Hark the Herald Angels Sing	AHB 227
Angels from the Realms of Glory	AHB 235
While Shepherds watched their Flocks	AHB 223

#### **Carol 2**

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly	AHB 225
Unto us a Boy is Born	AHB 218
O Come all Ye Faithful	AHB 228

#### **Carol 3**

At the Name of Jesus	AHB 170
Joy to the World	AHB 224
Once in Royal David's City	AHB 237

## A Calligrapher's Eye View

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**Display** of people's crafts, and the opportunity for each person to speak about them

**Demonstration** by calligrapher of techniques

**Craft** – making some simple cards

### **Devotions**

Thanks for the written word and the opportunity to read and learn, particularly from the Bible

### **Speaker**

- ☞ A historical overview of how the Bible has come to us (plenty of information available on the internet)
- ☞ We are God's living letters to the world. What do they read about him in our lives?
- ☞ Communicating the Gospel – use words when necessary.



## Caring for the Carers

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Those who are in the role of carers for others, whether they are looking after husbands, children other family members or friends need support, as their responsibilities are continuous.

Invite some of these from your parish to talk about their needs, and also if possible ask someone who is a professional in the area of caring for others (we asked one woman in our parish who coordinated the Anglicare Day Care Centre at Winmalee, and she brought with her a couple of the carers to talk about their lives).

This could lead to another type of support network with people offering to share the burden by being available to step in on a friendship basis so that the carer can have time to themselves occasionally.

## Children's Literature

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Display of children's books from local bookshop or library.

Focus on the Family have a very extensive section of book reviews for children. Their site is at **[www.focusonthefamily.com](http://www.focusonthefamily.com)** and you find it by clicking the more info tab on 'Parenting' and then selecting the 'Protecting your Family' menu . The last item on that menu is Book Reviews for Parents.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,  
To every believer the promise of God!  
And every offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,  
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;  
But purer and higher and greater will be  
Our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

**Final Blessing – said together:**

**May the God who shakes heaven and earth,  
whom death could not contain,  
Who lives to disturb and heal us,  
Bless us with power to go forth  
And proclaim the gospel.  
Amen.**

### **Acknowledgments:**

*The prayers were adapted from:*

The Anthology of Public Prayers – Mothers' Union

The Mothers' Union Worship Book

Laughter, Silence and Shouting – an anthology of women's prayers - Kathy Keay

Australian Prayers – Bruce Prewer



Thanks be to you, O Christ, that you have promised us the power of the Holy Spirit to help us to follow you, and to endure to the end.

Thanks be to you, O Christ, because where two or three are gathered together in your name, you are there among them.

Thanks be to you, O Christ, because you are alive for ever to intercede for us.

For these, and all other benefits of your mighty resurrection, thanks be to you, O Christ.

*I know that my Redeemer liveth* – from Handel's Messiah

With grateful hearts, we eagerly thank you, Easter God, that we have been raised up with Christ, and look for those things that are timeless. We eagerly thank you for bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel. We eagerly thank you for the glorious witness of our Living Christ to your unfailing, overriding providence. We eagerly thank you for the promise that we now share in the victory which Christ Jesus has won. We eagerly thank you that grace is stronger than evil, mercy is larger than suffering, joy is greater than grief, and love is mightier than death.

All our joyful thanksgiving and loving praise we bring to you, holy friend, loving Saviour, and glorious God of irrepressible Easter, through Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord.

*To God be the Glory* – **stand and sing together**

To God be the glory, great things he has done!  
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,  
Who yielded his life in atonement for sin  
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the earth hear his voice!  
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!  
Let the people rejoice!  
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;  
And give him the glory, great things he has done!

### Devotions

Thanks for imagination, creativity, story-telling talent, the ability to expand children's minds by good literature

### Speaker (librarian or school or pre-school teacher)

- ☛ How to encourage children to read
- ☛ Reading to children in general and from the Bible
- ☛ Choosing books for different age groups
- ☛ Popular trends, how do we make Harry Potter work for Christian families?



## Crime Awareness

Invite a local policeman/woman to come and talk about the problems of crime in your area – what you can do to be more aware and careful in your own situation. How you can help and support the police in their duties

### Devotions

Focus on the fact that our ultimate security is in God.



## Discipline – is there any?

This could be used as an outreach to playgroup or school mums. Make sure it doesn't become just a complaints session about the manners of today's children.

View a Christian DVD on discipline for children, or have a speaker review a book, bringing out its main points. Follow the DVD or speaker with a discussion time about what was raised.

“Focus on the Family” found at [www.focusonthefamily.com](http://www.focusonthefamily.com) have useful and reliable resources.

### Devotions

Thanks for God's discipline of us, prayers for our obedience to his Word

**Speaker (Christian doctor, Pre-school or Infants teacher or school counsellor)**

- ☛ How to encourage self discipline in children
- ☛ Discipline at different ages
- ☛ The challenge of the parents' example

You didn't mix with the right people, Jesus. You didn't only go and visit those left to rot in prison cells and mental hospitals, you loved them, laughed and sang with them. When the rest of us were scared to death about our own health and safety, you embraced the AIDS victim, and held him up as an example of one who knew his need.

You talked with people who felt cheated by the system, and gave them hope; on the streets, in grotty housing, and down at the dole. No wonder the authorities were worried. You sacrificed security for the life of the homeless, travelling in often tough places, and spending time with those who needed you the most. You spent little time inside religious buildings, and when you turned over the 'trinkets for Jesus' stalls, no wonder they didn't ask you back.

You reduced thousands of years of theology into one little command: to love your neighbour as yourself. How hard that is! Now they have caught you, but as you stand before the frantic crowd, you know it is they, not you, in whom the Spirit has died.

Help us to follow you, Lord. We have grown used to the comfort of other people's praise. It is not so easy for us to stand alone as you did. Give us the courage to go against the crowd, to die to self-interest, and so to overcome evil in the world today.

*O rest in the Lord, and He that shall endure to the end* – from Mendelssohn's Elijah

O Gracious God, and Loving Heavenly Father, through the mighty resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you have liberated us from the power of darkness, and brought us into the kingdom of your love; grant that as he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we may walk in newness of life, and look for those things which are in heaven, where with you, Father, and the Holy Spirit, he is alive and reigns for ever and ever.

Thanks be to you, O Christ, because you have broken for us the bonds of sin, and brought us into fellowship with the Father.

Thanks be to you, O Christ, because you have triumphed over death, and opened to us the gates of eternal life.

His people despised and rejected him. A suffering, pathetic and neglected creature; from him most turned their faces, reckoning him as useless.

Yet, unlike anyone else, he bore our lot, and carried the full ballast of our sorrows. But we carried on as if he deserved his fate, sentenced to misery by God. The wounds he bore were for our faults, the crown he wore was for our violations. He suffered shame to bring us peace, tasted pain that we might be healed.

We are as stupid as sheep, wandering and lost. But in and through this Man, you have carried our shame. His rights were openly violated, yet he took it without complaint – like a ewe before drunk shearers, as a lamb led to the slaughter.

From the land of the living he was cut off, by our sins he was struck down. Though he was never a violent man, nor ever spoke a treacherous word, he died between criminals, and was buried in a borrowed grave.

Yet you did not forsake this bruised servant. You made his death the unique death, and did the most unexpected thing: he rose to life again! After the agony came light, after disgrace came vindication: victory for himself and for others, banishing the burden of human disgrace.

Therefore this weak man is forever strong. His is the only truly successful life. He willingly staked his existence on you, and allowed himself to seem useless. But, in fact, he bore our uselessness, and removed all charges against us. His incomparable love-offering has become our true peace.

*God so Loved the World* – from Stainer's Crucifixion

Lord, you sit in silence, but it is too late for you to be quiet. You have said too much. You have fought too much. You have challenged everything that makes us feel secure.

You weren't sensible, you know, in the way you did things; you exaggerated and threatened people. They were bound to catch up with you in the end.

You called the religious people 'a load of wets'. You told them that their hearts were like sewers and that all their rituals stank to high heaven.

## *Fashion Frolic*

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This is an excellent way to raise money or just have a fun outreach day, while being conservation-minded in reusing clothing!

The idea is that people are charged a reasonable amount to attend - \$20 could be suggested if for fundraising. For this, everyone has a lovely morning tea, and is able to take home as many clothes as they like.

This can also be run at night with supper included.

### **Things that are needed are:**

- ☛ Requests for GOOD QUALITY used clothes to be brought to a central place in the days before the activity.
- ☛ A group of members to sort and display the goods, preferably on the evening before the activity.
- ☛ Lots of clothes racks, ironing stands, hat stands etc, plus many, many coathangers! - mostly just wire ones.
- ☛ Lots of large carry bags - to place on the back of everyone's chair so that they can use them to put all their goodies in.
- ☛ A separate room to be used as a change room with mirrors etc
- ☛ The clothes sorted in sizes and placed onto the clothes racks - handbags, shoes, jewellery etc on tables, and hats and scarves on the hat stands.
- ☛ Cover all the goods with sheets at the start, so that everyone has the same chance of looking at the goods when they are uncovered

- ☛ Set up tables for a very elegant morning tea, or supper, with members as hostesses at each table, which they set with their special china brought from home, plus silver teapots etc, and coffee plungers.
- ☛ Lots of special cakes and sandwiches, with a variety of each on each table.
- ☛ The hostesses organise all the tea/coffee etc for their table.
- ☛ Start the morning tea at 10 am, and then uncover all the goods at about 10.30 am after just a short welcome and announcements.

Supper could begin at 8pm and the goods be uncovered at 8.30pm.

Sit back and watch all the fun and fellowship as people sort through the clothes!

If there is a local Op Shop arrange with them to receive any left-over clothes.

## *The Importance of Grandparents*

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Display of photos of group members' grandparents, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, family members

### **Panel**

Three or four members to share memories of their grandparents, and the positive values they were able to pass on (NB each should speak for 5 mins or less, make this clear when asking the speakers)

See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

(extra verse included on CD)

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small:  
Love so amazing, so divine  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

*Isaac Watts 1674 – 1748*

### **ACT OF CONFESSION: - said together**

**God of mercy, we confess that we have turned away from you, and from each other; we repent of our hasty actions, our unkind words and bitter thoughts, our greed, our anger, and our indifference; we are sorry for our selfishness, and for all our sins, and ask for your forgiveness.**

**Grant, we beseech you, merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace, that we may be cleansed from all our sins, and serve you with a quiet mind: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Bible Reading – Psalm 51

Reflect on the words of this psalm, as we listen to this version of Psalm 51 sung in the Sistine Chapel each Holy Week from about 1630 – 1870, and for which the music was a jealousy guarded treasure. The fourteen year old Mozart visited Rome in 1770, and achieved the notable feat of writing the work out from memory after a single hearing. This English rendition is sung by the choir of King's College, Cambridge.

*Allegri's Miserere*

O God of infinite glory, we have heard the most unlikely story, we have seen your power in a weak Man.

He grew up quietly like a lonely plant, rooted in arid ground. There was nothing to make one notice him, no good looks to impress the crowd.

**Leader:**

We pray for homes and families, that husbands and wives may be faithful to their vows, and children may be brought up to know and follow you; give comfort to those who are divorced, and to all who live in broken or divided families; we pray for those who live alone, whether by choice or from necessity, and for all who work to strengthen marriage and family life; Lord, in your mercy

**All: Receive our prayer****Leader:**

We pray for those who are ill or disabled, and all who are afraid or perplexed: give them wholeness of body, mind and spirit; comfort those who are in any kind of trouble, and sustain all who care for others; Lord, in your mercy

**All: Receive our prayer****Leader:**

Lord Jesus, show us how to wash the feet, not of your saints, but of the humble and ordinary people among whom we live and work, for whom we also pray and give you thanks. Show us the right way to serve them, because they are yours, and in this service we are serving you. Lord, we are not worthy to do you any service, but you have given the commandment, and we would obey in love for you; Lord, in your mercy

**All: Receive our prayer**

Join in, or just listen and meditate on the words of When I survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it Lord, that I should boast  
Save in the death of Christ my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most;  
I sacrifice them to his blood.

**Devotions**

Thanks for all our family, prayer for love and wisdom in relationships.

**Speaker**

- 👤 The role of Grandparents in the family. The problems of proximity, the difficulties of distance.
- 👤 Grandparents' opportunities to share the Gospel
- 👤 A listening Grandma – a great safety valve

## Good Health & Wellbeing

Use the foursquare idea for this – **physical, spiritual, relational, mental.**

The Bible tells us that Jesus grew in knowledge and stature and in favour with God and man.

Ask a panel of members from your parish to talk about ways they use to keep healthy and fit in both body and mind.

Some topics could include: Pilates, walking with friends, swimming and/or gymnasium programs, good diet, line dancing, doing brain games - Sudoku, crosswords etc, or even playing bridge! Suggest different ways of getting together with people for different interests.

Spiritual well-being is very important – topics could include ways of Bible reading, prayer, study groups, seminars etc.

We often feel inadequate when faced with a situation where someone we know is grieving. When we ourselves are faced with grief we don't always react the way we think we 'should' and so can start to wonder if there's something wrong with us.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross was a world renowned writer and speaker on grief. The site **www.grief.com** gives access to articles written by her and by David Kessler who worked with her in the last 10 years of her life.

Provide a display of resources available for counselling through local church agencies, focussing on where to go for specialised help after bereavement, divorce or other trauma.

### Speaker

If possible invite a speaker such as a hospital chaplain or a counsellor to speak on one or more of the following:

- ☝ Working through stages of grief
- ☝ Practical ways to help others
- ☝ Coming to terms with loneliness

If no speaker is available, members could research the topic. The experience of individuals is helpful to hear as talking can help us to see that there is no one 'right response' to grief.

God, we confess that the things we deeply fear meet us at this execution. It is a nightmare from which we wish to hide our faces – from the one who seems abandoned by earth and heaven.

This Golgotha is the place where our smooth, sensible ideas of success, power, wisdom, faith and divine love are shattered by a hammer beat.

Either we must abandon this world's wisdom and begin again, or we must abandon you, God.

Here at this cross our faith either rises or falls.

Lord, we believe: help us in our unbelief.

“If with all your heart you truly seek Him, you will ever surely find Him, thus saith our God” – *Mendelsobn's Elijah*

### Leader:

God our Father, we pray for your people throughout the world; that we may share in the work of your Son who died for us. Help us to tell of your saving love to those who are part of our everyday lives;  
Lord, in your mercy

### All: Receive our prayer

### Leader:

We pray for those who suffer for faith or conscience or truth, for those who are tempted to turn back; help them to know they are not alone, to hold out to the end, and by their witness draw others to you;  
Lord, in your mercy

### All: Receive our prayer

### Leader:

We pray for the nations of the world; give peace where there is conflict, violence or oppression, peace between nations, among neighbours, and in our hearts; Lord, in your mercy

### All: Receive our prayer



**Leader:**

You sent your Son to give his life a ransom for the whole human family.  
Give justice, peace and racial harmony to the world he died to save.  
Father of all

**All: Hear your children's prayer****Leader:**

You gave your Son a share in the life of a family. Help us to value our families, to be thankful for them, and to live sensitively within them.  
Father of all

**All: Hear your children's prayer****Leader:**

Your Son drew around him a company of friends. Bring love and joy to all who are alone. Help us all to find in the brothers and sisters of Christ a loving family. Father of all

**All: Hear your children's prayer.****Leader:**

As we listen to this music, take time to think about your family, pray for each one of them, and commit them to the care of our loving Father, who wants the very best for all his children.

*Massenet's Meditation***Leader:**

Tomorrow is the day we remember the sacrifice of Jesus for us on the cross –

Holy God, this is the day we most love, yet hold in most awe.  
We behold the Man, and tremble.

O God, as Jesus is lifted up, our faith must either be renewed or lost. We see him and recognise the kind of person we want, yet are afraid to be.

Behold the Man – despised, outcast, accursed – quite dispensable when the powerful snap their fingers or rattle their moneybags.

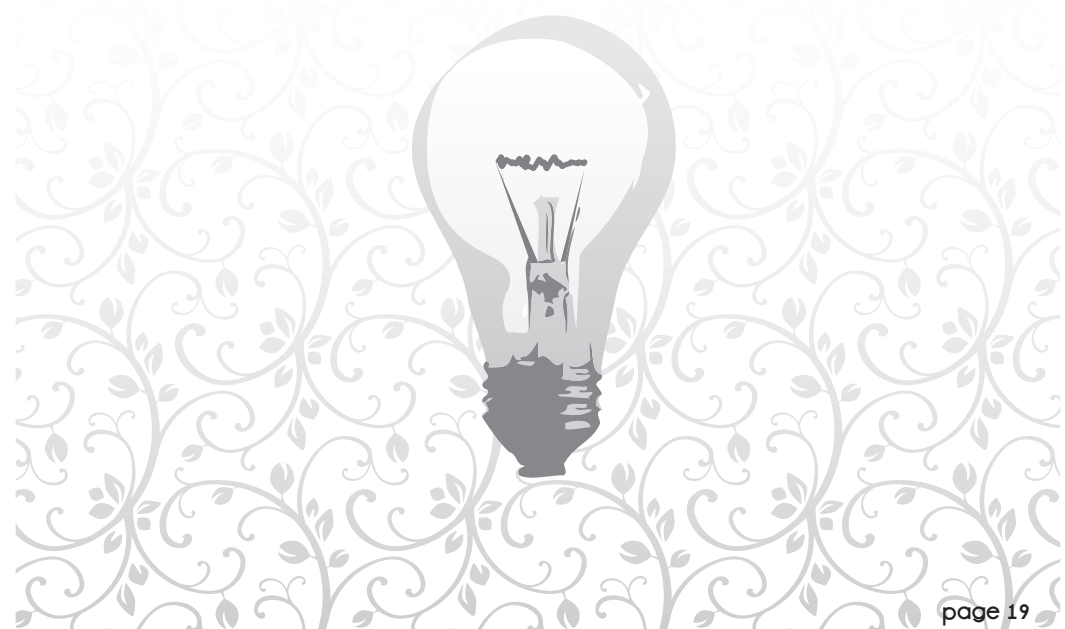
## Handy Hints

In the weeks before the meeting, invite people to write down some special hints they have found useful. Have a time limit to finish a few days before the next meeting, so that the hints can be typed up and collated.

These could be related to: kitchen, cooking, life-skills, relationships, gardening etc.

Have copies available at the meeting and ask a few of those who have contributed to talk for a few minutes about their special hints. If there are some easy recipes among the hints, these could be made up and sampled.

Spiritual hints that people have found helpful in focussing on God in times of trouble or being consistent in taking time with God when things are going well. Ways of using prayer, or particular ways of studying the Bible.





## 'Mini-Flowers' Morning Tea

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Demonstration of 'mini' flower arrangements done in bud vases, jugs, cup and saucer, teapot, goblet, eggcup etc.

Ideas on how to make the most of just a few flowers by using different foliage as a background, or using fruit, nuts or dried leaves.

### Devotions

Centred on God's creation

### Speaker

- ☞ MINI CARE - God's concern about the smallest details of our lives
- ☞ YOU ARE UNIQUE – How each person's background (even when seemingly unimportant or uninteresting) contributes to each one's special ministry for God
- ☞ SMALL IS WONDERFUL – How God can use the small details of life to teach us great truths.

## Mothering Sunday

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Mothering Sunday is the first Sunday in Lent, and used to be the time when families remembered their own physical mothering, and also the spiritual mothering of the church. Servant girls and apprentice lads were given the day off to return home, often taking with them a posy of flowers for their mothers.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,  
Beside the Syrian sea,  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
Let us, like them, without a word  
Rise up and follow thee.

O sabbath rest by Galilee!  
O calm of hills above,  
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
The silence of eternity,  
Interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire  
Thy coolness and thy balm;  
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,  
O still small voice of calm.

*John Greenleaf Whittier 1807 – 92*

**All: O Lord our Father, we come into your presence with awe; We thank you that we shall be received with love. Amen.**

God of compassion, whose Son, Jesus Christ, shared the life of a home in Nazareth, and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself; strengthen us in our daily living, that in our joys and sorrows, we may know your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Leader:

We pray for the family of the church, and for the life of families around us. Father of all

**All: Hear your children's prayer**

## *Suite #3 - Bach*

### **Leader:**

Be silent, still, aware,  
for there in your own heart  
the Spirit of God is at prayer.  
In the silence,  
In the stillness,  
We wait on God.

Lord, in this quiet time, let me be still, and know the light of Christ within.

Fill me with your Spirit Lord, Give me an inner radiance and peace, that I  
may come closer to your divine love, and understand more of your mercy  
and compassion.

Gentle God, breathe love within us, breathe love between us.

From one moment to the next, you hold us in the palm of your hand.

As we sit quietly, and draw away from all the busy things which occupy us,  
let us look instead to our heavenly Father:

Drop thy still dew of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of thy peace.

You may like to join in as we listen to this hymn, or just sit quietly and  
think about the words which draw us into the Father's presence –

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
Forgive our foolish ways;  
Reclothe us in our rightful mind:  
In purer lives thy service find,  
In deeper reverence, praise.

Traditions for Mothering Sunday have grown from this and the giving of flowers and making of a special 'Simnel' cake are ones which can be used now to highlight the concept of mothering, which all Christians support, and which MU is especially involved in.

The nurture of Christian families is not dependent on the physical fact of being a mother – everyone needs to be part of this.

Fresh flowers can be difficult to organise on a Sunday morning, but silk ones (good realistic ones!) can be organised in the week or so before – maybe a little card attached with a ribbon to a daisy or gardenia, wishing a 'Happy Mothering Sunday' could be given.

**Simnel cake** recipes are available, but just a small piece of fruit cake could be wrapped in gladwrap in the days before, and given out on the morning.

**Book marks** can be made with a special Mothering Sunday greeting for everyone.

If your church doesn't celebrate Mothering Sunday, these ideas can be used for Mothers' Day, the second Sunday in May. The traditions may be different, but the value placed on motherhood is the same.

## Once in a Pancake Day

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If the meeting is to be in the week when Lent begins (it does not necessarily have to be on Shrove Tuesday –Pancake Day itself), organise to have pancakes made for morning/afternoon tea etc, and have some members research the traditions of Pancake Day, Lent and also Easter.

There are many different activities and ideas people have used over centuries to celebrate this period, and some, such as decorating Easter Eggs, making an Easter Garden or a palm cross could be used as a craft activity for the group, or simply demonstrated, if that is preferred

### Speaker

- ☞ Focus on the joy of Easter and our wonderful redemption through Jesus' death for us.
- ☞ Consider Easter traditions in other cultures and the particular emphasis they have.
- ☞ Share family traditions and celebrations of Easter and their meanings.

## Scrapbooking - Easy Recipes

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In the month before the meeting, ask members to send in their simple easy recipes (no more than 4 or 5 ingredients etc), and then get someone to type them up and photocopy them for everyone.

Invite someone who is involved with scrapbooking come and show how to do this with the recipes - even if only a couple of pages are done, it gives people an idea of what can be achieved.

## Women's Health Issues

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A local gynaecologist could speak about problems of infertility, (we had a church member who was a retired gynaecologist and used the MU Bible Study on Hannah to do a case study on infertility and what processes are now available for treatment of this problem).

Other topics could include: menopause, tiredness, post-natal depression, arthritis, joint replacements, stress in family relationships.

Spiritual health could be focussed on with discussion on prayer – problems and pleasures.



## Wedding Memories (2)

Make this an evening meeting, with a special dinner and invite couples to come dressed as wedding guests. A charge may need to be made to cover catering costs.

Decorate the venue either as a wedding reception, or with photos of members' weddings around the room.

### Devotions

These could take the form of 'after dinner speeches and toasts' focussing on different aspects of marriage: joy of companionship, working through the difficulties of two becoming one, communication, for better or worse, the changes brought by children, growing old together.

### Speaker

- ☞ The most important thing in marriage – forgiveness
- ☞ Communication between partners
- ☞ Expectations of marriage
- ☞ For Christians marriage is a triangle with God at the top.

### Music

Entertain with 'wedding songs' if you have a musician or soloist available. If not use a suitable CD for background music.

### Speaker

A talk on 'Taste and See ...' could be given, highlighting God's goodness and provision for all people, especially his children, both physically and spiritually.

## Sibling Rivalry

Sibling conflict is as old as Cain and Abel, as legendary as Cinderella and her stepsisters and can be as deadly as the daughters of King Lear.

Parents should know the battles are inevitable and must prepare their kids to defuse potentially ugly situations. And there will be times when parents must come to a child's defense and say, *"We are family, and we will not say anything that doesn't build up one another. We will respect each other."*

This quote comes from the Focus on the Family website at **[www.focusonthefamily.com](http://www.focusonthefamily.com)** in the Parenting Section under Building Relationships.

The section there has some useful suggestions on managing sibling rivalry in the home. A member could use this site to prepare a talk on the topic which could then be combined with one or more of the following:

- ☞ Have some members share their own experiences of sibling rivalry from their birth families and between their children.
- ☞ If possible have a mother and daughter talk about their different perspectives on the family relationships

- 20 Ask some members to talk about the way their relationships in childhood effected their adult relationships with their siblings.
- 20 Invite a counsellor to talk about sibling rivalry
  - the problems of fitting a new baby into a home without jealousy and 'nose out of joint' feelings from other siblings
  - the difficulties of encouraging each child to feel that they have their own special gifts and personality, without detracting from the value of the other children.

### Speaker

Look at sibling rivalry in the Bible, eg Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his Brothers, David's sons and consider God's response.

## Wedding Memories (1)

Display of wedding photos brought by members. Number each photo, but don't say whose it is. Then give out a list of the names of all members who have brought a photo and have everyone try and match the names to the numbers on the photos. You may want to have a small 'prize' for the person who gets the most right.

If your members are all likely to know each other and get most of them right, go further afield and ask other church members if you can borrow their photos for the meeting day.

### Devotions

Prayers for marriage, relationships, families

### Speaker

A panel of 3 or 4 from different stages of married life could speak for about 5 mins on the particular stage they are experiencing at present. Ask them to speak on:

- 20 How long they have been married
- 20 What is their current family situation
- 20 What is one particular joy and one particular challenge they experience in being married at this time of their life?

Conclude by having a member pray for each person who has shared their story.

Alternately have a marriage counsellor or church pastor who prepares couples for marriage (don't try both) :

- 20 The stages of marriage
- 20 Handling conflict in marriage
- 20 'Give and take', but how often should one give



## UFO Coffee Morning

Most women have some unfinished craft stored away in their cupboards. This can be a fun morning when everyone can bring theirs along – maybe get help from others if they are having problems, or just enjoy spending time working on their project.

### Speaker

A short talk about how God is still working on us to bring us to be more like Jesus could fit in with this.

## Unopened Gifts

**Craft** – making gift boxes, wrapping gifts, making gift tags, tassels or bows

**Display** of ideas for gift wrapping

### Devotions

Gifts of the Spirit, or thanks for the gifts God has given us.

### Speaker

- ☞ Bible reading and prayer are gifts from God, often unopened by Christians
- ☞ Giving to others, identifying what they need, not just what we want to give them
- ☞ How am I using my gifts for God?

## Scone Day

### Special Devonshire Tea to start

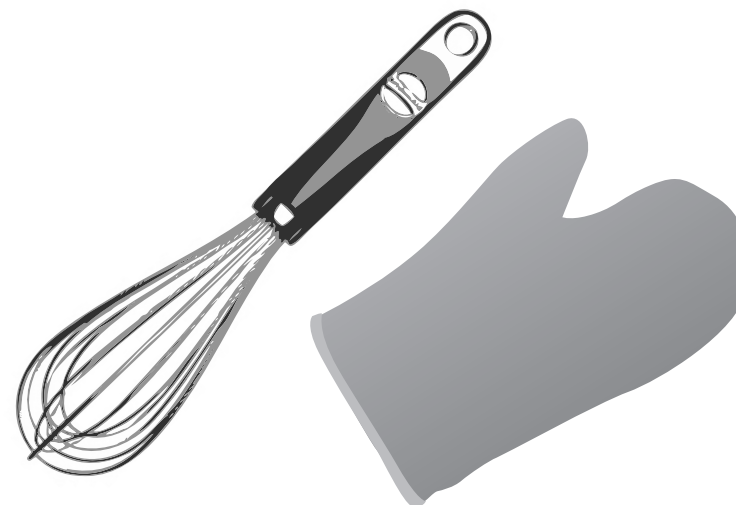
**Demonstration** of scone making which could be done by several different people with recipes given out.

### Devotions

Thanks for physical and spiritual nourishment.

### Speaker

- ☞ Encouragement in the ministry of hospitality
- ☞ 'A light touch and a hot oven' identifying the requirements for whatever God calls us to do.
- ☞ 'Some people just can't make scones' assessing one's strengths and weaknesses
- ☞ Getting back to basics in our spiritual life.





## Songs of Praise

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Ask about 5 or 6 members to talk about their favourite song or hymn, and give the reasons and background for their choice.

Get the names of the songs beforehand, and organise to have the music/words etc available so that a musician can play for them to be sung if wished.

If a CD is requested, make sure that the CD player is ready and WORKS!

You could also have a member/members research the lives of the authors of the chosen hymns. This isn't too difficult to do if they have access to the internet. Remember many hymns have two authors: the lyrics writer and the music composer.

You could conclude with a talk on the use of praise in the Bible.

## Tucker Without Tantrums

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Recipes and ideas for encouraging children to eat nutritiously.

At present (2010) Woolworths have a healthy eating theme called Fresh food Kids which have some excellent recipes, tips, information and computer games to encourage children to eat healthy food. The main Woolworths site is **[www.woolworths.com.au](http://www.woolworths.com.au)** and you click on the Fresh Food Kids heading.

Coles don't have a children's site, but they have a Recipes and meals ideas page on their website which is **[www.coles.com.au](http://www.coles.com.au)**

You could ask a number of people to come prepared to share one idea or recipe that has helped them with their children's mealtimes.

### Devotions

Thanks for all of creation, and for God's sustaining of us.

### Speaker

**(dietician, doctor, paediatrician, health centre nurse, nutritionist)**

- ☞ Foods children need
- ☞ Ways to take stress out of mealtimes
- ☞ Ideas for maintaining good discipline at mealtimes

*Note: If you do have an 'expert' available to speak, you may want to have a 'question box' where people can write their particular problems or questions anonymously and have them answered. Make sure if you do this that you give your expert time to look at the questions during the meeting, so she/he can think about how best to answer.*