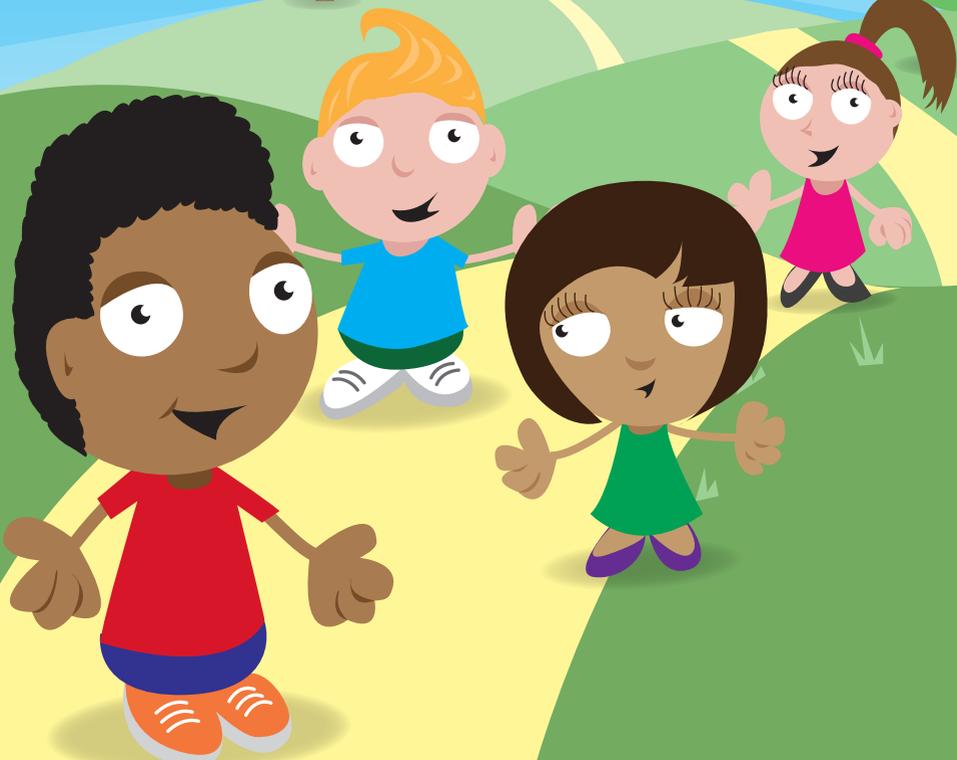


END OF TERM

Toddler celebration



This book belongs to

Summer Toddler Celebration!

Here are some ideas for an end of term toddler praise service to give thanks for friendships made during the year and to say 'goodbye' to any leaving the group.

It is based on the story of Jesus blessing the little children.

Ready:

If you are planning to meet in church, check that the service is in the diary. You might like to invite your church leader to make the brief point that we need to develop a childlike trust in God, depending upon him for everything as we move forward in our lives, or to give a final blessing.

Enlarge the picture of Jesus and pin to a board with enough space around him for the adults to add 'blessings' for their children on sticky notes or for small photos of their children.

Teddy:

Bring Teddy to help put everyone at ease in church and to show that children are most welcome. He could lead the way to show special features, such as a large Bible, a colourful window, a cross or a font.

Go:

Your aim is to praise God for your group and to show everyone (however old or young!) that they are loved and valued.

Storytelling Tips:

Think how to arrange chairs so that you can act out the story with your group. Any helpers or visitors could stay at the front to form the crowd!

The story

Leader:

Welcome to our toddler praise, everyone! Let's light a candle to remind us that Jesus is with us. *(Someone lights a candle.)* We're here today to say a big THANK YOU to God for all the friends we've made and all the fun we've had together this year. From all the team, it's been a real blessing to get to know you and we hope that this group has been a blessing to you! It's time for our first song!

Song:

Sing a joyful song such as 'Thank you, Lord, for this fine day' (Junior Praise), vv 1, 2. Wave arms above heads and dance in the chorus! You could add a verse, 'Thank you, Lord, for [name of group]'.

Reading:

Jesus blesses the little children (Mark 10:13 – 16)

Leader:

The story today is all about a girl called Rachel. Would anyone like to come out to the front to be Rachel? Rachel *really, really* wanted a story but her Mum was busy with the new baby.

"Please can I have a story?" she asked.

Mum nodded. "In a minute," she said. "Just let me dress the baby."

"Is it time for my story now?" asked Rachel.

"Nearly!" said Mum. "I'll just give the baby his milk."

Rachel sighed. "Babies take up a lot of time, don't they!"

"That's because they can't do anything for themselves," said Mum.

"I think we'll have to go for a walk now to get the baby to sleep."

"Oh no!" said Rachel. "I'll never get my story now!"

Shall we go for a walk with them, everyone?

All:

The group divides into two, carrying babies and leading small children up both sides of the seating, meeting at the top of a central aisle. Meanwhile, a helper places the picture of Jesus at the front.

Leader:

On the walk, Rachel met her friends with their Mums, Dads and babies.

All:

Hello! Hello!

Leader:

"Hello! We're going to see Jesus!" they said. "He's sitting in the

market place and he's telling some wonderful stories!"

Rachel jumped up and down. "Can we go and see Jesus too?" she asked. *What do you think? Shall we go and see Jesus?*

All:

The group moves halfway down the aisle and stops.

Leader:

"Look, Rachel, can you see Jesus?" asked Mum. "He's sitting in the middle of the crowd."

Rachel looked and looked. At last she saw a man who was smiling and moving his hands about as he told a story. Can you see him?

Leader:

"Let's go and speak to him," said Rachel.

"Yes!" said Mum. "We'll ask Jesus to bless you and all the children."

"Bless us?" said Rachel. "Whatever does 'bless' mean?"

"It means we want Jesus to bring you lots of happiness," said Mum. *Come on everyone, let's go and ask Jesus to bless the children.*

All:

The group moves closer to the front and stops.

Leader:

But just then, a man came and spoke to Mum.

"Don't interrupt Jesus now!" he said crossly. "Can't you see he's busy teaching the crowd?"

Poor Mum looked upset and some of the babies started to cry.

(Pause. Now speak slowly and clearly.) Then something AMAZING happened. Jesus stood up, held out his arms to them and called, "I'm never too busy for children! Let the little children come to me!"

(Hand to ear) What did he say?

All:

Let the little children come to me!

Leader

That's right! Come on, then, let's go and sit next to Jesus!

All:

All sit around your picture of Jesus.

Jesus welcomes everyone. Let's sing a song about that!

Song:

To the tune, Happy birthday!

We are welcome today,
We are welcome today,
Jesus says we are welcome,
And he'll bless us today!
(Repeat song)

Leader:

Jesus took the babies in his arms.

"May God bless you!" he said, and the little ones opened their eyes and gazed up at him.

Then Jesus knelt down beside Rachel.

"And what can I do for you, Rachel?" he asked, smiling.

Rachel looked at Mum and then back at Jesus.

"Would you tell me a story?" she asked shyly.

"A story!" said Jesus. "Yes, of course. I'm very good at those!"

So he told Rachel her favourite story all about how God made the world and all the animals and all the people. Rachel felt very important sitting there with Jesus, listening to her own special story. And do you know what – all the grown ups enjoyed it too!

Song:

Here's a song to the tune Frere Jacques, to say "Goodbye and God bless" to any leaving the group. You could form a circle around each child, place a hand on their shoulder or head, or shake hands, as you sing.

Goodbye, [Harry],
Goodbye [Harry],
God bless you,
God bless you,
We'll be thinking of you,

We'll be thinking of you,
At big school/somewhere new,
At big school/somewhere new.
(Repeat for each child.)

Prayer:

Play some gentle music (such as John Rutter's 'The Lord bless you and keep you') as the adults write a few words on coloured shapes expressing something they would like God to bless their children with this year (for instance, confidence, good health, new friends etc). They then bring these forward to place around the picture of Jesus. Alternatively, they might add small photos of their children as they say a silent prayer.

Dear God,

Thank you for the Bible story we heard today when Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me!" We are here today as your children, big and small. Please bless us all and help us to be a blessing to one another.
Amen

Leader:

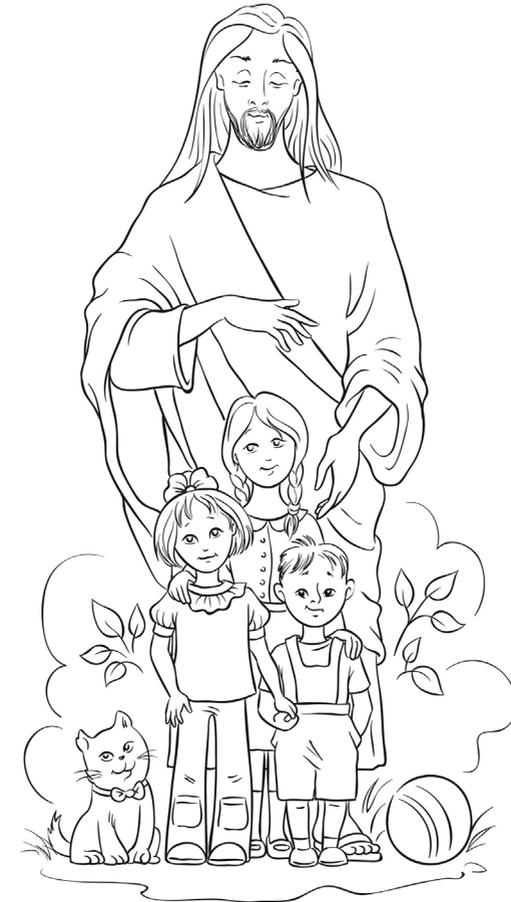
Happy summer holidays, everyone!
Don't forget that we meet again
on ...

Party bag:

Why not encourage the adults to continue today's theme at home by giving them the Let the Little Children Come to Me activity sheet to take away with them?

Let the little children come to me!

Share the joy of a story with your toddler every day, however busy you may be! Draw pictures of children around Jesus or cut them from magazines and glue them on the page as you retell the story of Jesus blessing the little children.



A bedtime prayer:

Let your toddler choose different people to pray for every night.

Dear God,
Please bless Grandpa and baby Abbie.
And please bless me!
Amen



Playtime

www.careforthefamily.org.uk

www.cpo.org.uk