

# **GUIDE TO STARTING YOUR OWN MOMS' PLAYGROUP MINISTRY**

**by Rosemary Bailey, Mommy and Me Coordinator at Pioneer Memorial Church (PMC)**

There is something about gathering together that is good for people. We gather together for weddings and funerals, for parties and work bees. As Seventh-day Adventists we gather together with our community of faith on a weekly basis. It is this regular gathering together that is cited as being one reason for Adventist health and life expectancy. Other studies report that having social support networks help people deal with stress in their lives. However, stay-at-home moms of young children can be highly isolated despite church attendance.

*Mommy and Me* provides one way for mothers and grandmothers to be part of a supportive community. Many mothers in the PMC community did not grow up here and have left their family, friends, and home churches far behind. Others may have children while the rest of their circle of friends do not and need to meet other moms who can understand their new role in a way that non-parents cannot. *Mommy and Me* provides a place to meet other mothers and become part of a group. There are benefits for the children who attend as well. Learning to share and get along with others is a very important skill that playgroups help children to develop. Often children enjoy playing with different toys and even babies have fun watching the bigger children play. Children also are exposed to fun crafts, songs, and stories. In this informal setting, mothers can chat and connect in a way that is not possible within the structure of Sabbath morning services. *Mommy and Me* is really Mommy and WE...building community together.

## **ORGANIZATION**

We have parents sign a waiver set up by the church stating that they are solely responsible for their child's safety. Unlike a daycare or school, there is no "teacher" responsible for the children. For this reason, every child must be accompanied by a parent or other care giver who will be responsible for that child. If you plan on using any pictures of the children in your playgroup, you should have the parents sign a photo-release. There are many reasons that it may be unsafe for a child's picture to be posted on Facebook, or even put on the church webpage or in the bulletin. You would not want harm to come to a child because of a picture. There is a sample at the end of this document.

## **DAILY SCHEDULE**

This schedule works well for our community. We meet once a week during the school year.

10:00 am      play time  
10:30          group time - child come to the rug for story time, Moms model respectful listening  
10:45          craft time  
11:15          clean up  
11:20          official end time

If your child needs to come late or leave early to accommodate naptime, we totally understand! Children must be supervised by a female parent or guardian.

## **NAME TAGS**

Moms and children all wear a name tag. We put masking tape and colored markers out each session so moms can make the name tags when they come in. We start each group time by singing a theme song. We chose a song about making new friends to the tune of "If you're happy and you know it":

*If you want to make a new friend, shake a hand (x2)*

*If you want to make a new friend, first say "hi, how do you do"*

*If you want to make a new friend, shake a hand.*

We sing “*clean up, clean up everybody everywhere, clean up clean up everybody do your share*” to transition from play to group time. Everyone helps clean up. At first, we asked specific moms to do specific clean up jobs, but now everyone knows where things go and what needs to be done so people just pitch in and it all gets done.

**RULES**

While every parent is responsible for their own child, we have found that it is helpful to have some rules and guidelines so everyone can work together as a team. Here are our rules.

- No hitting or hurting
- Walk in the room (no running)
- Use an inside voice
- Use kind words

**SAMPLE THEME**

Sometimes we take activities outside. We also used to have a Fit Kids time for 10 minutes when we had a mom who was a fitness instructor. The children really enjoyed it. Utilize the talents and interests of the moms in your group.

All of our leaders are moms that are part of the group. We don’t have special teachers. The program is run by the moms. We have a director (a mom) who communicates with the church, handles the budget, coordinates the leaders, teaches, and makes out the calendars and other parent informational materials.

APPLES IN FALL		
<p><b>Songs</b>                      If you want to make a new friend                      I like to eat an Apple                      I like to eat, eat, eat,                      Apples and Bananas                      My God Loves Me</p>	<p><b>Story Time</b>                      5 Big Apples Big Book                      or a book such as                      Apples for Everyone                      (Picture the Seasons)                      by Jill Esbaum</p>	<p><b>Craft Time</b>  <i>Apple Tree:</i> Provide an apple tree drawn or printed on paper. Use red finger paint to add apples to the tree.  <i>Apple Prints:</i> Cut apples in half and provide paints. Children use the apples like stamps to create designs on gift bags or cards. Use a drier apple like a red delicious variety.</p>
<p><b>Outside Options</b>                      Fill the basket: Have apples in a tub (or balls) and everyone works together to bring all the apples to the basket quickly.                      Visit an apple orchard, or take a walk and look for other fall seeds and fruits that animals can eat.</p>		

## PHOTO/VIDEO RELEASE FORM PMC Mommy and Me

I give permission for my child to appear in photos or videos taken at *Mommy and Me* which may be used for public relations or other church or group purposes. I understand that *Mommy and Me* is not responsible for the individual use of personal pictures taken at *Mommy and Me*.

Church \_\_\_\_\_ Group \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

I also give permission for my child to appear in photos posted on the *Mommy and Me* facebook private group.

Name of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_