

Gospel Light's
baby beginnings

nursery smart pages

A Guide for Nursery Directors & Caregivers

Includes:

Policies and Procedures

Volunteer Training Articles

Recruitment Helps

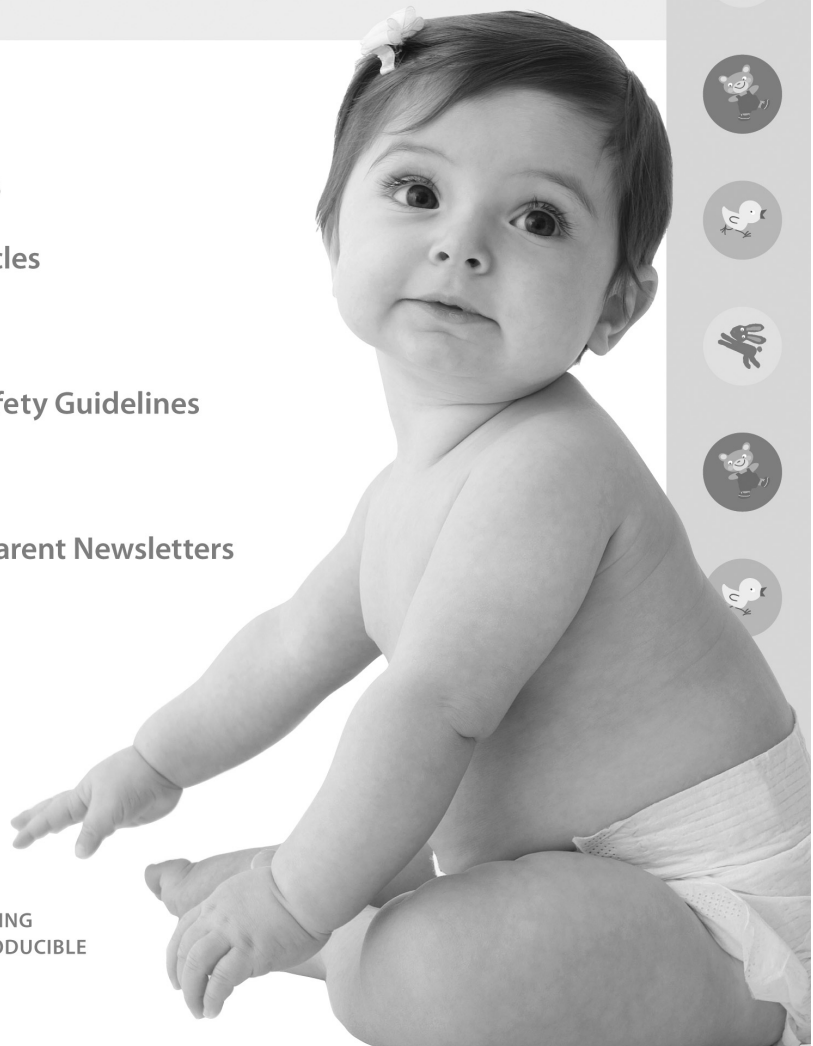
Updated Health and Safety Guidelines

Nursery Clip Art

Two Years of Monthly Parent Newsletters



INCLUDES TRAINING
DVD WITH REPRODUCIBLE
RESOURCES



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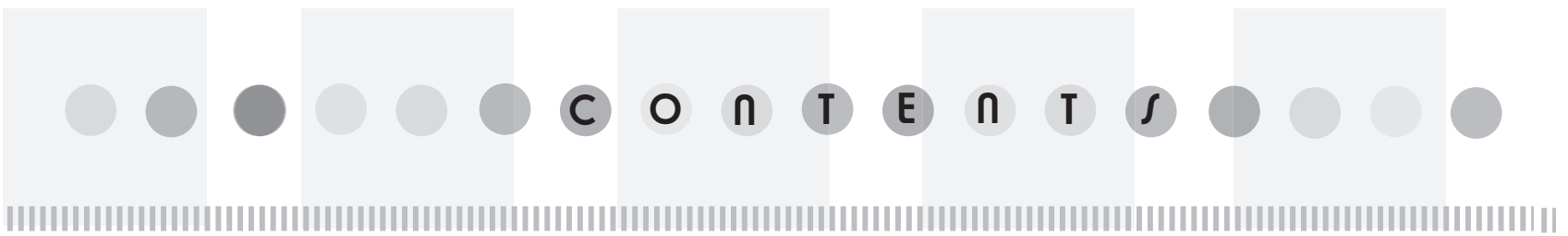
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A Step-by-Step Plan for Your Nursery

Gospel Light's Baby Beginnings baby/toddler program is the most complete resource available for churches who either want to begin or maintain a quality ministry to children in the first two to three years of life. Whether your church is large or small, you can use these resources. Here is a step-by-step plan for what to do.

1. Start with the basics: health and safety.

- Evaluate the nursery room, procedures and staff according to the Organizing Your Nursery section of this book.
- Use the Health and Safety Checklists found on pages 58-61.
- Set several short- and long-term goals for improving the operation of your nursery based on your evaluation.

2. Help your staff introduce a Bible-based theme for each month.

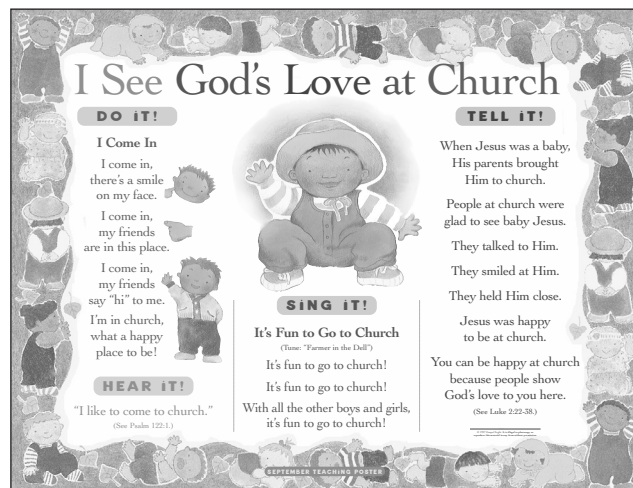
- At the beginning of every month, display in the nursery the three appropriate posters from the *Baby Beginnings Nursery Posters*. Caregivers, whether serving for several months, a few weeks or even as substitutes, will be able to see at a glance on the teaching poster the monthly theme, a simple song, finger fun and Bible story to use with children in the nursery. The Bible Story Picture and the photo poster for each month will not only help make your nursery attractive, but will provide caregivers with theme-related pictures to talk about with children.
- **Use Tips:** Display the teaching posters at an adult's eye level. Display the Bible Story Picture and photo posters where children can see them.

Purchase enough *Nursery Posters* so that each nursery room has its own supply of posters.

- **Bonus Idea:** Ask every caregiver to watch the *How to Build a Quality Nursery* DVD for ideas on how to make your nursery a healthy, happy place where babies and toddlers are introduced to God's love.

How can we make sure the posters and pictures last?

Posters and pictures can be laminated or covered on both sides with clear Con-Tact paper for greater durability. Lamination will also allow for occasional cleaning with a bleach and water solution.



3. Add a musical touch!

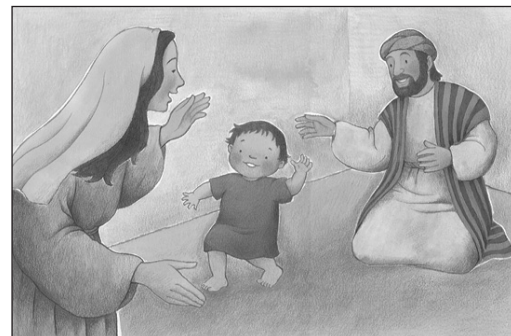
- Provide the *Baby Beginnings I Love to Sing!* CD for teachers to play and sing along with in the nursery. The upbeat, simple songs on the Active Time segment will give teachers ways to play with children as they talk about the monthly theme. The gentle, soothing songs on the Quiet Time segment are perfect for calming babies and toddlers.
- **Use Tip:** Reproduce CDs for parents in your nursery program to use at home or in the car.

Where can our nursery staff find all
the good stuff they need?

Designate a specific shelf or cupboard where all curriculum-related materials will be stored. At this same location, post one or more sheets which clearly tell the procedures each caregiver needs to follow (for example, how to set up the room—show a photo of how the room should look; how to check in children—include a copy of the check-in form; how to connect children's activities with the monthly Bible theme—provide the curriculum materials needed; how to clean up the room—give a brief checklist of what needs to be done). Consider creating a box for each month that contains the supplies for the month's learning activities as described in the *Baby Beginnings Teacher's Guides*. At the beginning of the month, the box is placed in the appropriate rooms for use by teachers.

4. Keep going with Bible Story Picture Cards!

- Place a copy of the *Baby Beginnings I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture Cards in each nursery room. Instruct each caregiver to use the card for the month to tell and talk about a short Bible story with children, one-on-one.
- **Use Tips:** Where many staff are in the same room, provide two or three copies of the cards for teachers to use.
- Purchase an *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture card set for each child. At the beginning of the month, make the cards available for parents (mail cards, set them out on a counter or in a pocket on your nursery bulletin board for parents to take copies, teachers place cards in diaper bags). Or in September, give the entire Bible Story Picture Card set to each family; give new families a copy during the year.



5. Don't stop now! Help caregivers, teachers and parents be prepared to use learning activities to take advantage of teachable moments in communicating Bible truths to children.

Teacher's Guide—0 to 18 Months

Children's Pastor or Nursery Coordinator

- Prior to the start of each month, send home the appropriate month's overview (first two pages of each month's section) to each caregiver in the nursery.
- If you have a regular, consistent staff for the month, include the activity pages for each month as well and encourage your staff to plan together which activities they will provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)
- If you have a rotating staff, select several of the activities yourself. Collect any needed supplies and place them in the appropriate rooms along with the page of instructions (highlight or mark the activity). Alert the staff to look for these items when they arrive to serve.

Teacher's Guide—18 to 36 Months

Children's Pastor or Nursery Coordinator

- Prior to the start of each month, send home the appropriate month's overview (first two pages of each month) to each caregiver in the nursery.
- If you have a regular, consistent staff for the month, include the activity pages for each month as well and encourage your staff to plan together which activities they will prepare and provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)
- If you have a rotating staff, select several of the activities yourself. Collect any needed supplies and place them in the appropriate rooms along with the page of instructions (highlight or mark the activity). Alert the staff to look for these items when they arrive to serve.

Toddler/2s Classroom Coordinator or Teacher

- Each teacher in the classroom needs a copy of the monthly overview and activities. (Print out copies from the CD-ROM that comes with the *Baby Beginnings Teacher's Guide—18 to 36 Months*.)
- Teachers plan together which activities they will prepare and provide each week of the month. (For example, one person would be prepared to lead a God's Wonders activity each week while another person would be prepared to lead an Active Play activity each week.)

How do we teach babies and toddlers?

The best session for babies and toddlers is one in which children freely play in a safe and interesting environment. Caregivers interact with children, participating with children in a variety of activities (singing, playing with toys, reading books, telling a simple story) and caring for physical needs. Young children are not developmentally ready for structured group activities, so while two or more children may occasionally gather to listen to a story, or do the motions to a song, don't expect toddlers to participate in a group learning time. Babies and toddlers learn best when the activity is one they have initiated, or when they express obvious enjoyment and interest in a teacher-initiated activity.



Parent's Home Pages

• Print out and photocopy the monthly Parent's Home Page (on the CD-ROM bound in this book and also on the CD-ROM in both *Teacher's Guides*) and distribute to parents (mail them, set them out on a counter or in a pocket on your nursery bulletin board for parents to take copies, teachers place pages in diaper bags). Combine the Parent's Home Page with the appropriate month's *I Love to Look!* Bible Story Picture Card by stapling or clipping each month's page and picture together.

• **Bonus Idea:** Supplement the learning ideas on the Home Pages with the instant activities in the *Baby Beginnings I Love to Wiggle and Giggle!* easel book. Each nursery room needs at least one easel book. Additional books should be purchased if the room is large and has more than two caregivers. Encourage parents to purchase an easel book to have at home, using the activities with their child to reinforce the learning that has taken place at church.

How can I make sure our nursery makes the best use of these nursery materials?

Ask parents of children in the nursery to take the responsibility for one or more of these tasks: display the appropriate posters each month and store posters for reuse, distribute the Teacher's and Parent's Home Pages and Bible Story Picture Cards, and reproduce and distribute *I Love to Sing!* music CDs to parents. In larger churches, the nursery coordinator or members of the nursery committee can do these jobs.

Members of an adult Sunday School class, a Grandparent's Club or the church youth groups can help with collating tasks.

Organizing Your Nursery

This section contains concise and practical information that can help you build a quality nursery ministry from the ground floor up. There are two ways to find specific information you need:

- (1) Use the index at the back of this book;
- (2) Read the section containing information on the subject you need help with.

Procedures are suggested for the following categories:



Caregivers

Describes everything you need to know about staffing a nursery. Includes recruiting tips, job descriptions, screening and application forms, scheduling and training ideas.

Parents

Gives guidelines for communicating with parents and making it easy for parents to communicate with you. Describes and provides samples for nursery handbooks and brochures, check-in forms and record keeping, plus a bonus Problem Solving with Parents section.

Health/Safety

Provides vital information about making your nursery safe for the children God has entrusted to your care. You'll find suggestions and tips for keeping the nursery clean, checking in children and their belongings, handling diapering and feeding of children, safety checklists, ways to respond to illnesses and emergencies and more.

Room/Supplies

Provides complete descriptions of everything in the well-equipped nursery environment. Includes equipment and furniture lists, room diagrams, guidelines for toy selection (as well as a section describing safe nursery toys you can make) and tips for handling specific room problems.

VIPs in the Nursery

The adults in the nursery come in all shapes and sizes—some with lots of experience and some with very little. They're called by many names: workers, caregivers, aides, baby-sitters, attendants, helpers. But no matter what you call the adults who staff your nursery, realize that these people are very important people: they're teachers. They may not consider themselves teachers, but at no other time in little ones' lives are children learning so much, and learning so quickly. Almost everything caregivers do teaches and influences the babies and toddlers in their care.

As a teacher, the nursery caregiver creates a safe and interesting environment with age-appropriate activities, provides physical and emotional care and encourages interaction among children and adults (among other caregivers and parents, too!). The caregiver's influence is so significant, yet it cannot be measured, and here's one reason: First impressions are often lasting impressions. A church nursery is often the first place the child is cared for away from home. The response of a child to the church nursery likely will affect his or her response to other new places. A church nursery is also often the first time a child is cared for in a group setting. Again, a child's nursery experience will help shape future interaction with other children.

Not only are the children affected by what goes on in the nursery, but parents are deeply influenced by their child's reactions. Nursery caregivers have the opportunity to make a significant impression on people who are just beginning their lives as parents. When a child is born, many parents find themselves overwhelmed by the responsibility, and for the first time may see a need for some kind of church experience. New parents may feel uncertain about what to do and how to properly meet the varying needs of their children—both physical and spiritual. A loving caregiver can be just the resource—and friend—a new parent needs.

Caregiver Ratio

Many variables affect the number of caregivers needed in the nursery. Generally, one teacher can adequately care for two or three babies and toddlers (use the higher number for toddlers) or three to four two-year-olds. Always plan for at least two caregivers to work together in the nursery, no matter how few children

are present. Requiring two staff members to be present with each group of children allows emergency situations to be dealt with and protects the caregivers and the church from unsupported parent complaints.

Recent research has shown that maintaining the proper ratios of caregivers to children helped children experience fewer tantrums, develop more advanced language skills, play in more complex ways with each other and their toys, and develop increased attachment to their caregivers. Caregivers also demonstrated gentler means of guiding children when they were responsible for smaller numbers of children.

Options for Staffing

Churches use a variety of staffing options: paid workers (church members, members of other churches who meet at different times, licensed caregivers obtained through a referral agency, students at a nearby Christian college), volunteers (parents or other adults in the church) or a combination of options.

A sample application form for nursery staff is provided on the next pages. Adapt this form according to specific guidelines your church has adopted and any applicable laws in your state. Some churches require fingerprinting and police background checks for all staff who work with children. All churches should have a well thought-out screening process for all caregivers. If your church has not yet developed guidelines for screening children's workers, consult a legal expert in church liability issues.

Set up an interviewing team of at least two people for all paid positions (member of church staff who has oversight for the nursery program, nursery committee member, parent). Pay rates should be comparable to pay scales in your community. Follow any applicable state or federal laws for reporting income and withholding taxes.

Using paid caregivers has some advantages:

- higher expectations of workers to fulfill the job description;
- continuity of caregivers in the nursery;
- increased value to the position.

Using volunteer caregivers has advantages, too:

- staff has a higher degree of commitment to the nursery—workers are present because they've chosen the job;
- volunteers are more likely to view their job as a ministry.

Training Your Nursery Staff

Every nursery caregiver can benefit from one or more training events. New caregivers need basic instruction in what their jobs are (give them a copy of the job description on page 18), and how the nursery program functions (give them a copy of your nursery brochure or handbook).

Even experienced workers need to be made aware of procedure updates, program improvements and changing health and safety guidelines. Most caregivers also feel a renewed sense of dedication and excitement about their nursery ministry after meeting for even a brief time of training and inspiration.

Each training event (at least once a year) should include a brief focus on the importance of the nursery ministry, reminders and updates about nursery procedures and tips for interacting with babies and toddlers. Show a training DVD (such as *How to Build a Quality Nursery Program* which comes with this book) designed to help nursery caregivers understand how best to provide a safe and enjoyable program for babies and toddlers. You may wish to provide training in a particular skill, based on one of the training articles found in this book:

- "Communication with Nontalkers," page 116
- "Crying: Understanding a Baby's Cry," page 117

- "Welcoming a Baby to the Nursery," page 143
- "Take a Look at Babies" and "Take a Look at Toddlers," pages 113 and 114
- "Teaching Babies About God," page 129
- "Extending Your Nursery Ministry," page 125
- "Why Use Curriculum?" page 119

The nursery coordinator can provide the training, or ask a knowledgeable person in your church or community.

Help build relationships among the nursery staff by providing name tags, offering refreshments and asking participants to answer a few ice-breaker questions such as, "What's your favorite thing to do with a baby or toddler?" or "What's the first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word 'baby'?" Ask each worker to answer this question from the perspective of a particular child in your nursery: "What is the purpose of our church's nursery?"

Personally meet with any new staff who are not able to attend a training event, giving them a copy of your nursery brochure or handbook and the DVD to watch at home.



HEALTH / SAFETY

Health and Safety Guidelines

Nothing speaks louder to parents of your loving care for their children than clean and safe rooms. While following health and safety guidelines does not guarantee a quality nursery program, an effective nursery ministry cannot function without them.

Well thought-out health and safety procedures benefit everyone connected to the nursery. Babies and toddlers and their parents are, of course, the prime beneficiaries: In a safe environment that is planned just for them, young children are encouraged to learn and grow. Secure in the knowledge that everything possible is being done to keep their child safe and happy, parents can take advantage of time away from their children to build their own relationships with God and others in the church family.

Nursery caregivers also find that making health and safety issues a priority makes their service a positive experience. For example, a nursery without a firm well-baby policy may find their caregivers (not to mention other children) are frequently exposed to illnesses. Establishing guidelines for specific nursery procedures (checking in, feeding, diapering, emergencies, etc.) also helps the staff to know and fulfill what is expected of them. Other safety guidelines (child/adult ratios, etc.) protect caregivers in the event of a complaint.

In discussing health and safety procedures with caregivers and parents, communicate instructions with a positive approach. For example, "In order to help our nursery be the best it can be, these are the health and safety guidelines we follow" or "So that you can concentrate on caring for and enjoying the babies in our nursery, here are the health and safety procedures we've established." Frequently thank parents and caregivers for their attention to these issues.

Occasionally a parent or caregiver may question the need for a certain health procedure. Acknowledge the

person's feelings ("It does seem like it takes a lot of time to put on the gloves just to change a diaper") but reaffirm the need for such a procedure ("Using the gloves means that no one has to worry about a child or caregiver being exposed to an illness while changing diapers").

Health and safety guidelines are best developed by a committee of people. Many churches have found it helpful to create a nursery committee which meets several times a year, or more frequently if needed, to establish the policies and procedures of the nursery program. This committee may be made up of several parent representatives, several people who serve in the nursery, a member of the church staff or governing body who is charged with the responsibility of the nursery program, a person who works in a daycare or preschool who is familiar with state regulations for licensed facilities and a health professional (doctor, nurse, etc.). Some churches request that a lawyer familiar with church liability issues review their health and safety procedures. (If your church has a licensed infant/toddler facility, state health regulations should be adhered to any time the nursery is in use.) You may also request that a consultant from your state's Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) or your state's agency responsible for licensing daycare facilities visit your nursery to evaluate the facility for safety and health hazards.

It is most helpful if the people on this committee are familiar with all of the information provided in the Organizing Your Nursery section of this book.

After establishing policies and procedures such as deciding on the number of staff members and their duties, how the nursery will be staffed, necessary equipment and supplies, and how children will be greeted and dismissed, this committee meets to evaluate and modify procedures and guidelines as necessary.



PARTNERING WITH PARENTS

Involving Parents at the Start

Any ministry to young children involves ministering to parents as well. Long-term, positive results in child guidance and nurture are increased when parents and nursery caregivers become partners working together. Conversely, whenever parents are ignored, the impact of any program involving their child is greatly reduced. Whether you are just beginning a nursery program, or your nursery program has been functioning for many years, it will benefit you to involve parents in the oversight of the nursery program, policies and procedures. If you have a nursery committee overseeing the nursery, include one or more parents on the committee. (See page 35 for additional information on nursery committees.)

Communicate with Parents

When parents and nursery caregivers share similar goals and use similar approaches, effectiveness is greatly increased. Parents and the nursery staff need to work together to develop common understandings of ways babies and toddlers learn and how they are cared for. The child will sense the continuity between church and home. A clearly defined and consistent plan for communication is vital to developing this link between church and home.

1. Parent Handbook. Develop a handbook or brochure that describes the procedures of your nursery program. Parents are usually very willing to comply with these procedures when they clearly understand what is expected of them and the reasons for the procedures. Periodically evaluate your brochure or handbook and update the policies as needed.

Distribute the handbook to parents the first time they bring their child to the nursery. Each person working in the nursery should have a copy. Make copies avail-

able in the narthex or entryway to your church and make sure church ushers or greeters know not only the location of the nursery, but where the handbooks are kept so they can give them to interested visitors. (Note: Whenever making handbooks, brochures or flyers to distribute to parents, make ample extra copies. Store the copies in a "new family" folder. When a new family becomes a part of your nursery, it's easy to compile a packet of the information they need.)

The handbook should include information on the following topics:

- A brief statement about the goals of your nursery program.
- Well-baby guidelines for children in the nursery.
- Which personal items should be brought to the nursery and how they should be labeled.
- Greeting and dismissal procedures, including your church's plan for child and parent identification.
- How you would like parents to provide information about the child (name of child and parents, phone numbers, feeding instructions, food allergies, etc.).
- Name and phone number of nursery coordinator or a church staff member who may be called for further information.
- Depending on the size of your church, you may also provide information about room locations for different ages, facility map, age at which children are promoted into a two-year-old class and programs in which parents of young children may be interested. Keep in mind that the brochure or handbook must provide the essential information parents need to know, but not so much information that only the most dedicated parent will read it!

Several sample brochures are provided on the following pages.

The Nursery Environment

Children under the age of three have very special needs that require very special care. The key words for baby/toddler rooms are space, cleanliness, safety and comfort. The environment in which these little ones are cared for helps set a new life (and often, the lives of the parents) on the path of either enjoying or resisting church experiences. Ask yourself, "If I were a baby or toddler, would I want to be in this room? Why or why not?"

When the nursery rooms are inviting in their appearance, recruiting nursery caregivers is also made easier. Although an attractive, spacious room does not automatically ensure quality care, facilities can either assist the nursery staff in providing a good program, or they can hinder the process. Staff who feel frustrated by poorly organized supplies or crowded conditions are not likely to return.

The goal of a well-designed nursery, however, is not only to enable the staff to safely and comfortably care for babies and toddlers, but to help parents feel that their children will enjoy and benefit from their time at church. Visitors to your church nursery will naturally evaluate the room and equipment, and are more likely to feel comfortable leaving children in a room that is attractive, safe and orderly rather than one that is poorly lighted, crowded and chaotic.

Size and Number of Rooms

One of the first issues to consider is the number and size of the rooms needed to provide safe care for babies and toddlers. Each person in attendance (caregivers and children) needs 25 to 35 square feet (7.5 to 10.5 sq. m) of space. Rectangular rooms, rather than square or long, narrow rooms allow for maximum flexibility in room arrangement.

What are the benefits of all this space? Young children need the freedom to discover and enjoy many activities. Open space, age-appropriate equipment and safe, interesting play materials help children feel that their room at church is a good place to be.

Depending on the size of your church, you may wish to group children of similar ages or physical development together: infants, crawlers, toddlers, walkers. Other ways of grouping children are:

- Birth to 3 months; 4 to 8 months; 9 to 12 months; 13 to 18 months; 19 to 24 months; 24 to 36 months.
- Birth to 12 months; 1-year-olds; 2-year-olds.
- Babies; younger toddlers; older toddlers; 2-year-olds.
- Babies to 6 months; 7 to 12 months; 13 to 18 months; 19 to 24 months; 24 to 36 months.



LARGE CHURCHES: Large churches may need to control the grouping of children more than small churches and may not want parents moving their own children from one room to another simply because the child has reached the next age grouping or developmental milestone noted on the sign. Using specific dates of birth to designate a room will give the church leader maximum control of how many children are assigned to each room and when children move from one room to another. For example, a room may be designated as being for those children born March 15 through June 10 of a given year to include the specific children who are ready for that room.

(If children of widely differing ages are in the same room together, perhaps even including preschoolers, read "Older Children in the Nursery" on page 133 for helpful guidelines.)

Some state licensing agencies require that children under one year of age be kept separate from those over one year, since the older children are receiving immunizations that may contain live cultures and be hazardous to infants.

Once each year, reevaluate room designations, considering the number of children and their ages. Many churches move children from room to room as they mature in physical and language skills, designating the two-year-old class as a "holding department." (A holding department receives children from a younger group more than once a year, but promotes the children to the next older group all at one time—"Promotion Sunday.") The two-year-old class often works best as a holding department, since the nature of twos already requires very flexible procedures and schedule.



LARGE CHURCHES: Large churches may find it helpful to designate one or two rooms as "promotion rooms" and leave these empty at the time of the big annual promotion of children. These churches typically evaluate class sizes and development of children on a monthly or quarterly basis and

R O O M / S U P P L I E S

promote whole groups of children into the empty rooms as teams of workers are prepared to receive them.

Keep in mind that a small group size is especially important for babies and toddlers. Young children are likely to be stressed by large groups (even with an adequate number of caregivers) and lots of activity and noise. If your nursery rooms are so large that more than 12 children are cared for in each room, consider ways of using sturdy dividers or other furniture to create smaller areas of space within the room.

Room Location

The ideal location for all nursery rooms is at ground level, with quick and easy access to a safe outside area (avoid locating the nursery near the parking lot or busy streets). Rooms on the first floor allow efficient safety precautions and are convenient for parents. An adequate number of exits are essential in case of emergency. Locating a nursery near the church sanctuary can help first-time visitors find their way.

Regardless of where the nursery is located, make sure it's clearly marked and that ushers, greeters and the welcome/information center staff know its location. Provide a labeled facilities map to direct parents to the appropriate rooms in which their children are cared for.

Room Appearance

While every church is unique in its facility design, there are basic guidelines that can be followed to make your nursery look and feel safe as well as comfortable. As you review these checklists and sketches, ask yourself, "How can we arrange our present facilities to include the features described in these rooms? What can we do to make our room more efficient and attractive?" Visit nurseries at other churches or day care centers (or interview their staff) to gain tips on what works and what doesn't (particularly if you're fortunate enough to be remodeling or building new facilities).

Room Surfaces. Floor coverings should be non-porous cushioned vinyl tile or a high density synthetic carpet with substantial rubber backing, and need to be thoroughly cleaned after each session. Invest in good quality floor surfaces which will last with frequent use.

Consider using carpet tiles that can be replaced one at a time. (Whether using tiles or otherwise, it is important that flooring be free of cracks or tears that harvest bacteria and might trip a worker who is carrying a baby.) If throw rugs must be used in the nursery, securely fasten edges to avoid tripping. Some churches run vinyl tile or carpet up the walls to the height of children.

Ceilings should be covered with acoustical tile or plaster to reduce sound; walls should be soundproofed, well-insulated and painted with cheerful pastel or light colors. Bright colors can be added as highlights. Painting walls with semi-gloss paint rather than flat latex paint allows walls to be washed. Place electrical outlets out of children's reach or cover them with safety plugs. Make sure all cords are out of reach.

Lighting. Lighting should be even and without glare. Subdued light is desirable in a room where babies sleep and are fed. Consider using a dimmer switch. Windows should be of shatterproof clear glass, with the bottom sill about 2 feet (60 cm) from the floor so that children will be able to see out. Window screens need to be securely fastened. Provide window coverings only if needed to reduce glare and provide insulation. Note: Some states require that windows be above a child's level or have special treatment if at a lower height. If you are remodeling or building a nursery facility, it is wise to check with the state licensing authorities about this issue.

Temperature. Adequate ventilation is a must! Maintain room temperature between 68 and 72° F (20 and 22° C). Check for drafts from windows and doors. Radiators or floor heaters must be covered for safety.



Introductory Parent's Home Page

Good Things Come in Small Packages

"I thought I was ready to be a father. But the first week after the baby came home from the hospital was amazing! I never knew anything so little could make such a big difference in our lives."

This father's story could be repeated in almost every home where a tiny bundle, weighing in the neighborhood of eight pounds, literally turns all daily routines upside down. The baby's size has nothing to do with the impact made on parents and their households!

Neither does the size of this little news sheet have anything to do with the impact it can produce in your home. The Parent's Home Page will never compete with the *New York Times* or even the Internet, but it can make a big difference in the quality of your family's life.

Each month until your child is promoted out of the nursery at our church, the people who care for your child there will give you a Parent's Home Page.

As you read each page, you will receive these benefits:

1. Fresh insights into your child's developments in the first few years of life. Did you know that's when more learning occurs than in any other period of life?
2. A variety of activities to enjoy with your child—designed to help you know each other better and to stimulate your child's cognitive, social, physical and spiritual growth.
3. An increased understanding of the goals of the nursery in your church. The activities suggested in this page are also used with your child when he or she is cared for at church.

If this sounds like a tall order for such a small paper, just keep reading. You will find it full of surprises and delights, well worth a few minutes of your time every month.

If you have any questions or comments about the nursery, please let us know. We're looking forward to participating with you in the care of your child.

Tips and Activities for Parents of
Children 0 to 18 Months • Year 1

God Cares for Me

"God cares about you."

(See 1 Peter 5:7.)



This month we will help your child:

- associate God with the loving care experienced at church;
- show interest in conversation and songs about God's care.

June

Do these activities with your child to continue the learning your child has experienced at church.

Do It!

God Cares for Me



God cares for me
When I sleep.



God cares for me
When I play.



God cares for me
All the time,
Every night and
Every day.



Say and do this finger play with your child. Replace the words "me" and "I" with your child's name. Use the finger play when putting your child to sleep or when playing with him or her. On a bright sunny day, talk about the color of the sky and the sunshine and then say the finger play. In the evening, take your child out to look at the moon and the stars and talk about the nighttime. Repeat the finger play.

Sing It!

I'm So Glad

(Tune: "Skip to My Lou")

I'm so glad that God loves me,
God loves me, God loves me.
I'm so glad that God loves me,
He loves me all the time.
I'm so glad that God loves you,
God loves you, God loves you.
I'm so glad that God loves you,
He loves you all the time.

Sing this song to your child, replacing "you" with your child's name. Clap your hands as you sing this song and encourage your child to clap with you. These first attempts at clapping are the beginning steps of learning rhythm. Say, **God cares for you when you play and when you sleep! I love you and care for you, too, when you are sleepy or playing!**

Little Activities for Little People

Babies

- Respond to your baby's babbling. Imitate the sound he or she makes, or make new sounds for your child to mimic. It's not important that the sounds match, just that you both have fun making noises with each other.
- Provide your baby with a variety of viewing points to observe goings-on around the house. If your child is not yet crawling, a washable blanket in the middle of the floor is a fine place to play with a few toys. Periodically, move close to your baby for a few words, pats and a little play. Your child needs your frequent attention even when he or she is playing happily.

June Parent's Home Page

Question & Answer

Q: My child has begun crying when I leave her. I feel awful! What can I do?

A: When your child cries at separation time, first remember that it is a normal part of growth to know and to prefer one's parents! Recognize and accept both your own feelings of anxiety as well as those of your child. If you communicate comfort by your calm voice and relaxed body posture, your baby will likely "pick up" on these cues and calm down also. However, if your child still has a difficult time calming down, try:

Staying for awhile, then leaving for a few minutes and returning. Over a period of weeks, increase the length of your absences until both you and your child become more comfortable. Once you return, stay with your child for the remainder of the nursery program. More than one good-bye in a session is too hard on a baby or toddler.

Providing a "comfort object" (a familiar blanket, toy or pacifier) and creating a separation routine. Give the "comfort object" to your child and always say the same "good-bye" words. Try words such as, "I know you are sad. We will come back." or "It's hard to be away from you, but we will be back. Then we will give you a big hug!" By establishing a separation routine, your child will begin to understand what's coming next and will likely react with more calmness.

Pots and Pans

• Pots and pans are ready-made nesting toys. And they are interesting to the youngest children, because they have seen their parents use them.

• Set out several pots, pans and their lids on the floor near your child. If your child is enjoying playing with these, add wooden spoons and metal or plastic measuring cups to the array.

• In playing with the pots and pans, children will find out the different weights of these items, discover what fits in what, use a wooden spoon and pan as a ready-made drum or pretend to cook with them.

• Say, **We use pots and pans to cook with. I like to cook good food for you to eat. I like to care for you and give you good things to eat. God cares for you, too.**

Bonus Activity: Put pots and pans in a low cupboard. When you have a cooking project, set your child near this cupboard and open the doors. Let your child explore the contents of the cupboard as you cook. Make it possible for your child to see some of the stages of your cooking project.

"God sends children for another purpose than merely to keep up the race—to enlarge our hearts and to make us unselfish."

Mary Howitt

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