



Creativity - Connection - Celebration - Generosity - Honour

Delight - Accept - Grow

Tuesdays 10am Transfiguration Anglesea - Wednesdays 10am St Luke's Torquay

Mainly Music started in 1990 in Aotearoa, New Zealand and is now in 14 countries, with over 600 Mainly Music and Mainly Play groups in Australia. Each group operates independently with a group of dedicated volunteers who provide a time and place where young children and their carers can find delight in shared experiences through music and play, be accepted for who they are, and grow educationally. The social and music interaction is designed for pre-kindergarten children - babies to 4 years of age.

The founders recognise the importance of attachment theory, which contributes to children's security and well-being. Each session provides education and development outcomes, an opportunity for children to enjoy an enhanced attachment experience with their family, and for carers to receive parenting tuition by example. There is a strong sense of 'it takes a village to raise a child'.

Churches are places of community, friendship and spiritual nurture, which often provide practical assistance - like marriage ceremonies, baby dedications, a place to explore God, and somewhere that can provide help through tough times. However, there is often a gap between community and church.

Through Mainly Music churches engage with the community in loving interaction, helping families to start the journey of faith. Each week in the session, a parenting tip, an educational highlight, a meaningful quote, or a faith thought are presented.

Mainly Music was introduced to Surfcoast Parish in 2015 at Transfiguration in Anglesea, with a second group starting at St Luke's Torquay in 2018. Our coordinator Philip Shirley, and his wife Julie, from Waurm Ponds Community Church have been running the program in their church and in Winchelsea Anglican for many years, both with great success. Volunteers came from their church to help our parish get started, and some of our parishioners were then trained. The Shirleys consider this their ministry along the Surf Coast region and work in partnership with local churches to encourage links between church and community. In 2023 we took on the registration costs for our two groups, and we are responsible for ensuring the Safe Ministry Clearances are undertaken and kept up to date for all the coordinators and volunteers in our groups. The cost for participants is \$5.00 per family no matter how many children they have, all these monies are spent on

session costs: the purchase of good, toys, birthday gifts, Easter and Christmas short Gospel stories and props.

Children might be brought by their mum, dad, grandparent or other caregiver. Many families do not have grandparents living nearby, so our retired volunteers are valued by both children and adults alike. Attendance varies with approximately 15-20 children at Anglesea and 20-40 at Torquay each week, and a waiting list at each centre.

Each group meets during school terms, with sessions lasting around an hour, and volunteers commit time before and after to set up and pack up. The program starts with 30 minutes of interactive music including at last one 'God' song. A volunteer leads the songs and actions, with a powerpoint providing words and actions shown on a TV. The children are encouraged to choose a musical prop to use while singing, and parents are asked to assist their children with the actions. The sessions are changed every 3 weeks so a variety of songs and movements can be learnt.

Morning tea is the halfway point, where a bowl of fruit and mug of water is provided for each child sitting on the floor next to their parent/care-giver. Then as the play equipment is rolled out, parents are offered tea, coffee or water and home-made or purchased slices, cakes and biscuits.

Each volunteer is rostered on for making/preparing/serving food, collection of props and cleaning up and putting away after the program finishes. They are also expected to assist the parents during play time and to have conversations with those who attend that are supportive and encouraging.

The faith commitment of the volunteers, the partnership of churches, the venues, and the inclusion of a few songs with 'God' content, are a witness to the larger Christian framework the program draws from. At the end of each session, the team prays together for the session, the families and each other. This is regarded as an essential aspect of the program.

As churches put respectful care, time and energy into their relationships with families, and provide other groups for them to explore faith a little more, with no strings attached, people can find a path toward God that is genuine and life giving, built around community.

Various parish representatives from St Luke's and Transfiguration have shared in this important work and new volunteers are always welcome. On occasions, attenders have become volunteers once their child has gone to school. The minister is always encouraged to spend time in the group, having conversations, sharing morning tea, or working as a volunteer. Every connection is important in building links between families and the church communities.

Contact: Phil Shirley 0407 383 256

Parish Office:

Mainly Music:

philipshirley@netspace.net.au

surfcoastparish@icloud.com

www.mainlymusic.org