



Family
Ministries

Having faith in the family



JUMP In!
Leaping into Faith with Little Ones

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

*A special session for use in the National
Month of Prayer for Parent-and-Toddler
Groups based on John 10:10-16.*

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Percussion instruments
- Instrument songs

The Good Shepherd



INTRODUCTION

'1277 Make Them Count' is a national movement for church-based toddler groups. On average a UK child has just 1,277 days between birth and starting nursery education, and the aim of the movement is to make these days count for the children, for their families and for the toddler groups that they attend. The precious moments of development from birth onwards can be challenging for parents/caregivers, full of questions or even loneliness. Through working with the children we can offer support, hope and connection. For the child they get to learn the value of social spaces and trusted adults, and to hear the word of God and to grow.

The National Month of Prayer (NMOP) is an ecumenical initiative of 1277 Make Them Count and happens throughout June each year. It encourages churches, individuals and toddler communities to pray three ways – in groups, for groups and across groups in the UK. The theme for 2026 is based on the words of Jesus found in John 10:10-16.

You might like to join the 1277 Facebook group, where ideas, prayer requests and stories can be shared alongside The Salvation Army's parent-and-toddler groups' UKI Facebook group (SA P-and-T groups UKI).



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BIBLE STORY

Today we are talking about Jesus being the Good Shepherd who keeps us safe and loved.

You can find the story in John 10:10-16 (ERV)

Other options are:

- *God's Big Promises Bible Story Book* (Carl Laferton), 'The Good Shepherd', p305
- *The Big Bible Story Book* (Maggie Barfield), 'I am the Gate', p188

The Good Shepherd

As you tell the story you could use a soft toy sheep, and a blanket or basket for a sheep pen, and let everyone touch or hold the sheep while you speak, before placing it in the pen.

When Jesus was talking to his friends he said:

'I came to give you life. A happy life. A life full of love.

I am the Good Shepherd. A shepherd looks after sheep. He keeps them safe. He loves them very much.

The Good Shepherd never runs away. He stays with his sheep, even when things feel scary.

The Good Shepherd knows his sheep by name. The sheep know his voice. They trust him.

The Good Shepherd loves his sheep very much. He will always care for them. He will always be with them.'

Talk about how shepherds look after sheep and how they know them all and make sure that they are kept safe. In the Bible, Jesus calls himself 'the Good Shepherd' and says that we are his sheep. Jesus knows you. Jesus loves you.

I wonder how it makes you feel knowing that Jesus is the Good Shepherd?



The Good Shepherd



SONG SUGGESTIONS

11. Theme Song (Tune: 'Here we go round the mulberry bush')

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows my name, knows my name,
Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows my name – he loves me!

Jesus, the Good Shepherd cares for me, cares for me,
Jesus, the Good Shepherd, cares for me – he loves me!

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, keeps me safe, keeps me safe,
Jesus, the Good Shepherd, keeps me safe – he loves me!

Additional songs

- 'Jesus, the Good Shepherd',
youtu.be/E8bQTy2SMvY?list=RDE8bQTy2SMvY
- 'My Good Shepherd'
youtu.be/zLn3BsLXylg?list=RDzLn3BsLXylg
- 'Jesus is the Good Shepherd'
youtu.be/W5hvgrrhhUno?list=RDW5hvgrrhhUno
- 'I am never alone', Dance Fit Tots 3,
www.salvationist.org.uk/resources/worship/dance-fit-tots
- 'Our God is a Great Big God'
youtu.be/OeXl6Ah-nRk?list=RDOeXl6Ah-nRk
- 'Wonderful Lord, wonderful God'
youtu.be/vxoggZ2ueJ0?list=RDvxoggZ2ueJ0



PRAYER

Invite everyone to join in by repeating each line and doing the actions:

Thank you, Jesus, for being the Good Shepherd ... *(hands together)*

You know my name ... *(point to self)*

You look after me ... *(hug self)*

I am safe with you ... *(arms wide, then hug)*

Amen.



The Good Shepherd



CRAFT/ACTIVITY IDEAS

- **Cotton wool sheep** – this can be linked with Congregational Prayer Idea below. Print and cut out a simple sheep template, or use paper plates, and add the sheep's coat by sticking on cotton wool balls.
- **Finger painting sheep**
Print and cut out a simple sheet template from white or black card and decorate using finger paints.
- **Shepherd's crook**
Cut out shepherd's crook shapes from old cardboard boxes and paint them.
- **For more ideas and sheep templates see**
uk.pinterest.com/FamilyMinistriesUKIT/national-month-of-prayer-2026-the-good-shepherd/



SENSORY PLAY

- **Sheep pen sensory tray**
Use straw, shredded paper or soft fabric to create a sheep pen and hide toy sheep for people to find. You could also use a toy farm set.
- **Sheep biscuits/cakes**
Use small marshmallows to decorate a biscuit/cake to look like a sheep. Be aware of allergies.
- **Good Shepherd play-dough mats**
flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2020/04/jesus-good-shepherd-play-dough-mat.html

The Good Shepherd

CONGREGATIONAL IDEAS FOR USE DURING THE NATIONAL MONTH OF PRAYER FOR PARENT-AND-TODDLER GROUPS 2026

1. Paper sheep pasture

What you need: Paper sheep shapes, crayons, stickers, pens, sticky-tack

How it works:

- Invite everyone at your parent-and-toddler group to decorate a sheep using crayons, stickers, cotton wool etc.
- Ask them to write on the back their family name and if there is anything they would like people to pray for.
- Stick all the sheep on to a large 'pasture' poster or green cloth with the heading, 'Jesus cares for our parent-and-toddler group'.

On Sunday, display the poster during your main church service, and invite the congregation to come and take a sheep, committing to pray for the family whose name is on the back.

2. Wool prayer bracelets/bookmarks

What you need: A ball of soft wool – this can be cut into strands or plaited.

How it works:

Give each person a piece of wool that can be tied loosely around the wrist or used as a bookmark to remind them to pray for the parent-and-toddler group over the coming week.

You could write a simple list of prayer topics that they can use each day, praying specifically for the families who attend and the leaders and helpers. Include things like:

- parents who are tired
- toddlers who are learning and growing
- leaders who guide the group

Suggest that as they pray for each topic they finish by saying, 'Jesus, our Good Shepherd, please watch over them.'

3. Hide and seek prayers

What you need: Toy sheep or pictures of sheep. You could write the names of families who attend your group on a label / luggage tag or on the back of the picture.

How it works:

Hide the sheep around the church before the service and invite everyone to search for them together. When they find one they can return to their seats and pray together for the family it represents.



The Good Shepherd

Ask them to pray for things specific to your group such as:

- any families who have been missing from the group
- new families to join
- any parents who feel tired or anyone who is unwell
- for new volunteers to help run the group

Conclude by saying a prayer that incorporates all the suggestions, or use a prayer that everyone can join in together.

4. Bubble blessings

This can be an indoor or outdoor activity.

What you need: Bubble blower

How it works:

Blow bubbles while praying simple blessings like:

- 'Jesus, please surround all our toddler group families with your love.'
- 'Jesus, please help the parents, grandparents and carers to feel supported.'
- 'Jesus, please help the babies and toddlers to grow safely and happily.'
- 'Jesus, please be with the leaders and helpers who run our toddler group and help them as they care for the families who come.'

5. Fingerprint flock

What you need: Ink pads or washable paint and a large outline of a sheep.

How it works:

Ask everyone in the congregation who is committed to pray for the parent-and-toddler group to come forward and to add their fingerprint to create a coat for the sheep.

Thank Jesus for the parent-and-toddler group, the families who come and the leaders and helpers.

Share the picture with your parent-and-toddler group and explain how it represents all the prayers that are being said for them by church members this week.



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