

'This is a book for those who take children seriously. A wonderful, practical resource for those who want to nurture children to be disciples in their own right: to pray, to engage with Scripture, to contribute to worship, to play their part as children of God. A must-read for those who work and volunteer with very young children.'

The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

'We all think we know that biblical scholarship and Sunday School teaching belong in different worlds. *Diddy Disciples* shows that we are wrong. Sharon Moughtin-Mumby brings the wisdom of a professional biblical scholar to the task of communicating the essence of the Bible to very young children, unveiling the depths of biblical stories for young disciples. Very user-friendly material from which adults can learn too.'

The Revd John Barton, Emeritus Professor, University of Oxford

'*Diddy Disciples* is an invaluable blend of Sharon Moughtin-Mumby's reflective practice and contemporary thinking about childhood spirituality. The result is an exceptional and inspiring resource for churches working with the very youngest children. A powerful case for seeing why the very young deserve the very best, and this is a well-tested method for doing that.'

Dr Rebecca Nye, Godly Play expert and researcher and consultant in children's spirituality

'*Diddy Disciples* is brilliant: a rich resource for leaders, simple and accessible for young children, inviting them into a lifelong journey of faith. Highly commended.'

The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford

'I'm excited by *Diddy Disciples*! It's a celebration of Psalm 8.2 and all that babies and toddlers bring to worship. Movement, stories, actions and songs combine in carefully crafted sessions to draw groups into a new way of worshipping that will enrich everyone involved. I can't wait to start using it.'

The Revd Mary Hawes, National Children and Youth Adviser, The Church of England

'When Jesus taught, he often used a language that was unafraid to hover rather than land. Through imaginative and playful provocation, he was opening up spaces for his listeners to move into. This is exactly what *Diddy Disciples* does. It takes for granted the fact that young children are intelligent and perceptive, and it therefore doesn't look down on them. Neither does it pretend that Christian faith is anything but a rich, complex and teasing migration towards the love and mystery of God, where questions can be as vital as insights. This is a liberating combination for everyone involved.'

The Revd Canon Mark Oakley, Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral

'Diddy Disciples [the programme] is being taken up enthusiastically by a growing number of parishes in the Diocese of Southwark. Helping young children grow into the fullness of Christ through creative, age-appropriate engagement is a wonderful journey of adventure and discovery; and this book, which I gladly commend, will be an essential resource for anyone starting out on that path.'

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Southwark

'I am very happy to support [the] Diddy Disciples [programme]. I was particularly encouraged and impressed by the way in which the biblical approach is intelligent and searching, without being above the heads of those for whom it is intended, or condescending to them. Similarly, the programme is firmly connected with the liturgical life of the Church, and this is something that is particularly important in a time when there seems to be widespread enthusiasm for separating all-age worship from good liturgy.'

The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

'Our young children love joining in with the simple songs and actions at Diddy Disciples, and before we know it they (and I) have a real understanding of the church liturgy. *Diddy Disciples* gives all types of children a chance to engage in a variety of activities: the chatty ones can sing, the active ones can move, the creative ones can get arty but the highlight of the week is always "What's in the Box?"

I love preparing Diddy Disciples as it is all done for me – I just pick up the book and off I go. If I can't remember a tune, I either hum it and it comes back to me or one of the children sings it for me, as they all know the nursery rhyme tunes. The crafts are all very basic and the children seem to like to be able to "make it their own". Before I did Diddy Disciples I used to spend hours preparing complicated crafts that took the children two minutes to complete, leaving them bored and me frazzled!!'

Charlotte Chappell, Diddy Disciples leader, Christ Church Aughton, Liverpool

'This is a serious book: serious about children; serious about worship; serious about spirituality; serious about God. Sharon Moughtin-Mumby draws upon her own experience as a priest, a parent and a theologian, and on the time-honoured shape of the liturgy, to create patterns for worship that honour God, by enabling the tiniest worshippers to hear the word and respond in praise. She offers enchanting and creative resources that will help to build the Church.'

Gill Ambrose, Consultant to the Liturgical Commission and Chair of Godly Play UK

'Anyone involved in education would agree that the early years in a child's life are crucial for laying the foundations of learning. We so often underestimate children's abilities and needs. *Diddy Disciples* is the resource I have been waiting for; a superb treasure trove of meaningful, interesting and challenging activities for pre-school children in our churches. Whether at a weekday event or Sunday School, *Diddy Disciples* provides singing, texts and ideas that link with the Church's year and provide the building blocks for Christian education. This is an essential resource for every church school, parish and Christian nursery. [The] Diddy Disciples [programme] has been road-tested in a real parish with real children. It demands nothing more than the resources available in any parish or setting. It is properly theological and completely age appropriate. If children are to experience proper faith development and to grow as disciples, it is just material like this that will give the resources needed. A lifetime of Christian discipleship is built on solid foundations. *Diddy Disciples* provides that resource.'

Fr Richard Peers, Director of Education, Diocese of Liverpool

The Revd Dr Sharon Moughtin-Mumby is the director of Diddy Disciples, which she set up at St Peter's, Walworth, South London, when her own wriggly children were three, three and two, and going to church with them felt impossible! Sharon is an Anglican priest and a respected Bible scholar with a strong interest in Bible translation, imagery, art and biblical languages. Before ordination, she was the tutor in Old Testament studies at Ripon College Cuddesdon. She continues to have a passion for education, particularly during the formative early years of life, and loves exploring new, ancient and imaginative ways of engaging with the Bible and worshipping alongside young children.

For my inspirational daughters, Joy, Anastasia and Zoe, and my husband, colleague and friend, Andrew

Diddy Disciples

Book 1:

September

to December

Worship and storytelling
resources for babies,
toddlers and young children

Sharon Moughtin-Mumby



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There are supporting web resources at <www.diddydisciples.org>. The password for the website is **likeachild17**

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Part 1

Introducing

Diddy Disciples

INTRODUCTION

What is Diddy Disciples?

Diddy Disciples is a collection of Bible storytelling, prayer and worship materials especially designed for babies, toddlers and young children. The materials aim to create a space for children to encounter God for themselves, inviting them to discover, explore and take an active part not only in telling Bible stories but in all forms of Christian worship. Diddy Disciples uses movement, imagination, our faces and bodies, symbols, creative activities, music and song to encourage and enable young children to participate fully.

Diddy Disciples is designed to be flexible and can be used in a variety of settings. Alongside the Bible Storytelling materials, a range of worship resources are set out in different 'Building Blocks' that your group can choose from to build its own sessions.

Why not just have a crèche for very young children?

Diddy Disciples grew from the realization of just how important the early years of a person's life are. During these first years, our sense of who we are, where we belong and how we fit in are shaped, as well as our interests, learning styles and attitudes. Diddy Disciples is based on the belief that, if we aim to build up a people of God who take part fully in worship, who are willing to lead and open to seeing how the stories we tell from the Bible are relevant to the way we live life, then this approach must begin during these first years. To put it another way, people who learn to 'sit still and be quiet' in church during the early years of their life are more likely to continue to 'sit still and be quiet' in church as adults, not becoming actively involved, or at least needing a lot of support to move beyond that way of being.

In the last few decades, we've become increasingly aware of the importance of exposing our children to music, singing and the rhythms of human language from the earliest age, even from the womb. We recognize that encouraging a baby or toddler to take part actively in talking, singing, making music, clapping, turning the pages of a book, even playing an instrument has a lifelong impact on that child's relationship to music and language. We don't wait until children have reached an age when they can be expected to fully grasp what is going on before we invite them to join in. We talk to children long

before they understand the words because we know that they understand the tone, the relationship, and will in their own time become active in speech and language. We understand that it's by making those first babbles, banging that first drum, turning that page, or moving in time to a beat that children start their journey towards a lifelong learning and love of language and music. Of course, we can begin to learn a new language or instrument as adults, but most would recognize that this is a far greater challenge and requires far more determination. Diddy Disciples is based on the belief that, if we hope for our children to embark on a lifelong journey as part of God's people – so that the language of faith becomes a 'first language', or 'mother tongue', for them – this journey can and should begin from the womb. Diddy Disciples was developed to help create a space for children to embark on that journey alongside others from the very earliest age.

Isn't babies, toddlers and young children quite a wide age group?

Diddy Disciples grew out of Sunday morning worship with babies and young children at the main Sunday communion service at St Peter's, Walworth, in London, England. We began by welcoming children over the age of two and a half. Soon, however, we decided to include babies, who arrived en masse at Advent along with their parents or carers, giving us a timely reminder in the run-up to Christmas of how much change babies can bring with them! Once we'd settled back into a pattern and rhythm, we found that the babies brought a great deal to our group.

Tip

For tips on how to involve babies actively, see 'Including babies in mixed groups' on p. 232.

For babies, Diddy Disciples represents an immersive approach to worship. They're not expected to follow and understand every word, but they are included as a full part of the group, drawn into the experience that is taking place around them, and encouraged to participate and lead in their own ways (which usually involves using their bodies). Being actively included from the very beginning is important in itself. As part

of God's family, these babies take part in the family's activities, just as at home they spend some time simply immersed in the melee of family life. At the same time, by being immersed in activities that are especially designed for the first years of life – alongside children only a little older than they are – these babies and toddlers are also given the opportunity to gradually develop skills that will deepen their experience over time. At St Peter's, Walworth, the babies' parents and carers speak movingly of what their children gain from the experience of being included in worship. The babies' verbal understanding may be limited, but they respond actively to the music, the movement, the actions, and the sense of being part of something important. Most of all they understand what it is to be included, for their contribution to be both expected and to make a difference.

The inclusion of babies in our group has also been beneficial for the children over the age of four. The revolutionary, 'topsy turvy' idea that they might learn from a baby doesn't pass them by: they love finding out what unorthodox uses the babies can make of their imaginative aids and imitating them. Some lovely friendships between babies and young children have emerged from their worship together, and these often continue beyond worship. Including babies in Diddy Disciples has also been beneficial for our parents and carers, who no longer spend the adult sermon either 'shushing' their children or segregated into a crèche area where it can be difficult for them to feel an active part of the church. We've found that many adults themselves find the worship and Bible storytelling meaningful, and are often moved by the experience of worshipping alongside – and being led by – the youngest of children.

Much of the material in the main volume is designed for a mixed group like that at St Peter's, or for groups with children over the age of two and a half. Groups that include *only* children under the age of three might find it helpful to look at 'Bible storytelling with babies and toddlers' (p. 233).

“ From around 9 months of age, Ezra loved to join in the New Start sign in the Sorry Song, and soon began singing along with his own harmonies. Now 18 months old, he can be heard in the main church service singing along joyfully, again with his own harmonies. Ezra almost certainly has no grasp of any of the words in those hymns at all, but he has grasped the most important thing: the song of the Church is *his* song and it's important for him to join in. ”

How do we know which Bible story to tell each week?

Diddy Disciples is organized into units of up to six sessions, with each unit covering an important biblical theme. In creating each unit, we asked: if we could only tell six stories to encapsulate this theme, what would they be? The Bible stories are then carefully ordered to help the children to build – week by week – their understanding and engagement with that theme. At the same time, each week's story is designed to stand alone, so that children joining or visiting the group, and those who can't be there every week, can be fully involved in the storytelling for whichever session they attend.

The units can be worked through in any order (with weeks missed out where appropriate for your group). However, they're designed so that churches who would like to follow the seasons of the liturgical year can do so. The connections to the liturgical year are indicated in brackets in the list below, but don't need to be kept by groups for whom this isn't relevant.

The units in this first volume are:

- Jesus' Wonderful Love (Green Time/ Ordinary Time)
- God the Maker (around Harvest in Green Time/Ordinary Time)
- In November We Remember (Green Time/Ordinary Time or Kingdom Season, in November)
- Getting Ready for Baby Jesus (Advent and Christmas)

Note: The storytelling material for All Saints (week 1 of the In November We Remember unit) can also be adapted for patronal festivals or saints' days.

The units in the second volume will include:

- Jesus, Light of the World! (Epiphany)
- John the Baptist (the weeks before Lent)
- The Journey to the Cross (Lent)
- Jesus is Alive! Alleluia! (Easter)
- The Day of Pentecost and Trinity Sunday
- Let Your Kingdom Come! (Green Time/ Ordinary Time between July and November)
- God's Best Friend, Moses (Green Time/ Ordinary Time between July and November)

Does Diddy Disciples follow the lectionary?

Diddy Disciples began by following the *Common Worship* lectionary. In practice, however, we found that the lectionary's tendency to move around themes and/or biblical books made it hard for young children to find a pattern. After some experimentation, we decided that working in units that could be matched to the Church's seasons worked best. We found that carefully ordering the biblical stories within the units helped to deepen our children's worship, brought a greater understanding

to their engagement with the Bible, and opened up the space for them to meet with God. Matching these units to the seasons and their broader themes meant that our worship in Diddy Disciples took place in time to the rhythm of the liturgical year, but in a way that was specially formed and shaped for young children.

Note: Book 1 begins with material that is appropriate for Green Time/Ordinary Time in September (rather than with the beginning of the liturgical year in Advent), as we recognize that many children's groups will be structured to work in time with the school year as well as the liturgical year.

BUILD YOUR OWN DIDDY DISCIPLES SESSION

Diddy Disciples isn't just Bible storytelling. The Building Blocks provide a wide range of prayer, worship and creative materials to resource and nurture your group's time with God. Different groups work in different ways and so the idea is that you can choose Building Blocks and options that are appropriate for your group to build your own service.

Tip

The material includes Building Blocks for every part of a communion service or a Service of the Word. However, it was never envisaged that any group would attempt to use all these Building Blocks each Sunday. That would be far too much for children and leaders alike!

Broadly, there are four types of Building Blocks:

Preparation Blocks: these work well before the Bible storytelling

Interactive Bible Storytelling: this is central to Diddy Disciples

Prayer Blocks: these work best immediately after the Bible storytelling. They're more substantial, so we recommend you choose only one of these at a time

Response Blocks: these work well after the Bible storytelling

The idea is for your group to explore the material and decide which Building Blocks you'd like to use for your session. Each Building Block comes with a range of options, which allows you to choose according to your tradition, time limitations, leaders, children, space and resources. Whatever choices you make, we advise that you stick to those choices for one whole unit (unless you intend to build gradually) so your

group can enter into a rhythm. This will encourage participation and allow for deeper engagement among the children and adults.

At this point, you have a choice. You can:

- dip straight into the material itself by choosing a unit. The first unit – Jesus' Wonderful Love – starts on p. 29;
- read a step-by-step guide to the Building Blocks including practical tips from p. 217;
- continue reading to see how three different groups built three different sessions from the Building Blocks.

Tip

You may want to use one of the first two samples as a 'quick start' guide for building your own first session. Sample 2 is particularly suited for new groups starting on Sunday mornings.

Sample 1: A simple and short weekday session

Sample 2: A session for a Sunday morning group who are just starting out with Diddy Disciples and adding Building Blocks gradually

Sample 3: A session for a well-established group held during a communion service on Sunday

Tip

Remember to look at 'Bible storytelling with babies and toddlers' (pp. 233–53) if your group is made up only of babies and very young children.



Sample 1: A simple and short weekday session

Starting simple can be very helpful. Here's the kind of 20-minute session that we hold with the nursery and reception classes at St Peter's Church of England Primary School.



This is how the session looks in practice:

God the Maker unit: Week 1

Introducing the Unit

Starting this week, we're going to tell stories about God the Maker who made the whole world!

Gathering Song: Option 1

- Song: 'It's raining, it's raining!' Words © Sharon Moughtin-Mumby
- Tune: 'A-Tisket, A-Tasket' (traditional). For the music see p. 85, or for a taster see the Diddy Disciples website.

Our world can have lots of different weather!
Who can tell us what the weather is like today?

Invite a child to respond.

If you're using imaginative aids, ask two or three children to give them out at this point. Then invite the children to warm up their imaginations by exploring actions for different kinds of weather: rainy, snowy, windy, sunny, cloudy, rainbows, chilly, stormy (thunder and lightning), etc.

God the Maker made the weather!
Let's thank God for every kind of weather
with our God the Maker song.

This Gathering Song and its introduction remain the same for the six weeks of the unit.

Introduce each verse by inviting the children to show the kind of weather mentioned with their imaginative aids or their bodies, as exemplified below.

Let's start off by imagining it's raining outside!
Can you show me rain?

Continue with the action as you sing:

It's raining, it's raining!
Outside it is raining!
God the Maker made the world.
Thank you, God the Maker!

Now let's imagine it's sunny outside!
Can you show me sunny?

Continue with the action as you sing:

It's sunny, it's sunny!

Outside it is *sunny!*
God the Maker made the world.
Thank you, God the Maker!

Look! I can see a rainbow!
 Can you show me a rainbow!
 Let's sing 'a rainbow, a rainbow!
 Outside there's a rainbow!'

Continue with the action as you sing:

A rainbow, a rainbow!
Outside there's a rainbow!
God the Maker made the world.
Thank you, God the Maker!

Oh my goodness, now there's thunder!
 Can you show me thunder with your feet?
 And lightning! Can you show me lightning?
 It's stormy!

Continue with the action as you sing:

It's *stormy*, it's *stormy!*
Outside it is *stormy!*
God the Maker made the world.
Thank you, God the Maker!

Wow! Now there's snow,
 Soft, beautiful snow, falling all around.
 Can you show me snow?

Continue with the action as you sing:

It's *snowing*, it's *snowing!*
Outside it is *snowing!*
God the Maker made the world.
Thank you, God the Maker!

And now listen.
Hand over your ear. Lead the children in blowing.

Can you hear that?
Lead the children in blowing louder and louder.
 It's windy outside! Can you show me wind?

Continue with the action as you sing:

It's *windy*, it's *windy!*
Outside it is *windy!*
God the Maker made the world.
Thank you, God the Maker!

Yawn. Who's feeling tired after all that weather?
 Let's sit back in our place and go to sleep . . .
Lead the children in being sleepy.

Look! *Point up.* Outside the stars are twinkling. *Twinkle hands*
 Can you show me the twinkling stars?

Lead the children in twinkling with hands as you sing quietly and sleepily.

It's starry, it's starry,

Outside it is starry.

God the Maker made the world.

Thank you, God the Maker!

End by falling asleep quietly and peacefully.

Getting Ready for Bible Storytelling: Option 1

→ Action: opening your group's box and naming this week's object

Invite one of the children to open the box. Inside will be pictures of different kinds of weather.

What's in the box? Ask the child to respond.

Invite the children to name the different kinds of weather on the pictures.

Interactive Bible Storytelling: God the Maker, week 3

→ Song: 'Everything in all the world sings "Alleluia!"' Words © Sharon Moughtin-Mumby

→ Tune: 'Old Macdonald had a farm' (traditional). For the music see p. 112, or for a taster see the Diddy Disciples website.

Tip

The group sings a song based on Psalm 148, exploring how all the different kinds of weather sing 'Alleluia!' to the tune of 'Old Macdonald had a farm'. To see the full material, go to p. 110.

Taking God's Love into the World

→ Matthew 5.14–16

→ Song: 'This little light of mine' (traditional)

→ Tune: Traditional. For a taster, see the Diddy Disciples website. For tips on teaching songs for the first time, see p. 215.

→ Guide: p. 232

This closing song and its introduction remain the same for every session.

Our time together is coming to an end.

Invite the children to sit in a circle for a moment of quiet.

God has lit a little light of love inside all of us.

Trace a circle on your heart.

Let's make our finger into a candle.

Bring your finger from your heart and hold it out.

Let's be God and light our little light of love together, after three.

Lead the children in lighting their finger candle by striking an imaginary match in the air on three and pretending to light your finger.

1, 2, 3 . . . Tssss!

Let's imagine God's love shining and dancing like light in us.

Wave your finger in front of you as you sing.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

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