According to the clock, the session is over. Parents are leaving their departments or worship and heading toward the preschool departments. Moments that elapse between the arrival of the first parent at the door and the departure of the last preschooler may be used profitably if leaders have planned an activity for this time. Teaching continues until the last child leaves.

Prior to the arrival of parents, check each child to be sure diapers are dry. Encourage potty-trained preschoolers to go to the restroom just before time for parents. If possible, gather possessions and put in diaper bags before parents come. Do this quietly and inconspicuously to avoid upsetting the children. Place art and other work and possessions outside the door, if possible. Make sure children’s names are easily found on the items.

Try to involve crawlers and ones in activities away from the door. Playing a CD will cut down on the noise from the outside.

Twos may enjoy a walk around the room as they look at pictures in the various areas. A teacher may comment, “I see a picture that has a bird in it. Please stand in front of it.” Twos need to be involved in activities, because they experience difficulty sitting in a group. Encourage them to finish what they are doing before asking them to go with you to the door. They may enjoy such songs as “Round and Round We Go,” “High Stepping Horses,” “Roll the Ball,” “The Wiggle Song,” or “Where is Thumpkin?”

Picture-read a book to twos and threes. They may enjoy talking into a recorder’s microphone and listening to themselves.

Threes may enjoy a rocking-chair game. A child may sit in a rocking chair and rock while the children and teachers sing the song “Rocking.”

As older preschoolers are seated in a group, there are several activities one might select for this time.

ROLL THE BALL: Using a rubber ball that is at least six inches in diameter, roll the ball to the child saying something like, “I’ll roll the ball to Ann.” After Ann catches it say, “Ann, roll it back to me.” This can be varied by saying something like, “I’ll roll the ball to Ann; Ann, roll the ball to Jim.”

AUTOHARP: Let the child strum the autoharp while a leader presses the buttons and all sing a song.

WHO IS HE?: Say something like, “I have a friend and he has on white socks and a blue shirt. Who is he?” Let the child guess who is being described.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME?: From a group of pictures, let the child choose one and tell about it. These may be teaching pictures, postcard pictures, magazine pictures, etc.

SANDY SURPRISE: Hide objects (sea shell, marble, rock, acorn, sweet gum ball, etc.) in a shoe box or dishpan filled with two or three inches of clean sand. A child may reach in and feel around until he finds an item to show to the others. Provide enough objects for all to have a turn.

WHAT IS MISSING?: Place four or five familiar objects on a tray. Talk about each item. Ask children to close their eyes as you remove an item and place it out of sight. Ask them to open their eyes and ask, “What is missing?” Repeat until all have had a turn. Add an extra item or two as the game goes on. They may wish to take turns being the “leader” too.
PLAY YOUR INSTRUMENTS: Using a recording, provide rhythm instruments for the children to play. Homemade instruments work well.

SURPRISE BOX: Make a surprise box (a box with a hole cut in the lid) or use a large paper bag. Place several objects inside (fruits, blocks, rocks, etc.), and give each child a turn to reach in and try to guess what an object is. He may bring it out after he has guessed its identity.

WHAT ANIMAL SOUNDS LIKE THIS?: Make an animal sound and see if they can guess what kind of animal makes that sound. They might enjoy having a turn at making sounds too.

SINK AND FLOAT: Gather such things as a rock, wooden block, plastic spoon, metal spoon, marble, toy boat, etc., and place them in a paper bag. Fill a plastic tub or dishpan with water to within two inches from the top. Place the container of water onto a towel in front of you. Talk about the properties of water and about sinking and floating. Select an object from the bag. Engage the children in a conversation about the object. Ask, “Do you think this will float or sink?” Place the object on the water. Release and see what happens.

CUT UPS: Have sheets of various colors of paper and scissors available. Talk about good foods to eat. Begin cutting out a fruit or vegetable (e.g., an apple from red paper). Can they guess what it is as you cut it out? Talk about the food (sweet, sour, juicy, soft, hard, etc.).

CDs: Play an activity CD, such as Learning Basic Skills through Music, Vol. 1.

HELPING AT HOME: Let the child whisper to you something he does to help at home; also let him pretend to be doing that thing while all sing the first verse of “It’s Fun to Be a Helper.” Then have the other children guess what the child was pretending to do.

MATCHING GAMES
Matching games can be fun. Make your own. Reach into a bag and pull out an item (sock, bracelet, toy, bib, etc.). Ask, “Who in a family would use this?” Talk about families and helping. Using hats and/or pictures of hats, ask children who would wear this. Talk about helpers.

Secure pictures of animals and animal homes. Show a picture of a home and ask the children to find the picture of the animal which would live in it.

Cut pictures which depict children involved in various actions. Draw a happy face on a paper bag and a sad face on another bag. Ask the children to look at one of the pictures and relate how they would feel if they were involved in that activity. Those they identify with happy feelings can be placed in the bag with the happy face on it, those with sad feelings in the other bag. Talk about feelings.

Gather several sheets of construction paper of the same color. Cut in half. Make several pairs of matching cards by attaching pictures associated with church experiences (envelopes, Bible, hymnbooks, “Sunday Shoes,” etc.) on one side. On the other side, paste a colored shape, spot, or numeral so that no two are exactly alike. Place the cards on the floor with picture face down. A child calls out two cards by identifying the shape, etc., on the back. Turn the two cards over. If the pictures match, remove them from the floor. Take turns until all are matched. Other pairs of pictures may be used, such as foods, leaves, or familiar objects from home.

From mail order catalogs, clip pictures of clothing which can be identified with either warm weather or cool weather. Select a picture depicting summer and one depicting winter. Talk about how the seasons are different. Show an item of clothing. Ask a child which time of year would be a better time to wear it. Have that child place the item of clothing near the appropriate picture.

Conclusion:
As parents arrive, the director or a teacher should be at the door to answer a parent’s soft knock. Encourage parents to remain outside while you quietly lead a child to the door. Do not call attention to the fact that a child is leaving or that parents are coming. The other teachers should continue to involve the children in learning activities to divert their attention from the door.