



# get MESSY!

Messy Church goes outdoors

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## Sessions in this issue

May-Aug 2018

God 24/7

Matthew 28:16-20

The money puzzle

Mark 10:17-27

Wonderfully made

Psalm 139:14

Creating and caring

Genesis 1:26-31

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[messychurch.org.uk/resources/get-messy](http://messychurch.org.uk/resources/get-messy)

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## Meet our session writers for this issue



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**Jean Pienaar** lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. She started a Messy Church in 2009 and is now one of the Messy Church Regional Coordinators. She enjoys a busy, messy life within the demands of traffic, laundry, regular meals and family, and tries to find holy moments and sacred beauty in the chaos.



**Jen Robertson** is the church/school youth development worker with Hamilton Presbytery and Scripture Union Scotland. She is the Lanarkshire Regional Coordinator for Messy Church and really enjoys helping congregations start, maintain and develop their Messy Churches. She loves to run and read, but not necessarily at the same time!



**Greg Ross** is a Uniting Church minister in Bunbury in the south of Western Australia. He is the Messy Church Regional Coordinator for Western Australia and is part of the National Messy Team for Australia. Greg and his family all play their part in their local Messy Church, which was the second one to start in Australia.

## Themes in this edition

What a privilege to explore key biblical themes in creative, hands-on ways! They may be familiar stories, but approaching them through the different senses and through play can bring so many insights. In **May**, when the church around the world celebrates the coming of God's Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we have the opportunity to join in with the Thy Kingdom Come initiative and to explore what it means to have God with us 24/7.

In **June**, we explore a theme that may be a concern to many of your families in this 21st-century world: how do we handle money so that it's healthy for us and for the world around us and is a fun part of our discipleship? And **July** ties in with Bishop Rachel Treweek's #liedentity campaign around helping all our families to have a positive godly image of ourselves, not one shaped by what the world wants us to think. Self-image may have been highlighted as a preoccupation of many teenagers, but we can help children and adults as well as teens to see themselves and others with God's eyes.

**August** gives us a chance to explore God's wonderful world and our stewardship of it – check out the article on page 6 about taking Messy Church outdoors.

1. Ask God to bless and guide you as you consider what's most helpful to bring families in your community closer to him in the coming months.
2. Glance through the four sessions so that you have an overview of the months ahead, noting down resources that will take time to source.
3. Use the downloadable planning sheets to share this month's session with your core team in plenty of time to shape the ideas together to suit your own situation.
4. If you're meeting face to face with the team, talk about this month's theme, using the Messy team theme provided.
5. Tell God your worries.
6. Ensure that the whole extended team has copies of your final version of activities, together with the Bible reflection provided to give them the background they need. You could give them the link to the passage on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) if you're not certain they have their own Bibles.
7. Include take-home ideas on handouts, texts or a Facebook page.
8. Print copies of the mealtime question cards for the meal tables.
9. Encourage review and reflection from everyone after the session has taken place and respond to suggestions for change ready for next time.
10. Thank God for wherever you saw him at work.

**Planning suggestions**

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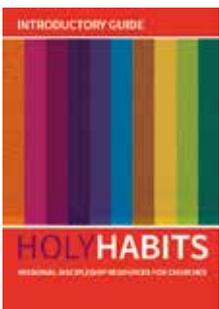
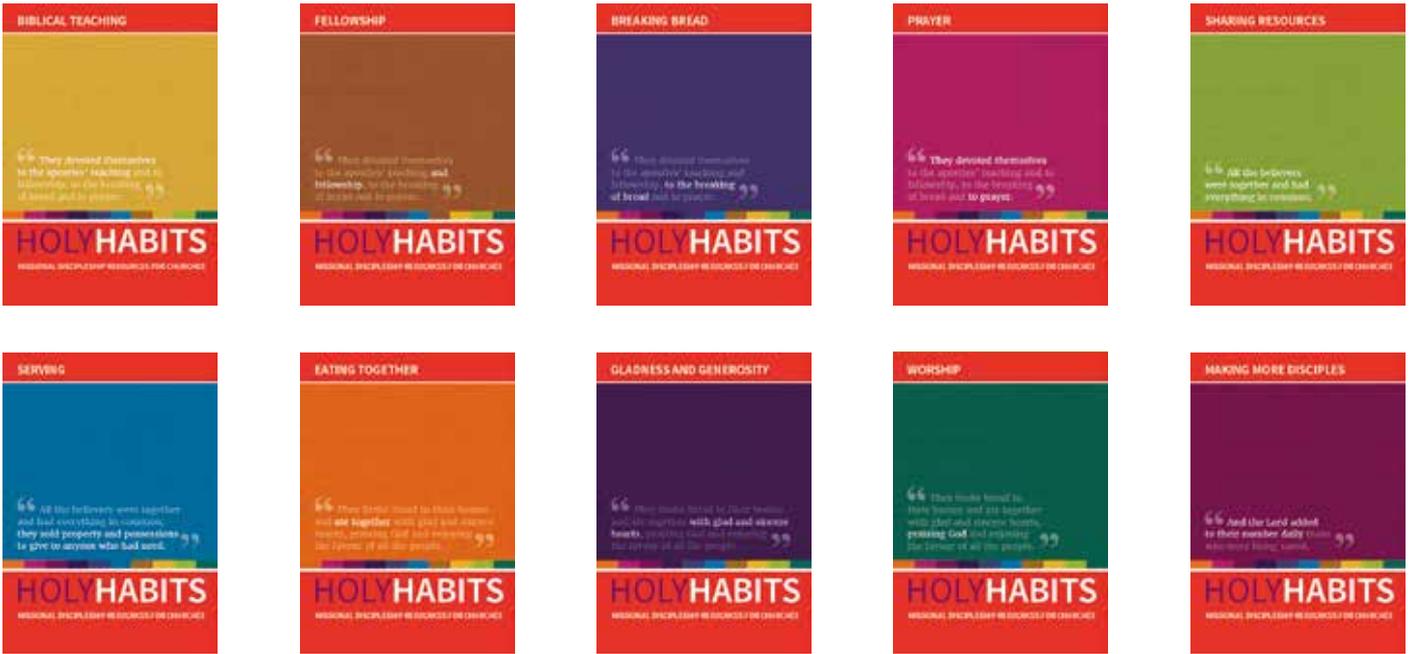
## In our next issue

September: Which way?

October: Safe and sound

November: Listening and learning

December: God so loved the world



Edited by **ANDREW ROBERTS, NEIL JOHNSON and TOM MILTON**

Buy all **10** books and get the **INTRODUCTORY GUIDE FREE!**

Holy Mess? Messy Habits? The wordplay possibilities are numerous... but more exciting is the potential for forming disciples of Jesus by developing holy habits in Messy Churches.

These resources have been developed from studying Luke’s portrait of the early church in Acts 2:42–47 – a portrait that is alive with energy, possibility and growth. The ten practices identified as holy habits are all possible to develop in the community context of Messy Church. Some, such as **Biblical Teaching, Prayer, Eating Together** and **Worship**, are often present right at the beginning. Others, such as **Fellowship, Breaking Bread, Sharing Resources** and **Serving**, may take time to develop in creative and appropriate ways. **Making More Disciples** is often the natural evangelistic outworking of the faithful practice of the other habits – just as it was in Acts. Then, in the midst of both Holy Habits and Messy Church, we find **Gladness and Generosity**. Greg Ross’s session for June, ‘The money puzzle’, provides one inspiring way to introduce and explore this habit.

BRF is publishing a full set of resources for those who would like to explore Holy Habits in their Messy Church or any other form of church. Alongside these, Andrew Roberts’ book *Holy Habits* (Malcolm Down Publishing, 2016) is a very helpful introduction to the habits and is packed full of biblical material and stories.

# HOLYHABITS

MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES



Lucy Moore writes...

# #discipleship

The more we explore what 'Messy discipleship' means, the more our small team at BRF becomes convinced that there aren't any easy answers. If only we could suggest to you that to make disciples in Messy Church – to 'move people on' – you should simply pop them on a course. Imagine! You could measure your outcomes so easily:

- Number of people on course (with bonus points if they are men, teenagers or Millennials)
- Number of people transitioning through to Sunday morning church service attendance
- Number of people joining the planned giving scheme (oh yes please)
- Number of people getting ordained.

But we're just not seeing a natural progression from Messy Churches on to courses. Real life, of course, tends to be messier than the nice, neat theories of what should work. And another issue could be that many discipleship courses assume far more commitment, biblical or liturgical literacy, or indeed simply that everyone attending will be an adult. So how do we do discipleship in a Messy context, where one of the most precious aspects of church life is that everybody is important, whether young or old, with or without special needs, able or unable to read?

The most glorious thing is that God is just quietly getting on with drawing people to himself through the gentle work of a Messy Church without any extra effort on our part. 86% of leaders in the Great Big Messy Survey said they thought God was drawing people closer to him through their Messy Church. And 49% of families who responded would like to know more about Jesus! It's hard to see growth when we're in the middle of it, which is why we're so grateful that the Church Army Research Unit is taking an objective look at discipleship in Messy Church (see pp. 14–15). It also helps to have the results of the Great Big Messy Survey year by year, which so many of

you and your families have been kind enough to complete. These results are already giving us many insights and will give us even more over time. And as more and more teams take part in the Discipleship Pilot (p. 13) and share their findings, we will all grow in our understanding and practice. Do give it a whirl and let us know what works and what doesn't so that we can all minister more effectively.

The questions we ask of Messy Church discipleship need asking of traditional church too: how do we measure the discipleship of the inherited church which meets on a Sunday? Is it enough just to attend a service? How are each of those people growing in Christ? Do we expect everyone to 'move on' as they grow? It's not about Messy Church and traditional church competing to see who makes disciples best, but rather about asking, how can what we know about discipleship in one sphere of church life inform us in another to help more people of all ages know Jesus more vividly and be more open to working with his Holy Spirit to change the world for the better?

As parents and grandparents, we watch our children growing up. It's a time-consuming, gradual process as they come to maturity, and 'growing up' means different things to different children. But their maturity, sense of self-worth, resilience and ability to shine depend far less on any courses and programmes that we might send them on, and far more on the unconditional love we lavish on them over the course of months, years, decades. In the same way, Messy discipleship seems to be far less about a great course, though that may help for particular aspects of life and learning, and is much more about our readiness to love and keep on loving the families God is sending our way so generously. What does that loving look like for you?





# Messy Church goes outdoors



Get out there! Messy Church should always be out on the edge, and for some of us that means bursting out of the safety of a church building into our local countryside, park or seaside. Many people’s spirituality resonates with the natural created world and the fresh air, exercise, space and green-ness are all health-giving. Here are a few reflections from experts and practitioners of the Great Outdoors. See also August’s theme from Jean Pienaar in South Africa, ‘Creating and caring’.

## Faith like an acorn

Andy Lester, A Rocha UK

As Conservation Director of the UK’s only Christian wildlife charity, I often get asked how we can make a difference when the environmental challenges are so huge.

The answer is found in the acorn. A typical oak tree produces over 2,000 acorns every year. Yet only one in every 10,000 acorns grows to become part of the next generation of oak trees. The majority of acorns get eaten; others land on the wrong ground and rot, and many get swept by the autumn rainstorms into drains and off to the sea. The life of the Christian taking action for nature can feel like that lone acorn... a journey in which you are left feeling the problems are way too big and the number of people engaging in caring for God’s world is far too small.

But if you give an acorn the right soil, it has a really high chance of growing and turning into a mighty oak tree. So it is with caring for nature. If we can prove that looking after our green spaces, gardens, parks and waste ground is both possible and fun, more and more Christians will engage in making a difference!

Looking after what God has entrusted us with takes small steps. One of those small steps is becoming an Eco Church. A Rocha UK is running an award scheme for churches who are signing up in their hundreds to take action for the planet. There are bronze, silver and gold awards – and getting bronze is a great first step to helping nature. Easy acorn-sized steps include creating compost heaps, putting up nest boxes, doing an energy audit and moving to fairly traded tea and coffee. As the acorn turns into an oak tree, you can perhaps aim higher and go for bigger community-level action: from developing a nature reserve to planting an orchard!

If you are interested in the work of A Rocha UK or would like to register your church free for the Eco Church award, do take a look at our website: [www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://www.ecochurch.arocha.org.uk).

## Church Outdoors

Graham Silk

It’s Church Outdoors and a group is searching the area for things as big as their hand, finger and nose. What have we found? Leaves, berries, sticks and trees as tall as us. What have we discovered? We are all special and God’s creation is amazing; we’ve identified the names of some trees too. We have seen fruits and consider our ‘harvest’ at home or work. The rain pours down and we shelter under a tarp. We have a hot drink from the flasks we have brought and cake too. We shelter under a tree (which happens to be 3.5 hugs around). We play hide-and-seek using the big trees nearby and think about God looking for us and not giving up. We pray, thanking God for his love and provision for us, and share 2 Corinthians 9:10–11 before going home to dry out.



This is a sample of what we do; maybe you can use a few ideas. Do contact us; we would love to hear from you with questions or your stories: [churchintheoutdoors@gmail.com](mailto:churchintheoutdoors@gmail.com).

We meet as Church Outdoors every month, discovering more of God in different locations, whatever the weather. The documented benefits of outdoor learning include enhanced physical, mental and spiritual health. Many people acknowledge the link they feel to God in the natural world and those, younger and older, who find a formal setting difficult can come alive outdoors. We usually have surprise encounters with God which impact us. Large groups can be harder to manage, so consider using several facilitators. We have used a small fire pit to toast marshmallows, cooked bread on sticks and even cooked our Christmas meal on a fire. A fire circle is a welcoming space which draws people into community and meaningful conversations.

## Getting outdoors with God

**Cate Williams, Gloucester Diocese Mission and Evangelism Officer**

Many people, both children and adults, find that their natural spiritual place is the outdoors. We shouldn't be surprised – God made the world, all of creation, and it was good. God has woven goodness in and through all that has been made, so it isn't the least bit unexpected to find that the natural world is a place where many have their most profound spiritual encounters. Biblically, we are encouraged to ask the animals and they will tell us about God (Job 12:7–10); we are reminded that all creation praises God (Psalm 148); and we note that the redeeming power of the cross is for all creation, not just humanity (Colossians 1:15–20).

Our society has become increasingly disconnected from nature in a variety of ways. Most of us live our lives at a great distance from the sources of our food in farming, and the cycles of the seasons. Against this background, wildlife charities are putting lots of resources into helping us

reconnect. So, too, are churches, exploring ways to be good news by offering ways to reconnect with creation and with God through the natural world.

The photo below is from Cheltenham Forest Church camping trip, exploring the story of the feeding of the 5,000. We heard the story, we went for a walk and allowed nature to speak to us of God's abundance, and we lived the story as we shared bread and fish, cooked on the fire. On other occasions, we have been on fungi hunts; we have explored the way Jesus' story of death, resurrection and hope is lived out in nature on an annual cycle; we have taken time to stop, look and appreciate. We find that children often lead the way in connecting with nature. While adults stride out, chatting and walking past all kinds of wonders, the children find the fabulous spider's web, or beautifully coloured leaf, or interesting beetle. Perhaps this is what it means to enter the kingdom of God like a child?



# SEND Messy Churches tell their stories

As the BRF Messy Church team has travelled the country to be part of training days and Messy Meet-ups, we have been thrilled to hear from teams who have intentionally adapted their Messy Church to welcome those with additional needs and disabilities. Messy Church is proving to be just the right shape of church to accommodate those who need more space and time, and a greater variety of learning activities and opportunities to worship than an average church service can usually offer.

Towards the end of last year, Lucy Moore invited those teams to get in touch and share their stories. We were incredibly moved and humbled by what they wrote and we hope what they have shared might inspire you too to think about how you can be even more SEND friendly in your own Messy Church. Because of the increased vulnerability of some members of these SEND congregations, many of the teams wished to maintain a degree of anonymity, so names have been omitted and locations withheld; nevertheless, we are sure you will find the following pieces inspirational. If you would like to find out more about becoming a SEND Messy Church, then get in touch with us at [enquiries@messychurch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@messychurch.org.uk) and also check out our useful guide on this topic on the BRF Messy Church website: [www.messychurch.org.uk/mmm-send](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/mmm-send).

## One Messy Church calls itself 'Wonderfully Made'. Its leader wrote:

As a family with a child with additional needs, we wanted to create a space where we could be reminded that every life is precious to God, that each person is created in his image and that they are valued by a community of people as an important part of what we do. We felt this was probably true for many SEND families. Hence the name 'Wonderfully Made', and the song that goes with it.

After much prayer, we decided to start our first Wonderfully Made Messy Church. We wanted to take the brilliant Messy Church model and see how we could adapt it to suit families with children with special or additional needs. We built in Makaton signing and the Widgit symbol system to help communicate with people with different ability levels, and took inspiration from the Portage 'small steps' approach. We created a quiet space in our chapel (complete with bubble tube and sensory toys) for those who need some time out due to sensory overload, or just want a space to pray or reflect.

Our families have a range of additional needs, from mobility issues to learning difficulties. Some children have an official diagnosis, some are more complicated! Some are, to use a loaded term, 'normal, typical' families. All are welcome.

We strive to create a safe space for people who are used to their children being seen as a problem to be solved rather than a person to be loved – something Jesus was pretty keen on! Some come because they want to be involved in a church but have found it really hard or have felt pushed out in the past. However, the vast majority have no church connection whatsoever, and would originally have said they had no use for or interest in church. But, over time, you can see all of them are on a journey and learning more about God, faith and the church. We have had baptism requests, prayer requests, house blessings and a few trips to visit people in hospital (as, sadly, many of our kids have complicated health issues).

## This next leader shared stories about individuals at her SEND Messy Church:

We run our Messy Church monthly, and one of our helpers is a lady of 60 who needs additional support to remain living in her own home. She has some learning difficulties, but loves anything to do with craft. She is always accompanied by someone else but often sets up and runs a craft activity. It gives her a great sense of satisfaction and belonging.

We have a young girl with considerable needs who comes with her mum; she attends a special-needs school. She cannot talk and has physical and learning difficulties. She loves to join in with the activities and her mum knows that we love to have her around and are not fazed by her sometimes erratic behaviour.

Our local school has over 40% special needs and we regularly welcome various parents and children. Many of these children have challenging behaviour and, again, we are affirming of and welcoming to parents and children.

We find that families don't always come regularly, but that is typical of the families we aim to serve. Many of them have chaotic lifestyles and struggle to get organised to be in a certain place at a certain time.

## Small steps to be inclusive of those with additional needs are important. Another leader wrote:

An example of the ways in which Messy Church benefits SEND children is the opportunity to connect and communicate in a variety of ways with people from very different backgrounds. We are very fortunate to have a lady who helps us and has shown us how to sign. I find this a great help, especially during our celebrations in church. Signing a verse or a song makes it more relevant to any child who wants to engage in the activity; and this is also very helpful for the adults!

# (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)



Messy Church can also be particularly good for children with ADHD, as we offer a variety of activities. Some of them can be achieved very quickly and those children can get a sense of achievement from finishing something they can hold and then move on to a different activity. One child was in care, now adopted, and has a variety of sensory difficulties. This child has got to know us and has developed a trusting relationship with those who can help him regulate his feelings and activities. Messy Church is a friendly and welcoming place with strong boundaries to help the development of trust and understanding.

## **Messy Church is also the type of church that can more easily invite SEND helpers on to the team. One leader wrote to us about this:**

We have a couple of helpers on our team who are SEND. Both are involved in the planning meetings and contribute greatly to the ideas, etc. One, aged 15 (though developmentally around 10–11), is very enthusiastic and has an amazing gift of hospitality and welcome, particularly during the mealtime when he makes sure everyone has somewhere to sit and goes around talking to people. The other is a lady (slightly older than middle-aged) who is quite creative and is part of the church family. She helps with planning meetings but is unable to do any preparation, so this is done for her. I feel that both gain a great deal of fulfilment from being part of the team; it boosts their confidence and enables them to feel valued and valuable. In addition, they bring an added dimension to the team with those, dare I say, childlike approaches of openness and simplicity that so many of us have lost as adults. They also enable those who come to see that we are open to and welcoming of a diverse range of people.

## **Finally, this from a Messy Church leader in London:**

Our Messy Church is attended by a small number of people with additional needs. One boy, aged 14, lives in a residential home for young people with autism and has weekly two-hour supervised visits with his mother and sisters. They have chosen to spend one supervised visit each month at Messy Church. He loves Messy Church because it gives him a safe space to meet new people with the support of his key worker and to take part in lots of sensory activities alongside people of all ages, and to share a meal. Born into a Muslim family that doesn't really practise faith, Messy Church has enabled him and his family to access faith in a way that they couldn't before and he now regularly asks to help lead the Messy Church grace during the celebration. His mother also has learning disabilities and Messy Church has enabled her and her whole family to feel welcome in church when they can often feel alienated from society.

Recently, a young woman who lives with autism, anxiety and an eating disorder has begun attending Messy Church with a local wellbeing support worker. Again, Messy Church has given her a safe space to access sensory play (she LOVES getting messy!) alongside children and adults of all ages. It's also given her more confidence and she was even able to attend the last Messy Church without her support worker, which also gave another member of the team an opportunity to offer Christ-centred hospitality by supporting her through the session.

The two case studies above are of people who come regularly to Messy Church, but I think the warm welcome that Messy Church brings, alongside its ability to allow people of ALL ages to explore faith through play (and lots of mess!) has enabled others who have come with additional needs to feel part of the Messy Church community too.

Miriam Thurlow joined the Messy Church national team in October 2017 as our Messy intern. Here, she explains why she is so passionate about Messy Church.



## Life as the Messy intern Miriam Thurlow



First, as a quick introduction, here are three things you may like to know about me: I love cooking and baking; my favourite place is the beach, especially one where I can go surfing; and I love spending time with family and friends.

I first got involved with Messy Church in 2010, when my parents began planning to start their own. They were already running a monthly children's club, but they wanted to reach the parents as well as the children and so they began looking into Messy Church. Together, we visited a couple of Messy Churches and we all loved how it was church for families to come to together.

So for the past eight years, Messy Church has been running at St Nix in Yate, Bristol. I have learnt so much from being a part of it and seeing how it has impacted the lives of the families who attend. The core values of Messy Church are an important part of why it has had such an impact:

**Creativity** – Messy Church provides the opportunity to get creative and think about the Bible in new ways which help make it more accessible. And although it is great to see children enjoying the crafts and activities, I always find it a joy to see adults really engaging in such creativity, whether that be making cotton-wool beards, treading in paint, or simply sitting next to a child and creating a picture together.

**All-age** – I love it when all different ages come together and make memories together. There are so few things these days that are not separated by age, and I think it is one of the most important reasons why Messy Church is so great. You can look around a Messy Church and see people of all ages, from 0 to 90+, all there learning about Jesus together.

**Hospitality** – I am a firm believer in the importance of sharing meals. I love cooking dinner for people, and of course there must be pudding involved too! In fact, eating with people was the thing I missed most when I first went to university, having come from a family where we always sat round the table to eat dinner together. And it was what Jesus did; in the Gospels, he eats with people and he does a lot of his teaching on these occasions too. And the same is often true with Messy Church. It is around the meal table that you really get to know people and experience amazing fellowship.

**Celebration** – Messy Church is about celebrating Jesus and what he has done for us, but it is also the chance to celebrate people's lives with them, whether that be a birthday, a new Taekwondo belt or a new child. By creating a community, Messy Church allows us to walk alongside people, both in the good and the bad times. And seeing such communities develop is a huge reason to celebrate and praise God.

**Christ-centred** – All of these values are great, but being Christ-centred is what makes Messy Church church. I love how all aspects of Messy Church are tied into Jesus and who he is. He welcomes all into his family, and so do we. I love when, in the celebration at Messy Church, you can suddenly draw the connection between all the different activities and that month's Bible passage. A dove mobile is no longer just something that might be hung up in your house for a few days, but it is a reminder that Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit, and that we can invite him into our lives and never have to be alone again.



All these are reasons why I love Messy Church, and reasons why I wanted to be the Messy intern for a year. I really believe in what Messy Church is doing and want to be involved in seeing more lives transformed through meeting God at Messy Church. I also wanted to see the bigger picture and what was happening all around the world with Messy Church.

I bring a number of years' experience of Messy Church to the table, including years of being a teenager in Messy Church. I am a creative person and love thinking outside the box. I am also an organised person (far too organised, if you ask my brothers!), all of which I hope will help me this year as the Messy intern.

As I am working with the Messy Church team this year, I hope my enthusiasm for Messy Church will continue and that I will gain a deeper understanding of who God is and how he is working in my life. I am also looking forward to learning new skills and having new experiences. I have never been a huge social media person, but I am learning how it can be a useful tool for resourcing and encouraging people. This year I am in charge of the Messy Church Instagram account (@messychurch), and I have already learned that there is an awful lot more to Instagram than just posting pretty pictures!

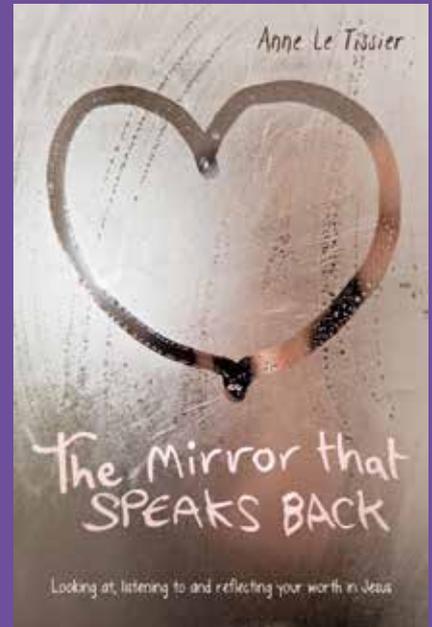
I have also had the opportunity to challenge myself in other ways. In October, we went to CRE (Christian Resources Exhibition) in Surrey and I had the chance to help lead a series of seminars with the team, which I really enjoyed. It was great to hear how God is working in Messy Churches across the country. I also helped out on the BRF stand, and although this is not my comfort zone, I really enjoyed being able to share my experiences of Messy Church with people and developing my answers to 'What is Messy Church?' and responses to 'We would like to develop our children's work, and think maybe Messy Church would be a good way forward!'

In many ways, it is not a normal internship. I mean, in what other internship would one of the first things you were asked to do be to dress up as an angel? Unlike many internships, it is not based in an office, but at home and you are in charge of your own diary. Although this felt a bit daunting to begin with, it is actually very exciting. It means that you decide where and when you work, so if you fancy working in a café one day with a cup of tea and a slice of cake, you can! And the team are always in contact via email, so you don't feel as if you are working alone. You can get stuck in straight away as a valued member of the team, where your voice is heard and you can share your ideas.

It has been a great few months so far and I am looking forward to what the rest of the year will bring!

**Are you interested in being the next Messy Church intern? We are currently looking for someone to start in September 2018 for a year, salary TBC. You can be based anywhere in the UK. For more information or to apply, please email [maddie.jane@brf.org.uk](mailto:maddie.jane@brf.org.uk).**

July's session is called 'Wonderfully made'. Anne Le Tissier's new book is the perfect complement, with its focus on issues of identity and self-esteem.



£6.99  
9780857465719

*With honesty and insight, this must-have book is sure to help many of us as we face the challenges of living in our insta-glamourised world.*

Cathy Madavan, speaker and author



A reminder that the Messy Church logo has been refreshed. The updated version is downloadable from [messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-logo](http://messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-logo), along with a number of customised versions for popular occasions and a DIY version to which you can add your own text.

You're of course welcome to continue using the materials you currently have, but when you come to update them or to create new items, please do so with the refreshed logo, and consult the guidelines to ensure your Messy Church is on brand and looking great!

Visit the CPO website [www.cpo.org.uk](http://www.cpo.org.uk) for new banner, leaflet and card designs and clothing products.

# Thy Kingdom Come



Thy Kingdom Come is a global initiative from the Archbishop of Canterbury aimed at encouraging Christians to pray for evangelism during the days between Ascension and Pentecost. In 2017, BRF helped to write and coordinate resources for children and families to use in churches and at home, including a full Messy Church session.

St Andrew's Church in Marks Tey, Essex, used this session last year and Elizabeth, who leads the Messy Church team there, wrote to us about how it went:

Our Thy Kingdom Come Messy Church was such fun and the highlight was launching the **Bottle Rockets!** Two of our dads took responsibility to launch them and we had some amazing launches and flights. A few landed on the roof of our church buildings and had to be rescued later with a very long stick.

Other activities included **Hidden Angels** – lots of amazement when the angels appeared; **Setting Out with Good News** – we had this made up already and who would have guessed that blowing chickpeas into holes around the world could be such a competitive game? For **The Lord's Prayer Spinner**, we had some personalised pencils made with 'Messy Church' on them, so that families could take one home. For the activity **All Together Now**, we used air-dry coloured clay, many families making a family group to go in our upper-room basket. For **Team Building**, we turned small bottles with screw-top lids into percussion instruments, that were then taken through to the celebration and played for the suggested '**Disciples' Song**'. There were also **Great Commission Spirals**, with much amazement at the length of the spirals and some interesting places on them, close-by and far away, where we prayed the gospel would be taken. For our celebration, we used the **Mannequin Challenge** and then followed the outline in the materials.

For most of our families, Messy Church is their church and their only experience of church. My friend's three-year-old, whenever she spots a church, calls out, 'Look, there's a Messy Church!' At our planning meetings, we have now begun focusing more on the spiritual theme of our topic for Messy Church. We held our first team away day in 2017, where we majored on the five values of Messy Church. In true Messy-Church style, we also enjoyed craft activities, celebration and food, using ideas from Jane Leadbetter's book *Messy Prayer*. Our prayer this year, as always, is that the families who come will be those who God wants to be there; and that our families will enjoy being part of Messy Church, have fun and learn something of God's love.

The Messy Church session for Thy Kingdom Come is available this year too, this time with photos of the activities. Do let us know how your session goes. Our thanks go to Elizabeth and her team at St Andrew's for sharing their story and giving permission to use the photos. Visit the Thy Kingdom Come website at [www.thykingdomcome.global](http://www.thykingdomcome.global).

## Emma Buchan, project leader for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Evangelism Task Group

Thy Kingdom Come is a focused ten days of prayer between Ascension and Pentecost for the empowering of the Holy Spirit to enable our evangelism and witness. In 2017, we saw this movement go truly global. With 85 countries taking part, we were thrilled with the way our brothers and sisters in Christ came together.

There were specific constituencies we had sought to encourage and resource: individuals, families and churches and cathedrals. The resources that we produced served a variety of traditions and styles, ages and outlooks. All were translated into six languages and available free on the website. They included the 'Kingdom kit' for children to engage with over half-term, a novena, prayer diaries, service plans, prayer stations, bookmarks and Bible studies.

We are excited to see in 2018 how this great wave of prayer continues to embed in the life of the church. However, the focus now is to encourage each of us as individuals and the churches we are part of to consider how God will use us to be part of the answer to the prayers we have prayed.



# #discipleship: team

*Try the Messy discipleship pilot:  
a way for your team to think about discipleship*

Lucy Moore

**You will need: bottles of pleasantly hospitable beverages; copies of the discipleship PDFs from [messychurch.org.uk/messy-discipleship-pilot](http://messychurch.org.uk/messy-discipleship-pilot). The cards will need printing off in colour and cutting into separate units beforehand. Everything else can be viewed on a screen – it'll help if everyone has a copy of the Details document.**

1. Open bottles. Administer appropriately but liberally to everyone and toast your amazing achievements so far.
  2. Pray for God's Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see all the possibilities and discernment to know the best way ahead.
  3. Go round the group and invite everyone to say what they value about your Messy Church.
  4. Sum up how it's been going since it started and what progress you feel you've made. Explain that all Messy Churches are being invited to think about making and growing disciples and The Bible Reading Fellowship, home of Messy Church, has produced a very simple way of starting to talk about how to do it.
  5. Invite people to gird their loins. As it were.
  6. Ask the group to choose which of these three broad-brush approaches you all think is most godly/interesting/likely to work in your context/could be the 'right' way forward for you: 1) doing a Messy extra of some sort; 2) encouraging families to do faith at home; 3) investing in the actual gathered Messy Church to make it more of a disciple-making opportunity.
  7. Spread out the cards and pull together all the options that are the same colour and which match the broad-brush idea you've chosen. Read through the ideas and see which one stands out.
  8. Look at the details and explanation of that idea.
  9. Compare it to the other ideas on the cards. Which do you all prefer? Have you thought of something even better?
  10. Has anyone read or heard about another Messy Church with a great idea for discipleship?
  11. One colour is for 'other ideas' that don't fit into a neat compartment. Do they help?
  12. Spend some time talking and thinking through what might be right in your context. Make sure the quieter and slower people have the chance to provide their valuable input too.
  13. Try to end up with a realistic but visionary set of ways forward.
  14. Pull together an action list with **who** will do **what** by **when** to make sure what you have decided happens.
  15. Write down **how long** you'll try these ideas for and **on what date** you'll review it.
  16. Write down what would make you see it as a '**success**' and what would mean a '**failure**'.
  17. Crack open another bottle and commit your plans to God.
- 



Claire Dalpra

## Dictaphones, discipleship and dessert

Discipleship. Bit of a slippery term, isn't it? On one level, most of us instinctively sense what discipleship is about. It's about how we live as followers of Christ. Yet why does it seem so difficult to pin down a more practical definition? And why do there seem to be so many hurdles to seeing deeper discipleship among our Messy Church families, especially among our adults?

I've been tasked with undertaking a two-year piece of research looking at Messy Church initiatives in the Church of England. The church commissioners who are generously paying for this research have noted the popularity of Messy Church and are curious about its longer-term effects in all sorts of ways. How does Messy Church vary in different contexts? How can we take families on a deeper journey of discipleship? How long should we intend or expect Messy Churches to live? What is the relationship between a Messy Church and its parish? What happens to *parents* after their children have moved on from Messy Church?

I know many of you wrestle with such issues on a regular basis. Here at Church Army's Research Unit, we have designed a multimethod piece of research involving telephone questionnaires, focus groups and qualitative interviews to gather data to offer some clear and practical learning points. Some of you may have encountered us already and our sincere thanks to all leaders and Regional Coordinators who have taken part in this research.

You will no doubt be aware that there are excellent written resources on these issues already. If you have not read

*Being Messy, Being Church, Making Disciples in Messy Church* and *Messy Church Theology* (all published by BRF), I do recommend them. As Hamley and Kurt write in their chapters for *Being Messy, Being Church*, developing deeper discipleship requires the relational investment which asks the team to go beyond the all-too-familiar 'running a good event' church mindset. Already in this research, we are hearing of many such approaches, including lay leaders making pastoral visits to families at home or offering regular prayer counselling for adults in their quiet space.

Our team's previous 'Day of Small Things' research in 2016 revealed that, in the leaders' opinion, 45% of Messy Church attenders, including team, were from non-churched backgrounds. As Paul Moore notes in *Making Disciples in Messy Church*, Messy Churches are starting so much 'further back' in inviting families to make a commitment to Christ. This pushes Messy Church into new territory, not often touched on by literature that tends to assume you're starting with people in the pews on a Sunday morning.

Another key parameter in framing discipleship for this research is working with the values that underpin Messy Church. How do you develop discipleship with family units rather than individuals? Some say it is impossible. Others point to the emergence of Godly Play, Faith Pictures and Why on Earth? – all highly visual, tactile and intuitive. Could these types of resources pave the way for intergenerational learning? It will come as no surprise that already many of you have mentioned hospitality as part of facilitating deeper conversations. True to your values, my Dictaphone had to

share table space with exceedingly tempting desserts during focus group research.

I recognise that our research questions are addressing issues far more common across the wider church than Messy Churches alone. Broadly speaking, I note how closely our Messy Churches work within a parish context, some even taking place on a Sunday morning for an inherited congregation. In our own denomination, we've inherited a deep instinct to try to answer the question of 'How well are we doing discipleship?' by counting numerical attendance at worship services and on faith courses; reporting outward practices is so much easier than measuring transformation of character or positive changes in a family's lifestyle. These hard questions are good for us all to wrestle with, in the spirit of grace and humility. In the words of the song from Disney's *High School Musical*, 'We're all in this together'.

You are pioneers. You may not feel it when you're wiping baked beans off the floor or hoovering up glitter. You may say that you are simply doing what all-age worship has always done. If it were not for the seismic shift in our UK mission context, you might be right. The Church Growth Research Programme reported 48% of Church of England churches have fewer than five under-16s attending on a Sunday morning. (Does that suggest that parents of this age group aren't in church either, I wonder?) I join with others in saying what is being discovered through Messy Church will undoubtedly be a gift to the wider church.

I know it's deeply frustrating not to have quick or easy answers to the deeper discipleship question. But maybe that's the way it should be. According to Gerald Arbuckle in *Refounding the Church* (Orbis Books, 1993), pioneers need to understand the need to sit in the darkness and chaos of unknowing, without distraction or the escapism of busyness, as the only way to new insight. For Christians in the mystic tradition, the place of disillusionment and powerlessness is a cherished place, unsettling though it undoubtedly is. It serves to intensify our love for that for which we long.

This research project is due to complete in October 2018, with findings to be published online. We still have more phone calls to make; we are speaking with 240 leaders in total across England (apologies that we couldn't go further afield geographically or denominationally), so don't be surprised to find an email or answerphone message from us. We still need to speak even if your Messy Church has stopped, as we believe we can learn just as much from initiatives that have ceased. We hope



our conversations might be a blessing to you as an opportunity to reflect on deeper Messy Church issues in the busyness of life – a chance to develop in our own discipleship, seeking God's wisdom in the place of unknowing for those families we care passionately about.





# Youth Column

James Turner, 14,  
Messy Church at St Nix, Yate

I first started attending Messy Church five years ago with my mum, brother and sister. I really liked it, so about two years ago I asked if I could join the team. I wanted to help people find a pathway to God and love him as I do. A year later, I started doing my bronze award for the Duke of Edinburgh scheme, and for my volunteering project I was able to put down helping at Messy Church. It is something I enjoy very much.

My favourite things at Messy Church are helping people and the team spirit, as everyone is so cheerful and kind and we have a lot of laughs. Yet we are very productive and I like running the craft tables. I also really enjoy our yearly weekend camping trips to Great Wood in Somerset, as everyone who goes gets along very well and has a great time.

I have felt very welcome since being part of this great team. I think we all work together very well and the meal at the end just adds to the friendship in the team, and is a good time to make new friends. People were surprised by Messy Church and I think that it is very inviting to the young families who, I think, aren't sure about going to church. Messy Church changes their opinion and they go to it every time it is on.

The team meetings are interesting as there are a lot of laughs but also a serious side. We discuss the story and talk about what we think about it, we do an activity and eat some cake, then we find out what stall we are going to be running.

Messy Church has changed some of my opinions, as people give their different views, and they hear some of mine. I like the discussions as they give us all something to think about. It is a lot of fun, which has been a massive enjoyment and I think that Messy Church has helped many people find Jesus.



## Making history:

As you read this, you are probably just about to celebrate Easter. This is a special time of year for Messy Church, as we get to show what Easter is really about – a story of suffering, grief and self-sacrifice, but also hope, redemption and great joy. No fluffy bunnies or pom-pom chicks here!

Messy Churches are good at finding innovative ways to share Easter with families. A few years ago, the Len Valley Benefice Messy Church in Kent had families searching for six Easter characters. Each told their part of the story and gave the children an object or told them where to find a 'treasure' related to their story.

Yoker Messy Church near Glasgow made stained-glass crosses and used the largest at their Good Friday service. It was laid on the floor and lit from underneath. As Bible readings were shared, black cards were placed on the cross to block out the light. The church said it was so thought-provoking it had several of them in tears.

When we understand the events of Easter and their significance, it's easy to be moved. Jesus' death and resurrection made a lasting difference; it changed the course of history, freeing us from sin and showing us that death is not the end. Messy Church helps bring this reality to families across the globe every Easter holiday.





## the Messy way

We can all choose to be history-makers and help make disciples like Jesus. This doesn't have to mean doing something extraordinary (like becoming a famous evangelist); it can be achieved through the simple things we do during this lifetime, and the choices we make about what happens when we've left for the next.

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is the home of Messy Church. For almost a century, we have been able to do amazing things thanks to the generosity of those who have supported us during their lifetime and through gifts in wills. One of these 'amazing things' was developing Messy Church into a worldwide movement, which currently reaches an estimated 500,000 people each month.

Across the globe, Messy Church is helping families hear about Jesus and grow in faith. If you want to see this work continue for many years to come, please consider supporting us through a gift in your will. It doesn't need to be huge to help us make a real difference, and we will use whatever you give for significant projects with lasting impact.

For more information about making a lasting difference through a gift in your will to BRF, please visit [brf.org.uk/lastingdifference](http://brf.org.uk/lastingdifference), email [enquiries@brf.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@brf.org.uk) or call us on 01865 319700.



## Remembering June

**Alison Bennett** *(shared with the permission of June's family)*

June was a member of our Messy Church catering team from the very beginning. She lived with significant pain and mobility problems, which often made working in the kitchen a bit of a challenge for her. However, she loved being able to help and rarely missed a monthly session, and so the others on the catering team worked around her and her limitations.

Sadly, on a Friday afternoon, after being at church in the morning, June suffered a catastrophic stroke as she returned home and died a week later in hospital, aged just 61. Her son and daughter allowed members of June's church family to spend precious time with her during her last days in hospital. She was asleep for much of the time, but clearly responded when we talked to her about Messy Church.

June's children told me that being a member of our church, and the Messy Church team, had been life-changing for their mum. It had given her a sense of belonging and purpose, because we had allowed her to do things that no one else would. They said that she always looked forward to Messy Church, and it was also a great joy to her when her granddaughter was visiting and she could bring her along.

June's funeral was held soon afterwards, with over 90 mourners present. Her family asked for donations in her memory to be given to the church. We were astonished when nearly £500 was donated, which we put towards a Messy Church day trip to the seaside next summer, as June loved the seaside.

As I have reflected on June's life, I am aware that Messy Church is only one part of her story, but it was a very big part over the last few years. God has blessed our church and the local community through Messy Church, and I have been reminded that there is always a bigger story to Messy Church than the one we might see on the surface.

RIP June.

# Session material: May



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18) to download all templates at A4 size

Spirit, directing our ways and filling us with the confidence we need to do his works.

## #discipleship: team

## #discipleship: individual

### Messy reflection by Becky May

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

Matthew 28:16–20 (NIV)

After three years following Jesus in close proximity, learning everything he would say and do, Jesus' disciples had the best experience of what it meant to be his followers. And yet, during the events of Easter and in the subsequent days, it is no wonder that they found themselves tested, confused and full of self-doubt. Having just been reunited with their friend and teacher, they would have been forgiven for wanting never to let him out of their sight again.

Against this backdrop, Jesus prepares to leave his friends on earth for the final time and he takes this opportunity to say two things: 'Go and share what you have learnt with others' and 'You won't be on your own'. Although they won't be able to see Jesus beside them again, they will continue to feel his presence and power at work in their lives.

How great a reassurance this is for us too! We who never physically walked beside Jesus can still know what it means to be with him. We stand on the testimonies of Jesus' followers through generations, who have all been able to share what Jesus has done in and through their lives, and how he has been with them in every circumstance of life.

Jesus' great commission was not just for his first disciples but also for us today. We have the same command to follow: to go out into our Messy Church, our homes, our schools, our places of work and make new disciples, knowing that when we feel most alone, most vulnerable and most unsure of what we should do, Jesus is right there with us, through the Holy

### Messy health check

Who finds it hard to talk about God during the activities? What one thing can you do as a team to help each other?

### Messy team theme

- What doubts do you have as you worship Jesus?
- Would it help our Messy congregation to share these doubts?
- The words 'Therefore go' can be translated: 'As you go now'. What impact could that translation have for us as we live life together as a Messy congregation?
- How can our Messy Church show that 'Christ is with us always' every month and in the weeks within those months?

### How does this session help people grow in Christ?

This session helps us to wonder about the last words of Jesus before he returned to heaven, 'I am with you always', helping us to consider whether we have ever known this to be true, and what life would be like if we knew Christ was with us in everything and in every place. As we look at this together, in the context of Jesus instructing the disciples to go into all the world and make disciples, we will consider how we can share that brilliant promise with those around us, at home, school and work.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- Who do you most enjoy being with?
- Do you think that Jesus is with you always?
- What difference might it make at work or school to know that he really is with you?

### Take-home idea

The Thy Kingdom Come website ([www.thykingdomcome.global/prayerresources](http://www.thykingdomcome.global/prayerresources)) has lots of ideas to help us pray together as families. Here is an idea to get started. Collect a bundle of craft sticks from the welcome desk before you leave Messy Church. When you get home, write the name of

# God 24/7 by Jen Robertson

someone you know from your school, work or neighbourhood on each stick and decorate it. Put the sticks in a tub and, every morning, pull out one of the sticks and pray for that person. Pray that they would know God with them and be aware of his love for them.

## Question to start and end the session

So... do you think God is with you always and everywhere?

## #discipleship: extra

Take a Messy group to your local Thy Kingdom Come celebrations.



1



2



3



4

## Activities

### 1. Big feet

**You will need: big wooden feet (you will find instructions on how to make these here: [www.instructables.com/id/Big-Foot-Race](http://www.instructables.com/id/Big-Foot-Race) – very useful items for any Messy Church to own!); several marker cones**

Create a team of people and stand on the big feet. Working as a team, make your way around the course marked out with the cones. Time how long it takes each team and see which team can do it the fastest. A small person and much larger person could probably function as 'one' person as part of the feet!

**Talk about** why we needed each other in the game. What difference does it make having Jesus with us all the time in our lives? What can we do that we couldn't do without him?

### 2. Great commission circles

**You will need: card of different colours; crayons or felt-tip pens; scissors; glue; circular items to create the different-sized circles; maps of your country and continent to cut out and colour in; pictures of the world (or a globe); binder rings or string; hole punch**

Either during or before the session, make your circles. Draw around the circular items on the coloured card and cut them out. As the circles get bigger, label them with bigger geographic areas. Some areas you could include are (use between four and six): My home, My school, My work, My village, My town, My city, My region, My country, My continent, My world.

Starting with 'My home', draw your home; for your city, draw your city (or town/village), etc. until you reach 'My world' for our planet. Punch holes in the top and use binder rings or string to assemble the project. Colour in the maps of your country and continent, and the globe.

**Talk about** how Jesus asked the disciples to tell everyone about him, starting in their town, then their city, their country and all over the world. Where could we tell people about Jesus? Bring your circles to the celebration!

# Session material: May

## 3. Love padlocks

**You will need: cheap multipacks of brass padlocks; a few battery-operated engraving pens (these can be bought very cheaply online); sharpies (or similar permanent marker pens)**

Choose a padlock and engrave the shape of the cross on one side and your initials on the other side. (Be sure children are supervised.) Then go over the scratched area with a sharpie. If you have a gate or a fence in the grounds of your Messy Church, use this to padlock your engraved locks to, or, if you prefer, people can take their padlocks home to remind them of God's love and his promise to be with us always.

**Talk about** how the padlock is locked on to the fence, just like God is faithful to us. He is with us always, wherever we go.

## 4. Build a mountain

**You will need: lots of newspaper/paper; tinfoil; paint; paintbrushes; washing-up liquid; cocktail sticks (or big cardboard rolls if you're going for the big version of the mountain); coloured paper; pens; sticky tape; card**

This activity can be done together to create one massive mountain, or as individuals/families to create smaller mountains. Scrunch paper into balls and form the balls into a mountain shape of your choice and attach it on to a piece of card with tape. Use cocktail sticks/cardboard rolls for the structure if you are struggling. Cover the mountain shape with tinfoil, pressing it into the shape of the paper. Once you are happy with the shape, paint the foil in the colour of your choice (adding a little washing-up liquid to the paint will help it stick to the foil better). Finally, make a flag with the words 'I am with you always' on it and stick it to the top of your mountain.

**Talk about** what it means to you that Jesus is with you always. How could we share that good news with others at home, school and work?

## 5. Mega paper chain

**You will need: lots of strips of card; stapler; pens**

Everyone takes a strip of card, writes their name on it and decorates it. Link the strips together as a paper chain, using the stapler to fasten the loops. Write names of other people you want to pray for on other bits of card and add them to the chain. How huge will the paper chain get?

**Talk about** how Jesus promised, 'I am with you always.' This goes on and on and on and has no end, and is for everyone. Whose names did we write on the cards? How can we help them to know that Jesus is with them always?

## 6. Minute to win it

**You will need: mugs; plastic jug; teapot; large plastic box; water; timer**

How many mugs can you fill with water in a minute? Fill the plastic jug with water from the box, then use the jug to fill the teapot, put on the lid and pour from the teapot into the mugs. Who will be the winner?

**Talk about** how we needed to fill the teapot to pour out the water. To be able to tell others about Jesus, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit: we need God with us all the time.

## 7. Wear the cross on your wrist

**You will need: leather cord; small cross-shaped beads; differently shaped beads; scissors**

Cut the leather cord to fit your wrist. Add the cross-shaped bead on to the cord, alongside some other beads if you prefer. Wear the cord with pride, reminding yourself that God is with you always and showing others that Jesus is important to you.

**Talk about** why it matters that Jesus said he would be with us always. What difference does that make for you at school or work? Who would you like to show your cross bracelet to and tell them where you made it?

## 8. Sharing God's love with our neighbours

**You will need: biro pens; coffee filter paper; red felt-tip pens; spray bottle filled with water**

Think about the people who live next door to you or above or below you. Draw their houses or apartments with the biro on the filter paper. Around the edge of the filter paper, draw some red patterns with the felt-tip pens. Red is the colour often associated with the Holy Spirit, who we celebrate particularly at this time of year. Spray the water on to the red patterns and, as you watch the red cover the picture of your neighbour's home, pray for them to know God's presence and love. This takes a little while, so enjoy the peace and quiet as you watch the colour spread. Take a picture of it to remember the prayers you prayed for your neighbours. This is an idea from Thy Kingdom Come.

# God 24/7 by Jen Robertson

**Talk about** what you prayed for your neighbours. How can we show them God's love?

## 9. Praying for God's light in the world

**You will need:** small globe vases (use jam jars if too expensive); blue and green tissue paper; decopatch varnish glue (mod podge); paintbrushes and/or sponges; battery tea lights

Paint the decopatch varnish glue on to the vase and add small pieces of blue tissue paper on top. Seal the paper with another layer of the glue. Once the vase is covered in the blue paper, start to add green shapes on top of the still-wet blue paper, to represent the continents of the world. Cover them in another coating of decopatch varnish glue. Add your battery tea light to the vase and see the light shine through the paper, lighting up our world.

If it is going to be too expensive to provide these for each person, consider working together to make just one and present it in the celebration.

**Talk about** how the Holy Spirit lights up our world today. What light has he brought to our lives? Where would we long for his light to shine today?

## 10. I am with you always

**You will need:** some kind of rectangular biscuit (e.g. Rich Tea fingers, Nice biscuits, etc); icing sugar; blue food colouring; chocolate sprinkles; writing icing

Cover your biscuit in blue icing. Sprinkle the chocolate sprinkles at the bottom of the biscuit to form the top of the mountain. Using the writing icing, write 'always' across the sky.

**Talk about** what difference it makes to you that Jesus is with you always, at home, at school or at work.



## Celebration

Invite everyone to carry their globe vases with their battery tea lights alight into the celebration (or, if you only made one, ask someone to carry it). If you built one large mountain, place your globe(s) at the foot of the mountain. If you don't have a large mountain, placing all the lit globes on a table will be just as effective. (If the globes are still very sticky you could place them on a few trays to be carried!)

Once everyone has gathered for the celebration, turn people's attention to the light that is shining through the shape of the world that they have all made. Explain that the light of Jesus shines all over the world now, and we here in our Messy Church are just a small part of it. We are his people and we are called to shine Christ's light in this place and this time. If you have connections with Christians in other parts of the world, ask them in advance to tell you what 'I am with you always' is in their language. Have these messages written out on large pieces of card and give them out to your Messy congregation. Get small groups of people to gather around each statement and ask them to work out what the message is and what country it is from. If you don't have contacts with other Christians in the world, this would be a good time to start! Use the Messy Church directory ([www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-churches](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-churches)) to message one or two Messy congregations in different parts of the world.

Once you have worked out where all these messages are from and what the message is, tell the story of how we first heard this message. Ask the congregation to get up and walk on the spot as if they were climbing a mountain, like the mountain(s) we built earlier. Explain that, every time you say 'Walk', they need to get up and walk on the spot.

After Jesus rose again, he appeared lots of times to his friends over the next 40 days – eating meals together, chatting, fishing, having a beach BBQ. One day, he told them he would meet them on top of a mountain, so they set off on the long walk. They walked and walked and walked, and then they started walking uphill. It was very hot, and very steep, but they were going to see Jesus, which was fantastic! They kept on walking, and walking. Eventually, they got to the top of the mountain and there was Jesus! It was so good to see him – they all said how great he was and they worshipped him. (Sing a worship song at this point all together, explaining that Jesus is so great that one of the ways we tell him how great he is, is by singing.)

# Session material: May God 24/7 by Jen Robertson

After the song, say that when we were singing, we would all be thinking different things. Some of us would be really believing all of it was true; others of us would not be sure and would be doubting if Jesus is really all these things. That is just how the disciples felt on the top of the mountain; they were worshipping, but they were also doubting and confused.

Then Jesus said some important things. He said you have to go and tell everyone about me and invite them to join my family, and you need to know that I am with you always. To help us remember these words, we can use all ten of our fingers. Use your left hand to remember 'Go to all people everywhere,' using one finger for each word, and use your right hand to remember 'I am with you always.' Do this a few times all together, encouraging everyone to join in. This is not just for children to remember – it can help us all whether we are driving, walking, working, learning, playing, studying, eating, chatting, etc.

After the disciples had heard Jesus say these words, suddenly Jesus disappeared! He was gone, but he had promised 'I am with you always' (use fingers again). They all started walking down the mountain again, this time slowly and sadly. They kept walking and walking, and they were worried. What did Jesus mean? How was he going to be with them when he had gone? How could they tell everyone about him if he wasn't there? They walked home.

Later, they were all in Jerusalem for a big festival when God sent them the Holy Spirit. Wow, everything had changed! They knew that Jesus was always with them even if they couldn't see him. They were going to 'Go to all people everywhere' (use the fingers of your left hand) and they knew it was true when Jesus had said, 'I am with you always' (use your right hand). Look again at our globes: the disciples started in Jerusalem (their city, look at some of the circles we made) and told everyone they met about Jesus. Two thousand years on, people know Jesus is with them all over the world (look again at our globe lights). We are part of that too. Because Jesus is with us always, we can share his love and light with everyone else around us. Say all together again: 'Go to all people everywhere' and 'I am with you always.'

## Prayer

Invite someone from your Messy congregation to be the leader for the prayer (or a couple of people to share the words of the leader). Encourage the congregation to use the fingers of their right hand for each of the words 'I am with you always.'

**Leader:** Sometimes we feel confused.

**All:** Jesus said, I am with you always.

**Leader:** Sometimes we feel alone.

**All:** Jesus said, I am with you always.

**Leader:** Sometimes we feel sad.

**All:** Jesus said, I am with you always.

**Leader:** Sometimes we feel hopeless.

**All:** Jesus said, I am with you always.

**Leader:** To all of us, always.

**All:** Jesus said, I am with you always.

## Song suggestions

'You will never run away' – Rend Collective

'Someone is with me' – Fischy Music

'God, you're good to me' – Vineyard UK

'Shine from the inside out' – Nick Jackson

'Hosanna (Praise is rising)' – Paul Baloche

## Meal suggestion

Meatballs with gravy and mountains of mashed potatoes (veggie balls as a non-meat alternative). Meringue nests filled with cream and topped with strawberries.

8



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# Session material: June

## The money puzzle by Greg Ross



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18](https://messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18) to download all templates at A4 size

### #discipleship: individual

#### Messy reflection by Jean Pienaar

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. ‘Good teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No one is good – except God alone. You know the commandments: “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.”’

‘Teacher,’ he declared, ‘all these I have kept since I was a boy.’

Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’

At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!’

The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’

The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, ‘Who then can be saved?’

Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.’

Mark 10:17–27 (NIV)

In Mark’s Gospel account, there is a young man, evidently with a lot of wealth, and he is desperate for eternal life. Today, when people are getting older with improved medicines and healthcare, eternal life might sound like a bit of a trial for

those around us, especially as the body and mind inevitably give way. But thankfully, eternal life is not bound by time. Eternal life begins when we have a relationship with Christ, and it refers to a quality of life, rather than a quantity of life. It is not something we can inherit from our earthly parents!

The young man is eager to please and is honest in his search. The Bible says that Jesus loves the man. By asking him to do the hard stuff – to sell all he had and give it to the poor – Jesus is asking him to change the focus in his life. He wants him to make space for a relationship with Christ and to receive the intangible treasures of peace, love and compassion.

Even if we don’t have riches that keep us from following Christ, perhaps there are other things or addictions in our life that do – electronics, accessibility and instant gratification crowd our lives, demanding our immediate attention and taking us away from time with God. How much time do we spend on Facebook instead of with our faces in the Book? Which device do we check first in the morning – has it become de-vice (the vice)?

The challenges are real – it is easy to get drawn into and engulfed in the ways of the world. Thankfully Jesus reassures us that indeed it is impossible in our own human strength, but with God, all things are possible. We can enjoy the treasures of eternal life if that is what we truly desire.

### #discipleship: team

#### Messy health check

Who is your team most thankful for? Let them know.

#### Messy team theme

- How can you demonstrate to your Messy Church that having Jesus as your friend is the most important thing in your life?
- How can you best invite and encourage all those who come to Messy Church to work at keeping Jesus as the most important person in their lives?

#### How does this session help people grow in Christ?

This session has the aim of helping people explore what has true value in their lives. People will be invited to wonder about

# Session material: June

what is most important: is it obeying all the rules, is it family and friends, or is it our friendship with Jesus that is most important? Invite people to really wonder about what they might be prepared to give up – in order to have what is most important.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- Who is the richest person you have heard about or seen?
- Why do you think that Jesus told the rich young man to give away all his riches to the poor?
- Do you know of people who are ‘poor’ and who could do with your help?

### Take-home idea

Could you go through your possessions and see if there are some possessions that you do not really need that you can donate to your local charity shop?

Perhaps as a family or with some neighbours, you might choose to have a ‘garage sale’ or ‘yard sale’ and donate funds from goods sold to help those in need in your community or in some of the situations of hunger and natural disaster around the world.

You could also set up your own Facebook Messy challenge for families – for seven days, get them to give away things they do not need. For an extra challenge, you could ask them to give away one thing on the first day, two things on the second day, and so on.

Loving God, thank you for the stories and teachings of Jesus that help us to focus on the really important things in our lives. Help us to share as freely with others as you share your love with us. Amen.

### Question to start and end the session

So... what is most important to you?

## #discipleship: extra

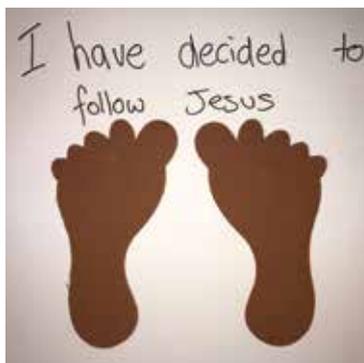
Put on an easy fundraising event for the whole family to join in with to raise money for a good cause (maybe even for BRF’s Messy Church ministry).



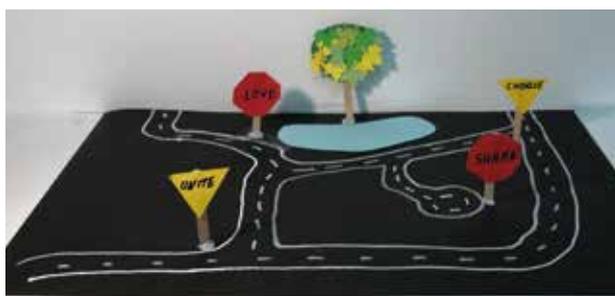
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# The money puzzle by Greg Ross

## Activities

### 1. Money-for-sharing boxes

**You will need:** 1-litre waxed cardboard milk or juice carton (one per two people); strong adhesive tape; scissors; paint, stickers or other decorative materials

Wash each carton thoroughly and cut in two (make sure to supervise small children). This way you can make two money-for-sharing boxes from each carton. Using the tape, create a new base from the top half and a new top for the base of the carton. Cut a slot for coins in the top of the money-for-sharing boxes. Then decorate with whatever materials you choose.

**Talk about** who you would share the money people collect with. I wonder with whom Jesus would share his money. Talk about how long it might take to fill the box. Would you choose to have an ice-cream, treat or coffee, or would you put money in the box for sharing?

### 2. Keeping and sharing



**You will need:** blank Snakes and Ladders sheet (download online); pens; buttons; dice

Come up with a list of actions or thoughts that would please Jesus and write these on to the ladder squares. Make a list of selfish thoughts or actions and place them in the snake squares of the game. Use buttons as markers and some dice to complete the game.

**Talk about** how Jesus wanted the rich young man to change the focus of his life and to turn away from doing selfish things. Invite people to play the game and talk about the story at home.

### 3. I have decided to follow Jesus

**You will need:** plastic sheet; paint; roller; trays; bowls of water; towels; A4 paper; pens

Spread the paint-proof plastic sheet on the floor. Invite people to remove their shoes, and then paint one or two feet with the roller and place them on to a sheet of A4 paper. After washing and drying their feet, write the words 'I have decided to follow Jesus' around the footprints. This can be a poster for a fridge, noticeboard, bedroom door or other.

**Talk about** how archaeologists often study footprints of people and animals to learn what they were like or the kind of life they led in the past. Then talk about the signs or footprints that we leave. Do they show that we are following the way of Jesus?

### 4. The road to the 'kingdom of God'

**You will need:** a heavy base (plastic tray, heavy card, plywood, etc.); coloured paper and card; scissors; glue; toothpicks; pens

Cover the base in coloured paper and then draw landmarks on. You may like to create a wiggly roadway from the start to the finish. Along the road, you could put in some signposts (card on toothpicks) with some of the lessons that Jesus taught people to follow as they followed his way.

There might be crossroads where choices have to be made; roundabouts with various options; roads that merge where we have to make way for others; places for resting along the way and renewing our strength and faith. There might be a turn-off for camels to go through the big city gates or small gates known as 'the eye of the needle'.

**Talk about** how we know where to go to find the 'kingdom of God'. What signposts would be on the road? Think about how much of Jesus' message was radically different for people of Jesus' day, and in our communities today.

### 5. Rich young ruler cartoon

**You will need:** window-faced DL envelopes; scissors; A4 paper; sticky tape; pens and pencils; felt-tip pens or crayons; ruler

Take your envelope and cut the ends off at the left- and right-hand side. Cut two strips of paper (wide enough to slide through the envelope) from an A4 sheet and stick them together. Using a ruler, mark two lines across the strips of paper to show the position of the 'window' in the envelope.

Invite people to make a series of cartoon pictures on the strips of paper to tell the story, making sure they only draw them in between the two lines. The window of the envelope becomes the TV or movie screen on which the story pictures can be seen as they are slid through the envelope and the story is told and retold.

**Talk about** what you like and dislike about the story. Which character do you like? What could you take out of the story but still have the same message?

# Session material: June

## 6. My treasure bag

**You will need: mini fabric bags (see-through if possible); faux jewellery; plastic coins; paint and paintbrushes (optional); fabric pens (optional)**

Encourage everyone to choose a bag and fill it with as much or as little jewellery/coins as they like. If the bags are quite plain, they can be decorated with paint or fabric pens.

**Talk about** what your treasures might be. What kind of ‘treasures’ might Jesus want us to place high value on?

## 7. Clay or Fimo story pieces

**You will need: air-dry clay, Fimo modelling clay or playdough**

Take your clay or playdough and invite people to make the characters from the story: Jesus, rich young ruler, camel, disciples, gate (‘the eye of the needle’). People can take these home after the session.

**Talk about** which parts of the story are the funniest. Which is your favourite character?

## 8. Riddle slideshow

**You will need: riddle books (from your local library); cardboard boxes cut up into flat surfaces; felt-tip pens; camera (optional)**

Encourage people to look through the books of riddles and choose their favourite one. Get them to write out the riddle on one side of their piece of cardboard, and the answer on the reverse side. If you like, and if you have the appropriate permissions, take pictures of everyone with their favourite riddle. You could compile these into a slideshow if wanted.

**Talk about** the way that Jesus used parables and riddles to make people think about alternative answers to questions. What other parables/riddles from the Bible do you know?

## 9. A fruity camel

**You will need: strawberries; bananas; blueberries or grapes; mandarin segments; toothpicks or skewers; knives**

Thread the blueberries or grapes on to the toothpicks or skewers to make the legs. Use strawberries to make the body and humps and the banana to make the neck. Use a segment of mandarin for the head and two blueberries for the eyes.

**Talk about** how camels were used in Jesus’ time to carry loads of goods for sale or even tents and other belongings. Imagine how much ‘stuff’ you could load on a camel! Imagine that camel and all its stuff trying to squeeze through a tiny hole in a needle! (These fruity camels could be used for dessert.)

## 10. Origami camel

**You will need: instructions for making an origami camel (download from the internet); good-quality or decorative square paper**

Use the instructions to learn how to make an origami camel.

**Talk about** why Jesus would use the example of a camel going through a small space to teach about how hard it can be to follow the way of Jesus. Sometimes it can be fun and sometimes we have to follow the example of others – a bit like doing origami. Is it easy to give up our possessions or money to follow the way of Jesus?

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# The money puzzle by Greg Ross

## Celebration

Go to your local lolly or sweet shop or dollar or pound shop and buy bags of gold foil covered chocolate money. Hide these all around the worship space or sanctuary.

*The Dramatised Bible* by Michael Perry (Marshall Pickering, 1989) is a great resource as a script to involve people in being part of the story. You will need several copies of the script from either Bible passage (Matthew or Mark) and choose people to play the parts. You could choose to have them dress up in costume or to translate it into a modern-day scene.

After the drama, thank the participants and use the Godly Play style wondering questions below.

If you are not into drama and you or one of your team are trained in the Godly Play storytelling method, you may like to create your own 'Godly Play' style of story – with small characters on a cloth background.

Invite responses to questions like these:

- I wonder what you like about that story.
- I wonder where you were in the story.
- I wonder if there is anything we could leave out and still have enough story.

After the story invite everyone to search for all the 'treasure' hidden around the worship space or sanctuary. Remind them before they start to search that the treasure is not for them alone – they are to bring it all and place it in the bowl on the altar or communion table or focus table. It is a treasure to share or give away.

(You may choose to place the gold treasure coins on the top of the ice cream cones at dinner to make another link from the story to the meal.)

## Prayer

Invite people to think about the words of the Lord's Prayer: 'Give us today our daily bread' or 'Give us today what we need.' Thinking about the story of the rich young man and Jesus, what kind of prayer might the rich young man have prayed?

Think also about the words: 'May your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.' What are the differences between the kingdom of Jesus and the kingdom of the rich young man?

Each time we say the Lord's Prayer, we can remember the lesson of Jesus and the rich young man. Say or sing the Lord's Prayer together.

## Song suggestions

'Life is better with a little mess' – Heather Price

'I have decided to follow Jesus' – S. Sundar Singh

'Wherever I go' – Robin and Dorothy Mann

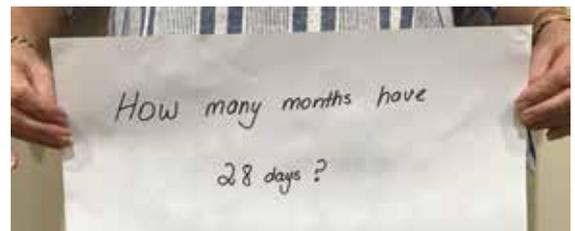
'A rich young man (Simple living)' – Stuart Townsend, Keith and Kristyn Getty

'Hearts on fire' – Michael Mangan

## Meal suggestion

Chinese 'money bags' and fried or steamed rice. Ice cream in a cone with a chocolate coin placed on the top. Or use the fruity camels from activity 9.

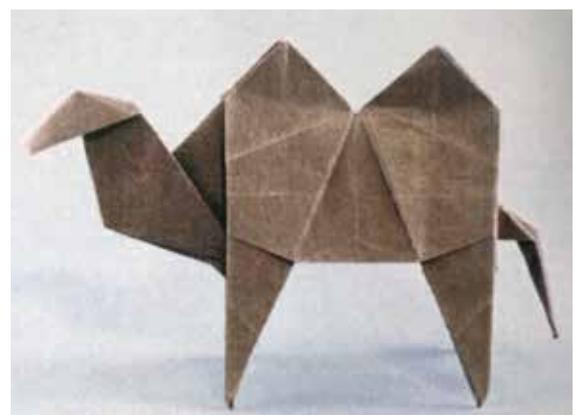
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# Session material: July



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18) to download all templates at A4 size

## #discipleship: individual

### Messy reflection by Jen Robertson

**I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.**

Psalm 139:14 (NIV)

Our hearts and minds are lifted by the sight of created beauty: a perfectly captured photograph of one moment in time; a painting that takes us out of our present context; a hand-crafted piece of furniture that has weathered the passing of time and many messy fingers; our recognition of God's activity in the mountains, seas, lochs, rivers that fill our world; and in the tiny plants unfurling as spring begins. We love and speak eloquently of beauty, but rarely of our own God-created beauty. Instead, we often focus on what we perceive to be our inadequacies.

This psalm may have been written by David. If it was, he knew what it was to be the youngest child, not thought important enough even to be invited to the party, or strong enough to join with the battle. However, he had learnt that God had made him and that was a wonderful thing, a thing of beauty to celebrate.

I sat at a meal recently with a group of teenagers and we were discussing the question, 'What three words would you use to describe yourself?' My immediate response was negative words about myself, while around me I was hearing these young people say words like 'beautiful', 'funny', 'interesting', 'brilliant'! I wondered what had made me have such low self-esteem. Perhaps I need a corrective perspective to see myself as fearfully and wonderfully made? Maybe as a child I didn't hear words of encouragement enough? If we believe ourselves to be beautiful, it will spill out to others as we celebrate our God-creativity together. Isn't Messy Church a great place to do that?

## #discipleship: team

### Messy health check

What is beautiful about your Messy Church? Include thanks for this in your prayer time.

### Messy team theme

- What do you want to praise God for today?
- Where do we celebrate God's handiwork in each of us?
- How can we affirm others who come to this Messy Church, that they may better see their true value?

### How does this session help people grow in Christ?

This session is built on just one verse of the Bible. But it is a verse that is full of power to speak into the lives of all who participate in this Messy Church session. In this psalm, we share in the awe and wonder we experience when we appreciate all that creator God has made in us. Through this session, we celebrate our uniqueness and individual value, which is found in the truth that God loves each one of us, exactly as we are. That said, we do not end in a place of simply puffing ourselves up in the mirror, but rather we reflect the attention back to our creator God and give him the praise for his good works in us.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- What makes you uniquely you?
- What is it in God's creation that makes you say 'Wow'?
- What reasons do you have to praise God?

### Take-home idea

When you're out and about in the week ahead, what do you notice that makes you say 'Wow'? Why not take a picture of it and share it on your Messy Church Facebook page? Say a prayer to thank God for the wonderful world that he has made.

Creator God, thank you for the beauty of your world. Thank you that you made each of us wonderfully unique and when you look at us, you say 'Wow!' Amen.

### Question to start and end the session

So... do you know how wonderful you are?

## #discipleship: extra

Have a DIY pamper evening for your Messy Church families, with each family bringing along something to pamper others with.

# Wonderfully made by Becky May

1



## Activities

### 1. Praise ribbons

**You will need: wooden rings (curtain rings or wooden craft rings); assorted ribbons; scissors**

Cut some ribbons to length, perhaps providing a measure on the edge of the table. Tie these ribbons on to the wooden ring in a pattern of your own design. Wave your ribbon around as you dance to praise Jesus. You could use your praise ribbon in the sung praise and worship during the celebration time.

**Talk about** the different ways we can express ourselves in praise, such as dancing and singing. How do we show God how great we think he is?

### 2. Pipe-cleaner glasses

**You will need: pipe cleaners (four per person)**

Use two of the pipe cleaners to form two circles and link them together to form the lenses. Take the remaining two pipe cleaners and attach these to either side of the lenses to form the arms, bending at the appropriate point so that they hook over the wearer's ears.

**Talk about** how we can see more of who our creator God is when we look at the things that he has made.

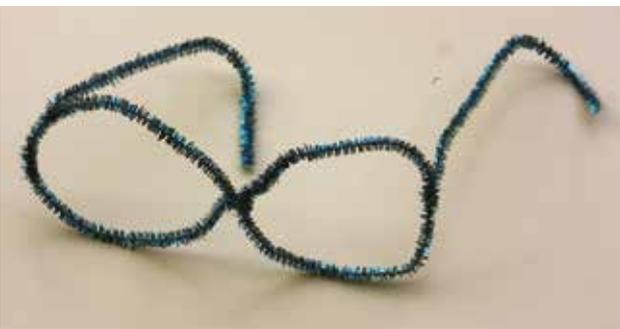
### 3. Mirror, mirror

**You will need: mirrors (various kits are available from Baker Ross, or use small framed mirrors); assortment of stickers, gems, pens, etc. to decorate**

Use the stickers, gems and pens to decorate the mirror frame with the intention of making the user feel good about themselves whenever they look into the mirror. You may want to write a feel-good message or the verse from this session, or you could decorate your mirror with images that portray this message to the user of the mirror.

**Talk about** how wonderfully God has made us, and what we notice about the way that he has made us when we really spend time looking carefully into the mirror.

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# Session material: July

## 4. Wonder-full jar

**You will need: old, clean glass jars; glass paints or pens; small strips of paper; pens; sticky gems (optional)**

Use the glass paints or pens to decorate the jar, perhaps labelling it 'Jar of wonders' or simply 'Wow'. You could attach sticky gems to add extra sparkle. Take a piece of paper and write a 'wow' prayer to God, celebrating something that he has made or done in your life that you think is wonderful, and curl it up before posting it into the jar.

When you take your jar home, continue to add your prayers of wonder to it. You could use it as a reminder of the things that God has done for you, and look back at some of your prayers to help you to pray to God at home, perhaps together with your family. You could even bring your filled jars back to Messy Church to celebrate together in your shared 'wow' prayers!

**Talk about** the things that God has done that make you say 'Wow!' How can we celebrate this with God?

## 5. Guess the artist

**You will need: a number of copies of works of art by well-known artists with a distinctive style, which can be purchased as prints or found as images online (ensure you comply with copyright); names of artists printed on separate cards; blu-tack**

Display the pictures of the artworks, unlabelled, on a wall and try to match the artwork to the artist's name. Attach your guesses with blu-tack, before revealing the answers.

**Talk about** the way we can recognise the artist's work by their distinctive style and how you can see their hand at work in the pictures they have created. How can we recognise God by his handiwork?

## 6. What's inside?

**You will need: a large sheet of lining paper with the outline of a person drawn on it; a set of picture cards for various organs or bones from inside the body; a diagram showing the correct position of organs/bones in the body**

Lay the outline on the floor and spread the organ cards around the edge of the paper. Try to place the different organs and bones in the correct places within the body outline, before checking to see how close they are.

**Talk about** how amazing our bodies are, and how wonderfully God has created us. Share any interesting facts that you know about the human body.

## 7. Disassembly line

**You will need: a selection of old and broken watches or clocks which you no longer need; a selection of screwdrivers; magnifying glasses and other small tools**

Take apart a clock, old watch or other mechanical device with the screwdrivers. Use the magnifying glasses to look closely at how it has been made and how the parts all work together inside to make the device work.

If you cannot get hold of enough old watches/clocks to make this viable, gather together any electronic devices that are no longer needed, and simply look at different mechanisms with a magnifying glass.

**Talk about** how somebody carefully constructed the device and how God has carefully put us together to his own design.

## 8. Clay sculptures

**You will need: clay; sculpting tools; mirrors**

Look closely in the mirror and use the tools and a small block of clay to sculpt a clay self-portrait, paying close attention to detail as you do so, but working swiftly enough so as not to overwork the clay. If you prefer, you could use the clay to create a sculpture of a hand or foot, perhaps.

**Talk about** the care and effort that you put into creating your sculpture to make it a good likeness, and talk about how thoughtfully God put you together.

## 9. Make your own human lung

**You will need: empty small plastic drinks bottles; plastic straws; elastic bands; balloons; scissors; playdough**

Use the scissors (supervise if needed) to cut the bottom end from the plastic bottle. Tie one uninflated balloon and cut away the round end before stretching the balloon over the cut-away end of the bottle. (This balloon represents the diaphragm.) Attach a straw to a second balloon with an elastic band, being careful not to tie it on too tightly and prevent the air getting through the straw. Put this balloon and most of the straw into the neck of the bottle, gently securing it at the neck of the bottle with the playdough. Your model is now made.

# Wonderfully made by Becky May

To test it out, pull down the knot in the balloon to demonstrate the way that the lung draws in more air to fill the space, working together with the diaphragm. Let go of the knot to show how air is expelled from the lung when the space is constricted.

**Talk about** the way our body works, even when we cannot see what it is doing. God created all the parts of the body to work together. He is the ultimate scientist!

## 10. Edible creatures

**You will need:** ready-to-roll icing; a selection of sweets and/or raisins; paper plates

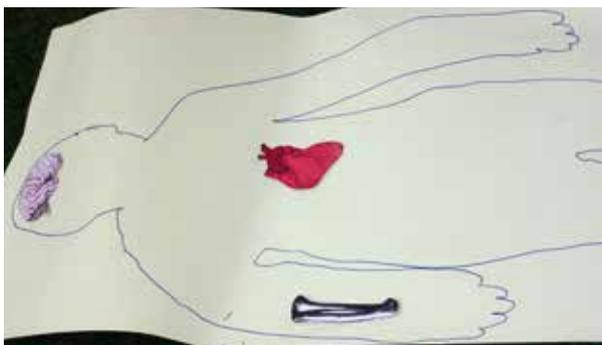
Mould a small block of ready-to-roll icing to create a basic shape for your creature. Attach sweets or raisins to form the different features, deciding how many hands, feet, eyes, mouths, etc. your creature will have. Allow your creativity to run wild as you invent your unique edible creature.

**Talk about** the way that God has made each of us to be different and unique. There is, never has been, and never will be anyone exactly like you in the whole world!

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# Session material: July Wonderfully made by Becky May

## Celebration

**You will need: the text from Psalm 139:14, written on a piece of paper; seven volunteers to come and stand at the front to represent David and his brothers**

Have you heard of a man in the Bible called David? You might know that he became King David. Or you might have heard the story of how, when he was just a young boy, he knew that God was with him and would enable him to defeat the giant, Goliath!

Now David was the youngest son of a man called Jesse. He didn't just have one big brother, or two or three, but six or seven big brothers! Big brothers all older, stronger, maybe better-looking or brainier. Perhaps they were more popular or maybe even cooler.

I wonder what David might have thought when he compared himself to them. With all those strong, cool and clever big brothers around, David might worry about where he fitted in. He may have felt small or even unimportant.

One day, David sat down to write a new song to God. In his song, David wrote:

'I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.'

*(Ask your smallest volunteer to read, with assistance as needed, the text from Psalm 139:14.)*

We might compare David to his big brothers, but David didn't. He knew that he wasn't just the little brother, hidden away in the background, but he had been wonderfully made by the creator God. David knew that made him special just for being him.

The great news for us is that David was wonderfully made by the same creator God who looked at the world and decided it needed someone just like you, and you, and you, and you, and me.

*(Use your finger to point directly to a selection of people in your congregation as you say this, ensuring that you deliberately choose a selection of males and females, young and old, those with a disability, etc., celebrating the rich diversity of God's creation.)*

And just like David, we can sing his song to the creator God who shows us just how wonderful he is, when we look at his beautiful handiwork. Just take a look around you!

## Prayer

Creator God, when we look around the room and see your beautiful, wonderful and diverse creation, we just want to say 'Wow!' We are fearfully and wonderfully made and we praise you for your wonderful handiwork. Amen.

You could also use the reworking of Psalm 139, together with actions ([www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/psalm-139-an-easy-to-learn-psalm](http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/psalm-139-an-easy-to-learn-psalm)), as a prayer.

## Song suggestions

'Everybody's body' – Fischy Music

'God knows me' – Nick Harding

'I am fearfully and wonderfully made' – Jim Bailey

## Meal suggestion

Pizza slices with assorted toppings, representing our diversity, served with salad, followed by a selection of home-made cakes.

# Session material: August

## Creating and caring by Jean Pienaar



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay18) to download all templates at A4 size

### #discipleship: individual

#### Messy reflection by Greg Ross

Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’

Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.’ And it was so.

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.

Genesis 1:26–31 (NIV)

Can you recall when you were first taught as a child that you were responsible for something? It may have been to look after a pet, or to do a particular chore or job around the school or home, or to look after a sibling. For some of us, this learning of being responsible for someone or something was taken to with great pride and a sense of importance. For others, the responsibility was a load that was not welcome.

The two creation stories in the book of Genesis try to create within the people of God a sense of responsibility. The millennia-long work of creation has been brought to life by the wild Spirit of God, dancing over the face of the deep, and by the

voice of God (perhaps this voice was like the voice that spoke to Elijah in 1 Kings 19), calling creation into being and then speaking words of blessing over it and forever proclaiming that it is good. And then this ‘good creation’ was entrusted to humanity to keep it in the way that it had been created.

Our 24-hour, 7-day-a-week world often seems to be more about exploiting creation for personal or monetary gain than actually keeping it as the ‘good creation’ that God proclaimed. Perhaps we need to create spaces and times where people can once more embrace this ancient wisdom and rhythm of life. I wonder what life would be like if we actually rested in creation and each person on this tiny blue planet worked together, sharing responsibility for the whole creation. I have a hunch that we would find ourselves in a much closer relationship with our creator God and with each other, and that together we would be working harder at healing the creation we have damaged.

### #discipleship: team

#### Messy health check

Are there any open-air opportunities to make your Messy Church better known this season?

#### Messy team theme

- What is the biggest environmental issue that we face in our community? Our country?
- Reflect on the contribution you can make to caring for God’s creation.
- How can we help others better care for the environment?

#### How does this session help people grow in Christ?

At the time of writing, there has been a call to the UN General Secretary to declare 2018 the Year of the Clean and Healthy Planet – creating awareness about the amount of pollution that is generated and waste that is dumped. Most of the global waste is generated by economically advanced countries. Pollution affects our air, our water and our land – and all that depend on it. However, it is the poorest countries which are expected to face the full brunt of climate change, even though they have contributed relatively little to causing the problem. God created the world, including us – and entrusted it to our

# Session material: August

care. The Messy Church session this month explores some of the environmental issues that we face and our role in God's creation. We also discover how we can be responsible citizens within our little sphere of influence.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- What is your favourite part of God's creation?
- What can you do to care for God's creation?
- What can we do at Messy Church to show others that we care about God's creation?

### Take-home idea

Think about ways in which you can reduce, reuse and recycle things you don't need any more. Do you know of a charity shop or jumble sale where you can donate clothes that don't fit you anymore? Does your school or Messy Church collect yoghurt containers, plastic or polystyrene trays, plastic bottles or cardboard kitchen rolls? Ask your Messy Church team what recycled things they can use at Messy Church over the next few months, and take them along with you to the next Messy Church.

Heavenly Father, thank you that we can know that you are always with us and that you care about us. Help us to care for our world and the people around us. Amen.

### Question to start and end the session

So... how can we create a caring creation?

## #discipleship: extra

Go for a Messy walk or picnic together and do one activity that brings you closer to God in the open air.



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# Creating and caring by Jean Pienaar

## Activities

### 1. Global warming

**You will need: two frozen blocks of water; a large stone; a tray; hard vegetables; knife for carving the vegetables (be safe – use blunt tools if there are younger children)**

Place the frozen blocks on the tray and allow them to melt slowly at room temperature. The older children and adults can carve animals out of the vegetables (e.g. polar bears for the ice and land-based animals for the large rock) that can be placed on the mini-scene. Play with the scene. Watch what happens as the ice melts and the population increases.

**Talk about** what happens to the amount of ice available for the polar bears over time. What happens to the water level?

### 2. Recycled animals

**You will need: clean plastic and cardboard containers and boxes; polystyrene trays; copious lengths of masking tape; scissors**

Use your imaginations to construct creatures using recycled materials and tape.

**Talk about** the variety of living creatures that you find in the world. Which is your favourite and why? Take a few moments to wonder at the amazing imagination of God to create such a variety of creatures across the world.

### 3. Water purifiers

**You will need: empty 2-litre plastic drink bottles; coffee filters; sand; gravel; small stones or rocks; scissors; soil**

Cut off the top part of the 2-litre bottle (about one third), remove the lid and invert it, so that it balances inside the remainder of the 2-litre bottle. Place a coffee filter in the inverted section. Add a handful or two of sand, followed by about the same amount of gravel and the same amount of small rocks (the biggest rocks should be on top). Slowly pour some dirty water (made by putting soil into tap water – don't drink this!) into the top of the water filter, and watch what drains out of the bottom of the filter, into the rest of the bottle.

**Talk about** how some people still rely on having to collect water from the river or well every day, and the water they need in their homes they have to carry in buckets. Jesus offers the woman at the well living water (John 4:10), and promises that the woman will not be thirsty again. What was Jesus referring to? Why was this such a revolutionary idea?

### 4. Plastic bag weaving



**You will need: a big sheet of cardboard; unused big bin bags; used plastic shopping bags or bread bags; scissors**

(See video online for visual instructions.) Cut an even number of notches along each of the two opposite sides of the cardboard. Cut the bin bags into long strips about 10 cm wide and tie these together to form a long length of plastic. Wrap around the cardboard sheet to form a loom. Slit the plastic bags up the sides. Start by tying the first plastic bag to the corner of the loom. Weave the plastic bag in and out of the loom. Just before you reach the end of the first plastic bag, tie it to another plastic bag that has also been slit up the sides (in effect, you are using a continuous length of plastic). Push it close together so that it is tight and firm. Continue adding plastic bags until the loom is full. Then tie the end at the corner diagonally opposite to where you started. Turn the loom over and cut down the middle of the loom (bin bags only, not the cardboard). Knot together pairs of the bin bag ends to form the 'tassels' of the mat. Trim unwanted loose ends. This can now be used as a table mat, or 'cushion' for sitting and working in the garden, or for sitting at school and watching sport.

**Talk about** how much plastic is brought into our homes on a daily/weekly basis. What happens with all the plastic? Where does it end up?

### 5. Blowing trees

**You will need: thin watercolour or poster paint; sheets of paper; straws; cotton buds; slightly thicker dark or brown paints**

Drop a few splotches of thick dark or brown paint at the bottom of the page. Use the straws to blow the paint to create the trunk of a tree. Once this has dried a little, use the cotton buds with the thinner paint to create leaves of different colours on the tree.

**Talk about** trees in the Bible, and their link with both life (symbol of growth) and death (crucifixion on wood from a tree).

# Session material: August

## 6. Fruit salad

**You will need: fruit; plastic knives; chopping boards**

Chop up the fruit to make a locally relevant dessert.

**Talk about** what fruit and vegetables are grown locally. Why is it better to use these? Which is your favourite?

## 7. Seed picture



**You will need: different types of seeds; glue; outline of flowers (available online), printed on to cardboard**

Use the different seeds to create different colours and textures, and glue these on to the cardboard outlines.

**Talk about** the seeds you have used. Can you work out what sort of seeds they are? Discuss what it means that only if an ear of wheat dies will it produce many seeds (John 12:24).

## 8. Graffiti wall

**You will need: a big piece of cardboard with 'bricks' lightly outlined; felt-tip pens**

Write 'green' messages to the community indicating how we can all contribute to looking after God's creation. Display it in a prominent place (e.g. a church, hall or neighbourhood shop).

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**Talk about** how we can encourage others to understand the importance of doing their bit to care for God's creation.

## 9. Global prayers

**You will need: a few current newspaper or internet articles on recent natural disasters (e.g. drought, flood, hurricanes, earthquake, fire, tsunami, etc.); Post-it notes; world globe or large map of the world**

Stick Post-it notes on the globe and pray for areas that have been affected by natural disasters.

**Talk about** how we might see God at work in the various disasters. How might we see love at work?

## 10. Scavenging textures

**You will need: lists of textures to be collected (for example: smooth, rough, hard, soft, fuzzy, prickly, rubbery, gritty, spiky, squishy, bumpy, slimy)**

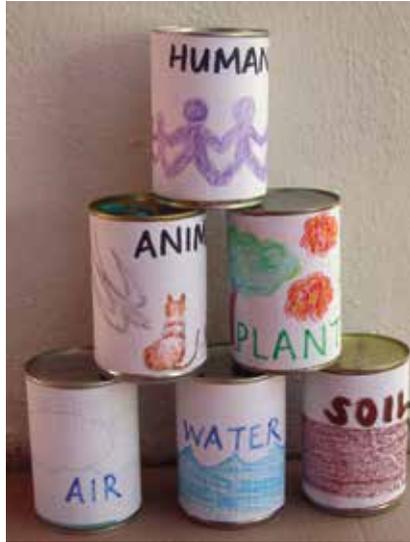
Go outside if possible, and see what different textures you can collect.

**Talk about** the different textures that you notice. Which textures make you feel safe? Which textures make you feel uncomfortable?

# Creating and caring by Jean Pienaar

## Celebration

**You will need: six tins or boxes (all of similar size), each labelled with one of the following: air, water, soil, plants, animals, humans**



Get the congregation to fill in 'good' when the narrator uses the prompt 'And God saw that it was...'

A story about the beginning of the world helps us understand how we fit together with the environment around us, and what our responsibility is. In the beginning of time, when God's Spirit hovered over the world, God gave us the gift of light, so now there is light and dark. *And God saw that it was... good.*

Then God gave us the gift of water – all water everywhere – and divided the waters above from the waters below. The waters above form our atmosphere, the air that we breathe. *(Position tin with 'air' label.)* And people can only survive without air for a maximum of four minutes. The waters below are the streams, rivers, dams, lakes and wide oceans. And people can only survive without water for a maximum of four days. *(Position tin with 'water' label adjacent to 'air' tin.)* *And God saw that it was... good.*

Then God gave us the gift of dry land. *(Position tin with 'soil' label on the other side of the 'water' tin.)* *And with the dry land, we also receive the gift of green and growing things. With air, water and soil, plants are now able to grow. (Position tin with 'plant' label balanced on top of two of the base tins.)* *And God saw that it was... good.* Plants provide a source of food, and we can only survive without food for 40 days.

Then God gave us the gift of the day and the night, which help us tell the time. *And God saw that it was... good.*

Then God gave us the gift of creatures that fly, and those that swim. *(Position the tin with the 'animals' label, on the second level, adjacent to the 'plants' tin.)* *And God saw that it was... good.*

Then God gave us the gift of creatures that walk on the earth: many-legged insects, four-legged animals and two-legged humans. *(Place the 'humans' tin on the top of the pyramid.)*

And God blessed the humans and told them to multiply and to be responsible for the animals and to eat the seed-bearing plants. And everything that grows out of the ground is a source of food for the animals and birds. *And God saw that it was... No, it wasn't good. God saw that it was **very** good.*

And so we have created a simple **food pyramid**. Air, water and soil provide the basis for all life (bottom row), and plants and animals can exist because they have water to drink, air to breathe and an environment where they can thrive. And humans are at the top, with their God-given responsibility. And for us humans to properly look after the plants and the animals (and ourselves), we need to make sure that we also look after our air, our water and our soil. And we can all do our own little bit, because every little bit helps. And we imagine what would happen if there wasn't enough clean water for everyone... *(Remove the 'water' tin and the pyramid should come tumbling down.)*

So we each need to do what we can to be responsible stewards of our earth: reduce, reuse and recycle so that we can best look after the planet's life-support systems and all of God's creation.

### Prayer

**REDUCE:** Using tight fists to make our uncaring attitude as small as possible, say a quiet 'sorry' prayer.

**REUSE:** Open your hands (palms down) and look at your hands. Think of ten different things you can be thankful for (one for each finger).

**RECYCLE:** Turn your hands over so that your palms face upwards. Listen to God speak to you – how can we repurpose our lives as we live in this world?

### Song suggestions

'How we need you' – Fischy Music

'All things bright and beautiful' – Cecil F. Alexander

'I, the Lord of sea and sky' – Daniel Schutte

### Meal suggestion

Macaroni cheese and green salad. Local fruit salad and custard (see activity 6).

# Dear Jane



## Advice for Messy Church leaders from Jane Leadbetter

✉ Email [jane.leadbetter@brf.org.uk](mailto:jane.leadbetter@brf.org.uk) with your Messy questions and for advice.

Joan in Southport writes:

*After a recent Messy Meet-up gathering with other local Messy Churches, my friend and I realised that we may not be all-age enough at our own Messy Church. Do you have a checklist for such a thing?*

**Dear Joan**

**You are not alone! We all need to regularly review how all-age our Messy Churches are. Messy Church is for all ages together and not a children's club. From the moment someone enters the door of a Messy Church until they leave, do we communicate that everyone is welcome? Do we use language to include all ages or are we hinting that really we would prefer it if children from ages 5-11 come and could they bring an adult? Check your church websites and Facebook pages to see how you are inviting people. When you are asked how many people attended your last Messy Church, do you reply 'We had 30 children with their families' instead of '100 all ages'? How could we advertise that it is church for all ages? Choose photographs or graphics that include adults and include activities rather than crafts.**

**Make a plan of the venue/room you regularly use for your Messy Church. Can you incorporate space for open-ended activities as well as the craft tables? Do you put out a sand pit or construction bricks for those with tactile and special needs? All ages need these activities. Do you offer science activities based on your Bible theme? Do the teenagers come because they are welcomers or on PowerPoint duty or running a challenge activity? Are you inviting all ages to share their skills such as knitting, flower arranging, banner making, woodwork? Do you have a rota of invitations for local Scout groups or Guide units to come and be involved, at least annually, and help them to gain badges and certificates in their organisations? Is the meal suitable for adults to enjoy or is it pizza or fish fingers every month?**

**This isn't a checklist, sorry, but a starter of suggestions. We have lots of hints and tips in our Maximising the Mess advice sheets on our website:  
[www.messychurch.org.uk/resources/maximising-mess](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/resources/maximising-mess)**

**Other helpful resources:**

- **Messy Togetherness**  
[www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857464613](http://www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857464613)
- **Messy Church Does Science**  
[www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857465795](http://www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857465795)
- **Extreme Crafts for Messy Churches**  
[www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857461629](http://www.brfoonline.org.uk/9780857461629)

Paul in Surrey writes:

*We want to start a Messy Church but we are unsure about whether to have it midweek or at the weekend. We have big toddler groups at our church and many of the carers are childminders. We see them midweek and numbers are huge. If we wanted parents to come along, it would have to be held at the weekend. But they choose not to come on a Sunday so how do we know if they would come at all? We think the big toddler group contacts may mean a Messy Church midweek would work.*

**Dear Paul**

**You need to be clear about why you want to start a Messy Church and who you want to come. If you want families - including mum, dad and grandparents - then you need to ask them when would be best for them. Take as long as it takes to get it right before starting your Messy Church. It could take months to survey the needs of your community.**

**Pop along to the school gates at home time and ask the families or give out simple questionnaires. Ask the parents when they are collecting children from groups who use your church hall such as Brownies or judo. Use social media to communicate the questionnaire. Be a faithful servant at your community's convenience rather than your own (even if you only have Friday nights free!). Or, if you want to offer Messy Church to childminders, then ask them the same way.**

**We have heard from Messy Churches who wanted to attract more men to hear about Jesus and they discovered that Friday nights or Saturday lunchtimes were good times to offer Messy Church. We know of Messy Churches who want to target very young families so that they can grow a new, young congregation. They advertised through their toddler groups but offered Messy Church on a Saturday afternoon at 4.00 pm, as the survey results showed that parents are ready for something after taxi-ing children to ballet class and football coaching, and doing the supermarket shop - if they could be fed as well and then get home for Ant and Dec on TV, even better! How can we fit into the lives of those in our community? I dare you to ask!**

**[www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/top-tips-being-all-age-messy-church](http://www.messychurch.org.uk/messy-blog/top-tips-being-all-age-messy-church)**

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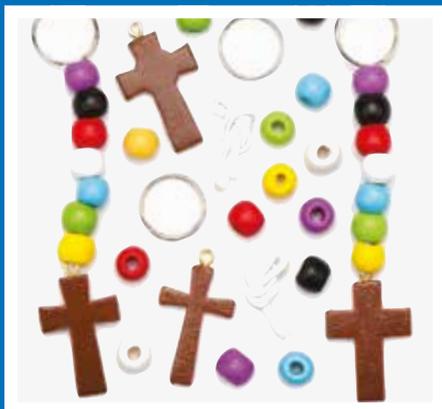
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