



# get MESSY!

Why  
Messy Church  
really is  
**church**

A **home**  
for good

Explore our  
**Bible overview**

Reaching  
(and keeping)  
**families**

## Sessions in this issue

**Sep-Dec 2018**

**Which way?**  
Matthew 8:19-20

**Safe & sound**  
Luke 15:1-7

**Listening & learning**  
Mark 10:13-16

**God so loved the world**  
John 3:16-17

## IMPORTANT COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Downloadable media purchased from The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF), including (but not limited to) PDF document downloads and mp3 music, is protected by UK and international copyright laws.

### **You are allowed to:**

- print a single copy, provided it is for your own personal use.
- print without limit any pages labelled 'Reproduced with permission from...'
- burn mp3 audio files to a single CD for use in venues where mp3s cannot be played.
- keep a single backup copy, provided only one copy is in use at any one time.

### **You are not allowed to:**

- print multiple copies of the PDF download file.
- print multiple copies of any musical scores within the PDF download file, unless the organisation printing them has appropriate licences. See [www.ccli.co.uk](http://www.ccli.co.uk) for more information.
- email, copy, post on a website or by any other means electronically share downloadable media.

**Note: If you have received this file by email, it may be an illegal copy. Please check with the sender that it has been legally obtained, and for conditions of its use.**

If you have any questions about the legal use of downloadable media, please contact us at [copyright@brf.org.uk](mailto:copyright@brf.org.uk).



BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE  
+44 (0)1865 319700 | enquiries@brf.org.uk  
brf.org.uk

Messy Church is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship,  
a Registered Charity (233280)

ISBN 978 0 85746 613 6  
First published 2018  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0  
All rights reserved

This edition © The Bible Reading Fellowship 2018

### Acknowledgements

Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version (Anglicised edition) copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, a Hachette UK company. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790.

The Holy Bible, International Children's Bible® Copyright© 1986, 1988, 1999, 2015 by Tommy Nelson™, a division of Thomas Nelson. Used by permission.

**Editor:** Olivia Warburton

**Subeditor:** Rachel Tranter

**Proofreader:** Kathryn Glendenning

**Designer:** Rebecca J Hall

**Cover photo:** Rebecca J Hall

Printed in the UK by Stephens & George Print Group

### Note for subscribers

Print copies are dispatched to arrive six weeks prior to the date on the cover of the magazine. The January 2019 issue should be with you around the middle of November 2018. The PDF version of the magazine is also available for purchase and immediate download from the beginning of November.

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

### Photocopying

Please note that photocopying of any part of this magazine is **not permitted**.

To order back issues of *Get Messy!* and other Messy Church resources, email BRF at enquiries@brf.org.uk or telephone +44 (0)1865 319700.

Send in news, stories, photos and general enquiries to our Messy Church administrator on +44 (0)1235 858246 or [messychurch@brf.org.uk](mailto:messychurch@brf.org.uk).

## Meet our session writers for this issue



**Becky May** lives with her husband and two young children in Bedfordshire, where she is Messy Church Regional Coordinator. Becky is co-founder of The Treasure Box People and is very much at home with all things messy!



**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 Children's Resources Manager of the Scottish Bible Society. Part of her remit is to help all generations engage with the Bible together. She is part of Burnside Blairbeth Messy Church in Rutherglen near Glasgow, which she helped to launch. 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

The themes in *Get Messy!* 2018–19 continue to address issues faced by families today, specifically for this season those of worries about the future, feeling safe, the need to be listened to by adults and self-worth. We want to be honest about the hard decisions of being a disciple as well as the incomparable upside.

**September's** theme of 'Which way?' opens up Jesus' challenges to his first disciples. Some of them wanted to follow him on their own terms but Jesus wanted complete commitment. Our Messy teams and families may be just at the start of faith, but the high bar of whole-life discipleship is one we should delight in, not be anxious about.

In **October**, we know we'll have fun with the famous parable of the lost sheep. At a time when fear is a major player, this reminder of the safety of the shepherd's shoulder is a timely one.

**November** gives us the chance to hear again the story of Jesus welcoming the children, which reminds us that we are all God's children and we can listen to and learn from each other. And in **December**, we wonder at the mystery of God sending his only Son out of love for us. Enjoy!

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

# Contents

Lucy Moore writes.....	5
Stories from Messy Churches far and wide .....	6
Messy Church International Conference 2019 .....	8
Getting creative starts before Messy Church .....	9
A welcome for every child.....	10
Youth column: reaching (and keeping) families.....	12
Discipleship pilot .....	13
Bible overview .....	14
<b>SESSION MATERIAL</b>	
September: Which way? .....	18
October: Safe and sound .....	23
November: Listening and learning .....	28
December: God so loved the world .....	33
Dear Jane.....	38



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## In our next issue

January: Where I belong  
 February: Self-confidence  
 March: Dusty drawing  
 April: Always with us

# The perfect gift for your Messy Church families

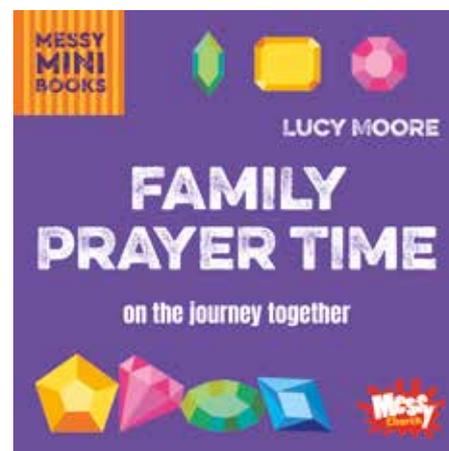
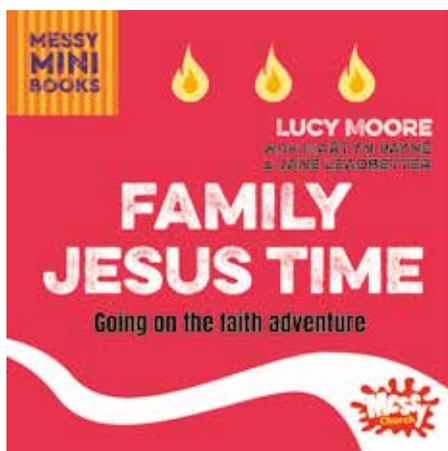
First there was:



Then came:



Now, specially for those who have taken a first step of faith, we present:



Great price, with discounts for bulk orders.

Go to [brfonline.org.uk](http://brfonline.org.uk) to order.

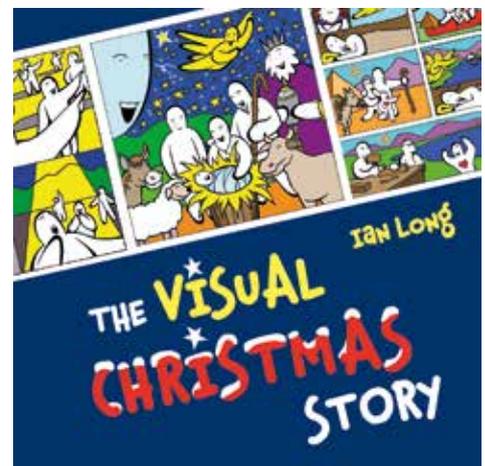
## The Christmas story as you've never seen it before!

With its distinctive 'blob' picture style, emphasising the emotions of the characters, *The Visual Christmas Story* opens up the Bible for readers and non-readers alike, of all ages and abilities. Verse-by-verse illustrations presented alongside the Bible text offer a vibrant and thoughtful way in to the greatest story of all time.



978 0 85746 743 0

£6.99



# WHY MESSY CHURCH IS CHURCH

Lucy Moore writes...

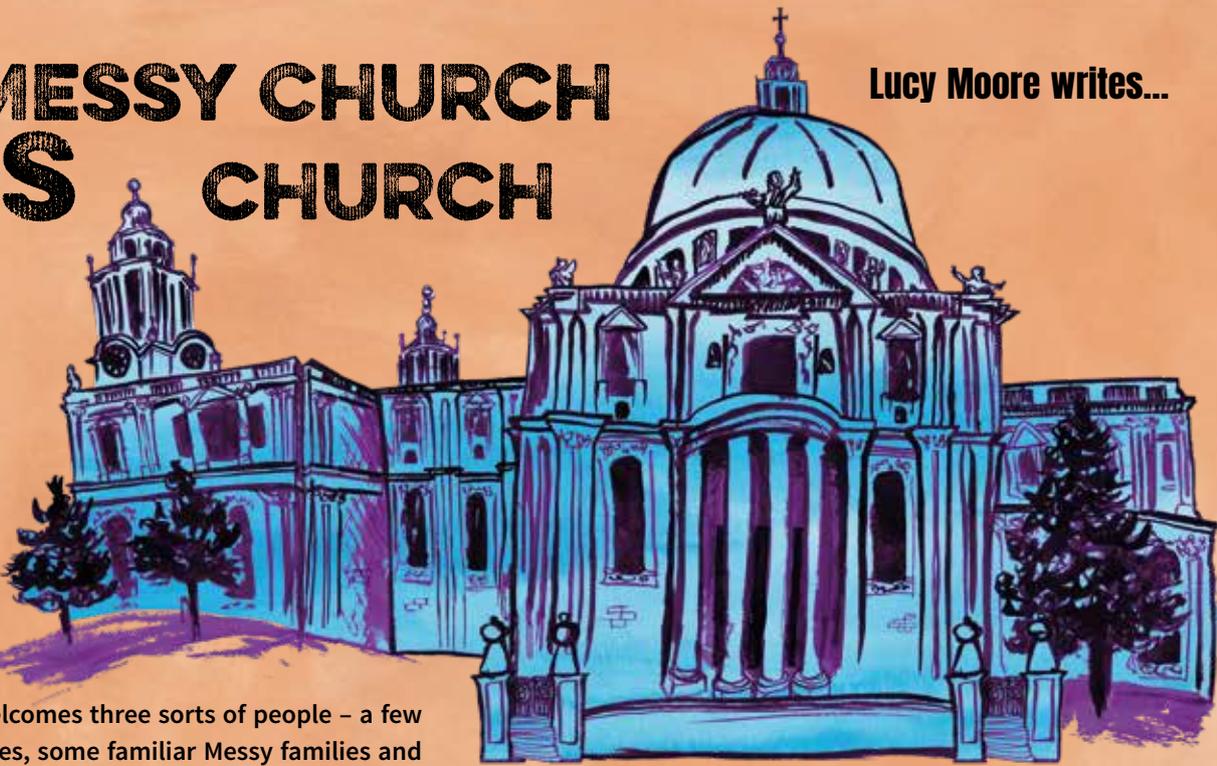
At our recent village Messy Church, I was leading the celebration and waxing lyrical (in a rambling way, as jetlag from an overseas trip was just kicking in) about Jesus when I noticed a slightly pop-eyed look on several of the adults' faces.

As many Messy Churches find, ours welcomes three sorts of people – a few folk from other churches, some familiar Messy families and quite a few there-for-the-first-timers who may never have set foot in a church before (alleluia). This session was one in which we had lots of those first-timers, and I can only think it was the mention of Jesus (okay, if I'm honest, the enthuse about Jesus) that took them aback. They'd enjoyed an hour of wonderful activities with their children and relaxed into the welcoming atmosphere and barely noticed they were being invited to pray, to explore the Bible, to talk about spiritual things. So the overt mention of the person behind it all came as a bit of a surprise. But of course, it shouldn't, because Messy Church has that giveaway in the very name: this is no craft club; this is church. The name is on the can, what you see is what you get – and other clichés of that ilk.

Having been challenged by a bishop not so long ago that I was being unreasonable to insist Messy Church is church and that, in his opinion, it is completely okay that 'some people see it as "church", some do not', I think it's worth continuing to explore over this year's set of magazines why I think it does matter that Messy Church is church.

As Claire Dalpra points out in her chapter in *Messy Church Theology*, church has four aspects: being 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic'. Claire equates these aspects with the four directions in which a church operates: 'in' (one), 'up' (holy), 'of' or belonging (catholic) and 'out' (apostolic). It is on the 'catholic' part I'd like to cogitate now. 'Catholic' is the 'church in a circle' idea, the notion that the members of a church are connected to each other and to other expressions of church. The Methodist Church, with its emphasis on 'connexion', embodies this particularly well.

I think Messy Churches, too, find belonging easy to comprehend and put into practice. They are made up largely of friends and family who have told other friends and family about Messy Church, either in the school playground or



on the adult friendship networks. Indeed, yesterday, as I prowled around chatting to people, one dad was telling me happily how he'd bumped into another dad from his workplace there, and a mum was noting all the parents she recognised beneath the layers of paint and glue from the school run. It's very relational. There is also a growing awareness in Messy Churches of the need to take social action locally and be connected to the needs of the community.

On a slightly wider level, Messy Churches do 'catholic' well because they are conscious of being just one of the congregations of a local church, not the be-all and end-all but an interdependent ecclesial community within that church family.

And wider still, Messy Churches are usually delighted to feel connected to other Messy Churches around their own country and even around the world. There is a steady trickle of interest in twinning with another Messy Church (funnily, UK ones usually want to twin with somewhere hot). There is huge interest in sharing ideas on Facebook or at local Messy Meet-ups. Messy Church team members find they can talk endlessly about Messy Church, even if it's the first time they've met. It's a very connected network.

And another way we can encourage each other to be a generous, helpful and supportive 'church', rather than independent operators, is the Messy Church International Conference 2019. It's the second chance to bring together leaders from all around the world and enjoy each other's wisdom and company. See page 8 for more details.

Church – what an amazing, if weird, family to belong to. As Messy Church, perhaps by our very existence, we can remind the rest of our church family just how weird and amazing a family it really is!

# Stories from Messy Churches far and wide

## St Luke's Messy Church, York Miriam Thurlow

We started our Messy Church at the start of the new year and we hold it after school in the school hall on a Thursday afternoon once a month. After a bit of a rocky start with our first Messy Church (the school hall had been triple booked!), we have been really encouraged by what has happened already. All the families who came to the first Messy Church returned for our second, along with new families.

We explored the parable of the good Samaritan together and what it means to love one another like God loves us. For several of our Messy families, English is not their first language, so one of our activities was a graffiti wall of what love means to us. By the end of the activity time, it was full of pictures and words in a variety of languages describing what love means to us all. It was great to see people of all ages, all ethnicities and all backgrounds engaging with the activity and sharing how they show love to people. Messy Church is for everyone to feel welcome and that they belong, and we are looking forward to getting to know our Messy families better and continuing to explore the Bible and God's love for us together!





## Ramsey Baptist Church Messy Church, Isle of Man

Louise Strickett

Here at RBC Messy Church, we have been getting 'out and about' for some of our Messy Church services. What better place to meet than in God's glorious creation? So far, we have ventured to the Wildlife Park, Ballaglass Glen, Ballaugh Beach and the Mooragh Park – all great places to meet together, invite family and friends and have adventures. We usually start with a story and thinking time, and then move on to a variety of activities, from games to treasure hunts, beach art to team challenges, finishing off with a time of prayer. We have floated leaves into the stream and thrown pebbles into the sea as an offering of prayer to God.

And, of course, we always finish with food, whether it be a picnic, an ice cream or hot chocolate at the beach. Our 'on location' Sundays have always brought fun and laughter. They have been a lovely opportunity to learn more about faith, spend time together and invite our friends along too. We look forward to our next adventure on our beautiful island!



## Whiteley First@4 Messy Church, Hampshire

Rev'd Philippa Mills

When Jayden and Ethan's mum asked me about baptising her boys, it seemed the natural choice to suggest that the baptism should take place at our First@4 Messy Church: that was, after all, the boys' experience of church! It seemed that God's hand was at work when the best month for the baptism turned out to be the month when we were planning to use the 'True family' session from *Get Messy!*

This was the third time that we've included baptisms of our Messy Church family, so we already knew that some of the Church of England liturgy could be woven into the activities in a creative way. The theme gave us plenty of opportunities to talk about 'family' in lots of different contexts: close family at home; the different generations and relationships within our families; our wider 'family' of friends; and, of course, our church family.

The family tree activity was wonderful in providing a visual representation of our church family. As well as each adding a leaf with our name on to a large tree, we also put small leaves on cards for each of the boys being baptised, using this as our affirmation that we would support them in their Christian journey. Our celebration focused on the baptisms themselves, again making this as interactive as possible with everyone turning for 'the decision' and plenty of water in our special font bowl. Finally, at tea, we presented the boys with their candles.





#MCIC19  
#discipleship

## International Conference

3-5 May 2019 @ High Leigh Conference Centre, UK

# Messy Church Conference 2019

It was such a lot of fun! My memories of the first Messy Church International Conference (MCIC) back in 2016 (when we were young) are blurred by the speed at which it all happened, but beautiful. One of my most vivid ones is of sitting at a dinner table with Swedish people on one side, Canadians not far away, Australians on the other side of the table, English and Scots tucked in among them, a babble of lively conversation all around the dining room as strangers became friends, and telling myself, 'Just stop now. Just stop and notice this, because it's one of the most exciting things you'll ever do and one of the most important times you'll have. Stop and notice it and give thanks for it.'

It was a good job I did, because the next three days were spent in a whirlwind of activity, whizzing from one element of the programme to the next and troubleshooting like a Wild-West sheriff on triple-shot espressos.

We always knew we wouldn't do an MCIC every year. We reckoned once every three years would keep up the impetus and energy and allow individual countries plenty of space to plan and deliver their own national conferences in the intervening years, something that the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia have already done with huge success.

We want MCIC19 to be a time for friendships to be made and renewed; somewhere leaders can come to be stimulated, challenged, encouraged and inspired to gallop on with God to the next step of the adventure he's taking them on. We want to live out the values of being Christ-centred, hospitable, creative, celebratory and, while all-age is hard to do in this context, to celebrate that value, at the very least. And as it is over a weekend, who knows? Maybe some younger leaders will be inspired to join us.

For MCIC19, we faced the prospect of trying to plan with just two voices on our little team. That felt completely inadequate, if we were serious about trying to meet the needs of a wide variety of people on all stages of their Messy journeys. So we were delighted when a small group of very varied people said 'Yes!' to joining us to plan it from scratch. Now, with a

mix of men and women, younger and older, ones who had experienced the last conference and ones to whom it's all new, we have a rich palette of ideas to paint from. If we could afford to fly in international friends to help plan, that would have been even better, but alas, the budget does not permit. Maybe by MCIC22, the 'Beam me up, Scotty' transporter will have been invented and all will be possible.

We knew we wanted to theme MCIC19 loosely around that thread that's been coming to the fore in Messy Church: *making disciples*: something that is vital whether we're just starting up a Messy Church or have been part of one for years. We're delighted that our two speakers can bring so much wisdom and research to bear on the question. Claire Dalpra is from the Church Army Research Unit and will, by the end of 2018, have completed a major piece of research into Messy Church discipleship, funded by the Church of England but relevant to all denominations. Andrew Roberts, from the Methodist Church and also long-term friend of Messy Church, is the author of *Holy Habits* (Malcolm Down Publishing, 2016) and the editor of the subsequent Holy Habits booklets (BRF, 2018), a phenomenal set of resources around discipleship. Both Claire and Andrew have thought deeply and prayerfully, widely and generously around the subject of how people grow in their faith in the 21st century, especially in the unusual intergenerational setting in which we operate. They are going to give us a treat: it may not be comfortable listening but it will certainly move us all on to better-informed action.

As you would expect, there will be far more than just sitting listening to talks: you can expect other forms of learning and story-sharing. There will be hands-on activities and new ideas to steal – oops, *observe* – from around the world; times to chat, both structured and unstructured; campfires and friends and food and, most of all, space to rest in the presence of Jesus surrounded by his family, with worship songs from the incomparable Fischy Music and opportunities for prayer and worship.

See [messychurch.org.uk/MCIC19](https://messychurch.org.uk/MCIC19) for booking details.

# Getting creative starts before Messy Church

## Barry Brand, Families Worker and Graphic Designer

In January, we got to celebrate the sixth birthday of our Messy Church. In those six years we've seen a lot of families, 50 people at our lowest and 200 at our max! We've laughed, we've cried, we've spread the good news and we've rejoiced in many answered prayers. However, without the various types of targeted publicity, it may not have been the success it has come to be.

We use posters, flyers at our toddler group, flyers in book bags at the local primary school and have also created our own Facebook group – and, of course, good old word of mouth from happy families bringing their friends.

So how do you create a poster and make it stand out to attract families to come to you instead of all the other things going on locally at the same time? The most important thing is to have fun. Getting creative isn't just about the activities in Messy Church; it starts way before then.

Your Messy Church should be a creative, fun and exciting place so your advertising needs to be the same. A boring black-and-white poster just isn't going to stand out and certainly doesn't say 'MESSY CHURCH!'

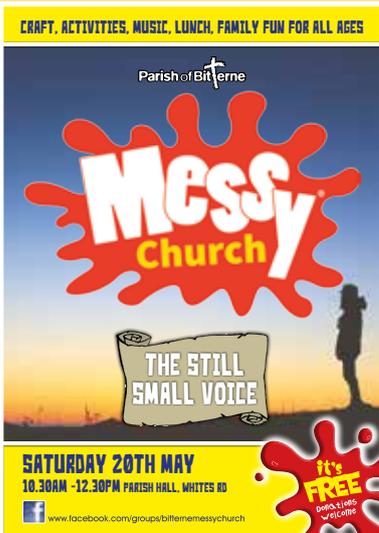
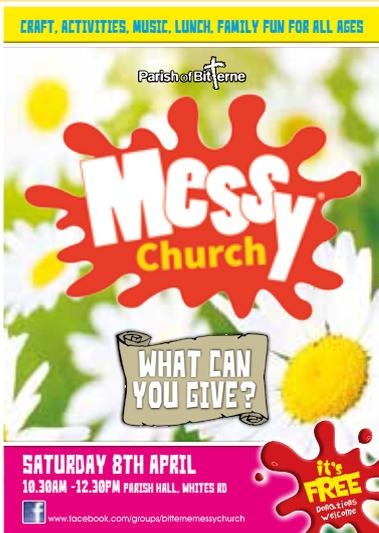
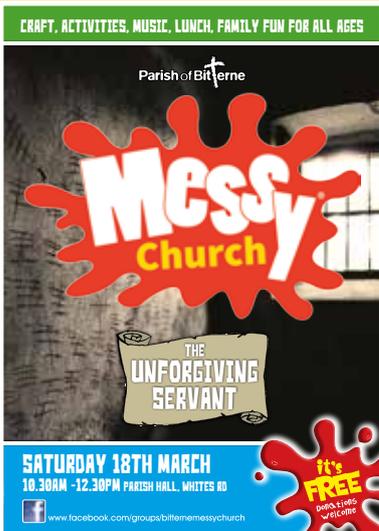
The posters on this page are from our Messy Church. They are all the same and yet different. The basics stay the same. At the top it says what Messy Church is: 'Church with a difference. Craft, Activities, Music, Lunch, Family fun for all ages', and next to it is our church logo. People reading it know where they stand and they know what they are going to get. This band stays there at the top for every poster. Only the colour of its background changes each month. Below that is the Messy logo – large so people who know about Messy Church know straight away what we're advertising. It also shows that this event is part of a much bigger thing, not just a one-off that this particular church is running. You will also see that the posters are sporting the new Messy logo which is out now and available to download here: [messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-logo](http://messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-logo).

Below that is the theme for this Messy Church. Families will get to realise, as time goes on, that Messy Church isn't a craft morning (or afternoon or evening) but that it's church. Each one has its own theme and the craft is just one part of an awesome church service.

I always have an image behind the logo and theme which helps reinforce what this Messy Church is about. These can be found with a simple search on the internet but you must ensure that you download an image that you have permission to use or that is free from copyright. Do not use anything that has a watermark or other logo on it.

Below this is the important information: when it is, what time and where. Our Facebook link is also there so that families can find out more. I also make a point of including that this is a free event. Just this alone can bring in families looking for something cheap to do with the children for a couple of hours. I make sure to point out below that donations are welcome and we have a cool, decorated bucket for that by the door. This band at the bottom also changes colour each month.

Have some fun with it. Try to get a basic template done and then each month you only need to change the date, theme, colours and image. What first looks a little daunting suddenly becomes manageable and even a joy to do. If this is all a bit much, you can order pre-prepared materials from CPO ([cpo.org.uk](http://cpo.org.uk)) but I really do encourage you to go for it. After all, we are made in the image of our amazing, creative, creator God – we just need to unlock that gift. Or maybe there's an artistic member of your Messy congregation who would like to help out if asked. How cool would that be?



# A welcome for every child

Amy Burns, Home for Good

This year in the UK, around 35,000 children and young people will enter the care system. Many will find refuge for a while with a safe and loving foster family; some may go on to be adopted into a new forever family. **Every single child is in need of a welcome.**

Home for Good believes the church is ideally placed to offer this welcome, through families within our congregations opening their homes and hearts to care for some of the most vulnerable in our society, and also through our churches becoming an incredible network of support and understanding for these families.

Children come into care for a wide variety of reasons, but all have suffered trauma and loss, and many have experienced abuse or neglect. This will understandably have an effect on each child. Some may struggle with trust, confidence or building appropriate relationships. Some may have health issues, developmental delays or additional needs. Some may not be able to cope with challenges and big emotions, and this will outwork in their behaviour.

It will take dedication and sacrificial love for foster carers and adoptive parents to provide the consistent and therapeutic care that vulnerable children need. For most families, it will be a journey with many ups and downs and, for some, this journey will be lifelong.

**What an amazing opportunity for the church to walk with families along this path, through every challenge and every joy.** Not everyone is called to foster or adopt, but as the collective church we can be part of ensuring that every foster and adoptive family is surrounded by love and support at every point of their journey.

The contribution that Messy Church has made to ensuring children and families are valued and engaged within our churches is incredible. The creativity, inclusivity and flexibility of Messy Church provides an excellent platform, and it models how we can connect with every member of our congregations to reach out to our communities in an intentional and appropriate way.

We know many foster and adoptive families who love Messy Church and have experienced a wonderful welcome for their children.

**The informal and inclusive nature of Messy Church was perfect for our foster son. He could explore the**

**activities at his pace without feeling rushed or forced into doing something he wasn't interested in, and the environment was calm and encouraging. It was brilliant seeing his confidence grow. He adored the interactive creative talk where making noise was not a problem and the informal meal meant he could eat with his peers without unhelpful expectations of his behaviour.**

Emily, foster carer

Thank you to everyone who works so hard to create a safe and warm environment for so many of our children.

**Every fostered and adopted child is unique.** Their past experiences and present circumstances are unique, as are their current needs and struggles. Because of this, we recognise there will never be a one-size-fits-all way of engaging with vulnerable children.

Home for Good considers adoptive parents and foster carers to be the experts for their children – although even they will face unexpected challenges as they continually seek to parent in a way that enables their child to flourish. Even so, to ensure that fostered or adopted children are made welcome at your Messy Church, the first and best thing to do is talk with and listen to their parents and carers.

That being said, parents and carers will not share personal details of their child's history with you because this is precious and private information. However, they will be very keen to talk with you about how their child can feel safe and valued at your Messy Church and may have specific suggestions for things that would help.

Alongside this, here are five general ideas for ways to establish a great foundation of welcome for all children. We know that many Messy Churches will already be doing some or all of these things, and we are grateful for your willingness to develop and adapt to prioritise the needs of vulnerable children.

## **1) Make your team easily identifiable and have clear boundaries**

Whether you use coloured t-shirts, name badges or something else, make it obvious who children should approach for help. Some fostered or adopted children may benefit from having an assigned 'key helper' who is a known and consistent presence. Others may struggle with over-familiarity, so ensure all adults comply with appropriate boundaries.



### **2) Consider offering a quiet area or breakout space**

While some children thrive in the fun and bustle of Messy Church, it can be overwhelming for others. Some may benefit from the chance to withdraw to a safe and quiet space with their grown-up, where they can regulate, 'cool off' or find comfort.

### **3) Make excellent safeguarding and confidentiality a priority**

Have clear safeguarding policies and share these with carers and parents so they are reassured. Be especially careful with photography, particularly if you use social media, to ensure that children's identities are protected. Be vigilant of others who may be taking photos and politely remind them of your policy where needed.

### **4) Communicate structure and transition points**

Many vulnerable children find change, choice and the unexpected challenging. To help them feel settled and secure,

let them know what to expect and give plenty of warning when things are about to change. Consider offering takeaway crafts for those who struggle to choose and run out of time to complete them all.

### **5) Consider how food is served**

It is wonderful that many Messy Churches provide food to families, as this is such a great way of building relationships. Some vulnerable children will have issues around food, potentially with regulating how much they eat or what they are willing or able to eat. If you serve food, talk about this specifically with parents and carers so you can establish how best to do this in a way that causes their child minimal discomfort.

**Thank you to every Messy Church for all that you do, and all that you will do, to welcome and value vulnerable children and those who care for them.**

Find out more about Home for Good: [homeforgood.org.uk](http://homeforgood.org.uk)

# Reaching (and keeping) families

Daniel Jones, Youth and Children's Adviser, Diocese of Bristol

Picture the scenario... a Messy Church in full swing with young families happily enjoying the crafts, the worship and sharing a meal together. Things tick along nicely for a few years and then a few families stop attending. Why, you may ask? Could it be that the children have grown too old for the activities? Assuming these families might make the transition to Sunday mornings is a little hopeful, so what is next for them?

Even the harshest critic cannot deny the impact of Messy Church in terms of outreach and sharing faith across the country (and the world). Ask any experienced church leader and they will most likely tell you that establishing a congregation takes time.

However, in my experience, time is a precious commodity when it comes to Messy Church. Why can't Messy Church continue to be 'their' church as the children veer closer to adolescence? Now there's a challenging question!

If you are familiar with the values of Messy Church, you will be aware that creativity is one of the founding principles. As the website states, Messy Church is Christ-centred, for all ages and based on creativity, hospitality and celebration. Creativity is nurtured through the creation of environments where all ages are valued, Christian fellowship is experienced, pathways are created for faith to be explored and individuals are led to a personal encounter with God. Or, putting it bluntly, creativity is not just about craft activities.

So back to the scenario – what can be done creatively to keep families in Messy Church when their children veer towards (and into) adolescence?

### **Remember 'creativity' is key...**

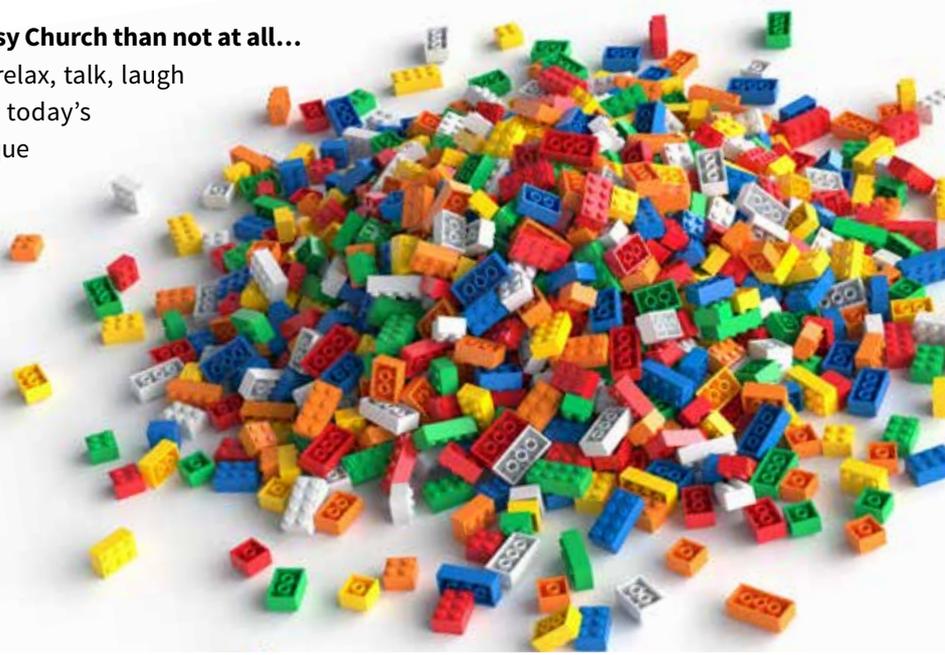
Evaluate the current activities on offer and consider if there are any gaps. Have parents been considered or consulted to find out what their children like doing? Have you asked the adults what they like to do? Think creatively about other activities/zones that will appeal to a wider range of people and get creativity flowing, e.g. a reading zone, discovery zone, play zone, talk zone or 'hang-out' zone. In addition, explore ways to include material from the various zones during the worship time so that they are not seen as an escape but an essential part of the Messy Church experience.

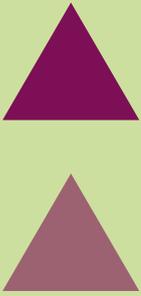
### **Remember you don't have to entertain everyone all the time...**

Sometimes people will drift, disengage or just do their own thing. Rather than worrying, embrace the situation by creating spaces where children, young people and adults can just hang out. Create a comfy zone with cushions, beanbags, etc. for people to chill and, if phones/tablets get used (which they inevitably will), encourage this with various challenges such as looking up facts or relevant clips on YouTube. What about a Lego area (which my nine-year-old son would love) with an invitation to make models that are relevant to the Bible story? And if people choose to make something else, at least they are happy and playing with something creative.

### **Remember it's better that families come to Messy Church than not at all...**

Places away from the home where families can relax, talk, laugh and enjoy each other's company are rare in today's society. This means that Messy Church is in a unique position. Ensuring time spent at Messy Church is something special, fun and memorable for everyone is key. Therefore, do everything possible to make everyone feel special, loved and valued; include and involve all ages in as much as possible; and believe that Messy Church is a positive, formative and transformative experience of church for all.





# #discipleship: team

## *Discipleship pilot*

Have you managed to find time to give the discipleship pilot a go with your team yet? Check out [messychurch.org.uk/messy-discipleship-pilot](http://messychurch.org.uk/messy-discipleship-pilot) if you have no idea what this is about. It's a worldwide Messy attempt to encourage more Messy Church teams to try out an intentional way of making disciples in their Messy Church. The pilot gives you a way to start talking about ideas and planning what you might do, perhaps encouraging families to do faith at home; perhaps adding on a 'Messy extra' of some kind; perhaps making your actual Messy Church an even richer opportunity to make disciples there and then.

Often 'making disciples' is more a matter of attitude than of radically changing the superficial activities you do: your team will run the Messy Church very differently if they are looking to make and grow disciples and to be better disciples themselves rather than being there just to do a job and get home as quickly as possible with the leftover cake snaffled as a snack for later. Maybe for you, discipleship will simply be about making friends with the families who come and sharing life with them. Or maybe it will mean setting out on a more structured adventure that changes you more than anyone else.

It's been fascinating seeing the very different starting points churches have. For some, discipleship starts with the team and they make the positive decision to 'be better disciples' in the way they operate as a team – praying together or committing to reading the Bible passage before the Messy Church takes place. For others, these habits are already in place – indeed, they would find it hard to imagine running a Messy Church without regular prayer or Bible study – but the idea of Messy social action is a challenge, or the concept of actively trying to notice God at work in the life of a Messy family is something they had never thought of.

There are some wonderful stories coming in and we'd love to hear more. They don't need to be as a result of the pilot – the pilot is simply one catalyst for talking and thinking and praying into the next stage. You may be doing something quietly amazing that would help other Messy Churches to take the next step, so do share your experiences, however small and insignificant they seem to you at this stage!

A few examples: the original Messy Church in Cowplain, Hampshire, still hold their monthly Messy Café for all ages – a simple breakfast, exploration of the story from the last Messy Church, prayer from the newspapers and all within an hour. In Claygate, Surrey, Emma Coy and her team have run a series for a smaller number of families, based on the Messy Church values. She's kindly sent in the materials they devised; if you would like a copy, just email us at [programmes.administrator@brf.org.uk](mailto:programmes.administrator@brf.org.uk). Both Claygate and Hornchurch in Essex, interestingly, put on their 'Messy Church extra' expecting Messy families to come, but found that very few did – but they did attract a different set of families! St Polycarp's in Sheffield have tried out 'Messy divas' for women! There are some great Messy Church family film nights happening round and about. Messy Church is not static but is a living movement of God's Spirit.

If you, like Emma, would be happy to share what you're doing with others, do send us your ideas or resources to the above email address, marked 'Messy discipleship', and we'll do our best to make them available to others.

# Bible overview

Want to help your Messy congregations learn about the Bible as an overall story? These activities, by Messy intern Miriam Thurlow, might help you out!

## 1. Big Bible timeline

**You will need: roll of lining paper; paint and paintbrushes; felt-tip pens; glue; tissue paper; stickers**

Create a big artwork piece telling the big story of the Bible. Roll out a long piece of paper for everyone to add to. Before the session starts, you might want to draw some outlines of different parts of the Bible on a timeline for people to colour in/paint/collage or have some images for people to copy. You could include images of creation, Noah, Joseph, Abraham, Moses, the promised land, David, Jesus (his birth, life, death and resurrection), Pentecost, the early church, now (your Messy Church), Jesus' return and the new creation. Encourage everyone during the activity time to come and contribute to one part of the story.

You may want to have a couple of Bibles/Bible storybooks available for people to look at if they don't know who some of the people/events on the timeline are and want to know a bit more.

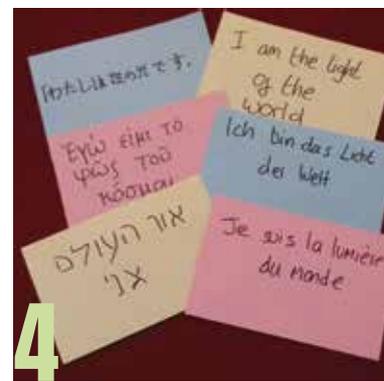
**Talk about** the fact that the Bible is made up of lots of different books and lots of different stories, and we often just look at one of these at a time. But there is also a bigger overarching story of God's love for us. Where can you see God's love in the different parts of the timeline?

## 2. Bible Kim's Game

**You will need: tablecloth; different objects (see description below); timer; paper; pens; table**

Place the objects on a table (each object links to part of the Bible). Give people 30 seconds to look at all the different objects on the table and try to remember as many as they can. After 30 seconds, cover up the objects with a tablecloth and get them to write down as many of the objects as they can remember.

When they have listed all the objects they can, remove the tablecloth and go through the different objects, explaining how they all link to the big story of the Bible. You could make this into a bit of a competition, by making a note of who can remember the most objects.

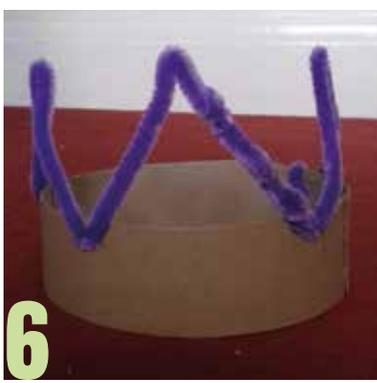


Objects:

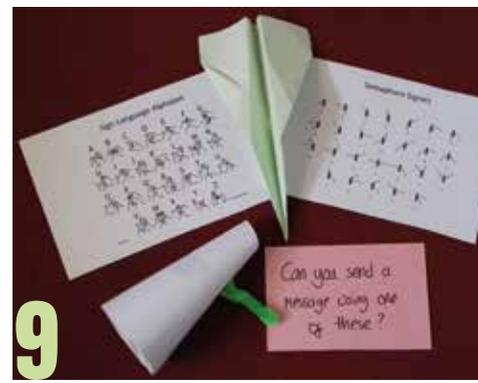
- Globe (keyring/ball): God created the world.
- Toy boat: People turned their backs on God so he sent a flood. Noah and his family, who had continued to trust God, were saved on an ark, along with animals.
- Star: God promised Abraham and Sarah that their descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky, and that one of them would be Jesus. Abraham and Sarah had to wait a long time, but they remained faithful and God kept his promise.
- Rainbow-coloured object: Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and had to go through lots of hard times, including prison. Even in tough times, God was there with Joseph and used him to save his people.
- Staff/stick: God's people became slaves in Egypt, but God used Moses to rescue his people and lead them to the promised land. God turned Moses' staff into a snake to show that he had sent Moses, and when Moses held up his staff, God parted the Red Sea.
- Map: God's people travelled for 40 years across the desert before they reached the promised land, but God was with them for all that time.
- Slingshot: David was a shepherd boy, but God chose him to be king of God's people. He defeated the enemy Goliath with just a slingshot and a small rock.
- Crown: After David, there were lots of different kings and prophets to help lead God's people. Some of them were good and some of them were bad.
- Baby doll: God sent his only Son, Jesus, to live on earth as a human. Mary and Joseph were his parents and he was born in a stable in Bethlehem.
- Plasters/bandages: Jesus did lots of amazing things while he was alive. Crowds of people gathered to listen to his teaching wherever he went. He also did many miracles, including healing people if they were sick.
- Cross: Jesus died on the cross and rose to life again three days later. This was so that we could be forgiven for our sins and so that we could have a way to draw close to God again because all the things we had done wrong were blocking the way between us and God.
- Candle: After Jesus went back to be with his Father in heaven, he sent us a gift: the Holy Spirit. God's presence lives in us through the Holy Spirit and helps us. When the Holy Spirit first came to the disciples, he appeared as a gust of wind and a flame upon their heads.



5



6



9

- Lego figures: After Jesus had gone back to heaven to be with his father, the disciples continued teaching other people what Jesus had taught them. And the good news about Jesus spread all around the world.
- Messy Church splat: Although Messy Church itself is not in the Bible, we are part of its big story because we are part of the wider community of the worldwide church. Jesus promised he will return one day, and so we are preparing for this as we learn more about Jesus.
- Gold object: Jesus will return and all those who believe in him will live in the new creation with God forever. We don't know what heaven will be like but the Bible gives us some ideas: there will be no pain, sadness or sickness; in a vision John saw streets paved with gold!

**Talk about** which part of the story is your favourite. Why?

### 3. Pipe cleaner storytelling

**You will need: pipe cleaners; pencils**

Give everyone four pipe cleaners and ask them to shape them into four pencil toppers: a heart, an 'X', a cross and a question mark. Explain that with these four symbols we can tell the whole story of the Bible. (The symbols come from the 4 Points initiative; for more information, visit [the4points.com/uk](http://the4points.com/uk).)

- **Heart** – God loves me (creation).
- **'X'** – I have sinned (I have turned away from God).
- **Cross** – But, because God loves me, he sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross for me so I could be forgiven.
- **?** – It's your decision: would you like to say yes to Jesus and follow him? And yes to his invitation of forgiveness and eternal life?

**Talk about** how you could show people that you love them.

### 4. One Bible for all

**You will need: copies of a Bible verse in a variety of languages; pens; paper**

The Bible was originally written in Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic, but now it is translated into hundreds of different languages.

Choose a Bible verse (perhaps John 3:16 or John 8:12) and write it out in a variety of different languages, for example:

ancient Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin (Chinese), Arabic, Romanian, Polish, Japanese and English. (If you have any families whose first language is not English, try to make sure one of the languages you choose is their first language.) One website for doing this is: [biblica.com/bible](http://biblica.com/bible).

Get people to look at the translated verses and guess which languages they are in. Explain that they all actually say the same thing and show them the English translation. Which one do they like best? Perhaps they could write out the language they like best and decorate it.

Although these languages all look different, they all say the same thing; we all share the same Bible. God loves everyone equally no matter what language we speak.

**Talk about** how everyone has the same Bible, but the different translations mean that more people are able to understand it. Have you ever tried learning a new language? Was it hard? Imagine if we didn't have an English version of the Bible and had to read it in another language!

### 5. Sticky tape rings

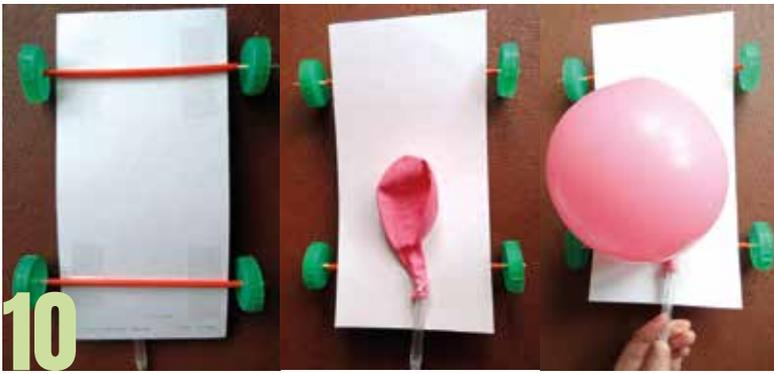
**You will need: patterned tape (often used for scrapbooking); scissors; jewel stickers; some of God's promises from the Bible printed out on card**

Rings are symbols of promises and the Bible is full of promises which God has made to his people. And God always keeps his promises, just like a ring has no end.

Cut two strips of tape per person, one slightly shorter than the other. Stick the two pieces together, sticky sides facing each other. You will be left with a bit of the adhesive side of the longer piece still exposed. Loosely wrap the tape around your finger, sticking it together with the remaining sticky tab. Now decorate with jewel stickers. (This video gives a simple explanation of the process and shows you how to do it: [youtube.com/watch?v=7dc-OqB76RM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dc-OqB76RM).)

Have some of God's promises out on the table for people to read.

**Talk about** why people wear rings. Do you always keep the promises you make? Do you think it is important to keep promises?



Take the items off and rinse your print in water for a couple of minutes to stop the reaction. Watch what happens. Lay your print flat on a paper towel to dry.

The items you placed on the light-sensitive paper blocked the light and the sun caused the paper around the objects to change colour.

**Talk about** what other sources of light there are. Could any of them tell you something about who Jesus is too?

## 6. King of kings crowns

**You will need: foil; pipe cleaners; card; stapler; sticky tape; scissors**

Jesus is called lots of different things in the Bible and one of those names is the King of kings. There were lots of different kings in the Bible, some good and some not good, but Jesus is the true king.

Cut a length of card to fit the circumference of your head and then staple it together to make the base of your crown. Then bend three pipe cleaners in half and staple or tape them on to the crown to make the points of the crown. Wrap the card and pipe cleaners in foil to make your crown entirely silver.

**Talk about** what you think it means when Jesus is called the King of kings. What do you think it is like to be a king?

## 7. Jesus is the light of the world

**You will need: photo-sensitive (sun print) paper; acrylic sheets (e.g. Ikea photo frame inners); cardboard; tub of water; variety of fun objects; paper towel**

This activity can also be found in *Messy Church Does Science* (BRF, 2017), pages 225–26.

Jesus is in the Bible the whole way through. In the Old Testament he was talked about and prophesied about, and the New Testament tells about his life on the earth. Jesus calls himself 'the light of the world' (John 8:12). Light is a helpful way of understanding Jesus better because when you shine light into darkness, the light will always overcome the darkness.

Arrange objects on a piece of photo-sensitive paper away from sunlight (not near a window). Place a clear acrylic sheet on to your paper, take it outside and lay it in direct sunlight for two to five minutes.

The areas exposed to the sunlight will fade. When you see most of the colour disappear from the paper, your print has been fully exposed. (This may take 15 minutes if it's cloudy.)

## 8. One book, many treasures (brandy snap baskets)

**You will need: brandy snap baskets; whipped cream; pre-prepared fruits of different kinds; paper bowls/plates**

The Bible is one book, but it is made up of lots of different books inside. Each book is different, but they are all important and special. They all teach us something different about God.

Take a brandy snap basket and fill it with cream and different fruits. Different fruits taste and look very different but they are still all fruits. (Perhaps these could be the desserts for your meal this month.)

The books of the Bible are written by different people and in different styles, but they are all the word of God.

**Talk about** what makes a fruit a fruit. Which is your favourite fruit and why? Ask someone (maybe a member of the team) if they have a favourite book of the Bible.

## 9. God speaks to us in different ways

**You will need: semaphore flags; a copy of the semaphore alphabet; a copy of the sign-language alphabet/symbols; walkie-talkies; megaphone (card or real); paper; pens; printed Bible verses**

God speaks to people in lots of different ways throughout the Bible, and he still speaks to us today. Choose a Bible verse and one of these different forms of communication, and try to pass the message on to someone else.

- Semaphore flags
- Sign language
- Walkie-talkie
- Megaphone
- Paper aeroplane

**Talk about** how you like to communicate with people. Talking? On the phone? Skype? In person? Has God ever spoken to you?

## 10. Balloon-powered cars

**You will need: plastic bottle lids; hammer and nails; cardboard; biros; straws; sticky tape; balloons; scissors**

In the Bible, we are instructed to spread the good news about Jesus around the world. Make one of these balloon-powered cars and see how far you can make it travel.

Make holes in the centre of four bottle lids using the hammer and nails (make sure there is appropriate adult supervision for this). Next, take a pen and take out the inner ink tube. Cut two straws to a length just shorter than the pen ink tube. Attach the two straws to either end of a piece of cardboard with sticky tape. Slide a pen ink inside each straw and push a bottle top on each end of the two straws to make your axel and wheels. Then take the plastic outer of the pen and tape one end to the neck of a balloon. Attach the pen to the top of the cardboard. Finally, blow up the balloon and then release to see how far your car will travel.

To see how it's done, watch [youtube.com/watch?v=QzY9RH\\_JnL0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzY9RH_JnL0).

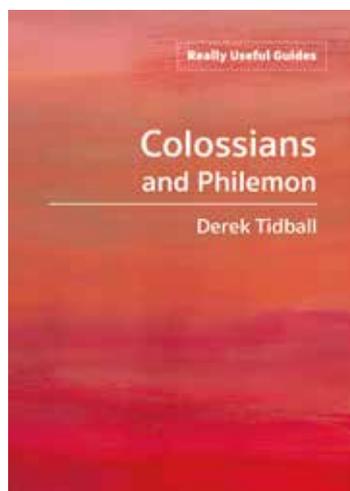
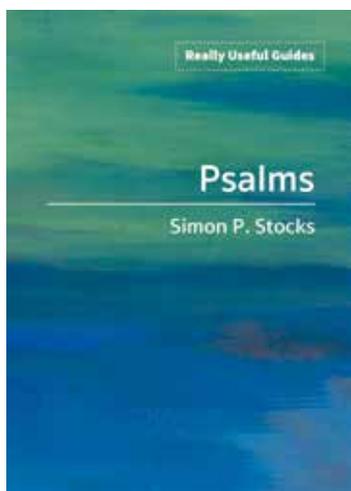
**Talk about** what you would say if someone asked you who Jesus is.

## Let's get going with Really Useful Guides to the Bible:

**Psalms:** 978 0 85746 731 7, £6.99

**Colossians and Philemon:** 978 0 85746 730 0, £5.99

**Published 21 September 2018**



## Sowing seeds and bearing fruit

Sunday 23 September marks the start of Sukkot or the Feast of the Ingathering. This festival was first mentioned in Exodus 34:22 and celebrates the harvest season. It's also the start of this year's **Messy Church £100 Appeal** when we encourage you to give back to the Messy Church network.

The first Messy Church started in 2004 and the movement became part of The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) ten years ago. It's grown enormously since then and there are now almost 4,000 Messy Churches in over 25 countries. Maybe your Messy Church has been going for a long time or perhaps you're just starting out. Wherever you're at on your messy journey, we bet you are bearing fruit and sowing seeds for the future.

Last year we asked you, and the families that attend Messy Church, just what you think of it. Over 94% of you said the format was allowing you to share the Gospel, and over half felt you were growing disciples through Messy Church.

Families, it seems, are loving your approach. Over 98% of all families responding to our survey said they felt welcome at Messy Church, and well over half (66%) are comfortable discussing their beliefs and doubts. In addition, almost all (89%) enjoy participating in Messy Church and most (68%) are continuing to read the Bible, pray together or talk about God at home.

Just like the sower in the Gospels, you are scattering seed and some of it is falling on good soil, but you'd find it hard to do this without BRF's Messy Church. Over 81% of you value being part of our network and seven in ten would struggle to do Messy Church without our input. We also know that 97% of you find our resources useful.

Equally we'd struggle to manage the Messy Church network and provide all the resources and support that we do without your help. That's why we're asking if you could give £100 a year or £8.50 a month to help keep the Messy Mission alive.

With your help, we can scatter more seeds and more families across the world will hear about Jesus and grow in faith. Now, isn't that something worth cultivating?

Find out more at [messychurch.org.uk/messy-£100-appeal](https://messychurch.org.uk/messy-£100-appeal)

# Session material: September



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18](https://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## #discipleship: individual

### Messy reflection by Jen Robertson

Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

Matthew 8:19–20 (NIV)

This is not long after the sermon on the mount, which has been followed by numerous miraculous events: a man with leprosy has been healed, a centurion's servant is well again and, after Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, their house becomes the focus for all in the town who are suffering to try to meet with Jesus to be healed. Jesus does and says such amazing things that people want to be with him and to follow him.

Into this frenzied focus on Jesus, one person expresses what many are feeling: 'I am going to follow you everywhere, wherever you go!' Jesus' reply is realistic and confronts the reality of following him. There will be no rest, no stopping, no having a break or a sabbatical; this is all go. He could have added that he will not rest until the job is done and, if the crowds around him are to follow him, that is how it will be for them too. The healings they have observed are tasters of the great healing that will take place when his loving sacrifice is fully revealed on a Sunday morning outside Jerusalem.

How do we balance this with what Jesus says just a couple of chapters later, to come to him and to find the 'unforced rhythms of grace' (*The Message*) because his burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30)? The culture in the west encourages us to take time for ourselves, to rest, but today's words of Jesus remind us that we need to work hard.

## #discipleship: team

### Messy health check

What is each person on the team most worried about? Make space to share and pray about these worries.

### Messy team theme

- How can you ensure that everything that we do and all that we say as individuals and as a team demonstrates the five core values of Messy Church?
- How are you working towards inviting people of all ages to follow the way of Jesus?
- How are you helping your Messy Church congregation to know more of the stories of people who chose to follow Jesus – the men and women – and the choices they made?
- How can you make clear that the welcome of Jesus is for everyone?

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

This session is designed to help teams share the stories of Jesus and show how the followers of Jesus had to make choices. This helps us remind people that following Jesus is not an easy choice, nor will following Jesus make our life perfect or simple, but the sharing of personal stories always invites a response because they are real.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- What is your favourite story/stories about Jesus?
- Who do you know who is a follower of Jesus?
- What shows that people are followers of Jesus?

### Take-home idea

As a family, you might like to find the stories of some people in your town who are known for helping others because they follow the way of Jesus. This may be people who help at low-cost food centres, or in family support centres, or goodwill or charity shops, counselling centres or other places. Most of the time, these people do not attract headlines, but their work truly reflects the life of Jesus. Your Messy Church leaders or minister/priest may be able to tell you some of these stories.

Gracious God, thank you so much for Jesus, who has helped us to know how to live in a way that brings your dream of heaven on earth to life. May your Holy Spirit strengthen us to choose to follow Jesus' way, even when it is hard. Amen

### Question to start and end the session

So... how do you show that you are a follower of Jesus?

# Which way? by Greg Ross

## #discipleship: extra

Hold a 'Interested in christenings?' open evening to explore what baptism is all about.

## Activities

### 1. 'Making choices' course

**You will need: materials for people to create a full-size obstacle course or maze; OR a model of an obstacle course or maze on paper**

Make an obstacle course (or use a paper one). There should be ten 'stops' along the way. (For an obstacle course, this could be something to climb over/under; for a paper maze, it could just be turning a corner.) Before people continue, they must make a difficult choice. You may like to make this even harder by offering a reward for the 'un-Jesus' choice and no prize for the 'Jesus' decision. These situations can be anything you like, but here are some suggestions to get you started:

- A new person has come to Messy Church or school and no one is sitting with them at mealtime. Do you: sit with your usual friends and ignore the new person, or go and sit with the new person?
- A parent asks you to do the dishes while you are busy watching your favourite show on TV. Do you: stop watching the show and do the dishes straight away, or say you will do it and then stay watching TV?
- It's rubbish collection day and you notice that your neighbour has forgotten to put their bins out. Do you: go and put their bins out, or do nothing about it?

**Talk about** why it is often harder to make the 'Jesus' choice. It's generally more beneficial for us to make the 'un-Jesus' choice, but more beneficial for others if we make the 'Jesus' choice. Why do you think Jesus asks us to make difficult decisions?

### 2. Prayer booklets

**You will need: small notebooks (buy in bulk from a discount store); materials to decorate them with, e.g. felt, buttons, ribbon, etc.; glue; scissors; felt-tip pens; a selection of short prayers**

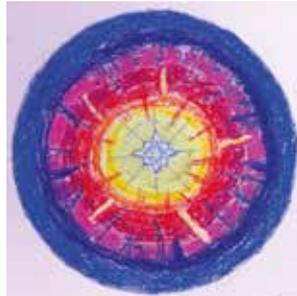
Decorate the notebooks together. Each person should include at least one prayer in their notebook (either copied or stuck in). Encourage people to take the notebooks home and continue to write in prayers they have found, or to write their own prayers.

**Talk about** the way that talking to people helps us to get to know them better. It's the same with prayer – it helps us to get to know Jesus better.

2



4



5



# Session material: September

## 3. Ready to follow

**You will need: a box of costumes or dressing-up accessories to represent different jobs (e.g. nurse, doctor, teacher, clergy, factory worker, gardener, cook, etc.); a box of items that you might use on a journey (e.g. map and compass, GPS, torch, hat, sunscreen, insect repellent, food, etc.); instant digital camera; photo frame; felt-tip pens**

Invite people to dress up in a costume of a worker they admire (or want to be) and to choose some of the things they might need if they were going to follow someone like Jesus. Take their photo on a digital camera and print it instantly and have them put it in a frame. You could invite them to either hold a sign that says 'A follower of Jesus' in the photo or to decorate the frame of the photo with similar words.

**Talk about** all the challenges that following Jesus brings for different workers. I wonder what these people might need to do better or differently if they were to follow Jesus' rules for living the way of God.

## 4. Circular paths

**You will need: paper plates; pencils; pens; coloured tissue paper; glue**

Make your paper plate into your own circular path or even a maze. You can do this freehand or, if you're not sure where to start, lightly draw concentric circles on the plate in pencil. Go over these with pen, leaving gaps to create a path. When you have finished, you could make your path/maze colourful by gluing bits of torn-up tissue paper to the paper plate.

**Talk about** the paths that we see in nature, e.g. a seagull's footprints in the sand, or a snake's trail, or human footprints. I wonder why people follow lines or paths. Ask if there are any people who they follow. What path or line did Jesus follow?

## 5. Nest

**You will need: paper bowls; twigs (or shredded paper); grass (or tissue paper); craft feathers; other things to decorate your nest such as shiny bottle tops, silver foil, beads, etc.; glue**

Jesus said that 'foxes and birds have nests', but he didn't have anywhere to rest. Make a nest out of the materials provided. Make it look homely by adding decorative items. The Australian Satin Bowerbird makes nests decorated with blue things. Remember that your nest should look like a safe place to bring up little birds.

**Talk about** what makes your life safe and comfortable. Jesus is saying that he gave these things up for the sake of God's kingdom. Would you be okay with giving up your safety and comfort?

## 6. I (heart) Jesus bracelet

**You will need: beads with the letters J E S U S; heart beads; other beads to decorate; thread; clips**

Gather some beads with letters to spell the name Jesus and a heart, as well as other beads, thread and a clip. Invite the participants to create a bracelet that will fit around their wrist or ankle that has J E S U S and a heart symbol spread among other beads.

**Talk about** what people love or like about Jesus and how they can copy or imitate those things in their lives.

## 7. The ten best ways to live

**You will need: small, smooth rocks or stones; felt-tip pens in colours that will show up on the stones; a list of the ten commandments; drawstring bags (optional)**

Invite people to say how many of the ten best ways (or ten commandments) they have heard or know of. Encourage them to draw a symbol of each rule on a stone or rock that will help them remember the rule. Encourage outside-the-box thinking! If you have them available, pack them up in a small drawstring bag to take home.

**Talk about** whether you think these ten rules are good or bad. Will they be easy to follow or hard to follow?

## 8. Palm cross

**You will need: recycled timber; band saw or jig saw; sandpaper; beeswax; cloth; hand drill; string or keyrings; safety equipment**

Ensure this activity is carefully supervised and you have safety equipment. Using a saw, roughly cut some crosses out of the recycled timber (you may want to do this in advance). Provide sandpaper for people to smooth down the rough edges. Use beeswax afterwards to rub into the timber and bring out the grain/patterns.

When you are done, drill a small hole in the top of your cross and attach it to some string or a keyring. Encourage people to hold the crosses when they are praying, or when they feel worried or sad.

# Which way? by Greg Ross

**Talk about** the choice that Jesus had to make. Would he run away from Jerusalem and disappear or would he stay in Jerusalem and risk being arrested and put to death to show people that God's love is stronger than death? Invite people to think about how difficult a choice that would have been for Jesus. Ask if they would make the same choice that Jesus did – to go the hard way of love or go the easy way and run away?

## 9. Choice cards

**You will need:** lots of blank business cards; pens; felt-tip pens

Give each person a handful of business cards. Turn each business card into a panel of a cartoon, drawing one picture on each card. Draw an everyday situation on the first card, which ends with a choice. (For example, someone is being bullied at school or the workplace; someone drops their wallet in the street and doesn't notice; you accidentally break someone's favourite mug, etc. See if people can come up with their own!) On the next panels, draw at least two different choices you could make. What might happen after this? What are the consequences? Is there a 'Jesus' choice you could make?

You could stick your cartoon down on a piece of paper, but it might be better to keep each card loose, so that you can swap out different panels to change the story.

**Talk about** times you have had to make a choice – was it easy or difficult? These might generate lots of discussion, so you could take them home or get them out again at the meal.

## 10. Jesus is my number one!

**You will need:** air-dry clay or plastic modelling clay; A5 sheets of heavy cardboard (perhaps cut out from old boxes); glue; pens

Invite people to create a model of their own hand, with the index finger pointing up, the other three fingers folded into the palm and the thumb across, to make the 'number one' symbol. The model hand can be glued on the heavy card and the words written in front or around it – 'Jesus is my number one'.

**Talk about** what the number one thing in your life is. Is it Jesus?

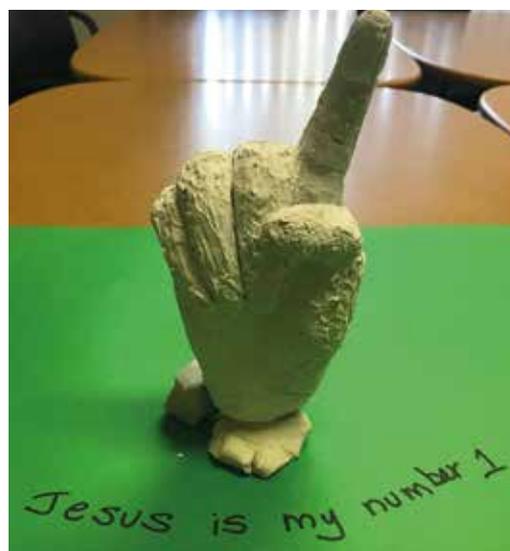
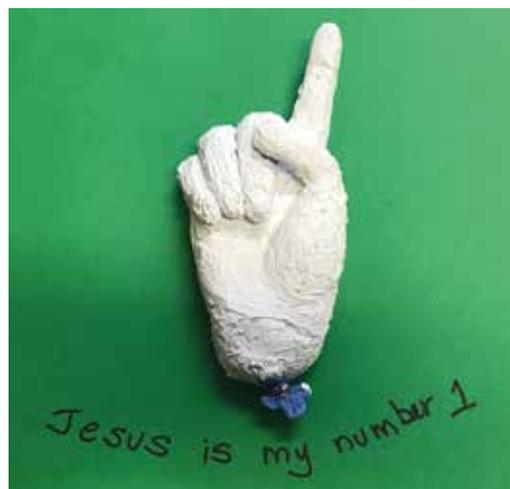
7



8



10



# Session material: September

## Which way? by Greg Ross

### Celebration

Read Matthew 8:19–20. We do not know the name of the person who came to tell Jesus he wanted to follow him. There are other ‘teachers of the law’ named in other places, but Matthew does not name this particular teacher. Jesus makes it really clear that anyone who chooses to try to live his way is not going to be rewarded with money or homes or comfort.

Each town or country will have people who have given themselves to the work of Jesus in one way or another, which has changed people’s lives. If you know any, tell a powerful story of local people who chose to follow the costly way of Jesus and who, in turn, changed lives. If you do not know of anyone who can tell a local story, there are thousands of stories to choose from: e.g. St Francis and St Clare.

This celebration is a chance to tell the story of your local Jesus-follower in pictures on the screen, or with period dressing-up costumes and props, and to remind people that God is still calling people to follow the way of Jesus today.

Once you have dramatised or told the story, hand out Post-it notes to people and invite them to write the name or names of people who they know have chosen to follow the way of Jesus in their town or family, or from the Bible, or from a movie or book.

At the front, on a white board or a large piece of card, have two sections where you write the words:

‘These people chose to follow the way of Jesus.’

‘I choose to follow the way of Jesus.’

Invite people to come and stick their Post-it notes on the board with the name of someone they recognise as being a follower of Jesus in the first section. If they want to say they are a follower of Jesus, invite them to write their own name on a Post-it note and stick it in the second section. Make it clear that this is optional.

As people move to do this, you may like to start a song.

### Prayer

Thank you, loving God, for calling all people to follow the way of Jesus. Help us to make wise choices in the way we live and speak so that we show others how to follow Jesus. Amen

### Song suggestions

- ‘Sing a new song to the Lord’ – Fischy Music
- ‘I, the Lord of sea and sky’ – Daniel L. Schutte
- ‘I’ll follow you, Lord’ – Blair Jereza and Rhea Bernardez
- ‘Every breath I take’ – Hillsong
- ‘I will follow him’ – from *Sister Act*
- ‘I sing a song of the saints of God’ – Lesbia Scott

### Meal suggestion

Pizza with a choice of salad or steamed veggies. Fruit crumble for dessert, with a choice of custard or ice cream.



# Session material: October

## Safe and sound by Becky May



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18](https://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## #discipleship: individual

### Messy reflection by Greg Ross

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering round to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.’

Then Jesus told them this parable: ‘Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent.’

Luke 15:1–7 (NIV)

A while ago, I heard the story of a young police officer who decided that ‘moving homeless people on’ was not the best solution for the people or the police force. All it did was transfer the people and their problems to another space. So, hearkening back to a lesson learned at home, church and Sunday school, he decided to go and sit with one homeless man across from the city precinct. At first, he was treated with distrust, but each lunchtime he went back, took his lunch and enough for the homeless guy. Gradually, trust was built, the man allowed him to look after his treasures while he took a shower every couple of days and then eventually, he was able to make the transition into a small home of his own. It turned out that this homeless man had once been a husband and father and was well educated, but through a series of events, he had become ill and homeless.

At first, the other police officers complained and teased the young police officer, but after several months, this act of searching and being with those who had previously been considered ‘the lost’ became the standard practice for police officers within that region.

It took lots of courage for the young police officer to make the first move, and perhaps more courage for the homeless man to trust people in uniform who had previously treated him with contempt.

The witness of Jesus sitting with the people who were held in contempt by the religious leaders of his day echoes so strongly with this young police officer. They felt safe with Jesus, and they longed for acceptance and the embrace of God’s grace. This is not an easy task, but it is still one that each follower of Jesus is called to. How might our Messy Church reach out and welcome those who need acceptance and the embrace of grace?

## #discipleship: team

### Messy health check

How is the safety at your Messy Church? Do your risk assessments need renewing? Are you TOO safe?

### Messy team theme

- How has God rescued you from harm?
- How do we share our stories with others who are part of our Messy Church family?
- How does our Messy Church help others to feel safe?

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

This is perhaps one of the most well-known parables that Jesus told, and yet so often we focus on the little fluffy lamb without grasping the power of the story. Through this session, we explore some of the reasons why we, like the sheep, can wander off and get lost and how God loves us so much that he came to rescue us, just as the shepherd valued his one lost lamb enough to leave the 99 others safe and go looking for it.

Through this session, we recognise some of the things that help us to feel safe and celebrate the truth that it is God who ultimately keeps us safe and sound, free from all fears and dangers, exploring the way that he, like the shepherd, is actively involved in our lives, protecting us from harm.

# Session material: October

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- Have you ever been lost?
- Where do you feel safe?
- How does God keep you safe?

### Take-home idea

At this time of year, when many people like to focus on dangers and things that make you feel scared, talk as a family about what things help to make you feel safe. Is there something you can do to help other people feel safe? Perhaps sort out some unwanted clothes, blankets or toys to donate to a local homelessness project or women's refuge.

Father God, thank you that you hold us safe in your arms.  
Amen

### Question to start and end the session

So... how do you know when you are safe and sound?

## #discipleship: extra

Invite everyone to a pumpkin carving evening and design some fun 'holy' ones.

# 1



# 2



## Activities

### 1. Sheep pen

**You will need: newspapers; masking tape; cuddly toy sheep**

Roll the newspaper and secure with masking tape to form paper 'sticks'. Attach these together to create a freestanding, secure sheep pen in which to place the cuddly toy sheep. How long can the pen remain standing?

**Talk about** the way the shepherd keeps the sheep in the pen to keep them safe from harm.

### 2. Edible shepherds

**You will need: gingerbread men; candy canes; marshmallows; icing and icing pens; paper plates; plastic knives**

Roll the icing flat and cut a coat shape and head covering from it, to clothe the shepherd. Use the icing pens to add further details to the shepherd. Attach a marshmallow sheep and candy cane shepherd's crook.

**Talk about** the shepherd and the different things that he does to look after his sheep. How does God look after us?

### 3. Sheep money boxes

**You will need: small clean plastic drinks bottles (with large lids); cotton wool; glue; black paper; googly eyes; scissors**

Cut a large slot in the top of the drinks bottle, perhaps before the session – it should be big enough to slot coins into. Cover the whole bottle with cotton wool balls. Cut out a sheep face shape from the black card and attach to the bottle lid, before adding googly eyes to its face. Make sure that the coin slot remains uncovered and easily accessible, and that the lid can continue to be unscrewed so money can be taken out.

**Talk about** how we keep things safe that are valuable to us.

### 4. Shepherd's crook

**You will need: old wooden walking sticks; marker pens or acrylic paints and brushes**

Use the paint or marker pens to draw symbols on the walking stick and transform it into a shepherd's crook. These could

# Safe and sound by Becky May

be images relating to sheep and shepherding, or the parable itself, or perhaps images which represent what it means to be safe and sound. You may prefer to complete this in small groups or families, rather than a walking stick for each person.

**Talk about** how the shepherd uses his crook to rescue the sheep and guide them on their way.

## 5. Lego marble maze

**You will need: Lego base boards and bricks; marbles or small balls for younger children**

Use the Lego to construct a maze on the base board, testing out whether you can roll the marble or ball through the maze as you do so. Swap mazes with someone else to test out one another's mazes – can you get the marble all the way through?

**Talk about** a time when we felt or were lost. How were we found again?

## 6. Safe in his arms



**You will need: photos of members of your group or a camera and facilities to print on site (with appropriate permission); scissors; glue sticks; large sheet of paper with 'arms' template (download online)**

As a prayer, cut out a photo of yourself and add it to the large picture, showing that you are held in the arms of God, the shepherd. Take a few moments to sit by the artwork as it is made to reflect on what this means.

**Talk about** how it feels to know that God is holding us safe in his arms.

## 7. Sheep pebbles

**You will need: round, smooth pebbles; acrylic paints; paintbrushes**

Choose a smooth, round pebble and use the acrylic paints to create a pebble sheep, waiting for each layer to dry as you add the sheep's face and fleece. When finished, you could either take your pebble home with you as a reminder of the story or hide it somewhere in the local area for someone else to find. If you choose to do this, you could use your Messy Church Facebook page to share the news of the hidden sheep pebbles and invite families to upload their photos when they find one.

**Talk about** why you think the sheep got lost. What different reasons do we have for finding ourselves far from God?

4



5



6



7



8



# Session material: October

## 8. Wool felting

**You will need: natural wool fibres; felting needles; felting base brush or polystyrene block (felting kits are available commercially or components can be bought individually); small cookie cutter**

Ensure this activity is supervised. Place the cookie cutter on top of the base brush or block and fill with the wool fibres. Use the needle to begin punching the fibres closer together. Continue until you have a clear shape and remove from the cookie cutter to finish off the edges. (This process takes some time, and participants may prefer to come and have a go at a small amount, rather than completing the entire task individually. There are a number of tutorial videos available online.)

**Talk about** the value of the sheep both today and at the time of the story. For its wool, meat and sacrificial use, this sheep was precious and valuable to the shepherd.

## 9. Sheep sensory bins

**You will need: a number of plastic toy sheep, each placed in a separate tray or container filled with assorted sensory items, such as: dried rice, jelly, cornflour and water gloop, water beads, leaves, etc.; wet wipes or sink to wash hands in**

Use your hands to recover the sheep from each sensory tray in turn, making sure you clean your hands in between each tray to keep the trays clean and not muddled together.

**Talk about** what the different trays could represent. Where do you think the sheep wandered off to?

## 10. Welcome home!

**You will need: large roll of paper; selection of marker pens or paints and paintbrushes; glue; scissors; various decorations or ribbons**

Roll out a length of paper and write in large lettering: 'Welcome home!' Work together to colour and decorate the banner with the pens or paints and stick on the other decorations, before hanging your completed banner on the wall.

**Talk about** how the shepherd celebrated when he found his lost sheep. What does it mean for us to be welcomed home?

## Celebration

Gather together and explain that you are going to share a story. Try to memorise the text so that you can focus on telling the story, and mime actions at the appropriate points.

There once was a shepherd, let's call him Jack, who had 100 sheep. He cared for them all day and all night and it would be fair to say that living with all these sheep left a rather sheepy smell in the air!

Every morning, Jack would welcome the sheep out into the field: 'Good morning, Dolly! Hey there, Shaun. Primrose, you're looking rather lovely this morning.' (*Mime greeting each of the sheep and 'directing them' before you.*)

'Come on then, Sally. Terrance, stop eating that! Now then, Kevin, where's Kevin got to this morning? Ahh, there you are, hiding in the back of the barn. Come on, out you go!'

And every day began with a hunt for Kevin, who could squeeze himself into the smallest of spaces in the hope that Jack would leave him to sleep in late.

Then came time for Jack's lunch. Just before he could sit down and eat, Jack would do a quick head count: '1. Timmy, 2. Fluffy, 3. Crystal... 67. Larry, 68. Shelley, 69. Tulip... 98. Thor, 99. Flash, 100. Kevin... Where's Kevin gone now?'

So, every day, before he could enjoy his lunch, Jack would have to search the field to look for Kevin, and every day Jack would eventually find Kevin... tucking into his sandwiches.

In the afternoon, as the sun began to go down, Jack would lead the sheep along to the stream so they could have a long, cool drink before heading up to bed. Once again, he would count the sheep into the line, checking they were all safe and sound.

'Right, Timmy, you take the lead. 2. Fluffy, you follow on, 3. Crystal... 58. Jemima, 59. Sophie, 60. Rosie... 98. Thor, 99. Flash, 100. Kevin... Where's Kevin gone now?'

Now most days, Jack would find Kevin after a few minutes checking the field. After all, he knew all Kevin's favourite places to go. He was usually head-down in a patch of clover, munching away. But not today. Today was different.

Jack scouted the field, checking all Kevin's favourite clover spots, but there was no sign of him. He checked along the line

# Safe and sound by Becky May

of sheep in case he was among his friends, but he wasn't there either. Jack hurried across the field and into the next one, searching high and low as he followed the footpath, down to the gate at the bottom. Still no sign of Kevin. Jack hopped over the gate out to the country lane that ran beside the field.

'Kevin, are you there?' Jack followed the lane down towards the rocky caves at the bottom. 'Kevin! Can you hear me?'

Jack peered into the dark cave. Suddenly, quietly, Jack heard the faintest bleating coming from further within. Following the sound, Jack hurried through the cave, being careful not to bump into anything in the dark. Eventually, he spotted the glistening eyes of his rather frightened little lost sheep.

'Kevin! Kevin, I found you!'

Kevin bounced over to Jack and licked him right on the face, so glad to be found again. Jack wiped the slobber from his face, lifted Kevin up on to his shoulders and carried him back up the hill towards home.

The first person to tell this story wasn't me, but Jesus, who wanted to tell people about a shepherd who loved his sheep so much that he would do whatever it took to find the one who went away.

I wonder who the sheep in Jesus' story could be... I wonder how he got lost... I wonder who the shepherd may be...

## Prayer

Father God, we thank you that no matter what we do or where we go, you are always with us, looking out to keep us safe and sound. Amen

## Song suggestions

'The baa baa song' (He's the good shepherd) – Sibling Harmony

'I've lost my sheep' – Chris Matthewman

'Shepherd' – Amanda Cook

## Meal suggestion

Shepherd's pie and green beans followed by ice cream.

9



10



## Hi Messy Friends,

**My name is Cecil the Lost Sheep. Would you like me to join you at Messy Church in October? Well, just head to the Messy Church website or facebook page, click on the link and I'll send you:**

**A story for the Celebration. It's a powerpoint packed with crackingly exciting pictures.**

**Activity sheets to take home. Some activities measured 11 on Greg the test pigs fun-O-meter.**

**Stencils of giant sheep trees and rocks. Make props for a story-telling extravaganza.**

**See you at Messy Church**



# Session material: November



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## #discipleship: individual

### Messy reflection by Becky May

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.' And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16 (NIV)

Is there a better passage to explore in a Messy Church context? Messy Church is a wonderful place for bringing the children to Jesus, but before we all pat ourselves on the back too much, let's run a quick health check on our approach, against Jesus' teaching here. Some questions to think honestly about:

- Do we welcome the children to Jesus so that they can encounter him for themselves?
- Do we try to cut down the gospel into 'kid's meal' portions, or do we share a feast together?
- Do we make our apologies for mentioning God, or do we share our excitement at what he can do for all of us?
- Do we hold the control as to what we teach, or are we prepared to listen to, and learn from, the children?
- Is there anything else we need to change?

When we imprint the words of this passage on our hearts, Messy Church becomes not only a wonderful place for bringing the children to Jesus, but rather a wonderful place to see this whole passage lived out. In among the glitter glue and paint, building bricks and jelly, our whole Messy Church community can enter into God's kingdom in play, joy and wonder, when we become children sharing together in a journey of exploration and discovery.

In this place where we can all become God's children, we learn together, from one another, hearing those words of truth that God speaks to each of us and sharing together in his blessing. Seize the joy and wonder and enjoy being a child!

## #discipleship: team

### Messy health check

Who was the last child each team member took time to listen to?

### Messy team theme

- Who do you need to really listen to?
- How can you be a better listener?
- What can you learn from the different people who come to your Messy Church?

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

Since the mid 1990s, South Africans have been involved in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Institute for Healing of Memories. Through this work of healing, justice and reconciliation, the importance of listening and silence in the practice of remembrance has been realised. Healing begins with the affirmation and acknowledgement that our stories have been received by others who have listened compassionately.

As we explore healing, remembering and listening, we look at Jesus' interaction with the children in Mark's gospel. Jesus uses the children as a model of vulnerability, trust and openness – as the way to receive the kingdom of God. As we focus on listening, we realise that sometimes we need to look (or hear) deeper than what is apparent on the surface, and that we need to ensure that we listen to everybody (including the children), not just the most articulate.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- Which people (or pets) do you like to remember?
- How many different ways can you listen?
- How does Jesus listen to you?

### Take-home idea

Make an effort to really listen to and hear what other people in your family or friendship group are saying. This will take a few moments in your day. Remember that sometimes people can't use our mother tongue or know our language as fluently as we can, so they may use other ways to tell us things. Pay attention and listen well. Try to understand, even if you don't necessarily agree with them. Show them that you have listened.

# Listening and learning by Jean Pienaar

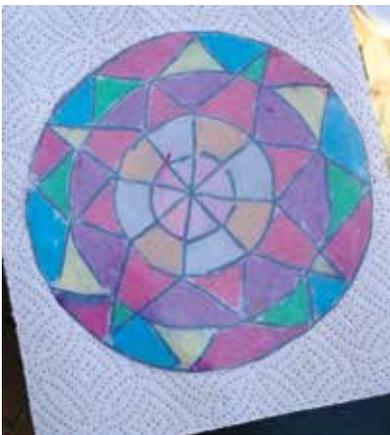
## Question to start and end the session

So... why is it important to listen?

## #discipleship: extra

Have a quiet prayer space one afternoon to remember and celebrate people you miss.

2



3



4



## Activities

### 1. Blindfold trail

**You will need: household items to make a simple obstacle course (e.g. rope to walk along, chairs or a table to crawl under, ladder, flat on the ground, to step over, cardboard boxes or a pop-up tunnel to crawl through, etc.); blindfolds**

Construct a simple obstacle course. Have one person blindfolded and another person to guide the blindfolded person through the course.

**Talk about** how it feels to be completely dependent on others. Sometimes we have to trust and rely on others to show us the way.

### 2. Rose window



**You will need: printout of rose/stained-glass windows (download online) or blank pages and different circular shapes to give the circular outlines; oil pastels; oil (vegetable oil is fine); cloth; newspaper; scissors**

Draw and/or colour in the rose window using oil pastels. On the reverse of the paper, wipe with an oiled cloth. Cut out your rose window and place it in a special place – a window works well. Make sure you have permission as the window might get a bit oily.

**Talk about** the fact that rose windows (and often stained-glass windows) always have a focus or centre. Jesus brought the children into the centre. What is at the centre of our lives?

### 3. Music making

**You will need: a few glasses with different colours of water at different levels; water in jugs; different food colourings; wooden spoons**

Pour some coloured water into a glass. Gently tap the glass with the handle end of a wooden spoon to hear a note. Take another glass or bottle (possibly of a different shape to make it more challenging) and try to fill it with the correct amount of water so that the note you make is the same.

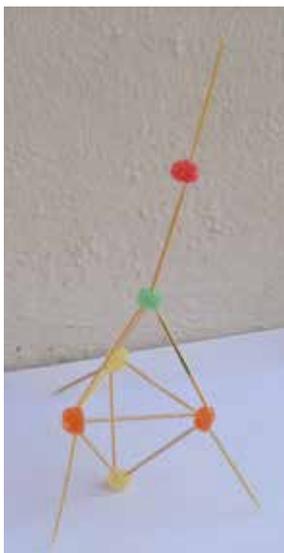
**Talk about** the challenges of really listening and hearing.

# Session material: November

5



6



## 4. Butterfly pretzels

**You will need:** regular pretzel shapes; straight pretzel sticks; cream crackers; cheese spread; knife for spreading

Spread some cheese spread in a line down the centre of the cream cracker. Break off a piece of the straight pretzel to form the body, and use the curvy pretzels to form the wings of a butterfly.

**Talk about** how butterflies are vulnerable to their life cycle; they change and adapt as necessary. How can we be less set in our ways, and more open to listening to others and even learning from children?

## 5. Gratitude tree

**You will need:** cardboard cut-outs of leaf shapes; hole punch; wool or string; felt-tip pens; tree or branch (outside if you have access to one, otherwise bring one in a pot)

On a leaf cut-out, write the name of someone who has been special in your life and who you are grateful for having known. Hang this on a tree branch.

**Talk about** special people (and pets) who have been in your life at some stage, just like leaves on a deciduous tree which are only there for a season. As you write the name/s on a leaf shape and hang them on the tree (or branch), use the opportunity to quietly thank God for the impact they have had in your life.

## 6. Tower challenge

**You will need:** jelly tots or mini marshmallows; toothpicks

In small groups, use six jelly tots, or mini marshmallows, and toothpicks to try to design the tallest tower.

**Talk about** the challenges of working together and listening to other people, especially if you don't agree with them or think their contribution is valuable. Why did Jesus bring the children to the centre?

# Listening and learning by Jean Pienaar

## 7. Coded messages



**You will need: encrypted messages for people to try to decipher (download online); paper; pens**

See if you can discover what the coded messages say! Once you have done this, write your own messages.

**Talk about** how sometimes people hide what they are really trying to say, especially in difficult situations or if they are feeling uncomfortable. We sometimes need to look deeper to see what people are really meaning.

## 8. Masks

**You will need: paper plates; scissors; felt-tip pens; coloured paper; glue; stickers; hole punch; wool or elastic**

Clowns and actors use masks to try to pretend they are someone else. Cut out and decorate a paper plate to create your own fun mask. Once you have finished, punch a hole at either side and thread the wool or elastic into the hole so that you can wear it.

**Talk about** how we can hide behind masks because that is safer and we feel less vulnerable. Talk about what masks we wear, and how Jesus welcomes us and loves us for who we truly are – the person behind the mask!

## 9. Clay play

**You will need: clay or playdough; tablecloth to protect the table**

Use the clay to mould something that makes you feel sad. Then change the clay into something that makes you feel happy.

**Talk about** how listening to others explore their journeys helps them in the healing process. Talk about how hard it is sometimes to express things in words. By listening to the children, Jesus showed compassion and understanding, and the disciples learned something too!

## 10. Sign language



**You will need: a printout of sign language (download online)**

Learn how to sign your name or other simple words in sign language. If you have someone in your Messy Church who already knows sign language, they could teach whole sentences.

**Talk about** how not everyone can hear using their ears. Deaf people use sign language to communicate, so they can participate in a conversation. Talk about how you can still listen even if you are deaf or hard of hearing.

# 8



# 9



# Session material: November

## Listening and learning by Jean Pienaar

### Celebration



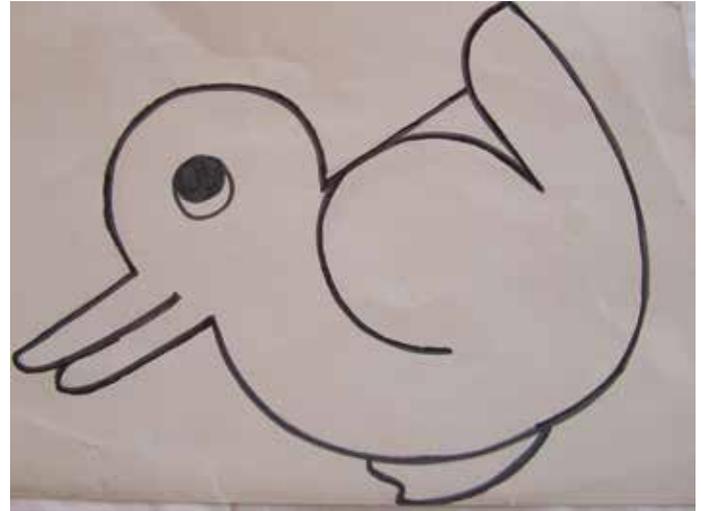
**You will need: a printout of the duck/rabbit image large enough for people to see (download online)**

People used to go to Jesus for healing, seeking his touch – either for physical healing or emotional healing. Nowadays, people still ask Jesus to heal them. Sometimes we have painful memories or we really miss someone and that makes us feel sad. When we talk about our sadness with someone else, we often feel better. By really listening to someone else share their story, we can help in their healing process (and often our own too!).

In the story we have explored today, people brought children to Jesus for him to bless them. The disciples were annoyed, but Jesus welcomed the children. He put them in the centre, made them the focus of the lesson. Let's have all the children (big and small) come to the centre. *Ask the children:* How does this make you feel? *Encourage responses, and repeat to show you have heard/understood. It is important not to judge the responses, but to figuratively 'hold' them.*

Jesus told the crowd that had gathered that they needed to receive the kingdom of God as a little child if they wanted to experience it. Now, let's ask the crowd (*all the others*): How does this comment of Jesus make you feel? *Again, encourage responses and echo the comment to show you have heard/understood.*

And so, Jesus was embracing the children and encouraging the adults to do the same. He was encouraging the people to acknowledge the children (in a culture where they were often regarded as insignificant) and to listen to them and to learn from them.



Look at this picture. What is it? (*Some will say rabbit, and others will say duck. Turn it a little so that both images are seen.*) Is it a duck or a rabbit? Who is right?

Both are right! It all depends on your perspective. Just because people see or hear different things doesn't necessarily mean one person is right and the other person is wrong. We can all bring something of value to each other. Listening and learning is really important.

### Prayer

*Practise sign language for the words 'listen' and 'thank you'. As the prayer is read out, use the sign language when the word is mentioned:*

**Thank you**, God, for the children and we pray your blessing on them.

**Thank you**, God, for the adults who look after the children and care for them, and we pray that you would bless them too.

We pray that we might have **ears** (*point to ears*) and **eyes** (*point to eyes*) to **listen**, and a patient **heart** (*point to heart*) to really hear when people try to communicate with us.

### Song suggestions

'Let the children come' (Hillsong Kids)

'Be still and know' – Steven Curtis Chapman

'Telling our stories' (Fischy Music)

### Meal suggestion

Fish fingers and chips, with green salad. Jelly and custard for dessert.

# Session material: December

## God so loved the world by Jen Robertson



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18](https://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

### #discipleship: individual

#### Messy reflection by Jean Pienaar

For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son. God gave his Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world guilty, but to save the world through him.

John 3:16–17 (ICB)

This well-known passage speaks of three truths – the universal character of God’s love, its sacrificial nature and its eternal purpose. It also shows us the link between loving and giving, and that love enables giving.

God’s love is unconditional, *agape* love, which expects nothing in return. God loves us because that is the core of God’s nature. God is the essence of love. It is only because God loved the world so much that he could give his only Son, Jesus. C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Four Loves*, ‘To love at all is to be vulnerable.’ Giving love exposes our vulnerability, and God illustrated the epitome of love, vulnerability and sacrifice in the incarnation of Christ as a dependent baby.

Jesus declares his love for us at our very best and also our very worst. God is in our corner and is the Saviour to a world filled with broken and desperate people, measuring self-worth based on the size of a Twitter following or number of Facebook friends. In spite of what the world wants us to believe, we only need to be known by God. Although we feel exposed through our weaknesses and failings, we are never rejected. So there is really no need to self-promote, compare or compete – we are highly esteemed by the Most High. We are worthy because God thinks so. We need to accept and believe that we are given to bless others – in our wholeness, holiness and holiness.

As members of the Messy Church team, we are givers – of our time, of our talents, of our Messy selves. But, we need to love ourselves, even our broken selves, if we are to give of ourselves to others. As Ann Voskamp observed, ‘The art of living is believing there is enough love in you, that you are loved enough by him, to be made into love to give’ (*The Broken Way*, Zondervan, 2016).

### #discipleship: team

#### Messy health check

What will you, as a team, celebrate most about the year that’s reaching its end?

#### Messy team theme

- Nicodemus came at night to talk to Jesus. In what ways can we be more open about our relationship with Jesus?
- Why do you think John 3:16 is so well known, whereas verse 17 is less often quoted?
- What amazes you most about the biblical narrative of the Christmas story?

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

This session gives space in the busyness of Christmas to stop and consider the enormity of God sending his Son because he loved the whole world. His Son, who would live, heal, teach, welcome, care, die, rise again and return to heaven for each of us. As we reflect on this story, we pray that the depth, width and height of God’s love would be known more deeply by each of us.

### #discipleship: families

#### Mealtime card

- If you could give a present to everyone at this table, what would you give them?
- If you could be one of the characters in the Christmas story, which one would you be and why?
- How will you include Jesus more in your Christmas celebrations this year?

# Session material: December

## Take-home idea

If you are holding this Messy Church at the start of Advent, encourage families to create a 'reverse' Advent box. Have a box in your home and each day add something to it that a foodbank (or equivalent) would like to receive, for example tins of food, sanitary products, packet food, toothpaste, etc. If you are running this Messy Church later in the month, you could have a 'reverse' Christmas box to fill during the school holidays and collect items for the same purpose. This will help us remember that God's love revealed at Christmas is for all, including those who need help just now in our communities.

## Question to start and end the session

So... what gift does the world need today?

## #discipleship: extra

Join in a local charity's Christmas outreach to deprived families one afternoon or evening.

4



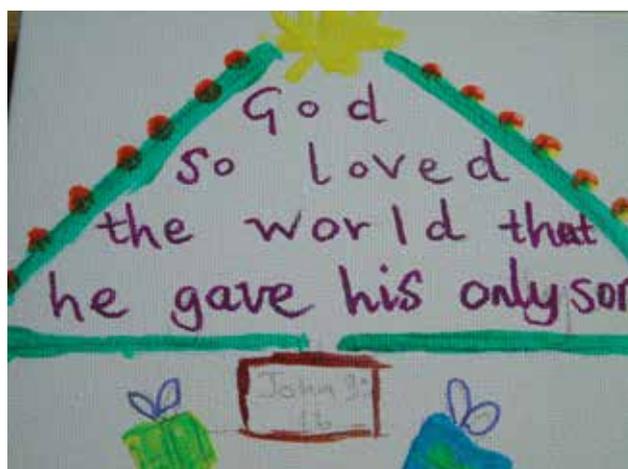
6



7



8



2



3



# God so loved the world by Jen Robertson

## Activities

### 1. Minute to win it

**You will need:** lots of Post-it notes; a timer

You have one minute to stick as many Post-it notes as you can on your friend, parent, sibling, grandparent, etc. You might like to make this into a competition by recording scores.

**Talk about** how we use Post-its to send messages. What is the message God sent us at Christmas?

### 2. Blackboard love

**You will need:** four pieces of MDF; enough rolls of blackboard self-adhesive film to cover the size of MDF you have purchased; chalk pens

Write the letters L O V E on the boards, one letter on each board in large bubble letters. Decorate the letters with words and pictures that express how you feel about the love God showed at Christmas by sending his Son to be with us.

**Talk about** why sending Jesus is such a big expression of God's love.

### 3. Christmas tree decorations

**You will need:** wooden curtain rings; thin tinsel thread (red, gold and green)

Wrap three curtain rings with the tinsel, each one a different colour. Leave a piece of thread at the start which you can use to tie the completed decoration to a tree.

**Talk about** the three different colours of decoration and how they remind us of God's love for us at Christmas. Red for his sacrifice, green for his gift of eternal life and yellow for his kingship.

### 4. Nativity story stones

**You will need:** smooth (but not shiny) stones or pebbles (available at most garden centres/DIY shops); thin black marker pens; thicker coloured pens; acrylic paint; thin paintbrushes

Take nine pebbles/stones per person and draw the outlines of: a baby, a sheep, a shepherd, the wise men, gifts, the stable, a star, an angel and Mary and Joseph. Then colour them in with

the coloured pens or the paints. Use the stones to tell the story of how Jesus arrived in the world.

**Talk about** the story together.

### 5. Build a giant Bethlehem

**You will need:** cardboard boxes; scissors; pens; sticky tape

Make a cardboard version of Bethlehem: houses, inns, stables... what else?

**Talk about** the incredible event that took place in this little town. What would you have seen, heard and experienced if you had lived there in that time, on that night?

### 6. Christmas tiles

**You will need:** cheap square white ceramic tiles; mosaic tiles (can be bought online); PVA glue; glue spreaders

Choose a range of mosaic tiles and create an image on the white tile that you think best represents God's love revealed at Christmas.

**Talk about** what you made. Why did God have to come and live among us as one of us to show us his love?

### 7. Stable decoration

**You will need:** jumbo craft sticks; glue gun; coloured marker pens; sparkly thread or string; scissors

Cut three craft sticks in half. Use three of the halves to make Mary, Joseph and Jesus. Use two of the remaining halves for the side of the stable, and three full sticks for the roof and ground. Glue everything together with the glue gun (be careful of the hot glue), and press it together until it's dry. Tie the sparkly thread/string around the join of the roof, and write on the two sticks that make the roof, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.'

**Talk about** how God could fit into a feeding trough in a stable. That is a lot of love, for God the king of the universe to become a tiny baby. Why did he do that?



# God so loved the world by Jen Robertson

## Celebration

If your venue is suitable, start off by having an indoor snowball fight, whether you are celebrating Christmas in the sunshine or in the rain (or something in between). Indoor snowballs are easily purchased online or in discount stores. Split your congregation into two and create a barrier between the two teams that can't be crossed (a chalk line, a strip of masking tape, etc.) The aim of the game is to have no snowballs left on your side of the line when time up is called. Have fun!

The Christmas story shows us how much God loves everyone in the world. Have your cardboard Bethlehem and your LOVE blackboards displayed at the front of your celebration if you can. As you tell the following story, draw large pictures to accompany what you are saying; a flip chart works well. If you are uncomfortable doing this yourself, invite someone else who is more confident at drawing to do the pictures while you speak. However, it is more effective if you talk and draw the story (don't just hold up pre-prepared pictures as this is not really the idea. It may be helpful to practise beforehand.) The numbers indicate when you start a new piece of paper.

God so loved the world (1. Draw a globe with vague shapes of the continents) that he sent his only Son (add a big arrow to point out where Bethlehem is on your large globe) as a tiny baby (2. Draw a baby's face). God loves little people, tiny people who can't even speak or walk or talk yet! There was no room for the baby and his mum and dad in any of the places they tried to stay (3. Draw a 'no entry' sign) so they ended up having to stay in a stable with the animals, using the hay and straw for a bed. It was smelly, and cold (4. Draw a stable with Jesus in the manger, cattle too if you want). God loves people who have no home, who find themselves strangers in countries and towns that they don't know, who have nowhere to call home.

Some people came to visit this new baby. There were shepherds up on the hills behind Bethlehem (5. Draw a hill and a night sky with shepherds and sheep) who were looking after their sheep, when suddenly a huge number of angels appeared in the sky (draw lots of angels), singing songs of praise to God (add some musical notes) and telling the shepherds to go to Bethlehem and find this baby wrapped in cloths in a manger. The shepherds ran down the hill to the town (6. Draw the shepherds running down the hill) and found the baby in the manger just as the angels had said (7. Draw the stable, the manger, the baby, Joseph and Mary and the shepherds). No

one really liked shepherds, no one trusted them, they were outcasts, they were rough and ready. God loves people who feel like outcasts, who no one else wants to spend time with. God loves people on the outside.

There were some other people trying to get to Bethlehem. They were following a star (8. Draw a large shiny star); they had been following it for a long, long time! They were wise men (draw three wise men following the star) who understood stars. They knew that this one was special, so when it stopped they went into the place where Jesus was (9. Draw Mary and Joseph with one of them holding the baby, with the three wise men kneeling down). They gave Jesus presents – gold, myrrh and frankincense (draw in the gifts). The wise men were from far away, from a different country from Mary and Joseph; they spoke a different language, they looked different, they believed different things. God loves everyone in the whole world; there is no one outside his love. God sent Jesus so that everyone could believe in him and be with him always. He didn't come to make us feel bad or guilty. He came to save us, to bring us into his family (10. Draw lots and lots of people with a cross in the middle).

That is very good news!

## Prayer

Stand around the large world map you made during the activities, which should be covered in prayers for the world. Invite four or five people to sit nearer the map and to choose one prayer each to read out. After each prayer is read, all join in with this refrain: Come, Lord Jesus!

## Song suggestions

'Seed of hope' – Alison Davies and Heather Price

'Jesus, little baby' – Alison Davies and Heather Price

'Merry Christmas to you' – Ian White

'O come all ye faithful' – Rend Collective

'Wide' – Colin Pye

## Meal suggestion

If possible, to recognise that God loved the whole world, find a traditional Christmas dish from somewhere else in the world. Living in Scotland, I thought the Polish tradition of a beef and mushroom casserole looked quite tempting!

Cake is always welcome at Christmas as dessert – so much to choose from! Why not ask Messy families to bring their favourite cake? (Buying it is encouraged, home baking is not necessary unless wished.)

# 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.



*Nigel in West Yorkshire writes:*

*What is the best way to find out how the Messy Church families feel about our Messy Church and if we are holding it on the right day and time for them?*

Dear Nigel

There are various ways and before anyone starts a Messy Church we advise that they take their time and explore when their community would like a Messy Church to take place. One way you could try this with your existing Messy Church is with a mini questionnaire. Keep it light and avoid intentionally inviting negative comments. Create three speech bubbles on a small piece of paper. Inside one bubble you could ask, 'What do you like best about Messy Church?' In another, 'What could we do better about Messy Church?' and finally, 'Any other comments?' Or you could ask, 'Does Messy Church suit you and your family on Saturdays?' We have heard about some interesting responses to questionnaires at Messy Churches such as, 'Can we always have jelly and ice cream?' and, 'What happens to the money in the donation bucket?' so be prepared!

A good time to put out a mini questionnaire is during the mealtime. Families enjoy doing things together and that includes telling us what they think of Messy Church! Just supply the pencils and have a posting box on the way out. Or you could cover tables with paper cloths and supply felt-tip pens. Invite responses to the questions using a microphone or loud voice, then photograph the scribbles before clearing the tables. Share what transpires with us!

*Sarah in Devon writes:*

*We love Messy Church! Thank you for all of the resources you produce. Is there anything to help us move on from sandwiches and cakes to hot food? We are very nervous of cost, how much to cook for unknown numbers and what to choose. Any guidance please?*

Dear Sarah

Be bold. Be strong. For the Lord your God is with you! (As the song goes.) We all take a step of faith when it comes to feeding our Messy Church congregations. No one likes waste and yet we shake in fear of not having enough food too! Plan a rotation of three or four staple meals each year and review it after twelve months. Many Messy Church cooking teams revel in their keen observations when it

comes to supermarket bargains! Buy minced meat and freeze it for your February cottage pie. Look out for the tinned tuna offers for a September pasta bake. Negotiate with a friendly butcher for sliced Christmas turkey. Plan ahead. Other popular Messy Church meals include jacket potatoes with various toppings or a sausage casserole. Lots of Messy Churches plug in their slow cookers early on in the day or, if it is a breakfast meal you are offering, take time to price up the bacon options and croissants and pastries.

Keep records of numbers you have cooked for, recipes and so on. Then in the second year, you can make any adjustments. Some Messy Churches invite their congregations to vote for their favourite meal of the year. Oh, and don't forget to keep on bringing out the Messy cooks from the kitchen for applause and encouragement. It can get tense in the Messy kitchen!

You can find lots of recipe ideas on our Messy Church Pinterest Board about hospitality: [pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/hospitality](https://pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/hospitality).

*Tom in Essex writes:*

*We have always kept to the exact programme of creative hour first, then the celebration worship and ending with a meal. We recently read about a Messy Church that started with a meal! Is this a popular model and what follows?*

Dear Tom

We encourage all Messy Churches to experiment with the best format that suits them on the day and time that their community chooses. We have many Messy Churches that start with a breakfast, go into the activities time and finish with the celebration time. We recently heard from a Messy Church on the Isle of Man that changed their Saturday timings to start with lunch, enjoy activities and end with the celebration time – and they have almost doubled in numbers! Ask your Messy congregation what works best for them. Experiment and review. Plan practically and direct well during the transitions from room to room. Ask families to be meal marshals on a rota, children included. Include the Messy cooking team in all discussions. The more open and inclusive the discussions, the more everyone feels comfortable and a sense of belonging to the Messy Church.

## How to order *Get Messy!*

**Get Messy!** is published three times per year in January, May and September.

Available from: your local Christian bookshop

BRF +44 (0)1865 319700

Online: [brfonline.org.uk/getmessy](http://brfonline.org.uk/getmessy)

By post – complete the form below

SUBSCRIPTION (INCLUDES POSTAGE AND PACKING)	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL (£)
Jan 2019 to Dec 2019 one-year subscription (UK)	£16.95		
Jan 2019 to Dec 2019 one-year subscription (Europe)	£25.20		
Jan 2019 to Dec 2019 one-year subscription (Rest of the world)	£29.10		
SINGLE COPIES	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL (£)
<i>Get Messy!</i> Jan–Apr 2019	£4.50		
Postage for single copies (see right)			
Total			

Name ..... Acc. no. (if known) .....

Address .....

Postcode .....

Telephone ..... Email .....

### Method of payment

Cheque (made payable to BRF)  MasterCard / Visa

Card no.

Valid from     Expires     Security code\*

Last 3 digits on the reverse of the card

Signature ..... Date .....

ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO PROCESS YOUR ORDER

A **group subscription** works when you receive five or more copies of *Get Messy!* delivered to a single address. A group can operate in the UK. Groups do not have to pay postage charges: all you pay is the cover price of the magazine. Groups do not have to pay in advance: we will invoice you for each issue or for the year, whichever you prefer.

POSTAGE AND PACKING CHARGES			
Order value	UK	Europe	Rest of world
Under £7.00	£2.00	£5.00	£7.00
£7.00–£29.99	£3.00	£9.00	£15.00
£30.00 and over	FREE	£9.00 + 15% of order value	£15.00 + 20% of order value

### General information

Delivery times within the UK are normally 15 working days. All prices are subject to the current rate of VAT. Prices are correct at the time of going to press but may change without prior notice. Offers available while stocks last.

### Please return this form with the appropriate payment to:

BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE

Tel. +44 (0)1865 319700 Fax +44 (0)1865 319701

To read our terms and find out about cancelling your order, please visit [brfonline.org.uk/terms](http://brfonline.org.uk/terms).



Messy Church is part of BRF, a Registered Charity (233280)

## DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENTS

You can pay for your annual subscription using Direct Debit. You need only give your bank details once, and the payment is made automatically every year until you cancel it. If you would like to pay by Direct Debit, please also use the form below, entering your BRF account number under 'Reference' if you know it. You are fully covered by the Direct Debit Guarantee.

### -Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit

Please fill in the whole form using a ballpoint pen and return it to:



BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE

Service User Number:  5  5  8  2  2  9

Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To: The Manager	Bank/Building Society
Address	
	Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Branch sort code

Bank/Building Society account number

Reference number

### Instruction to your Bank/Building Society

Please pay The Bible Reading Fellowship Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with The Bible Reading Fellowship and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Signature(s)

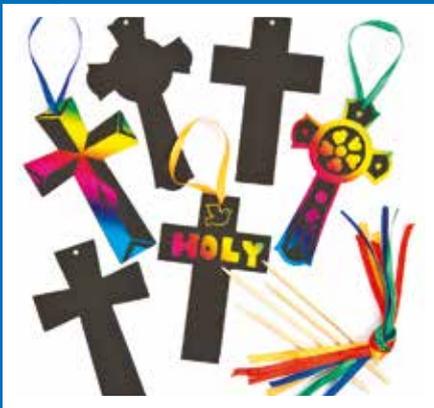
Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account.

## The Direct Debit Guarantee



- This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.
- If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit, The Bible Reading Fellowship will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request The Bible Reading Fellowship to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.
- If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by The Bible Reading Fellowship or your bank or building society, you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.
- If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when The Bible Reading Fellowship asks you to.
- You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.





Our range of **Christianity Themed Crafts** are ideal as a visual support for Sunday school projects or sharing Bible stories

see FULL range at [www.bakerross.co.uk/christianity](http://www.bakerross.co.uk/christianity)

**SPECIAL DISCOUNT**  
for **MESSY CHURCH**

**15% OFF\***

Simply quote this code when ordering:

**BRF15**

\*Terms and Conditions: Offer applies to goods value only (excl. delivery) and cannot be used against special offers, sale items and discounted lines or in conjunction with any other offer. Offer ends 31st December 2018.



"I am always keen to order from Baker Ross because I know that the quality of the goods is excellent..."

Mrs Cathryn Houghton,  
Sandbach  
Messy Church

Over 2,000 **GREAT VALUE** Crafts, Toys & Fundraisers!

A leading supplier to Churches and Religious Groups since 1974



[brf.org.uk](http://brf.org.uk)

Messy Church is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship, a Registered Charity (233280)