

MESSY!



002

CONTAINS TWELVE MESSY CHURCH SESSIONS INCLUDING CHRISTMAS AND EASTER



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Aike



writes...

Welcome to Get Messy! Volume 2

Get Messy! Volume 2 contains twelve session outlines for Messy Churches. This volume takes you through the basic themes of Christianity, including: Who is God? Who is Jesus? Who is the Holy Spirit? The material includes the key Christian festivals: Christmas – God entering the world as Jesus; Easter – exploring Jesus' last supper and why Christians celebrate Communion; and Pentecost – the arrival and gift of the Holy Spirit. The sessions also cover God's best ways of living, demonstrated through the life and stories of Jesus, with themes on love, grace, mercy and forgiveness. It also includes God's plan to save everyone, a challenge to follow Jesus and trust God with a new direction, exploring following and belonging to Jesus through baptism. The themes in this volume are especially suited to Messy Churches that have just started or that may have people who are at the start of their journey of discovering Jesus. For Messy Churches that have been gathering for longer, the sessions provide the perfect opportunity for your Messy Church to explore the sacraments of Communion and invite people to a commitment to follow Jesus through baptism.

How to use Get Messy!

Other than those on the key Christian festivals – Christmas, Easter and Pentecost – the sessions stand alone, so they can be done in any order. Feel free to choose topics that are most suitable for your context.

It's important to remember that any resource is just a springboard, and we hope that you will creatively adapt ideas for your Messy Church. If the themes in this edition are not the right fit for you, as we're all at different stages on the Messy Church journey, we have a massive back catalogue of resources available at messychurch.org.uk.

A huge thank you to our writers, who have taken the time to create and test-drive these sessions, especially those who are

writing for the first time. Each one includes a Bible story and some pointers to get your team thinking about how to talk about the theme during the activities. We've added some 'I wonder?' open-ended questions for each activity and during the celebration, to help people of all ages to engage with the topics.

We suggest you take time at the start of your planning meetings to pray, reflect on where you noticed God at work in your previous session and if anyone had any 'God conversations' that might need following up. Then read the Bible together and be curious about which words or verses stand out. This will help your team talk about the key Bible themes that you wish to share during the activity time and will provide you with a fantastic opportunity for discipleship within your team. You'll find a choice of ten activities, designed for a range of ages and abilities, with both indoor and Messy Church Goes Wild (outdoor) activity suggestions. Remember you don't have to do them all! We're also thinking about how we can be more eco-friendly with our activities, so try to reduce your waste, reuse what you already have in the back of your church cupboard before buying anything new and think about how any craft items can be recycled after Messy Church.

Additional templates and table activity signs can be found at messychurch.org.uk/getmessyvol2-2878.

The social action idea can help your Messy Church be church throughout the month, encouraging people to put into action the Bible theme. In the celebration section you'll find ideas to retell the Bible story in an engaging way, together with a prayer, plus song suggestions. Finally, to help you with hospitality, we've included mealtime card question ideas (you can download this in the support material), designed to keep the conversation flowing when you gather to eat, together with a meal suggestion.

Remember to check out the stories and articles that accompany these sessions on our social media, blogs, e-newsletters and website.



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Visit messychurch.org.uk/getmessyvol2-2878 to download all sorts of extra content for these sessions, including photos, templates, table signs, mealtime cards and a session planning template!

Session material: September

Who is God? What is God like?

by Sharon Sampson



PDF DOWNLOAD



MESSY CHURCH AT HOME



MESSY CHURCH GOES WILD

Bible story for prep

Psalm 139:1–18 (NIV)

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand – when I awake, I am still with you.

Pointers

Some people might think, 'How can we know a God we can't see or touch?' But the Bible is full of descriptions of his character. One such place is in Psalm 139, which includes these phrases:

- 'You know me' – God is not some distant figure but someone who knows everything about us, the good and the bad, and still loves us.
- 'You are there' – God is always with us, waiting and wanting to be part of our lives.
- 'Your right hand will guide me' – if we choose to believe, God's Spirit will help us through life.
- 'Your hand will hold me fast' – no matter what trials we go through, God holds us and support us.
- 'The night will shine like the day' – God can shine light into the darkest of times in our lives.
- 'You created my inmost being' – God is the one almighty creator, who created us, for a purpose. Each one of us is precious to God.

How does this session help people grow in Christ?

Some people envisage God as a remote being whose only interaction with people is to rain down fire when they misbehave. This session is designed to help us get to know the real God. God is not an old man with a long beard, sitting on a cloud, dishing out punishment. Instead, God is the creator both of the universe and of the very breath inside us. God knows us intimately. Hopefully we will discover that we can have a personal relationship with God.

Add value

Mealtime card

- Before today, what did you think God was like?
- Do you like to chat to God?
- When do you feel closest to God?

Question to start and end the session

So... if you could ask God one question, what would it be?

Social action idea

God created an amazing world. How can we care for it better? Challenge your Messy Church to do a litter pick.

Activities

1. Mending hurts



You will need: a large heart-shaped piece of card; plasters; pens. Or if you wanted to make individual hearts for people to take home, some smaller hearts and smaller plasters

Encourage adults and children to stick some plasters to the card. You could write on the heart people or situations that need God's love and light, such as relationships that need healing or prayers for our enemies. Pray together that God's love and light will shine in all these things.

Talk about how Jesus' first commandment is that we need to love one another, just as he has loved us. Some situations in our lives may need healing in order that love can be rebuilt. Prayer is a great first step in this.

I wonder... what situation would you like to pray about?

2. Dancing leaves collage



You will need: leaves from outside – collect a few days before so they can dry; acrylic or poster paint; paint brushes; eye stickers or googly eyes; pens; large backing paper

Choose a leaf and paint it with acrylic or poster paint. Place this paint side down on the poster paper and make a print. Add arms, legs and eyes to it, and write underneath it a word or phrase which summarises what love is for you.

Talk about how there are different ways to show love.

I wonder... how might you show love this week?

3. Lanterns



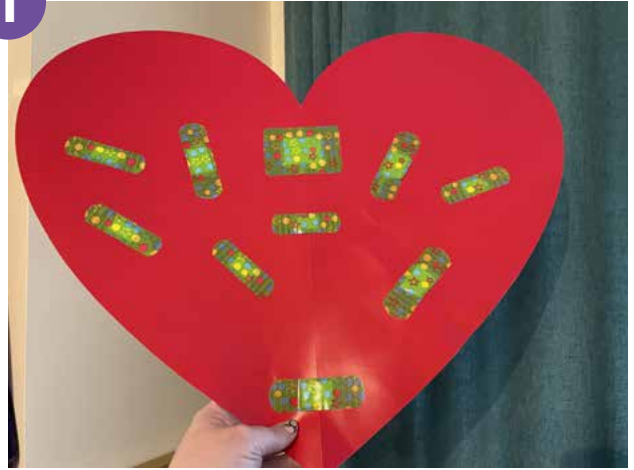
You will need: paper/thin card; stickers; glue; sticky tape; scissors; electric tealights

Fold the paper in half lengthways, and from the folded edge, cut strips along the whole length of the paper, leaving 2–3 cm before the edge. You should have room for around 8–10 cuts on an A4 piece. Unfold this and make it into a cylinder by bringing the two short ends of the paper together – stick it together. Decorate with stickers or drawings (if drawing, do this before you stick it together). Make another strip for the handle, and two strips that cross over at the bottom of the lantern which will hold the tealight.

Talk about how the world would become a brighter place if we all loved one another like Jesus asks us to.

I wonder... what dark situations or places need Christ's light to shine?

1



2



3



Arrange the grapes together to make a bunch and secure. Attach some leaves to the top and then attach the bunch of grapes to the branch to look like grapes hanging from a vine.

Talk about how the workers in the field were picking grapes – have you ever picked grapes? They grow on a vine in a vineyard. They need lots of water to grow and lots of sunshine.

I wonder... why do you think some grapes are purple and some are green? Which are your favourite?

3. Salt dough money



You will need: plain flour; salt; water; a bowl; a measuring spoon or cup; rolling pin; cutters (optional); a plate

Into the bowl put flour, salt and water in the ratio 2:2:1. Mix it up to make a dough. Roll out the dough and make coin shapes. Mark the 'coins' with your design. Put them on the plate to dry or to take home to bake slowly later.

Talk about what we use money to buy.

I wonder... why did landowner in Jesus' parable pay all of the workers the same amount of money? Did they deserve the same wages?

4. Treading grapes



You will need: a large container or small paddling pool containing a number of small sponges full of water; towels; a timer

Introduce the old-fashioned grape treading machine when people squeezed the juice from the grapes by standing on them. Invite some 'workers' to tread on the grapes (sponges) with their bare feet to squeeze the juice (water) out. Do this for two minutes without stopping.

Talk about how tiring it was to get the juice from the grapes. The workers in Jesus' story had to work hard.

I wonder... do you think the workers were happy to have a job that day?

5. Fruit salad smoothie



You will need: soft fruits, such as strawberries, bananas, blackberries, mango, pineapple (make sure you wash/peel them!); plastic or butter knives; chopping boards; liquidisers or a food mill; milk (or alternative); honey; plastic drinking cups; straws

Chop the fruit into small pieces and place them in the liquidizer or food mill. Add some milk and blend it all into a smoothie. Carefully pour smoothie into the drinking cups, add straws and enjoy.

Talk about when the fruits are mixed together into a smoothie it gives a delicious flavour.

I wonder... what the wine the workers were making in the vineyard tasted like? What do you like to drink on special occasions? What's your favourite smoothie combination?

6. Invisible ink grace

You will need: sheets of white paper with the word 'GRACE' painted on them with bicarbonate of soda, all dried; grape juice or blackcurrant squash (undiluted); paint brushes; cotton buds

Mix together equal amounts of bicarbonate of soda and water, this mixture will be your invisible ink. Paint the word GRACE onto the paper using the mixture and a cotton bud. Leave to dry completely. Paint over the white paper using the grape juice. The word should be revealed, can you tell what it is? It is the word 'GRACE'.

Talk about how grace is something invisible, but is always there. Jesus shows us his grace when we ask him. Grace reveals itself when we need it most.

I wonder... can you think of a situation when someone has shown you grace? How did that feel?

7. Woven together

You will need: different coloured wool or thread (each colour representing a characteristic of Jesus, e.g. red – love, blue – forgiveness, green – kindness, yellow – grace, purple – mercy, pink – compassion); blunt tapestry type needles; plastic canvas or aida cut into squares or rectangles; scissors

Weave different coloured threads in and out of the holes crossing over one another.

Talk about how each of the coloured threads make up the picture or pattern just like the different characteristics of Jesus make up who he is.

I wonder... what coloured threads would we weave together to show our characteristics?

7



9. Frankincense – potion making

You will need: small glass bottles; avocado or olive oil; gloves; dried, fragrant herbs and plants (e.g. rosemary, sage, jasmine, rose, lavender, chamomile, pine needles, cinnamon sticks, frankincense resin); a little funnel; labels; pens

Make your own perfume oil. Sprinkle different dried items into your bottle until you are happy with the smell. Then pour in the oil and shake. Write a blessing word (peace, love, joy, hope) on a sticky label and attach it to the bottle. Take the bottle home and let it sit on a sunny windowsill for three to four weeks, shaking it every week or so. Then store in a cool dark place. Use as a perfume, massage oil or to bless others.

Talk about how the wise men gave the baby Jesus frankincense, a valuable fragrant oil made from the resin of the Boswellia tree. It has been used in traditional medicine but also in religious ceremonies, burned as an offering to God. It was also used to embalm the dead.

I wonder... do you think, when they gave Jesus frankincense, the wise men knew that Jesus was God's Son or that his death would end up being so important?

8



10. Grab bag



You will need: cotton tote bags; paint; a sponge; brushes; card; scissors; double-sided tape; a permanent pen; cardboard; the camel template

Use the camel template to create several stencil cut-outs. Insert cardboard into the tote bag to avoid getting paint all the way through. Use a sponge to sparingly paint the background on the tote bag. Do another craft while it dries for ten minutes. Add 'GRAB BAG' in permanent pen at the top of the bag. Place the template on the edge of the bag, hold it down firmly while you sponge brown paint for the camel. Then move the template to the other edge of the bag and sponge on the person. Finally add the rope with permanent pen.

Talk about how after the wise men had gone, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to flee to Egypt to avoid Herod's soldiers. They had to escape in the middle of the night, quickly grabbing whatever they could.

I wonder... what would you want in your grab bag for an emergency?

9



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Celebration

Invite everyone to play a part in your storytelling. You will need one person to play the part of the man, and another to play the part of Jesus. You could have a few other hopeful people sit beside the pool and a busy crowd who may help those who wait. You will also need a few religious leaders, and you could have some active participants to play the part of a pool, perhaps holding ribbons or a play parachute, swirling it around and 'bubbling up'.

Today's story involves a man (*indicate this character*) who had not been able to walk for many, many years; 38 years in fact! He wanted to be well again so badly that every day he sat beside the pool at Bethesda. Now here's an interesting fact for you: Bethesda means 'house of mercy'. We've come across that word before today!

This man wasn't the only one there; in fact the pool at Bethesda was thought to be very special and have special powers, so many people who were sick or disabled (*indicate to those playing these parts*) would come near to the water in the hope that they may be healed.

The thing was, you couldn't just come near to the water, you had to go into the water. And you couldn't go into the water whenever you felt like it, nor could you go into the water altogether! The legend was that whenever the water bubbled up (*encourage those playing the part of the pool to 'bubble' the water*) only the first one into the pool would be healed!

So, the people would wait around until the water bubbled, then those in the crowd would lift someone into the water in the hope that they would be healed. But nobody would lift this man into the water. I wonder why. Perhaps he had done something wrong to upset these people? Perhaps he was grumpy or rude? Perhaps he was lonely and sad? We know he had come to this place because he wanted 'mercy'.

One day, Jesus was walking near the pool when he spotted the man and asked him if he wanted to be healed (*encourage the actors to mime*).

'Yes!' said the man, 'but nobody will help me into the water; someone else always gets in ahead of me!'

So what do you think Jesus did? Carry him into the pool? No. Jesus stood in front of the man and said, 'Get up! Pick your mat up and walk!' And that was it! The man was healed immediately! The man didn't need a house of mercy or a pool of mercy; he needed Jesus, the God of mercy.

The man went into the town to the temple, where he showed the religious leaders what Jesus had done. When Jesus saw him there, he said something strange to him: 'Don't sin again!' Jesus had given the man a fresh start and he wanted him to use it well!

I wonder...

- How the man's life changed after this moment?
- What you have discovered about Jesus in this story?
- How it would feel to know that Jesus shows us mercy too?

Prayer

Blow bubbles over the group as you pray, perhaps using a bubble machine.

God of mercy, just as you did for the man at the bubbling pool, you take away our sin and give us the chance to start afresh. Thank you for your gift of mercy. Help us to see where we need to show mercy to others. Amen.

Song suggestions

- 'The bubbling pool of Bethesda' – Ishmael
- 'God of mercy (prayer song)' – Lou Fellingham
- 'His mercy is more' – Keith and Kristyn Getty

Meal suggestions

Pasta with a choice of toppings – bolognese, veggie bolognese, ham, grated cheese, tuna, etc. – followed by fresh fruit salad (use up the remaining soft fruits!)

Session material: February

What did Jesus say?

'I forgive you'

by Rachel Gotobed



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MESSY CHURCH AT HOME



MESSY CHURCH GOES WILD

Bible story for prep

Luke 7:36–50 (ERV)

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him. Jesus went into the Pharisee's house and took a place at the table.

There was a sinful woman in that town. She knew that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. So the woman brought some expensive perfume in an alabaster jar. She stood at Jesus' feet, crying. Then she began to wash his feet with her tears. She dried his feet with her hair. She kissed his feet many times and rubbed them with the perfume.

When the Pharisee who asked Jesus to come to his house saw this, he thought to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know that the woman who is touching him is a sinner!'

In response, Jesus said to the Pharisee, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.'

Simon said, 'Let me hear it, Teacher.'

Jesus said, 'There were two men. Both men owed money to the same banker. One man owed him 500 silver coins. The other man owed him 50 silver coins. The men had no money, so they could not pay their debt. But the banker told the men that they did not have to pay him. Which one of those two men will love him more?'

Simon answered, 'I think it would be the one who owed him the most money.'

Jesus said to him, 'You are right.' Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave me no water for my feet. But she washed my feet with her tears and dried my feet with her hair. You did not greet me with a kiss, but she has been kissing my feet since I came in. You did not honour me with oil for my head, but she rubbed my feet with her

sweet-smelling oil. I tell you that her many sins are forgiven. This is clear, because she showed great love. People who are forgiven only a little will love only a little.'

Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

The people sitting at the table began to think to themselves, 'Who does this man think he is? How can he forgive sins?'

Jesus said to the woman, 'Because you believed, you are saved from your sins. Go in peace.'

Pointers

There are many stories in the gospels that show how Jesus offers forgiveness, and sometimes they are accompanied by him telling a parable to help us understand how and why we should be willing to forgive too. Ultimately, we know that it is because of his death and resurrection that our sins are forgiven, because he willingly sacrificed his life for us. But as recipients of his forgiveness, he asks us to forgive others, and we don't always find that easy.

Forgiveness can be a messy business! People feel hurt over all sorts of situations, and even when an apology has been offered, sometimes we hear them say things like, 'That is unforgivable!' However, in teaching his followers to pray, Jesus includes the lines, 'Forgive our sins, just as we have forgiven those who did wrong to us' (Matthew 6:12), and he also says, 'Don't judge others, and God will not judge you. Don't condemn others, and you will not be condemned. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven' (Luke 6:37).

In the story, Jesus asks the Pharisee who has invited him for dinner to interpret the parable he told, to try to help the Pharisee understand the forgiveness Jesus affords us all, including the woman the Pharisee calls sinful. Jesus' forgiveness is not like our natural inclination to only forgive as we feel is justified, but rather it is a forgiveness for all, and of all, and he wants us to forgive others this way too.

Activities

1. Following a trail



You will need: a trail or labyrinth that fits your surroundings – if outdoors, consider using natural materials to lay a trail (such as pebbles or sticks); a map; numbered stations; story prompts to reflect on along the path

Create a trail or labyrinth to represent Peter's journey. Link it with a map and have numbered stations that link to the various activities with the story. Participants can wonder as they journey.

Talk about what Peter found out on his journey? I wonder how he felt (as a Jew) knowing that he was going against the law to visit someone he shouldn't (a non-Jew)?

I wonder... how would it feel to meet an angel/have a vision?

2. Soap carving

You will need: bars of soap; tools to either carve or scratch patterns into it (depending on the age range of participants)

Choose a shape – either a heart or a cross – and either carve the soap into that shape (by carefully cutting away parts of the bar) or scratch that shape into the top of the soap bar.

(Tip: collect up all the soap fragments and put them in a net bag to be used to wash hands. You could leave a note up about where these soap fragments came from and advertise the next Messy Church.)

Talk about what soap physically does to our hands when we wash them. The Bible tells us that we are cleansed of our sins (the things we do wrong) by the cross (for soap crosses) and by the love of God (for hearts). The cross offers salvation, and Jesus loves all of us.

I wonder... what do I need to say sorry to God about?

3. Cleansing



You will need: dirty toys/objects; washing up bowls with clean soapy water; 'walking trays'; soil; towels to dry objects or feet

This one can be as messy as you have space/facilities for. Whatever you choose, start with something dirty and clean it. For example, dirty toys or objects for people to clean or have trays filled with soil for people to walk through and then have bowls of warm soapy water to clean the dirt off.

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their own prayer jar. Add at least seven crafts sticks with the names of other Messy Church participants to your own prayer jar. Take your jar home and place it in a prominent place so you remember to pray for your Messy Church family.

Talk about how Jesus prayed for his disciples (John 17:11 – ‘Holy Father, watch over them in your name, the name you gave me, that they will be one just as we are one.’) Likewise, we should pray for our Messy Church family.

I wonder... who or what situation needs your prayers?

6. Foot-washing station



You will need: bowls or basins; water; dish soap; rags or sponges; non-porous dolls (e.g. Barbie dolls)

Choose a doll and wash its feet by dipping a rag in soapy water and rubbing them. Alternatively, offer to wash someone else’s feet.

Talk about how Jesus chose to wash his disciples’ feet and taught us all a lesson in humility. To wash a person’s foot is to literally lower yourself before them. When Jesus was alive, the task of washing feet would have been quite a dirty one (imagine how dirty your feet would be if you were walking in sandals on the roads of Jerusalem) and one that likely only a servant would do. By washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus showed a selfless, humble love.

I wonder... what are ways that you can show love and humility like Jesus?

7. Parable writing



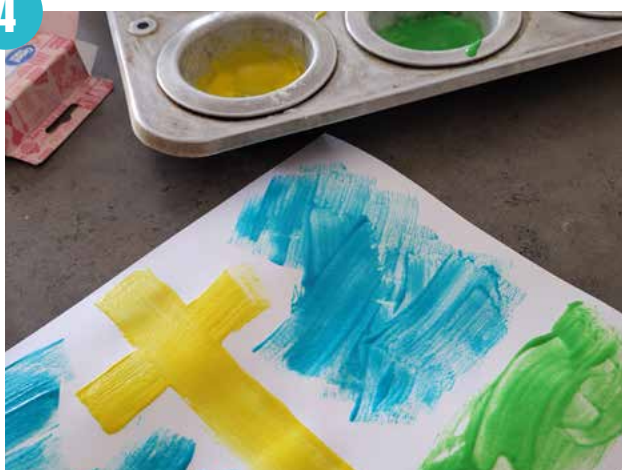
You will need: lined paper; pens/pencils; examples of parables, such as: the yeast (Matthew 13:33), the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the soils (Matthew 13:3–9)

Try writing a parable by following these steps:

- 1 Pick a moral lesson you’d like to cover (e.g. show love and kindness)
- 2 Consider the consequences (e.g. what might happen if the lesson is not followed? What if it is?)
- 3 Write a beginning, middle and end. The beginning should set the stage and tell us who all the main characters are, while establishing important themes; in the middle, some kind of problem or conflict emerges; and in the end, we learn about the results of that conflict or how the story concludes.

An example of a parable: In a quiet town, there was a little cat named Luna. Luna was known for her graceful charm and soft, velvet fur. She wandered the streets, visiting homes and shops, and was welcomed by everyone for her friendly disposition.

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6



5. Look at my hands!



You will need: different coloured paints; paint trays; brushes; water for cleaning brushes; crayons or felt-tips; a bowl of water and towels for washing hands

Create fish paintings by first drawing an eye and mouth where the painted heel of your hand will be. Then cover paint trays with different colours of paint. Coat your hand well with paint, and place it on the paper with the heel over the mouth and eye. You can combine colours on your hand if you want to have a 'two-tone' fish. Name your fish and allow to dry. NB: If your activity is near the mural you may want to add handprints to that as well.

Talk about how the disciples were terrified when Jesus appeared and thought they had seen a ghost! He said, 'Look at my hands.' He was also hungry, and they gave him a piece of cooked fish to eat (Luke 24:37-43). It might feel squishy and yuk placing your hands in paint, but as you do, think about how the disciples felt. Imagine their surprise when Jesus ate the fish!

I wonder... how do you think the disciples felt when Jesus appeared with them? How would you have reacted?

6. Nailed!

You will need: plywood or timber offcuts about A4-size; nails and hammers; fish template; coloured wool; scissors; felt-tips

Using the fish template, hammer the nails into the board as an outline. Tie a thread of wool to a nail and weave it around the outline, twisting it around the different nails as you go. Then weave the thread back and forth across the outline to create a pattern. Using different colours will add to the effect.

Talk about what fishy stories you can remember, either from the gospels or your own experiences.

I wonder... why did the resurrected Jesus eat some fish in front of his disciples?

7. Game - in the water/ on the road



You will need: a large space; chalk or masking tape to mark out areas

Divide a large space into three areas using the chalk or tape or existing lines made by floorboards, etc. The central area is called 'the road' and the outer areas called 'the water'. Participants are gathered into the central area as the rules are explained.

Rules: when the caller says, 'in the water', participants jump into the water. When the caller says, 'on the road', everyone jumps on to the road. The last person to jump and get to the right area is out of the game. The last person to be caught out becomes the next caller.

A leader is chosen as the caller, who gets the game started with this narrative:

When Jesus was born his family escaped Herod's soldiers by going to Egypt - on the road!

Jesus found his first disciples by Lake Galilee - in the water!

Jesus travelled all around Israel teaching and healing people - on the road!

Jesus made breakfast on the beach when his disciples went fishing - in the water!

Jesus met two disciples travelling to Emmaus - on the road!

Then speed and mix things up gradually:
in the water/on the road/in the water/on the road, etc.

This is a fast-paced game and can burn a lot of energy in a short time, but it can get boring if it goes on too long.

Talk about how those on the road with Jesus in those early days were regarded as being a disciple. Early Christians were called followers of 'the Way' (Acts 24:14).

I wonder... who are you following?

8. Plant forget-me-not seeds



You will need: seed raising mix and containers; seeds; wooden spoons; water in spray bottle

Sow seeds, lightly water them and take them home to grow. While the common forget-me-not plant is far from endangered, the Chatham Island forget-me-not (*Myosotidium hortensia*) is listed as 'nationally vulnerable' (doc.govt.nz/nature/native-plants/chatham-island-forget-me-not). Alternatively, choose seeds from an endangered plant species to grow.

Talk about sharing God's love with others is a way we can spread seeds of his love and ensure he is always remembered.

I wonder... how do you remember Jesus? Who could you share some of God's love with today?

Celebration

Begin the celebration by asking some questions:

Which was your favourite activity? Why?

Did you learn anything new about the Holy Spirit? What?

Does anyone want to share their experience of the Holy Spirit?

Has anyone got any questions about the Holy Spirit?

Tell the following story (script based on Acts 2) and encourage participation. You will need the tongues of fire from activity 9.

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm (*encourage wind sounds*), and it filled the house where they were sitting (*encourage louder wind sounds*).

Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them (*invite people to put their 'tongues of fire' on their heads*).

And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability (*encourage people to speak in languages other than your local language, or gobbledygook if they don't know any other languages*).

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers (*encourage people to speak more loudly in languages other than your local language, or gobbledygook if they don't know any other languages*).

They were completely amazed. 'How can this be?' they exclaimed (*get people to repeat, 'How can this be?'*).

'These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! Here we are – Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans and Arabs' (*if you have A/V facilities, show a map marking these places and point them out*).

'These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!'

They stood there amazed and perplexed. 'What can this mean?' they asked each other.

But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, 'They're just drunk, that's all!'

I wonder...

- What the Holy Spirit is doing as we gather as Messy Church?
- How can I know that the Holy Spirit is living in me?
- How will I experience the Holy Spirit in the days and weeks to come?

Prayer

In small groups and with appropriate supervision, light a candle or a tealight. Watch the flame. Think about how flames bring light and warmth. Thank God for the times when you sense God's presence with you through the Holy Spirit, when the way forward seems clear.

Blow the candle out. Pray for those times when God takes you by surprise and takes you in a direction you are not expecting, or when you have no sense of God's Spirit being with you.

Take the candle home and use it in your prayers over the coming days, as a reminder of God's presence and power in your life.

Song suggestions

'This little light of mine' – Public domain

'Shine from the inside out' – Spring Harvest

'Pentecost Song' – Jan Brind (to the tune of 'The grand old duke of York')

Meal suggestions

How about having a barbeque, or if the forecast is bad, hot dogs prepared indoors? If the place where you meet allows, you could cook on a bonfire or fire pit. You could try baking potatoes in the fire and serving with grated cheese. For a sweet treat, you could cook bananas and chocolate wrapped in foil. These provide further opportunity to talk about the transforming work of the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Session material: July

‘Come, follow me’

by May Dappa and Martyn Payne



PDF DOWNLOAD



MESSY CHURCH AT HOME



MESSY CHURCH GOES WILD

Bible story for prep

Matthew 4:18–22 (NIV)

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Luke 5:27–28 (NIV)

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

Pointers

When Jesus invited people to follow him, they were going about their business. Andrew and Peter were throwing their net into the lake; James and John were preparing for a fishing trip; and Matthew (Levi) was sat in his tax office. The call to ‘follow me’ came during everyday living. We don’t know how much these men already knew about Jesus or what they had already heard him say, but what is clear is that they chose to follow him. They left their day job for a new calling.

Becoming a disciple isn’t an occasional add-on to our normal lives, nor a hobby for our spare time; it is all or nothing. The two sets of brothers by the lake discovered a new sort of fishing that would lead them far from home and off on a huge adventure with God; and the one who kept accounts for the Romans would end up writing an account of the life of Jesus that is still being read by

millions across the world. I wonder what wonderful story yet to be written is waiting for those in your Messy Church who may respond in this session to the invitation to leave everything and follow Jesus.

How does this session help people grow in Christ?

As Jesus told stories and performed many miracles, he also invited people to follow him. It was unusual for a rabbi in those days to choose his disciples; it was normally students who applied to sit at the feet of well-known teachers. But Jesus is God come looking for us, and whose great love longs to welcome everyone into God’s family. To become a disciple is all about living life the Jesus way; to learn by watching what Jesus said and did; to learn in conversation, as they walked the roads of Galilee and spent time with him; to learn by imitation, as an amateur learns a new skill alongside a professional, who gently corrects mistakes and inspires us to try again.

At their best, our Messy Churches offer young and old alike, a model of how to follow Jesus. As the generations work together, they pass on what faith means in the everyday. Through stories, songs and prayers, everyone’s discipleship is nurtured; in conversation around the activity table or over the meal, we discover and explore the best life God has planned for us.

Following Jesus comes at a cost (Luke 14:2), but the reward is matchless. May this Messy Church session not only offer the invitation to follow Jesus but help us all become more and more like him as his disciples.

Add value

Mealtime card

- What new skills have you learned in this session?
- What new skills do you think the disciples learned by following Jesus?
- What might change in our lives as we follow Jesus?

Add value

Mealtime card

- Share a story of seeing someone be baptised or being baptised (if not yourself, perhaps a family member or friend).
- Do you know anything about Ethiopia? What continent is it in? What countries are its neighbours?
- How fast can you run? Would you be able to run as fast as Philip beside the chariot carrying the Ethiopian?

Question to start and end the session

So... what does being baptised mean for us today?

Social action idea

The Ethiopian in today's story found a pool of water beside the road, and he asked Philip to baptise him in it. Sadly in many countries, pools of water are too dangerous to even touch. The need for clean, safe, drinking water and toilets is a number one concern for millions of people around the world. In March 2023, a United Nations report estimated that around 2 billion people in the world do not have access to a safe water supply. This is roughly one in four people. Allocate everyone in your Messy Church celebration a number from one to four. Ask all the number ones to move to one side of the room and give them a glass of water that has been made brown with food colouring, while you give everyone else a clean glass of water. This is a visual representation of 25% of the world's population not having access to clean water.

Find out what agency of your church or community supports the development of clean drinking water, washing water and of safe toilets. See if you can raise some extra funds to support them. Toilet Twinning and Who Gives A Crap are just two organisations that fund clean water and toilet projects around the world.

Activities

1. Make a name bracelet



You will need: one toilet roll centre; four craft sticks; Sellotape; coloured paper; a wooden skewer; wool; letter beads. Alternatively, you could make name bracelets with pony beads, loom bands, handmade paper beads or in any other way you like.

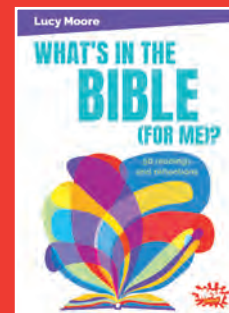
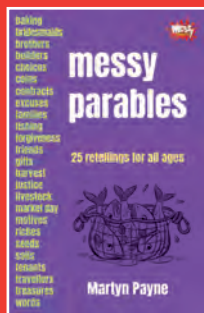
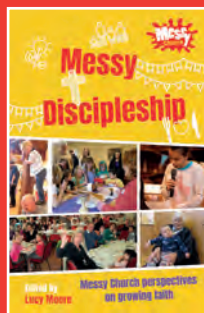
Make your own 'spool knitting loom' by taking a toilet roll and taping four craft sticks to it. Decorate it by covering it in coloured paper. To make your knitted bracelet: drop the end of your yarn down the centre of your cardboard roll. Let a 10 cm tail hang out at the bottom. Keeping a gentle hold on the tail, cast on your stitches by wrapping your yarn around one craft stick once, in a clockwise direction, and then take your yarn to the second craft stick, winding it once in a clockwise direction. Move on to the third and fourth sticks in the same manner, wrapping the yarn around them once in a clockwise direction. To knit your stitches: lay your yarn across the first craft stick, just above the stitch that you cast on. With your fingers or the wooden skewer, hook the lower stitch over the top of the new stitch and let it fall into the centre of the tube. Gently pull the tail of the yarn to tighten the stitch. Continue around your loom, doing the same thing. Don't forget to keep giving the tail a gentle tug to tighten the stitches. When you are finished, attach some beads with your name to the bracelet.

Talk about when people are baptised, they often choose a new name with a special meaning; for example, Greg means watchful or vigilant. Sandy (from Cassandra) means shining upon or helping humankind.

I wonder... what does your name mean? Do you know why it was chosen for you? Is there anyone else in your family that has the same or a similar name?

Get Messy! contains twelve session outlines for Messy Churches, running through the year from September to August.

Everything you need to run your Messy Church, including activity photos, mealtime cards, social action ideas and templates, all downloadable from the Messy Church website. With an introduction by Aike Kennett-Brown.



Find these and other Messy Church resources at brfonline.org.uk



messychurch.org.uk