



Fully revised  
and expanded  
new edition

# Extreme Crafts

## for Messy Churches

*(and all sorts of other contexts)*



80  
ACTIVITY  
IDEAS  
FOR THE  
ADVENTUROUS

Barry Brand and Pete Maidment



## **The Bible Reading Fellowship**

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ISBN 978 0 85746 973 1  
First published 2015  
This edition published 2021  
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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

# **Extreme Crafts** **for Messy Churches**

**80 ACTIVITY IDEAS**

**FOR THE ADVENTUROUS**

**Barry Brand and  
Pete Maidment**



**Barry:**

For Adele, George, Freddie  
and my amazing extended Bitterne Messy family.  
You guys are awesome.

**Pete:**

For Jolly and Moshua.

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# Acknowledgement

There are some people who leave an everlasting mark on your life. Helen Copsey was one. It was a surprise when Helen offered to be on the team at the new Bitterne Messy Church. We went to different services, so I'd never seen her before. She told me she'd done various church stuff before and had always been in the kitchen. But she didn't want to be in the kitchen this time: she wanted to be out with the families.

Helen was put in charge of our edible crafts table and had quite a surprise when 150 people turned up to our first Messy session. She was too ill to help at the next two, but she still brought cakes for the lunch before going home.

Helen didn't really let on just how ill she was and, very sadly, she passed away. The last time I saw her was at one of Pete's Messy training events. She was so excited, desperately wanting to get back to our Messy Church and share the love of Jesus with the families by simply decorating cakes and biscuits and chatting.

Thank you, Helen, for sharing your love and faith. You made your mark and the edible crafts table, 'Copsey's corner', is still the most popular.

**Barry**

# Introduction

‘The trouble with Messy Church is that it isn’t really for men, is it?’

You would be amazed how often we hear this opinion. Every time you get a bunch of people together to discuss Messy Church or to consider launching a new one somewhere, someone will make this statement.

This is a bit strange, because the two of us are, not to put too fine a point on it, men. We’re both in excess of six feet tall. Between us we’ve run marathons, climbed mountains and built stuff. We both drink beer and eat curry and, at the time of writing, we’re having a beard-growing competition, which Barry is winning hands down – Pete’s scraggly, patchy, mostly ginger growth can’t really be called a beard. Since writing and a few years down the line (2020), Barry is blessed with a fine beard of 6 inches in length; Pete, not so much.

Perhaps the assumption that people make when they announce that Messy Church isn’t for men is that once a month we set all that to one side and, with the mums, grannies and childminders (female), we get down to some fancy, pretty, arty-crafty activities with the children.

It simply isn’t true.

We need to tread carefully here, because we’re at risk of creating all sorts of stereotypical and unhelpful gender divides. Girls, boys, men and women are all capable of doing the same things and enjoying similar activities when it comes to Messy Church. Boys’ activities

don't have to involve guns and girls' activities don't demand glitter. Men are just as likely to enjoy careful, fiddly craft activities as women are to enjoy boisterous physical activity.

I guess the difference is that men are unlikely to want to be perceived as taking part in crafty stuff. That's why it's called 'Messy' Church, not 'Crafty' Church, and why the first hour is spent at 'activity' tables rather than 'craft' tables.

This book, then, isn't a list of crafts for men, and it's not a list of men's activities. Rather, it's a selection of some of the more extreme activities that we've had a go at in our Messy Churches, which have given us real enjoyment. Above all, though, it's a list of things for you to do, as adults and children together, to try something new and to learn about following Jesus in this crazy world we live in.

We've carefully chosen activities that fit some of those harder-to-fill areas at Messy Church. Our science experiments build on people's natural desire to solve problems and understand things: they're messy and fun, but they stretch the imagination too, expecting us to think outside the box to see how something is done or how it works.

We've included a list of 'big stuff' – activities that call for people to work together to make something bigger than they could manage alone. Which of us didn't don a hard hat as a child and head out to build something?

Food has universal appeal, but our recipes (if you can call them that) are about creating great stuff to eat rather than using food as a craft.

We've also included a section on art and craft, but possibly not as you've imagined it before. Whether it's just a teeny bit dangerous, extra messy or just BIG, these ideas will, we hope, appeal to everyone – even the men!

# Toy car track

**Mess rating 2/5 • Danger rating 3/5 • Difficulty 5/5**

I haven't met many children or dads who don't like toy cars. I'm sure such people must exist, but in this craft it's as much to do with the ingenuity and problem-solving as with the little toy car.

This junk craft is quite simple in theory. All you need to do is get the car from one end of the room to the other with one push, not allowing it to travel on the floor. When we did this at our Messy Church, I'm not sure who had the most fun, kids or dads. We spent a whole hour on it and only managed a perfect run a couple of times. (Some quick repairs were needed when a toddler rampaged Godzilla-like through the middle of the track.)

## Themes

Perseverance; Christian journey

## Craft outline

### You will need

- A Hot Wheels™ car or similar toy car with good, straight wheels
- Various junk items: card, tubes, boxes, pipe, foam and so on
- String; sticky tape; scissors

Depending on the size of your room, you need to start your track high enough to give the car momentum but not so high that the car just flies off before the end. Use whatever comes to hand – chairs, pews, microphone stands – but be careful not to damage any paintwork.

## Talk about

- Our journey through life can be difficult at times, but, with perseverance and faith, we can overcome the obstacles in our way
- Have you ever thought of your life as a journey with ups (good times) and downs (bad times)?

# Fruit catapult

**Mess rating 4/5 • Danger rating 3/5 • Difficulty 4/5**

This activity is something of a legend at the St Wilfrid's Messy Church. When someone said, 'Do you think we could make a catapult for firing fruit?', we didn't realise quite what we had let ourselves in for.

## Themes

Fruit of the Spirit; evangelism; good news

## Craft outline

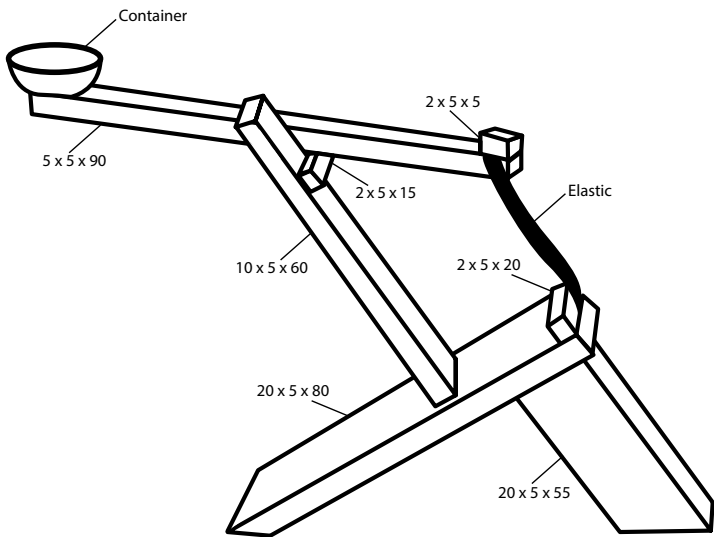
### You will need

- Pieces of wood (sizes roughly as shown in the diagram: all measurements are in centimetres)
- Hammer and nails
- Thick, strong elastic
- Old, soft fruit; a plastic bowl or cup

The catapult shown in the diagram below is a bit like a trebuchet, with a heavy wooden base, an arm at the top that pivots on a wooden support, and a cup to load the fruit into. For the elastic, we would recommend using a giant elastic band from a physio-therapist, if available.

At its simplest, you could get away with two stakes hammered into the ground, with the elastic tied on to the tops. You can then load the fruit up, pull back the elastic and let it fly.

Whatever design you choose to go with, make sure you test it before use, work out where it's safe to stand, and so on. There's nothing more disappointing than setting up a catapult, only to discover that your fruit will fly barely a few feet.



To download the diagram, go to [messychurch.org.uk/extremecrafts](http://messychurch.org.uk/extremecrafts)

Once you're all set up, preferably outdoors with plenty of space, let people take turns in loading up some fruit and seeing who can fire it the furthest. You can compare different fruits or different loading and aiming techniques, to turn it into a really geeky science experiment, if you like.

## Talk about

- How much fun is it to spread the fruit around the churchyard?
- Have you got a message you'd love to share?
- The Bible says that spiritual fruit can grow in us (see Galatians 5:22–23). What kinds of 'fruit' do you think God might give us to bless us?
- Why does God want us to share the good news rather than keep it to ourselves?



# Junk whale

**Mess rating 3/5 • Danger rating 2/5 • Difficulty 3/5**

This craft causes a lot of excitement. Young children love the finished whale because they can get inside it, and the adults and older children love the challenge of building it. We made a blow-hole in our whale and I finished off my talk with my head sticking out of the top.

## Theme

Jonah and the big fish

## Craft outline

### You will need

- Bendy bamboo sticks or the poles from a two-pole play tent
- Wire coat hangers
- Black bin bags; dust sheets or bed sheets
- Paper; sticky tape

Use the bamboo sticks or play tent poles to form the main body of the whale. Use more bamboo or wire coat hangers to form the tail and fins. Cover the structure with the bin bags and sheets and decorate to look as whale-like as possible. Some of the smaller children

might like to make some paper barnacles or seaweed to stick to the whale.

Try to make a mouth that opens and closes, so that you can go inside.

## Talk about

- Have you ever done something wrong and tried to hide it or forget about it? Can we hide from God?
- God wants us to tell him about our wrongdoings and ask him for forgiveness, for help and for strength to face our fears
- Have you ever played hide and seek? Hiding from God isn't much fun
- Sometimes God or our parents can ask us to do things we don't want to do. This happened to Jonah
- Have you ever been too scared to do the right thing?



*Enabling all ages to grow in faith*



Anna Chaplaincy  
Living Faith  
Messy Church  
Parenting for Faith

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# Explosive fun for everyone!

In this fully revised and expanded new edition, Barry Brand and Pete Maidment offer 80 activities for Messy Church sessions, carefully crafted to appeal to male as well as female participants. They challenge the assumption that Messy Church 'isn't really for men or boys' and offer approaches to engage men and boys in an intentional way. Featuring sections on **Big Stuff**, **Construction**, **Science**, **Arty Crafts** and **Edible Crafts**, this book provides inspiration for creating a Messy Church that everyone will love to be part of.



**Barry Brand**

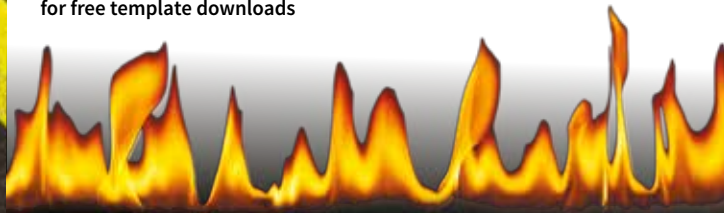


**Pete  
Maidment**

***Extreme Mess... is the world ready for this? I am!***

**Lucy Moore, founder of Messy Church**

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ISBN: 9780857469731



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