

Messy Easter

3 complete sessions and a treasure trove of ideas

for Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Jane Leadbetter



Messy Church® is a registered word mark and the logo is a registered device mark of The Bible Reading Fellowship.

Text copyright © Jane Leadbetter 2014

Illustrations copyright © Simon Smith 2014

The author asserts the moral right
to be identified as the author of this work

Published by

The Bible Reading Fellowship

15 The Chambers, Vineyard

Abingdon OX14 3FE

United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1865 319700

Email: enquiries@brf.org.uk

Website: www.brf.org.uk

BRF is a Registered Charity

ISBN 978 1 84101 717 4

First published 2014

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

All rights reserved

Acknowledgements

Unless otherwise stated, scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society, are used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, a member of the Hachette Livre Group UK. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of International Bible Society. UK trademark number 1448790.

Cover photos: Background image: © flas100/iStock/Thinkstock; glitter pens: © Graça Victoria/Hemera/Thinkstock; top ribbon: © inerika/iStock/Thinkstock; bottom ribbon: © adisa/Kristina Gruzdeva/iStock/Thinkstock; gingerbread: © ajaphoto/iStock/Thinkstock; Easter eggs: © jopelka/iStock/Thinkstock; pretzels: © joanna wnuk/iStock/Thinkstock; cross made and photographed by Christine Reissland

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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

Messy Easter

3 complete sessions and a treasure trove of ideas

for Lent, Holy Week and Easter

Jane Leadbetter

Contents

Planning grid for Messy Church	6
Introduction	7
1 Lent Messy Church	8
2 Holy Week Messy Church	38
3 Easter Messy Church	54
4 Creative Easter prayers	73
5 Easter allsorts.....	74
6 Easter food and food crafts.....	78
7 Easter games	81
8 Easter trail	85
Craft templates	87
Index of crafts and games	91

Introduction

Happy Easter!

We may not be absolutely sure when Easter Day is going to be each year, but when it comes, hurrah! Easter is one of the three most important times in the Christian church calendar, along with Christmas and Pentecost. We have a time to prepare for it—Lent. We have a time of exceptional events to explore on the way—Holy Week. Then we arrive at one of the most joyous and great celebrations of the year—Easter Day!

The season of Lent and Easter gathers together thoughts about preparation, abstinence, repentance, reflection, self-sacrifice, death, resurrection, forgiveness, hope, assurance and celebration. Easter is the celebration of Christ's resurrection from the dead. As it is the oldest and most important festival of the Christian church, it also includes many traditions, depending on where in the world you live.

Your Messy Church, if monthly, could fall at any time between the beginning of Lent and Easter Day. You may wish to pack the whole story into two hours or select some special themes or cover just part of the journey to Easter and continue it next year. However you offer Easter to your community, please use this book as your bag of pick 'n' mix. It is important that we find as many ways as we can to help families engage with the real story of Easter.

This book explores the desert in Lent, uncovers the key events of Holy Week and helps you to experience the surprise of Easter morning. The three sessions invite all ages to discover the elements of the Easter story through many methods and styles of creativity, using many different art media and skills. Everyone learns in different ways so there is a wide variety of ideas for those who enjoy activity-based learning.

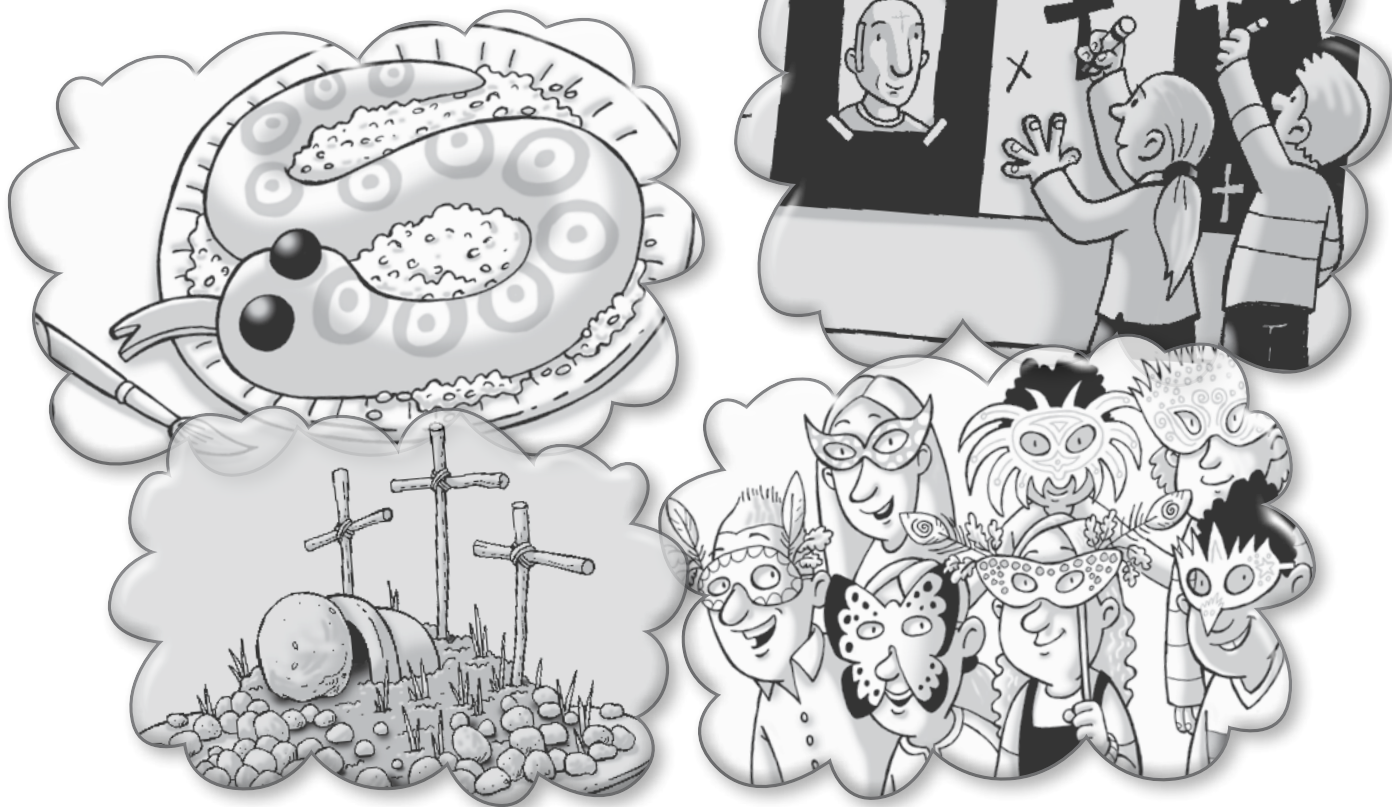
In addition to the three main sessions, there is an 'Easter allsorts' section with additional ideas. It is less detailed but gives examples of alternative crafts and activities to use at any Easter occasion.

Messy Church offers an abundance of opportunities to share the Easter story with the community. We hear great stories of Messy Churches on Good Friday mornings, where hundreds of people of all ages gather to open up the Easter story and eat hot cross buns together. Some Messy Churches link up with their local school to explore the Easter journey and some use the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Day, a day of waiting, to shout out the message that Jesus is alive. Thank you, Messy Churches everywhere, for your wonderful all-age ministry in your local communities. Enjoy the Mess! And not an Easter bunny in sight...

Lent Messy Church

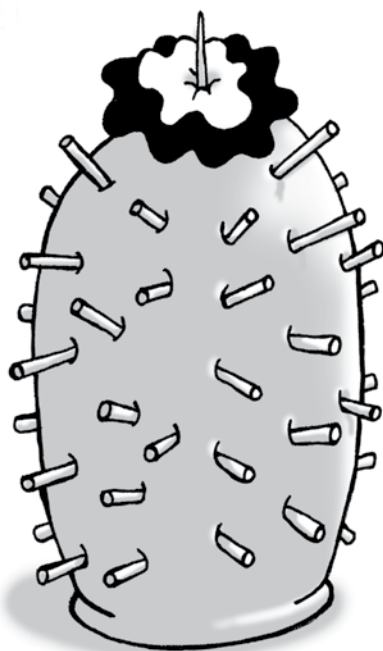
- **Theme:** preparing for Easter
- **Biblical story:** Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days of preparation for his ministry, facing temptations from the devil
- **Equipping today's families:** by discovering what happened to Jesus in the desert, we can find God in our own desert times. God wants to build endurance into our lives, to strengthen us as we follow him. The season of Lent invites us on a journey of hope.

The Bible passages for this story are Matthew 4:1–11;
Mark 1:12–13 and Luke 4:1–13.



Crafts

Desert cactus



You will need:

Two large cups of flour; two large cups of water; one large cup of salt; two teaspoons of cream of tartar; one tablespoon of oil; green food colouring; cocktail sticks or dried spaghetti; small pieces of brightly coloured tissue paper; printout of various cactus shapes

How to

In advance of the session, make playdough by mixing the flour, water, salt, cream of tartar and oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Add your desired amount of food colouring. Stir well and place in a microwave. Heat for three minutes on high power. Stir again and heat for another three minutes. Allow the dough to cool, then knead it. Place in an airtight tin or wrap in clingfilm.

Take a small ball of playdough and create any cactus shape. Insert broken pieces of spaghetti or cocktail sticks into the cactus for the spines. Make one tissue paper flower and attach it to the cactus with a cocktail stick.

Talk about how the desert is a dry and barren place, but the cactus plant can grow very long roots and store up moisture. It can fight off hungry animals by growing sharp spines, and some cacti display beautiful flowers. Just as a cactus stores up water to give it strength, we need Jesus to be the source of our strength. Jesus said, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (John 4:13–14).

Lenten cross

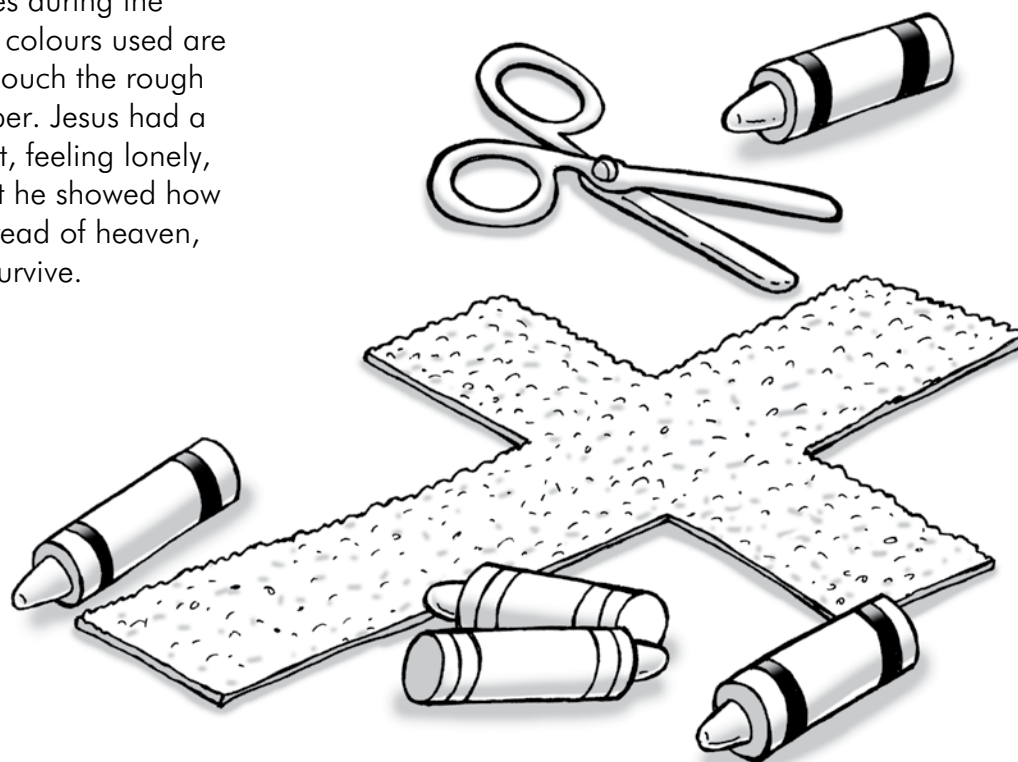
You will need:

Pieces of medium rough sandpaper; cross templates (page 88); purple, grey or dark blue wax crayons

Talk about how the colour purple symbolises pain and suffering and is used by many churches during the season of Lent. Other colours used are red, violet and grey. Touch the rough texture of the sandpaper. Jesus had a hard time in the desert, feeling lonely, hungry and thirsty, but he showed how he needed only the bread of heaven, the word of God, to survive.

How to

Draw round a cross template on the reverse side of a piece of sandpaper. Cut out the cross shape with scissors. On the rough side of the sandpaper, make patterns on the cross with a thick wax crayon. To create a jigsaw, cut the cross into six pieces.



Sackcloth bags

You will need:

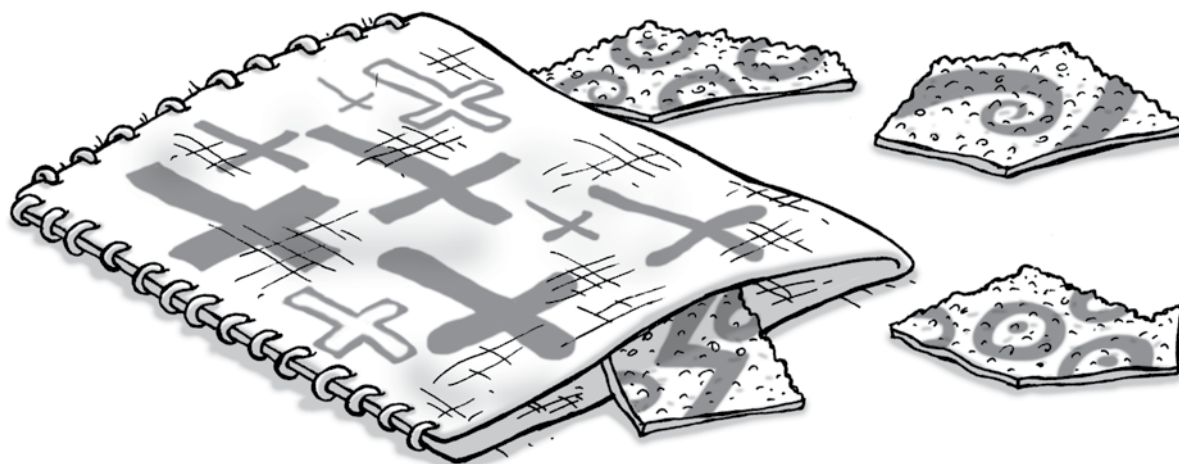
Pieces of sackcloth or rough material; wool; bodkin needles; purple colouring pens; cross jigsaw pieces from previous activity

Talk about how sackcloth is another symbol of Lent. Along with ashes, it symbolises mourning, mortality and penance. Sackcloth was worn at sad times by many people in the Bible, including Jacob, David, Daniel and the Ninevites after they heard Jonah's message.

How to

Cut a piece of sackcloth approximately 40 cm x 15 cm. Fold it in half and sew up each side with wool, leaving the top open. Using the colouring pens, decorate the bag with purple crosses.

Place your jigsaw pieces inside the sackcloth bag and remove just one piece each week during Lent. Gradually form the shape of the cross by piecing together the jigsaw, somewhere in your home, as a reminder of Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness and the 40 days of Lent. The sandpaper will also remind you of Jesus in the desert.



Celebration

Get ready

As people enter the celebration space, show PowerPoint pictures of the crafts and activities everyone has been doing. Play powerful music such as the *Prince Caspian* film soundtrack, or anything with a menacing theme. Explain that the crafts were chosen to help us to think about the six weeks of Lent and how Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days and nights. What happened to Jesus during this time?

If you like to use props during your storytelling, have ready some stones, an A-frame set of ladders, a PowerPoint photo of the world and a sword. Invite all ages to raise their arm like a sword whenever you raise your sword, and shout out loud, '**Jesus is the Son of God!**'

Go

Close your eyes for a moment. Try to picture what you think Jesus looks like. There are no right or wrong answers. I wonder if he looks happy and smiling or tired and sad. Is he long-haired, with a beard, or messy-haired with a halo? Or is he a baby in a manger? OK, open your eyes!

Well, Jesus was around 30 years old when he asked John the Baptist to baptise him. So picture the scene. There were the cool waters of the River Jordan, crowds of people who wanted to be baptised and there was Jesus, telling John that now was the time. John wasn't sure, but he baptised Jesus in the River Jordan anyway, and, as Jesus came out of the water, the sky opened up and a bright light shone down on him. The Spirit of God came down like a dove and landed on Jesus. Then a voice from above said, 'This is my Son. I love him and I am pleased with him.'

Close your eyes again. Can you see Jesus now? How is he looking this time?

What did God's voice say? 'This is my Son.' (Raise your sword.) **Jesus is the Son of God!**

Open your eyes! Jesus is now being led by the Holy Spirit into a desert. A minute ago, he was hearing God say how pleased he was with him and now suddenly he is all alone in a dangerous place. Jesus has no food and goes hungry for 40 days and nights. During this time the devil tempts him and challenges him about being the Son of God. The devil often tempts us when we are tired and hungry and feeling weak.

The temptations are a bit like when you receive flyers in the post or phone calls pestering you to change from one electricity or gas company to another, when they promise you a better financial deal; or like when a mobile phone company tempts you to change provider and receive more apps and phone options for less money. The devil would love it if Jesus decided to move from his 'provider', God, and work for the devil instead.

Jesus is facing the biggest challenge ever—and remember that Jesus is a man, fully human. He has to make important decisions every step of the way.

First, the devil tried to tempt Jesus by asking him to change some stones into bread. (*Show the stones.*) Now we know that Jesus could turn water into wine and multiply fish and loaves, as we have read about it in other Bible stories. But here Jesus responds by quoting the word of God, showing how he trusts only God—because **Jesus is the Son of God!** (*Raise your sword.*)

Second, the devil took Jesus to the top of the temple in the holy city, Jerusalem, and asked him to throw himself down and let the angels catch him. The devil even quoted from Psalm 91 in the Bible, but Jesus also quoted from the Bible—a verse about not putting God to the test. **Jesus is the Son of God!** (*Raise your sword.*)

Third, the devil took Jesus to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. He offered it all to Jesus if Jesus would bow down and worship him. But how could the devil offer the world when it doesn't belong to him? It belongs to God! Jesus answered that we should worship only God. **Jesus is the Son of God!** (*Raise your sword.*)

Then the devil left and the angels came to care for Jesus. Jesus faced every temptation, but he resisted. He did not sin and give in. Now he was ready to work hard for around three and a half years, telling everyone about God his Father. **Jesus is the Son of God!** (*Raise your sword.*)

Remote control prayer

Give photocopies of the TV remote control template (page 89) to everyone. Then say:

The word 'remote' can mean far away, distant, secluded or faint. Jesus was far away and secluded when he was in the desert for 40 days. Look at the buttons on your remote control for the desert. There are 40 buttons, one for each day of Lent. There are other familiar buttons too.

Press button number 1.

Thank you, Lord, for Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. We think of the ashes, which remind us how we are sorry for not always being close to you, and the dust of the desert, where Jesus suffered for 40 days.

Press the 'fast forward' button.

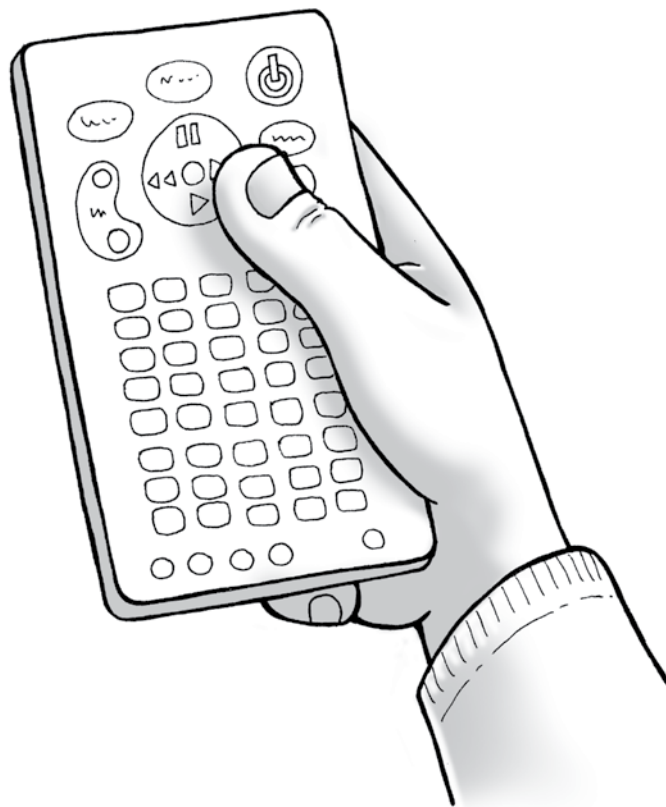
Help us, Lord, to think about the fasting in our lives, the things we will give up through Lent. Help us to declutter our lives as we grow to know you better.

Press buttons 1–40 (as quickly as you can).

We think about how you suffered in the desert and stood strong against the devil. Help us to keep strong in our love for God.

Press the 'Guide' button.

Thank you for the Holy Spirit, who came to you on your baptism day, watched over you in the desert and guides each of us every day.



Press the 'Exit' button.

Because you are the Son of God, you invite each one of us to walk beside you in love and trust.
Thank you, Lord, for resisting the devil, and help us to say 'no' in times of weakness. Thank
you for being in control. Amen

Song suggestion

'Trust in God with all your heart' (Suzy Smale, Thankyou Music)

Finish with the Messy Grace:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (*hold out your hands as if expecting a present*)
And the love of God (*put your hands on your heart*)
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (*hold hands*)
Be with us all now and for ever. Amen! (*Raise hands together on the word 'Amen'.*)

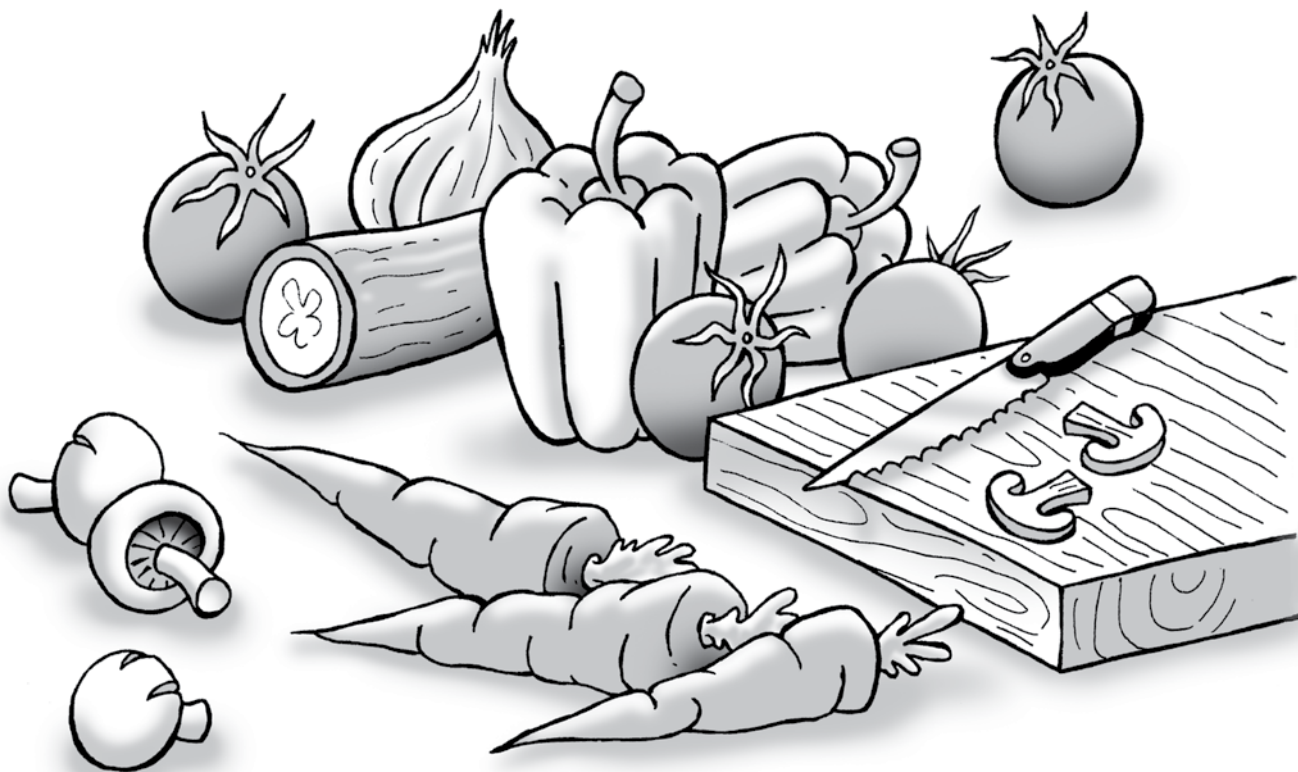
As everyone leaves the celebration space, play the song 'Footprints in the sand' from the CD *Spirit* by Leona Lewis.

Cards to put on the meal table

- What did you like best about Messy Church today?
- If you could choose just one thing to take into the desert with you, what would it be?
- Have you ever been tempted and found it hard to resist?
- How do you think the angels cared for Jesus after his 40 days in the desert?
- If Jesus was eating with you now, what would you ask him about his time in the desert?

Take-home ideas

- **Ash alms jar:** Choose an empty glass jar, with a lid, to decorate in grey, purple or dark colours using glass paints or tissue paper. Make a coin-sized slit in the lid. Use the jar to collect coins for a needy cause during Lent.
- **Declutter (deMess):** Simplify your life by sorting and clearing unwanted and unused items in the home. They could be clothes, books, toys or everything in the shed. Give some away to good causes.
- **Fast food fasting:** Avoid the junk food and takeaway options. Simplify your diet with healthy recipes and less rich food. What difference will this make to your well-being in six weeks?



40 Messy Lent family challenges and activities

1. Make an ash alms jar (see Take-home ideas, page 24) and decide which charity you will collect coins for during Lent.
2. Think about what you could give up during Lent to enable you to redirect your money to the alms jar.





Three complete sessions for Lent, Holy Week and Easter, together with a wealth of activities to extend the range of excitingly messy activities for your Messy Church—creative prayers, games, food crafts, and ideas for organising an Easter trail. Craft templates and a session planning grid are included.

Jane Leadbetter is part of the BRF Messy Church team, has worked as a primary school teacher and was Children's Work Adviser in the Diocese of Liverpool for twelve years. She runs L19: Messy Church once a month.

Visit www.messychurch.org.uk/9781841017174/ for free template downloads



An imprint of brf
978-1-84101-717-4
UK £6.99

Design: Christine Reissland



9 781841 017174

visit Messy Church at www.messychurch.org.uk

Background image: © flas100/iStock/Thinkstock; glitter pens: © Gracia Victoria/Hemera/Thinkstock;
top ribbon: © inerika/iStock/Thinkstock; bottom ribbon: © adisa/Kristina Gruzdeva/iStock/Thinkstock;
gingerbread: © ajaphoto/iStock/Thinkstock; Easter eggs: © jopelka/iStock/Thinkstock; pretzels: © joanna
wnuk/iStock/Thinkstock; cross made and photographed by Christine Reissland.
Internal illustrations: Simon Smith

Visit the Messy Church website at www.messychurch.org.uk for resources, email updates and the Messy blog