



Messy Vintage

**52 sessions to share
Christ-centred fun and fellowship
with the older generation**



Katie Norman and Jill Phipps

The Bible Reading Fellowship

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Foreword

Never did I imagine seven years ago that the form of 'doing church' which has become Messy Vintage would start to spread like wildfire and that I'd become such an advocate of it.

Messy Vintage started in Philadelphie Methodist Church in the parish of St Peter, Jersey, now a Messy Centre. That doesn't just mean they do Messy Church, they *are* a Messy Church. The then-minister, the Revd Christine Legge, and local lay minister Katie Norman explained how a few years ago the church was heading for closure. 'The congregation was dwindling. As they got older, it was harder and harder to find officers: people to be stewards and so on,' said Katie.

'We faced a stark choice,' explained Christine: 'Change or die.' Having held their first Messy Church in 2009, Katie had been praying that Messy Church might grow and become central to their plans. So, in 2011, building on the success of the Messy Church, Messy Vintage as we now know it went 'on the road' to local care homes. In the spring of 2013, a celebration service was held to 'praise God and give thanks for his vision for 'Philadelphie Messy Centre'.

They haven't looked back since. When I visited the church, across the hallway, tables were laid for the fine tea which follows every Messy Vintage at the Centre. What a tea it was – gingham cloths, fresh roses in porcelain vases and an Indian tree-patterned tea service. Cake stands and doilies were ready to be brought out, laden with dainty sandwiches, cream and jam scones and all manner of fancy cakes.

In ones and twos the people arrived, some climbing off mobility scooters, men and women from sheltered homes and others who lived alone, some who had been given lifts to the centre and all gathering for friendship, fellowship and the promise of that delicious tea.

The atmosphere was more sedate than when children burst through the doors for Messy Church on other days of the week. The Messy team was ready in their aprons and with name badges to meet and greet every older person by

name and guide the less mobile to their places. Gentle devotional music was playing in the background.

It opened with a welcome, some familiar hymns, then all settled down to a themed craft activity. This month the emphasis was on 'Pumping up – faith fitness'. We were each encouraged to make a mosaic reflecting something of our journey through life, of what is important to us, whatever we might be inspired to depict, using the different coloured tiles.

Later there was a talk on the Micah challenge (Micah 6:8). What does God require of you? 'To act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.' The conversation over the choosing, gluing, sorting and snipping didn't flag.

Helpers guided those with less nimble fingers to complete their tasks, and all the while everyone was talking, swapping stories, evoking memories, laughing, giving and receiving gentle encouragement.

We were invited to show one another the results of our concentration. A man shows his tile – a mosaic with a cross in the middle, light radiating from it. Another man talks of a winding path, 'the ups and downs, twists and turns of life'. Another's has a cross too, this time with arms outstretched from it. 'It's about love,' the maker explains. A woman shows us her tile saying, 'The dark pieces are for the times of depression.' Everyone nods. I notice there are more light mosaic pieces than dark ones glued on her board.

It is not difficult to see the advantages of Messy Vintage. The activities are absorbing. The exchanges between us all were honest and authentic. People's self-esteem grows visibly through the loving attention they are paid. If friendship is top of the list of what churches should provide (when older people are asked for their opinion), Messy Vintage makes space for friendship aplenty.

In a care home I went to the next day for Messy Vintage 'on the road', few of the participants were able to colour in drawings for themselves depicting the Lord's Prayer. But that was no barrier to enjoyment, as people in wheelchairs selected the colours they wanted helpers to use, and discussed their memories of church as a child, or chatted about football, or how much they liked the music playing softly in the background.

One helper, on only her second time out as a team member, said, ‘From the moment you come in here, it feels like you’re entering sacred space. The atmosphere of peace is amazing.’

I helped one man in the lounge who had very little ability to speak. His intonation, the way he modulated his voice, might have sounded like that of normal, everyday, conversation. But only one word in about twenty was comprehensible. You might have thought it nigh on impossible for us to communicate. But gradually we did find a way to connect through smiles, having a hand to hold, a repetition of those words I did catch... to check with him that I’d understood correctly. When I bade him farewell, he took the name badge sticker off his shirt and gave it to me as a keepsake.

Since 2014 many other key people, like Katie, have been drawn into this endeavour. Jill Phipps lives not far from me in Hampshire and first contacted me because of her interest in Anna Chaplaincy for Older People. Again, little did she, or I, know we would come to be colleagues spreading the word of Messy Vintage which is now overseen by the Anna Chaplaincy team.

I was in Crickhowell in Powys, Wales, one day, talking about Messy Vintage, when a hand shot up and a man told me proudly how they conduct Messy Vintage in some care homes nearby. It seems you can’t keep a good thing down. He was so keen to tell everyone assembled on that day all about it, at an event focusing on ministry among older people.

This book is the fruit of an irrepressible delight in the fact that God is doing something new. Such enthusiasm for it is infectious. Katie and Jill are a formidable duo, determination personified, when it comes to making church happen in some of the least likely places.

Let them guide you into the art of creating worship which touches all the senses and, quite simply, sets people free to be who God wants them to be.

Debbie Thrower
Anna Chaplaincy Pioneer

Find out more about Anna Chaplaincy at annachaplaincy.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Many people have had a part to play in bringing this book into existence. We are grateful to Richard, Debbie, Alex and Olivia at The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) for their initial suggestion to write it and for their, and Lucy's, ongoing encouragement while it was in progress. To Alex and Wendy, who read and made helpful suggestions on our first drafts, noticing the fine details which we had overlooked, and to Rachel and the BRF publishing team, who delivered it from PC to printed word with patience, kindness and professional expertise – thank you all.

The craft activities in this book have come from a variety of sources: some from previous sessions and others new; some suggested by family and friends, others sourced from the internet and sites which we have listed at the back under 'Resources'. For all of these we give thanks, but perhaps one of the greatest shout-outs has to go to our amazing teams, who make all things possible.

A huge thank you to Deacon Sally Wheadon and all the team at Philadelphia Messy Centre, Jersey, for your passion, creativity and total belief that Messy Vintage needs to reach every corner of the globe.

Particular thanks to Flis and Chris on the Portsmouth team, and to Juliet Helbren and Wendy Horn of St Barnabas Church, Swanmore, Hampshire, for their help, advice and Wendy's prayerful reflection for the Bible Sunday craft.

Also to the staff, activity coordinators and residents of the care homes, for their warm welcome, enjoyment and participation in worshipping our creator God with us.

Finally, massive thanks to our long-suffering and patient husbands, Bill and Martin, who dished out encouragement and cups of coffee and tea, with great dollops of belief that we could do it!

We hope you enjoy the book and pray that God will use it to bless your work with our wise and wonderful older generation.

Introduction

Katie Norman writes:

It started with cake stands – not even real ones, just the vision of them. Cake stands so beautifully dressed and adorned with home-made cakes and finger sandwiches that they displayed a feast fit for kings; and indeed the guests were royalty, for they were ‘the silver-haired heads’ on whom God places his ‘crown of glory’ (Proverbs 16:31, NKJV).

It was a beautiful picture and one that could easily have remained just that if it were not for the unwavering belief and support of my minister at the time, Revd Christine Legge, who gave Messy Vintage her blessing, rolled her sleeves up and, along with our amazing Messy team, developed and grew what has become a much treasured way of ‘being church’. The steadfast faith of our small Sunday congregation also played a huge part. They selflessly gave up what had long been familiar to them and enabled Philadelphie Methodist Church to be developed as a Messy Centre, a place in which all generations of mixed abilities and needs can celebrate in comfort, with Christ-centred fun, fellowship and food – all led by people as passionate now as they were when we started.

The Messy Vintage gatherings with which I am involved grew out of an existing Messy Church, but this does not necessarily need to be the case. I have spoken with many people seeking to serve the ‘silver-haired heads’ who have no involvement with Messy Church but who, in common with the teams who lead that phenomenal model of church, have hearts filled with passion and zeal to shine the light of God into every corner. For us, this ‘corner’ takes the form of sharing Messy Vintage at the Messy Centre, in care homes and in dementia units. For you, it may well be that a community centre, a village hall or a retirement home is the setting best suited to the needs of those you feel called to meet with. The meeting place is not pivotal to Messy Vintage; what is crucial is the heart from which Messy Vintage flows and adherence to the Messy principles of creativity, hospitality and celebration.

Creativity, for the predominantly older generation for whom Messy Vintage is aimed, can seem daunting, with such a vast array of abilities to cater for. However, it has been our experience over the last ten years that it is not so much the craft itself that is important but the time spent creating it together and the conversations that ensue. Some of you may feel that the craft sessions offered in this book are too simple (or maybe too difficult), but they are not set in stone. Think of them as the middle C from which to play the right tune for your gathering, and then adjust them accordingly. They are ideas off which to bounce, not necessarily to create exactly as depicted. So too the ideas for team conversation and celebration: adjust them, delight in them and above all have fun.

As for hospitality, this again will differ according to where you are meeting. When we meet for Messy Vintage in our church setting, it will come as no surprise to you that we serve the aforementioned delicious feast on three-tier cake stands, all beautifully laid out on tables dressed with crisply laundered coverings and with flowers adorning the centre. Sadly, this is not usually possible to replicate when going into care homes and dementia units, so in such instances we run the session just before the residents have their lunch or afternoon tea.

Hospitality, of course, comes not only in the form of food, but in being welcoming and generous of spirit and love, and in these respects there are no Messy Vintage bounds! For Messy Vintage is a church that creates a sacred space where even those without a voice can engage and delight. It is where participation is encouraged, not perfection sought, and where the sound of laughter, singing and percussion instruments throngs the air. It is where I have witnessed a man with seemingly no communication skills thumb through an illustrated Bible with such reverence and beauty that his intimacy with God was tangible, and where I have seen people moved to dance in joyous abandon as their act of praise. It is a church where hearts, long broken, find solace, where friendships are formed and where, as one of our faithful participants puts it, 'you feel part of a big family'.

Many older people yearn to be part of a 'big church family' but, for reasons of age or mobility, cannot engage in the more formal way of being church. 'I don't always get to church now as the service is too long,' says a 91-year-old. 'The Messy Vintage service time is just the right length for me. Our afternoon tea is delicious.' When Messy Vintage goes out into the community, 'being family' is equally as important and evident. 'We love to encourage all staff, family

and visitors to get involved. It creates a wonderful atmosphere,' remarks the ward sister, along with the activity coordinator of an adult mental health unit, who also acknowledges the value of supporting the residents' spiritual needs in a 'wonderful afternoon of love and friendship'.

Clearly, Messy Vintage means a great deal to all whom it embraces, be that in church or in a community setting, but none more so than to the activities coordinator of the care home who opened their door for our very first Messy Vintage, for she simply puts it like this: 'We love Messy Vintage. It's like a breath of fresh air!'

I pray that as you read this book you too will feel that 'breath of fresh air' equipping, enabling and encouraging you to start up, or continue to grow, your Messy Vintage.

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Our God is a great, big God

Bible passage

Psalm 34:1-3

Focus verse

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!

PSALM 34:3 (RSV)

Aim

For friends and family, or maybe a school class, to share in a time of fun and fellowship as you praise the Lord at a Messy Vintage bug drive! This session could be used as a follow-up to 'A surprise invitation' (session 28).

Messy team conversations

The conversations around the table will play out organically.

Activity



You will need: sufficient quantities of yellow, green, red and grey playdough; standard black pipe cleaners; fine black pipe cleaners or other suitable material for use as legs and feelers; small scraps of tinsel pipe cleaners; coloured feathers; googly eyes; black felt-tip pens; dice and shaker pots, one for each table; a copy of the 'Instructions to play' template for each table; a few small prizes, such as bars of chocolate or soap; a person (the caller) to direct the game

Sit people at tables of no more than six. Explain that each player is playing for themselves (not in pairs). Hand out the instructions and give out the component parts needed for whichever bug you are using. To play, each player throws the dice, making up their insect when the correct number is thrown. They continue to throw the dice until a number is thrown for a piece they already have. The game then moves on to the player on their left until someone finishes and shouts 'bug'. After a small prize is given out, move on to the next bug. (Note: You could shorten the games by allowing multiple pieces per correct throw; e.g. throw six to get all the legs.)

Celebration

Read Psalm 34:1–3. Talk about the power of placing magnification on even the smallest of insects. Whether by using a magnifying glass or viewing it on a nature programme, the end result is the same: what is revealed is a beauty and intricacy beyond what we could possibly imagine.

In the same way, if we want to see the beauty and intricacy of God, we need to magnify him. Not by trying to make God bigger than he truly is, for that would be impossible, as God is greater than all things, but by making God bigger in us, in our whole being – in our thoughts, actions, hearts and praise. In these ways we magnify God and see his intricate beauty and utter awesomeness.

Prayer

We thank you, our great, big, awesome God, for this time of fun, fellowship and praise. May we magnify you in our daily lives and never cease to tell everyone of your intricate beauty. Amen

Song suggestions

- Our God is a great big God
- How great thou art
- Our God is an awesome God
- Immortal, invisible, God only wise
- Praise to the Lord, the almighty
- With gladness we worship, rejoice as we sing

40

Advent

Bible passage

Isaiah 40:3–5

Focus verse

‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’

ISAIAH 40:3 (NRSV)

Aim

To prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ at Christmas.

Messy team conversations

What did you do as a child in the weeks before Christmas? How did you prepare? Did you stir the Christmas pudding on Stir-up Sunday? Did you make Advent wreaths? Talk about the four candles, one for each Sunday in Advent, three purple and one pink – for the third Sunday in Advent.

Activity

You will need: OASIS floral foam or polystyrene foam rings sitting on a base, e.g. a plate or board; water in a bowl; cocktail sticks; greenery, preferably from a natural evergreen, e.g. conifer, hebe, ivy, pittosporum, yew, rosemary or euonymus, but something artificial can also be used; LED tea lights or small pillar candles, ideally three purple and one rose-coloured; pine cones sprayed gold; ribbon; small baubles

If using OASIS foam, soak it in water. Mark where the four candles will go with the cocktail sticks, spaced evenly around the ring. Insert foliage, using the larger pieces for the base and smaller pieces at the sides and into the middle, being careful not to fill up the middle. Secure the candles with candle holders or, if using LED tea lights, place them on the ring, tucked in among the foliage, so that you can lift them up to switch them on and off. Add ribbon, pine cones or small baubles as wished.

Celebration

Share what you've been talking about with regards to traditions and customs of preparing for Advent.

Advent is a time of waiting, but also of action. Reviewing our actions and attitudes, does anything need changing? Spend some time with Jesus, asking him to help us prepare – for the king who has come, is still coming and will come again.

Prayer

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as we spend Advent waiting for you, bless us with the knowledge of your presence. Amen

Song suggestions

- Make way, make way
- Open our eyes, Lord
- Restore, O Lord
- Tell out my soul
- Make me a channel of your peace



Enabling all ages to grow in faith



Anna Chaplaincy
Living Faith
Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Christian charity that resources individuals and churches. Our vision is to enable people of all ages to grow in faith and understanding of the Bible and to see more people equipped to exercise their gifts in leadership and ministry.

To find out more about our ministries, visit

brf.org.uk

Being 'church' with older people in care homes, congregations and the community

Messy Vintage is Christ-centred and creative, full of celebration and hospitality and open to all, aspiring to include people of all ages while specifically reaching out to older people. A typical session involves hands-on creative activities to explore a Bible story, a short celebration with story, song and prayer, and refreshments.

Whether you're just getting started with Messy Vintage or looking for new session material, this book offers practical advice and resources to help you reach out to the older people in your community.

'A wonderful resource book for Messy Vintage leaders written with Katie and Jill's warm friendliness and expertise. It's so exciting to see this ministry among older people flourishing, and this book will help even more churches join in.'

Lucy Moore, Messy Church founder and pioneer

'The Messy Vintage team always make me feel welcome – they are worth their weight in gold.'

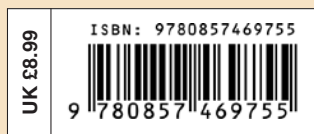
Messy Vintage participant

'We love Messy Vintage. It's like a breath of fresh air!'

Care home social activities coordinator

messychurch.org.uk/messy-vintage

Katie Norman is the pioneer of Messy Vintage in Jersey, taking the approach into churches and care homes, as well as hospital units for people living with advanced dementia. **Jill Phipps** is BRF's National Coordinator for Messy Vintage.



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