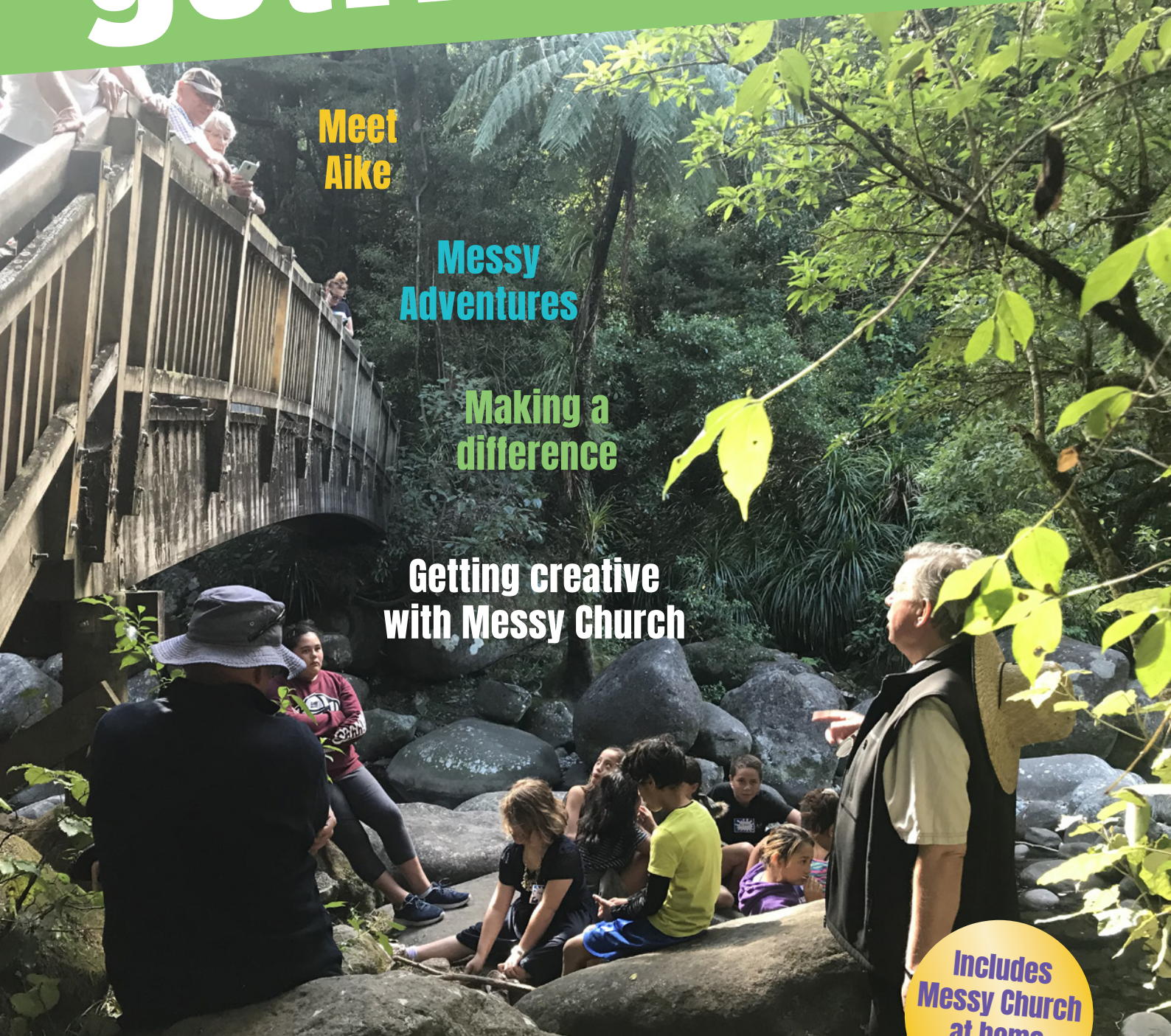




May-August 2022 £4.85

get MESSY!



**Meef
Aike**

**Messy
Adventures**

**Making a
difference**

**Getting creative
with Messy Church**

**Includes
Messy Church
at home
ideas**

Sessions in this issue

Pillar of comfort
Exodus 13:20-22

It's all about fishing?
Mark 1:16-20

Zac's up the tree
Luke 19:1-10

**Forgiveness is a
loving action**
Matthew 18:21-35



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Meet our **session writers** for this issue



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Both have written resources for churches and children's ministry publications.



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Prior to ministry, Sandy was a secondary school teacher of Chinese, English and RE. Sandy is married to Brendan, and they have a daughter, Sophia. In her free time, Sandy enjoys fibre arts, painting icons, genealogy, cooking and travel.



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Themes in this edition

This year is all about 'making a difference', as you can read on page 5. So every session focuses on how our faith makes a difference in some way. In **May** we look at the classic story of God's cloudy or fiery pillar guiding God's people through the wilderness. The fire ties in with Pentecost too, of course, and we reflect on what a difference it makes to have a God who is close to us and leads us on through difficult places and times.

In **June**, it's all about fishing... or is it? As we think about Jesus calling his disciples while they were fishing, we think about what a difference it makes to know we're called and wanted by Jesus. Our identity lies in our relationship with him, not in our job or our schoolwork.

In **July** we enjoy the massive difference Jesus makes in the life of Zacchaeus and the people of Jericho as he, perhaps like us at Messy Church, sits and eats with someone society has excluded.

And in **August** we explore one of the aspects of following Jesus that perhaps makes the most difference of all: that of being forgiven and forgiving others, through Jesus' story of the unforgiving servant.

Contents



Creative Ways to Tell a Bible Story.....	4
Lucy Moore writes... ..	5
Stories from Messy Churches far and wide	6
Getting creative with Messy Church	8
Messy merriment	9
Messy Church Goes Wild.....	10
Messy Adventures	11
Parenting for Faith – Creating windows.....	12
A Voyage of Discovery	13
Meet Aike, our new Messy Church Ministry Lead!	14
Meet Sally, our Messy Coordinator!	15
#discipleship: team.....	16
How can you help Messy Church make a lasting difference?	17



SESSION MATERIAL

May: Pillar of comfort.....	18
June: It's all about fishing?.....	23
July: Zac's up the tree	28
August: Forgiveness is a loving action	33
Messy questions.....	38



How to run a Messy Church planning meeting

Why?

Whether your team is large or small, sharing creative ideas and prayers is beneficial to running a healthy and intentional Messy Church.

Pray

Pray for your Messy Church, for the worldwide Messy Church network and for God to be at work.

Where to hold a meeting

Choose a warm and friendly environment with refreshment facilities and a hospitable host. Wi-Fi is a bonus!



Go to messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay22 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet.



If you are using these sessions for a Messy Church at home, look out for this symbol! These are activities that can easily be adapted to the home.

In our next issue

SEPTEMBER Share like sheep

OCTOBER God's love for the planet

NOVEMBER All welcome in God's family

DECEMBER We were there – are you?



Lucy Moore writes...

Making a difference

Making a difference! How exciting to be part of a network that really does make a difference to the life of local families and the life of the local church. 'Making a difference' is the tagline of the International Conference (squeals of anticipation) and the starting point for choosing all the stories for *Get Messy!* this year. Each session asks the question, 'How does this passage make a difference to people's lives?' The Bible stories we've chosen encourage us to think about how God makes a difference to our need for forgiveness, for justice, healing, identity, belonging, hope... What an amazing faith Christianity is, that in Jesus, God meets so many of our human needs and makes such a difference to us all. And we're invited to work with God on this MAD ('making a difference') idea! Awesome.

The **International Conference** is this month (May 2022) and goodness, do we need that boost of wallowing in each other's company after such a difficult season. I think there might be more than a few tears among the laughter, as we look out for each other and pick up each other's burdens. Both international conferences so far have made a real difference to the people who came on them and this one will be the same: there's an energy and a delight, a penny-dropping move into a new understanding of what God has in store when Messy people get creative together in Jesus' name. If you possibly can come, it really will make a difference to you personally and to the way you run your Messy Church, as well as to the Messy community around the world, as everyone relishes having you and your valuable experience there.

It's wonderful to see the **Messy Church Goes Wild** movement taking root (ha ha) and to appreciate more of the seasonality of the natural world. Greg Ross in Australia described in an email the seasons according to the first nations people of his region, which are very different from the spring, summer, autumn, winter we're used to in the UK. It was a reminder that we can see change or difference in different ways, through different lenses. And as Messy Church moves from one season into a different one, we delight together in gratitude for what has been, and stand on tiptoes in gleeful anticipation of what is to come. As Dag Hammarskjöld (a Swedish diplomat) gloriously said, 'For all that has been, thank you. For all that is to come, yes!'

I think there might be more than a few tears among the laughter, as we look out for each other and pick up each other's burdens.

It's a season of difference, of change. It's where the long 'lead time' between writing articles for *Get Messy!* and the publication date feels really weird. I'm writing this article the day after a life-changing interview for a new job, knowing that when you read this, I will have moved on from the Messy Church team some months ago. I will doubtless be missing you and this lovely worldwide family I've enjoyed so much, whilst (I hope) relishing the challenges of the new role.

The great thing is that Messy Church has always been a team thing, and not just meaning the wonderfully gifted people I've been privileged to work alongside on the BRF team, but the Regional Coordinators, the Support Teams, the overseas strategic leaders, the many, *many* people who have brought body and soul to the ministry in their local churches: it's always been about 'us' rather than 'me' on so many levels. And whether I'm on the BRF team or not, I shall be cheering you all on, as well as, of course, carrying on being part of a Messy Church in the village where I live. Because, frankly, who wouldn't want to be part of such a joy-filled, hope-stuffed, colourful, vibrant, dynamic and holy sort of church?

There's still so much to do and so much excitement lying in wait in this Messy ministry! It will continue to be a vital part of BRF, of course, and it will be fascinating to see how the team develops things in fresh ways and how new friendships and opportunities for serving God and each other will open up over the coming seasons. As I move on to play a small part in making a difference in a different role, I know the Messy Church values, and even more so, the beautiful friends I've met through this gift of a ministry, will always hold a very dear place in my heart. Thank you... thank you...



Session material: May 2022



Go to messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay22 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet.



If you are using these sessions for a Messy Church at home, look out for this symbol! These are activities that can easily be adapted to the home.

Bible story

Exodus 13:20–22 (NIRV)

The people left Sukkoth. They camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud. It guided them on their way. At night he led them with a pillar of fire. It gave them light. So they could travel by day or at night. The pillar of cloud didn't leave its place in front of the people during the day. And the pillar of fire didn't leave its place at night.

Pointers

Today's story occurs soon after God used Moses to bring his people out of slavery in Egypt. After centuries of life enslaved, the Israelites suddenly found themselves released and facing an unknown future, full of promise, hope and expectation, yet also of uncertainty and unfamiliarity.

Here in the desert, God came close and was with his people. In those moments when we face an uncertain future, equally weighted with promise, hope and expectation, uncertainty and unfamiliarity, God comes close to us too.

God remained visibly close to the people both by day and by night, in the pillar of cloud and of fire. There must have been times in the darkness of the night when doubts crept in and fears arose, yet the pillar of fire remained; a striking visible sign that God was there, bringing comfort and lighting up the darkness. Even in our darkest hours, the God of all comfort promises to be right there.

This short passage sits in the middle of a description of the Israelites facing a final conflict with the Egyptians. The pillar of fire was there at night, together with the pillar of cloud by day to ensure that the Israelites could continue to move forward. God was with his people in the darkest place, but he did not intend for them to stay there. God led his people out of danger, and eventually to the land and future he had planned for them. God is with us in our darkest places, but he does not intend for us to stay there, he leads us out to the places he has planned for us.

#discipleship: team

How does this session help people grow in Christ?

The story of the Israelites' escape from Egypt teaches us that God has a plan to release us from those things which enslave us and lead us to the future he has planned for us. The Israelites are very relatable – they are people who want to trust God and follow him, but fall off the path, disobey his instructions and allow doubts and uncertainties to creep in.

In this episode, we discover the God who draws close at our darkest times and leads us through to the future he has planned. In this session, we celebrate the comfort God brings us, and explore what it means to put our trust in God and follow his guiding.

#discipleship: families

Add value

Mealtime card

- How do you think it would feel to have to escape your home?
- How does God show us that he is close to us?
- How have you felt God's comfort?

Messy Church in a bag

Activities 1 (use small cardboard tubes), 7 and 9.

Question to start and end the session

So... how do we know that God is with us?

#discipleship: extra

Social action

Connect with a local refugee support organisation to find out how you can practically support those fleeing their homes, perhaps with a clothing or toy collection or supporting hosting provisions.

Session material: June 2022

Activities



1. Famous dads run-around

You will need: ten cards with a picture of a famous cartoon child on each one and a letter from the word 'COURAGEOUS' in the corner; a game sheet for each player (example can be downloaded online) with a photo of each matching dad numbered so that the word 'COURAGEOUS' is revealed when child/dad are paired together and all clues are put in the right order; writing pens or pencils; laminating pouches (optional)

Preparation for the game – place the pictures of the children around the hall or the worship space. Give each person a game sheet. Explain that around the room are ten pictures of famous children. When you find one, look in the corner and write the letter beside the picture of the correct dad. In the grid on the game sheet, match up the number on the dad with the letter on the child. When you have all of the letters, what word have you written? Laminate your game sheets to take home if you like.

Talk about how Jesus asked the fishermen to leave their nets and boats and go with him because he had a special job for them. Do you think we could call them courageous? Why? What is the most courageous thing you have done or you have heard someone else do? Do you think it takes courage to tell other people about Jesus?



2. I am MAD

You will need: card circles; markers; sticky tape; safety pins or badge-making kit/machine if you have one (kits available, for example, from Baker Ross)

MAD stands for 'Making a Difference'. This activity is to encourage people to choose five things they could do to make a difference and design a badge to show one or more of these. Suggestions include: be kind, smile, help someone, tidy up, recycle, etc. Use the materials you have to make badges to represent your different MAD activities.

Talk about how we can all make a difference to the world around us, even by doing something small. What things can we think of that would make a difference to someone?



3. Modelling clay fish

You will need: coloured air-dry clay; paper/plastic plate; modelling tools or thin sticks

Using the clay, make a fish. Add patterns and detail with the modelling tools or sticks. Put your fish on the plate to dry.

Talk about how the fishermen in the Bible story caught fish for a living until Jesus called them to a different lifestyle. It's like their lives changed direction – from going out in their boat fishing they were to follow him, watch him, learn from him and eventually tell others about him. Where has your life changed direction – maybe a new job or a new school or class, maybe a new home?



Session material: July 2022

4. Kaleidoscope!

You will need: sugar paper; cardboard cut into strips; aluminium foil; acetate (or laminate sheets bonded together with nothing between them); tiny beads/sequins; scissors; sticky tape; glue; items to decorate outside of tube if desired

Cut three strips of cardboard roughly 3 cm x 15 cm. Cover each with aluminium foil. Sticky tape them together to form a triangular prism (with the neat, shiny foil-covered side facing inwards). Cut a piece of sugar paper that will roll neatly around your triangular prism, in a tube shape, and make sure that it sits flush with it at either end. Use sticky tape to fix the tube around your kaleidoscope. Stand the kaleidoscope on one end. Cut two discs of acetate to fit just inside the circumference of your tube. (You can trace around your tube to get the correct size.) Place one disc in place, and then pour some beads on to the surface. Not too many! You want them to be able to move around with light between them. Place the other acetate disc on top and neatly sticky tape in place, trapping the beads between the two discs of clear acetate. Turn the kaleidoscope over and cut a piece of sugar paper that is the same size as the tube and make a small circular hole in the middle for an eye piece. Tape to the end of the kaleidoscope. Decorate your kaleidoscope and check out all the pretty patterns it makes!

Talk about how we all see a story from different perspectives. How can you tell how another person is feeling when something happens? Can you tell when someone else is feeling lonely or sad? What can you do to make a difference for them? Do you think Zacchaeus' feelings changed when he saw Jesus?



5. Prayer tree

You will need: roll of large paper; pencils; paint brushes; fun textural painting tools like corks, forks, etc.; water pots; palettes; paint in 'tree colours' (brown, green, orange, red, yellow, etc.)

Draw a pencil outline of a tree on a large piece of paper. As a collaborative piece of art, paint a large sycamore tree together.

Talk about how Zacchaeus was thankful to Jesus for inviting him to dine with him... it changed Zacchaeus' life. What would you like to say thank you to Jesus for? (You can use the responses as the prayers of thanksgiving in the celebration.)

5



6. Catapult Zac into the tree!

You will need: a large (A3 sized) picture of a tree placed on a wall; large tongue depressors; elastic bands; plastic spoons; something to catapult into the tree. If you are being Covid safe, something like plasticine or pompoms, if not, large marshmallows work well.

Make your own catapult. Be creative and see what you can come up with! If people are struggling, you could find some instructions through doing an internet search.

Talk about what different techniques work for making a catapult? How does changing your design effect the outcome? Zacchaeus had the goal of wanting to see Jesus. What ways can we get to 'see' Jesus today? How can we help other people get to 'see' him and know him?

Forgiveness is a loving action by Lydia Harrison



10. Hugging forgiveness pal

You will need: card or poster board; pencil and pencil crayons; ribbon; stapler

Cut a large person or imaginary creature from card or coloured poster board, ensuring that it has long arms. Decorate with a variety of craft items and add features. Staple a metre-long length of ribbon on to each shoulder area of the cardboard person or creature. This means that the pal can be tied round a person to create a hugging effect.

Talk about how forgiveness is hard, and we need people around us to help comfort us in our times of need. Who do you need to forgive? Who or what brings you comfort?

10



Celebration

You will need: big prison cell from activity 9 or suitable area laid out as a prison; a bowl of water; Alka-Seltzer tablets.

I wonder if you are really good at something? Is it something that you can repeat? Are you good at playing table tennis? Or maybe you're good at sewing? Or swimming lengths in the swimming pool? Do you get tired after so many though? How many times do you think you could do it before you got really tired?

What about saying sorry when you've got something wrong? Do you find this easy? What about forgiving others? Jesus tells Peter at the start of today's reading that we should forgive people seventy times seven times, which is 490. But it's more than that. It's infinite. He asks us to forgive people infinitely and always.

The king in today's story seems to be a very wise and gracious man. At first, he demands back what he is owed, saying that if it

can't be paid then the debtor and his whole family will be put in prison until they earn what they owe. However, when the debtor says he can't pay and begs for mercy, in his generosity, the king wipes away the debt that his servant owes, saying that it no longer matters. This is an unusually kind thing to do!

However, the servant responds in an unexpected way. The thing is, someone he knew owed him a debt, too. Instead of following the king's example and forgiving this debt, he makes the debtor pay.

When the king hears about this, he is really angry and changes his mind about forgiving the man's debt, throwing him in prison until all the debt is paid.

The king did a wonderful thing in forgiving the man, but the man did not pass that forgiveness on to others.

God forgives all our sins, and because he forgives us, we should forgive other people too. But forgiveness doesn't mean that we allow people to walk over us. There is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation, and there is a difference between forgiveness and repentance. If someone persists in treating us unkindly, then we need to protect ourselves from further harm. This might involve keeping a safe distance. We need to be wise and discerning in our forgiveness as well as generous.

Prayer

Give everyone an Alka-Seltzer tablet (warning – do not eat) and ask them to hold it in their hand and think of something they either need forgiveness for or that they need to forgive someone else for. When they are ready, invite them to put it into the bowl of water at the front and watch God take it away. Pray together once everyone has had a chance to give their prayer to God.

Let's pray.

Lord, forgiveness isn't easy, but we pray that you will help us to forgive each other, so that we can love each other as you have loved us. Amen

Song suggestions

'Big family of God' – Nick and Becky Drake

'You forgive me' – Maker Fun Factory Music (Group Publishing)

'You are my king (amazing love)' – by Chris Tomlin

'Forgiveness' – Matthew West

Meal suggestion

Pasta bake with garlic bread and biscuits/cakes from activity 6.



Enabling all ages to grow in faith



Anna Chaplaincy
Living Faith
Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

100 years of BRF

2022 is BRF's 100th anniversary! Look out for details of our special new centenary resources, a beautiful centenary rose and an online thanksgiving service that we hope you'll attend. This centenary year we're focusing on sharing the story of BRF, the story of the Bible – and we hope you'll share your stories of faith with us too.

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