



September-December 2022 £4.85

# get MESSY!

**Messy Church  
Conference 2022**

**Messy Nights**

**Messy Christmas pack**

**Dwelling in the word**

**Includes  
Messy Church  
at home  
ideas**

## Sessions in this issue

**Share like sheep**  
Matthew 25:31-46

**God's love for  
the planet**  
Job 38-42

**All are welcome  
in God's family**  
Galatians 3:26-29

**We were there  
- are you?**  
Luke 2:1-38



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## Meet our session writers for this issue



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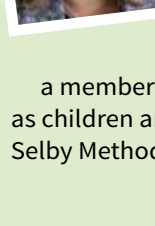
have written resources for churches and children's ministry publications.



**Sandy Brodine** is a minister in the Uniting Church in Australia with a passion for finding creative new ways to help people follow Jesus and engage with their faith. Sandy ministers with a number of new faith communities in the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches: a Messy Church, an intergenerational interactive Sunday community called Common Ground and SPACE, a contemplative community.



**Becky May** is founder of The Resources Cupboard, supporting the local church to make young disciples. She helps to lead a Messy Church and enjoys engaging with Messy Church with her family. Becky is a member of the Messy Church writing and training teams.



**Lydia Harrison** is team leader of the Messy Church prayer support team, and a member of the writers support team, and she works as children and family work enabler for the Goole and Selby Methodist Circuit. She loves cows.



## Themes in this edition

There are four great stories lined up that help Messy Churches consider how to make a difference in our local communities and to our planet.

In **September**, we're looking at Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats, exploring what it means to follow Jesus, the good shepherd. Through this session we discover that we serve God through serving others, and it provides us with some practical suggestions to love our neighbours.

**October's** session delves into the difficult Old Testament story of Job. We're focusing on the part of the story where God asks Job a series of questions that reveal God's nature through the power of creation and created things. The session challenges us, as God's children, to love and look after the planet, everything in it and each other.

**November** celebrates the Messy Church value of hospitality as we consider who is welcome in God's big family. Through exploring Paul's teaching in Galatians, we consider our identities as followers of Jesus and how we should relate to one another.

And in **December** we consider the difference that Jesus' birth had on the nativity characters – shepherds who were getting on with their job, Simeon who had waited for the Messiah and the prophetess Anna, who was always worshipping in the temple. What difference has Jesus' birth made to us and to the people who come to Messy Church?

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## What do the different parts of the session mean?

**Bible story pointers:** some thoughts about the Bible passage that may inform or direct your discussions during the activities.

### How does this session help people grow in Christ?

Is everything theme-connected and helping all ages to be more like Jesus?

**Mealtime card:** reflective questions to consider during mealtime conversations.

**Messy Church in a bag:** activities that you can easily deliver in a bag to families who can't or won't attend in person, so that they can still take part.

**Question to start and end the session:** use on social media/posters/flyers too.

**Social action:** link the theme with additional activities, charities and events or explore international issues.



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep22](https://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep22) 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

**JANUARY** Are you willing?

**FEBRUARY** Everyone welcome at this party!

**MARCH** Heavenly hope

**APRIL** Redeemed



Aike writes...

## Messy Church in a messy world

The 2020s are rapidly becoming a decade of challenge and uncertainty. As we attempt to convince ourselves that the pandemic is now just endemic, a mental health crisis is bubbling away, and in parts of the world, tensions have boiled over into conflicts including Afghanistan and Ukraine. It's true – we're all a bit messed up, living in a messy world!

We shouldn't be surprised that Jesus warned: 'You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. These things must happen, but the end is still to come' (Matthew 24:6, NIV). While it's reassuring that Jesus knew all of this would happen, I'm not sure I feel 'unalarmed', particularly if you read the rest of that chapter. However, Jesus finishes his apocalyptic warning with a call to action. Rather than living in denial of what will happen, parodied in the Netflix movie *Don't Look Up*, he calls us to be prepared.

So, what does the Lord require of you? The prophet Micah calls us to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). As Christians and as Messy Churches, we are called to make a difference when we see injustice, to have kind and compassionate hearts towards those in need, while recognising that without God's grace, our efforts are useless. Our Messy Church Conference back in May challenged us to reflect on ways that our Messy Churches can make a difference both locally and globally as we respond to the climate crisis.

However, to be those change-makers, we're called to walk humbly with God. This is not a one-off, standing-still effort, but an ongoing action, walking one step at a time, side by side with God. So how do we effectively listen out for God's leadings in our lives and the life of our Messy Church?

Our newly formed BRF Messy Church team is attempting to listen to God through the practice of 'dwelling in the word' (see p. 16). As I write, we've been reflecting on John 10:11–16, where Jesus declares himself to be the good shepherd that David writes about in Psalm 23. Our team noticed the line, 'I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice' (John 10:16, NRSV). We felt it spoke of the opportunity Messy Church has to reach new people currently outside of God's family, who are yet to

hear of God's great love and care for them. Ultimately, God wants 'one flock, one shepherd'. Are we giving ourselves time to tune into God's voice?

I've been a city-dweller all my life. However, my soul is restored by walks through green pastures and from wild swimming in pools of still water. I realise now that I hear God's voice best when I'm out in nature. I make it a spiritual discipline to walk our dog around the park each morning, praying as I go, noticing the beauty of nature and being open to conversations with people I meet. However, if I'm wrestling with a bigger issue, I find I need to make my way out of the city, and take time to be still, read scripture, fast and pray.

One such occasion was when I was contemplating the BRF Messy Church ministry lead role. Initially I gave every possible excuse why I wouldn't be suitable. However, as I spent time with God praying on a Cornish beach, reading the Bible and listening to podcasts, the same two passages kept popping up: Mark 5:36 ('Don't be afraid; just believe') and the story of Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3). I read how Moses gave excuses why he wasn't fit for the task of setting God's people free, and yet God was gracious, gave him some tools and a companion for the task and promised, 'I will be with you.'

As I prepared for the interview, close Christian friends prayed for me as I spent a day fasting and praying. To be honest, I have rarely fasted, but in that moment of intentional listening, God gave me three words for the Messy Church movement: sustainable, intergenerational and discipleship.

A few days after I accepted the role, I visited a Messy Church, where a wonderful 'God-incidence' was in store – we explored the story of Moses and the burning bush. As I sat surrounded by Messy Church families, I felt affirmed that God would be with me in this new role, making use of the gifts and talents I bring, despite my perceived inadequacies. Besides, God was also providing a wider team at BRF to help with the task.

As we walk humbly with God in the season ahead, I pray that we will continue to listen to God's voice, so that our Messy Churches can make a difference in a messy world.

# Session material: September 2022



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## Bible story

### Matthew 25:31–46 (NIRV)

The Son of Man will come in all his glory. All the angels will come with him. Then he will sit in glory on his throne. All the nations will be gathered in front of him. He will separate the people into two groups. He will be like a shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep to his right and the goats to his left.

Then the King will speak to those on his right. He will say, 'My Father has blessed you. Come and take what is yours. It is the kingdom prepared for you since the world was created. I was hungry. And you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty. And you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger. And you invited me in. I needed clothes. And you gave them to me. I was sick. And you took care of me. I was in prison. And you came to visit me.'

Then the people who have done what is right will answer him. 'Lord,' they will ask, 'when did we see you hungry and feed you? When did we see you thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in? When did we see you needing clothes and give them to you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

The King will reply, 'What I'm about to tell you is true. Anything you did for one of the least important of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'You are cursed! Go away from me into the fire that burns forever. It has been prepared for the devil and his angels. I was hungry. But you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty. But you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger. But you did not invite me in. I needed clothes. But you did not give me any. I was sick and in prison. But you did not take care of me.'

They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty and not help you? When did we see you as a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison and not help you?'

He will reply, 'What I'm about to tell you is true. Anything you didn't do for one of the least important of

these, you didn't do for me.'

Then they will go away to be punished forever. But those who have done what is right will receive eternal life.

### Pointers

This is not an easy read or a cute story Jesus told about animals. Jesus' parables were often stories with stings in their tales and this one stings hard. There is also a risk with this parable that we misunderstand the teacher and believe that we are saved by the good deeds that we do. James teaches clearly about this and the relationship between faith and works. Rather, this parable speaks to all those who claim to be followers of Jesus, his flock. Here, Jesus declares that he will separate those who really are his sheep from those who just look like sheep (i.e. the goats, whose actions do not live up to the mask they wear).

In this story, there is equal surprise for both the sheep and the goats when Jesus tells them that they have served him. The sheep, those who really follow Jesus, serve the least and the lost not because they have tried to win favour with Jesus but because it is in their very nature to serve. Meanwhile, the goats are caught out when they choose not to serve, failing to recognise that when we serve others, we serve Jesus himself.

Many Bible stories give us the opportunity to reflect on the example that is set for us and the lessons we can learn. In this parable, we see our place in the kingdom of God and the impact our actions have on eternity. This session gives us the opportunity to reflect on that.

### How does this session help people grow in Christ?

Jesus refers to himself as the good shepherd and his flock as his sheep on numerous occasions. These stories teach us that we are saved, that we are known and that we belong to him. In this parable, and through this session, we explore what that calls us to do, what it looks like to be a sheep in Jesus' flock and how our actions, and our hearts, reveal who we really are. Through this session we discover that we serve God when we serve others and think through some practical ways that we can do this.

## Add value

### Mealtime card

- Who has shown you what it is like to be a sheep?
- How do we reveal what is really in our hearts?
- Can you think of a way that you can serve Jesus by serving others?

# Session material: October 2022

## How does this session help people grow in Christ?

By helping us to remember that God is at work in our lives. We might not be able to understand what God is doing and we might feel small and humbled in God's presence, but we know that God is with us. We know that God loves everything he has made and that includes us! This enables us to feel thankful for all God has made and done, and to explore how we can look after our planet, God's creation.

## Add value

### Mealtime card

- Have you ever questioned God?
- What does trust in God look like?
- How can we help to look after God's whole creation?

### Messy Church in a bag

Activities 1, 2 and 5.

### Question to start and end the session

So... how do we look after God's creation?

### Social action

Look up the work of an environmental movement, or set a challenge to go plastic-free, one item at a time (look up 'Plastic Free July' for ideas), or look up craftivism and send some craft items to your MP to raise awareness of environmental issues.

## Activities



### 1. Paper plate animal masks

**You will need:** paper plates; paint; pens; scissors; a variety of craft equipment (tissue paper, coloured card and paper, stickers, googly eyes, etc.); elastic to wear the mask or a lollipop stick; a copy of today's passage to spot which animals are in the story

Create a mask of your favourite animal – the possibilities are endless! Will you choose a cow, a dolphin, a lion or perhaps a cat or dog?

**Talk about** how a huge variety of animals are mentioned in today's passage – how many can you spot in the reading? In his infinite love God made them all – and made you and me, too. Incredible!

1



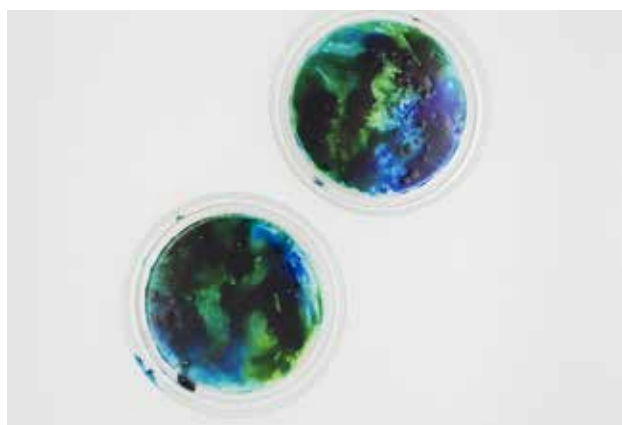
### 2. World suncatcher

**You will need:** a clear plastic lid (like from a large yoghurt pot); green and blue food colouring; cocktail sticks; a spoon

Pour enough PVA glue into the inside of the yoghurt pot lid and spread it with a spoon until the whole side is covered in PVA glue. Drop some drops of food colouring into the glue and swirl it with a cocktail stick to spread them around. Make sure to leave a bit of white to represent the arctic, and the clouds we see in the sky!

**Talk about** how God loves our planet, and he loves us! How can we help to show God's love to the world? What can we do differently to help our planet to flourish and thrive?

2



### 3. Kintsugi plant pot

**You will need:** a kintsugi repair kit (available in craft stores and on the internet – but bear in mind this contains strong glue that could be dangerous); some plant pots; newspaper; hammer or something to break the pot with; aprons; compost; seeds

If you are breaking the pots and putting them back together, wrap each pot in newspaper and carefully break it with the hammer (bear in mind that the more pieces you make, the

# Session material: November 2022

**Talk about** how Paul writes to the Galatians and tells them that everyone is welcome to be part of Jesus family: Jews, Greeks, slaves, free people, men and women! Nobody is left out. Who gets left out in your community? How can you welcome them?



## 5. Rainbow sands

**You will need: coloured sand or salt (we used salt which is cheaper and easier: colour it by putting it in a ziplock bag and add a tiny drop of food colouring and shake around until all coloured); small bottles with lids; teaspoons; a taper candle; matches; spoons**

Use a spoon to put some coloured sand/salt into the bottle. Layer the colours one on top of the other to create a pretty pattern. When you get to the top, ask an adult to drip some wax from a taper candle into your bottle so that the sand stays in place. Take this home to remind yourself that even though all of the colours are different, they all come together in the end in one rainbow to symbolise our 'unity in Jesus'. (Or alternatively: in the Hebrew scriptures, God tells Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the grains of sand on the beach. Take this bottle home to remind you that YOU and everybody are welcomed into God's family!)

**Talk about** what colour of the rainbow you like best. Can you separate out the colours in a rainbow?



## 6. Rainbow prisms

**You will need: a clear drinking glass; a small mirror; water; a white wall/white piece of paper; torch (optional)**

Fill the glass with water. Place the mirror into the water inside the glass at an angle. Position it so that the sunlight (or a beam of light from a torch) shines directly at the mirror. You may need to shift the mirror to find the right angle. Look for the reflection on the wall/piece of paper of a rainbow. Note *Messy Church Does Science* (BRF, 2017) has an excellent chapter called 'Light and Colour' on science experiments to do with light. You may like to adapt another one to explore this theme of all of the colours coming together to make one clear light, just as all people come together to make the one 'body of Christ'.

5



**Talk about** how when the white light hits the mirror through the water, the light is bent or refracted. Light has to bend between 40 and 42 degrees for the rainbow to appear. Just as white light is made up of 'all the colours of the rainbow', so people of all different kinds are part of God's family. How can we all help to make our Messy Church a place where everyone is welcomed into God's family?

## 7. 'One family' quilt

**You will need: pre-cut light-coloured cotton fabric squares; pieces of felt; scissors; glue; fabric paints; fabric pastels; wool and other sequins or off-cuts**

In a group with the people you come to Messy Church with, design a 'quilt piece' that represents your particular family and what makes you unique. This might include something about where you come from, something you particularly enjoy as a family, or special gifts and talents that make your family different.

You will need a 'crafty person' who can take the pieces home and sew them together to display at the next Messy Church. (Alternatively, you could do this on pieces of A4 paper and stick these together with sticky tape to make a paper quilt.)

**Talk about** what makes your family or household unique. What is special about you? What special gifts do you bring to the community at your Messy Church?

# We were there - are you? by Anne Offler and Sharon Pritchard

Take tiles to spell a Christmas word e.g. GLORY, HOPE, JOY, PRAISE, HALLELUJIA. Lay the letters on a piece of card one under the other to spell the word then glue them into place. Glue some decorations to the bottom of the card and add string, ribbon or thin wire to the top with sticky tape to make a hanging loop.

**Talk about** Christmas celebrations. In the story the angels sang and praised God, the shepherds were amazed and joyful, Simeon was at peace and Anna was excited. How does Christmas make you feel? Why?

## Celebration

**You will need: volunteers to wear costumes – angels with tinsel halos, shepherds holding a toy sheep or with a headdress, Mary and Joseph with a headdress and a baby doll, Simeon with a scarf draped around him and Anna with a cloak around her shoulders**

*Ask Mary and Joseph to sit in the centre of the acting area, the angels to gather behind them, the shepherds to sit at the far right and Simeon and Anna to stand at the far left.*

We are going to tell the story of Jesus' birth in a bit of a different way. Let's start the story.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, angels were asked to do a special job (*ask the angels to say, 'Glory to God', a few times*). Over on the hillside, the shepherds were quietly watching their sheep when the angels went up to them (*send the angels to the shepherds*). The shepherds heard the angels praising God (*angels to say, 'Glory to God'*) and they hid behind one another looking really scared. One of the angels told them not to be scared because something amazing had happened. Jesus, God's Son, had been born down in the town. Why didn't they go and see for themselves? The angels left the shepherds (*tell them to go back to stand behind Mary and Joseph*) and the shepherds stood up. They scratched their heads and decided they wanted to find out more, to see the baby for themselves. They went down the hill and found Mary and Joseph and the baby and knelt in front of them. They were amazed that they had been chosen to see something so special and they went back to the hillside grinning and cheering.

Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple (*walk over towards Simeon, with his hands held in prayer pose, and Anna*). Simeon, an old man who lived in the temple, came over to see them. Simeon had been hoping and praying that he would

see this special baby. Simeon prayed for them and went away still praying. Anna also lived in the temple. She was old and so pleased to see the special baby that she went out to tell everyone (*have Anna move among some of the congregation miming telling them*).

Who could believe that a baby would mean so much to the people who met him? I wonder what meeting Jesus today means to us. (*Thank the actors and have them stand where they were at the start of the story.*)

### Prayer

*(In preparation, practise the actions in response to the key words.)*

Lord Jesus,  
thank you for Christmas and a chance to hear your story again.

Some of us are like the shepherds, seeking you (*hands to eyes looking around*).

Some of us are like the angels, so happy and glad (*wave arms in the air*).

Some are like Simeon, praying (*hold hands together in prayer pose*).

Some are like Anna, telling everyone about you (*cup hands around mouth*).

Some might even be like Mary and Joseph staying faithful and trying their best to do God's will (*put hands on heart*).

Bless us as we celebrate Christmas  
and draw us closer to you.  
Amen

### Song suggestions

'Away in a manger' – traditional

'Come and join the celebration' – Valerie Collison

'Child in a manger born' – Mark and Helen Johnson

'Calypso carol' – Michael Perry

### Meal suggestion

Christmas celebration buffet – make a celebration buffet relevant to your context – for the UK we usually have sandwiches, pastries, cakes, fruit, etc. But your own context may mean you can have a BBQ! The idea is to share a celebration meal together as it's Christmas – so plan something special as a treat!





*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.

Find out more at [brf.org.uk/cetenary](https://brf.org.uk/cetenary).

To find out more about our work, visit  
[brf.org.uk](https://brf.org.uk)

