

Three complete sessions and a treasure trove of ideas

for Lent, Holy Week and Easter



BRF's Messy Church ministry is a creative, inclusive way of being church for families which enables people to encounter Jesus in a relaxed space. It's primarily designed for people who don't already belong to another form of church, no matter how 'messy' they feel their lives are – and it's definitely not just for children! Around the world, people of all ages and backgrounds are coming to faith through Messy Church's unique combination of warm hospitality, creative activities that open up Bible themes, a celebratory approach to worship, conversations over a shared meal and a clear focus on Jesus.

If you would like to support this ministry, you can become a friend of Messy Church by giving £2 a month or more. Find out more at brf.org.uk/friends.





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For all of my crafty friends

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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, 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.

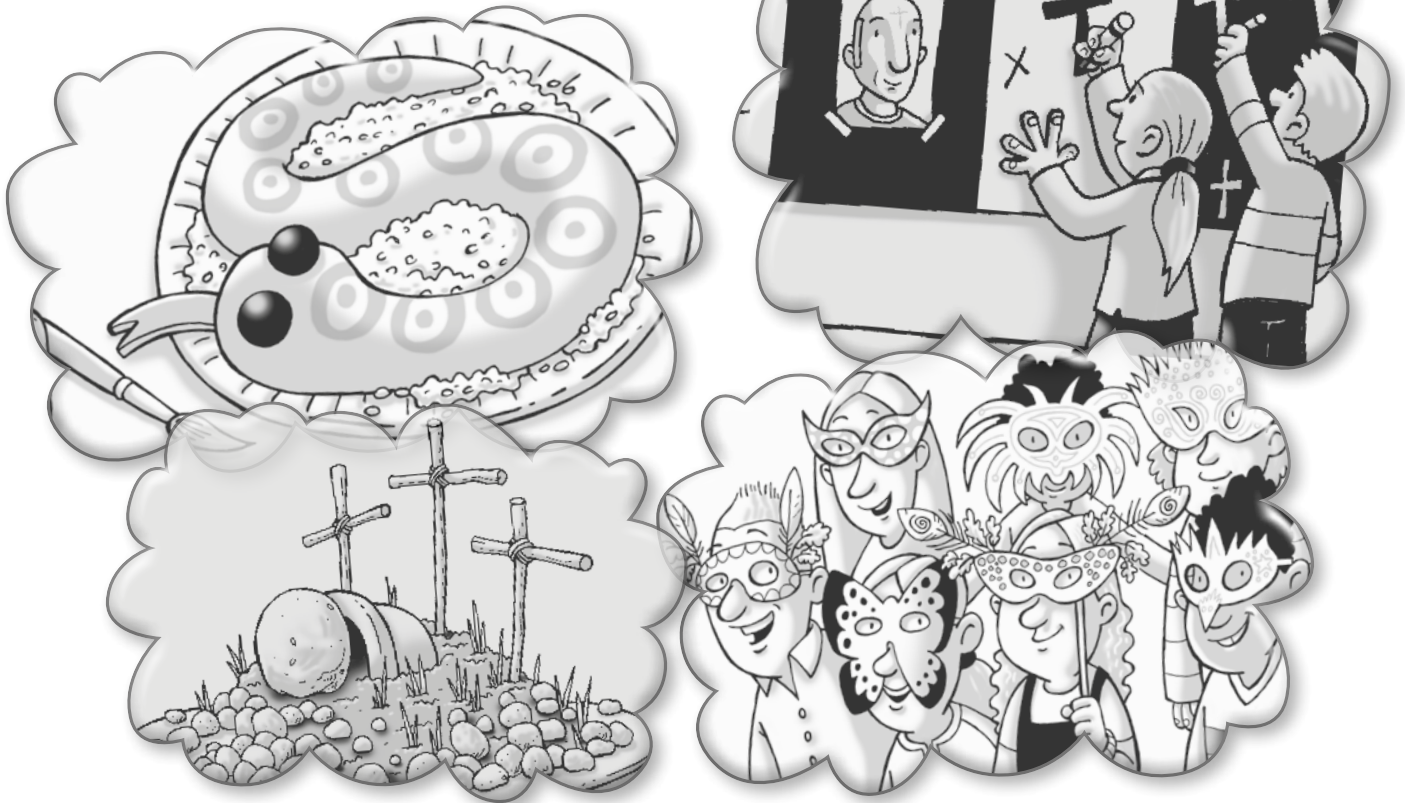
In addition to the three main sessions, there is an 'Easter allsorts' section with additional ideas. It is less detailed but gives examples of alternative crafts and activities to use at any Easter occasion.

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

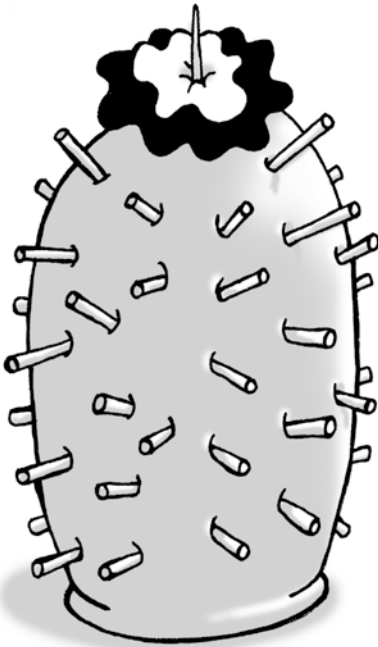
- **Theme:** preparing for Easter
- **Biblical story:** Jesus in the wilderness for 40 days of preparation for his ministry, facing temptations from the devil
- **Equipping today's families:** by discovering what happened to Jesus in the desert, we can find God in our own desert times. God wants to build 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

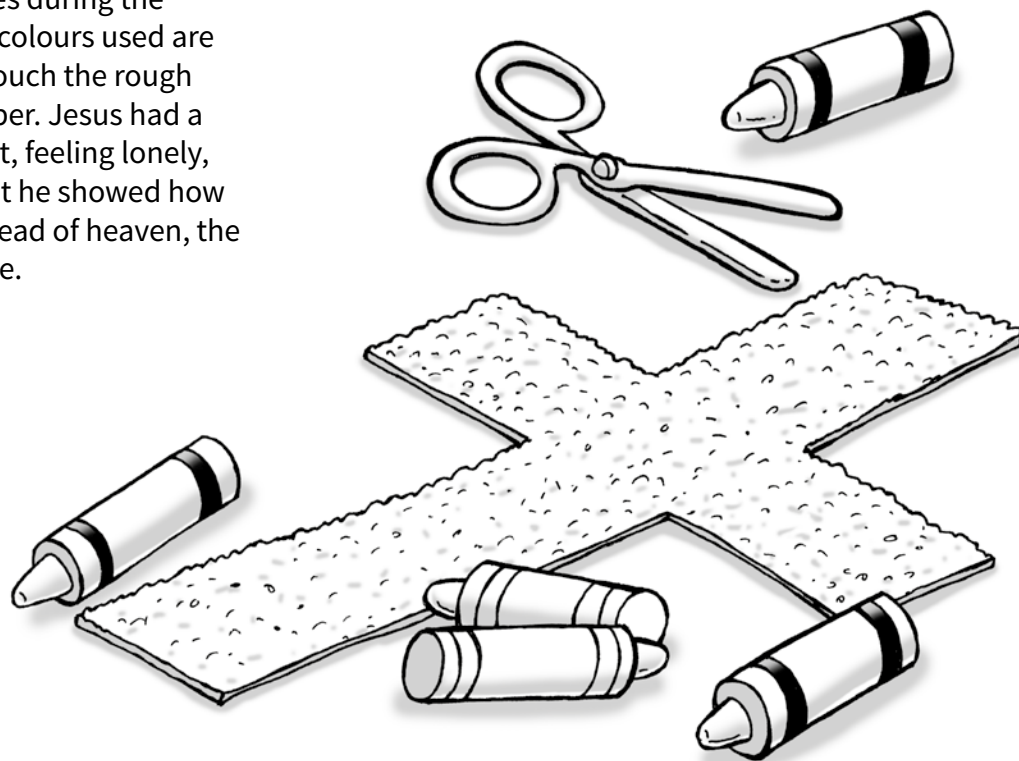
You will need:

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:

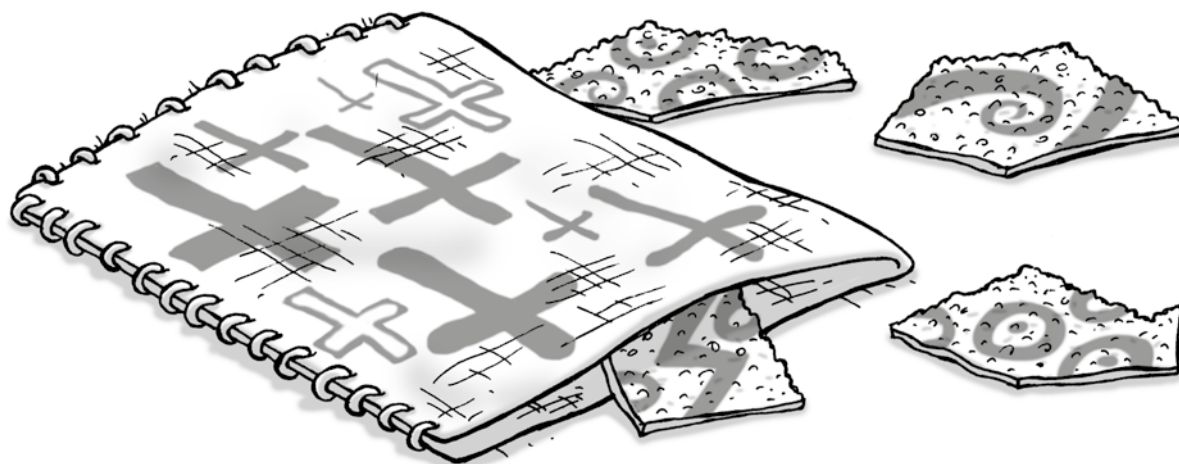
Pieces of sackcloth or rough material; wool; bodkin needles; purple colouring pens; cross jigsaw pieces from previous activity

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.



Snakes in the sand

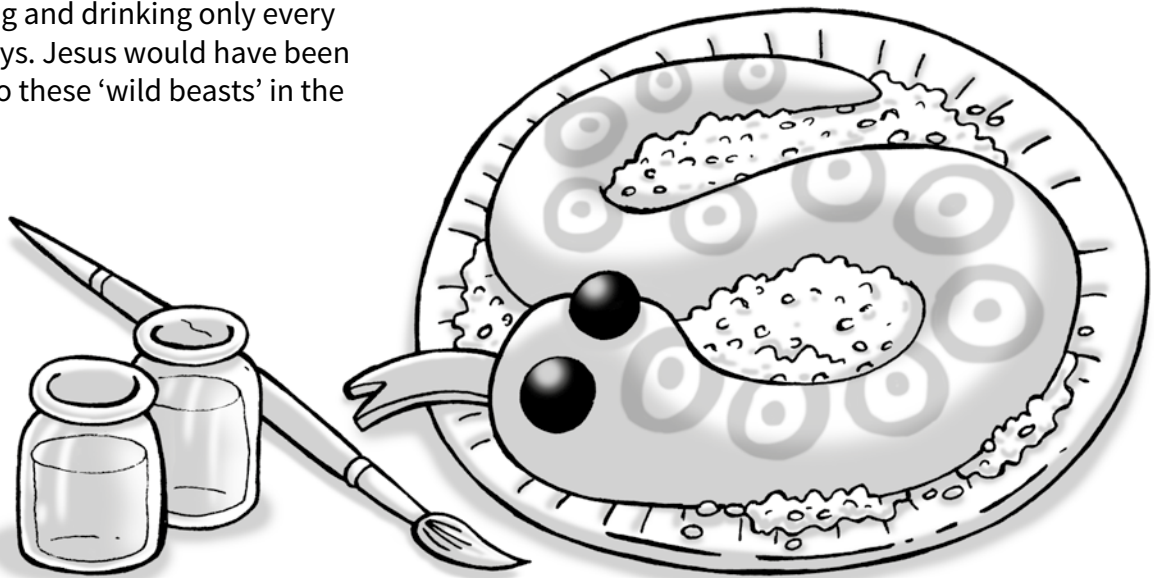
You will need:

Ready-made fondant icing;
selection of food colourings;
icing sugar; thin paintbrushes;
edible eyes; red sugar paste;
brown caster sugar (optional);
paper plates

Talk about how snakes feature throughout the Bible. In the deserts of the Bible, the snakes would have been able to adapt to the hot days and cold nights, eating and drinking only every couple of days. Jesus would have been vulnerable to these 'wild beasts' in the desert.

How to

Roll out a ball of icing to form a snake shape and place it on a paper plate. Mix together some food colourings in small bowls and paint snakeskin markings on the icing. Finish with edible eyes (use an icing sugar and water paste to glue together) and a sugar paste tongue. Sprinkle icing sugar or brown caster sugar on the plate to represent the sandy desert.



Dangerous words

You will need:

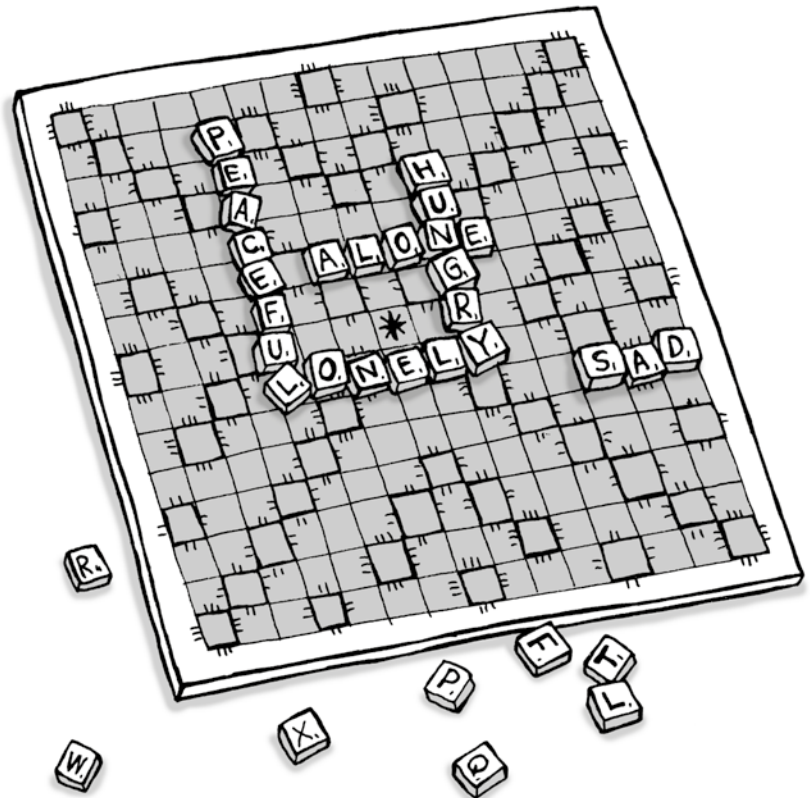
Scrabble boards and letters
(or letter tiles from another
word-based board game);
paper; colouring pens

Talk about spending long hot days and cold nights with no food or drink. What kind of animals would there be in the desert? How dangerous would it be? Who could you talk to? What would you do in an emergency? How would you feel for the first ten days? Would you feel any different after 40 days?



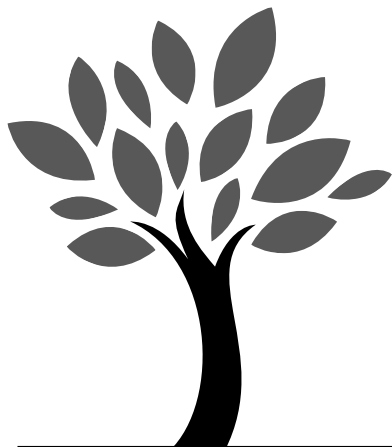
How to

Think about how Jesus would have felt in the desert for 40 days and nights, then think of some words to describe how he was feeling. Try to link the words together using the Scrabble letters, or use colouring pens on large pieces of paper to create a similar crossword.





Enabling all ages to grow in faith



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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 work, visit

brf.org.uk



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. Activity templates and a session planning grid are included.

Visit messychurch.org.uk/messyeaster for free template downloads.



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



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