



get MESSY!

One holy,
catholic and
apostolic
church

Messy
weddings

Bible overview,
part 2

Survey
results
are in!

Sessions in this issue

Jan-Apr 2019

£4.50

Where I belong
Luke 2:41-52

Self-confidence
Judges 6:11-16

Dusty drawing
John 8:1-11

Always with us
Matthew 27-28



BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE
+44 (0)1865 319700 | enquiries@brf.org.uk
brf.org.uk

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Editor: Olivia Warburton

Subeditor: Rachel Tranter

Proofreader: Kathryn Glendenning

Designer: Rebecca J Hall

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Send in news, stories, photos and general enquiries to our Messy Church administrator on +44 (0)1235 858238 or messychurch@brf.org.uk.

Meet our session writers for this issue



Becky May lives with her husband and two young children in Bedfordshire, where she is Messy Church Regional Coordinator. Becky is co-founder of The Treasure Box People and is very much at home with all things messy!



Jean Pienaar lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. She started a Messy Church in 2009 and is now one of the Messy Church Regional Coordinators. She enjoys a busy, messy life within the demands of traffic, laundry, regular meals and family, and tries to find holy moments and sacred beauty in the chaos.



Jen Robertson is the Children's Resources Manager of the Scottish Bible Society. Part of her remit is to help all generations engage with the Bible together. She is part of Burnside Blairbeth Messy Church in Rutherglen near Glasgow, which she helped to launch. She loves to run and read but not necessarily at the same time!



Greg Ross is a Uniting Church minister in Bunbury in the south of Western Australia. He is the Messy Church Regional Coordinator for Western Australia and is part of the National Messy Team for Australia. Greg and his family all play their part in their local Messy Church, which was the second one to start in Australia.

Themes in this edition

Over the next four months of sessions in this magazine, we'll be exploring four aspects of Jesus bringing life in all its fullness to people of all ages. We'll be encouraging everyone to think about Jesus' sense of belonging to his heavenly Father and what that means for our sense of belonging (**January**); our self-confidence, as God has a job for each of us, just as he had for the unlikely Gideon (**February**); the unconditional forgiveness we can receive from Jesus and can give to others as we look at the story of the woman forgiven by Jesus (**March**); and the rock-solid hope and trust that Jesus is always with us that comes from the Easter story (**April**).

Over these last twelve months in the magazine, we've been responding to the deepest fears and needs expressed by children and young people in the UK, as highlighted in the Good Childhood Report. As we welcome new families and individuals to our church family, we are both fellow children of God and responsible parents in that family. In our Messy Churches, we are enjoying rediscovering the joys of belonging to this family as children ourselves and trying to love wisely, as generous parents. Together with family members new and old, younger and older, we explore facets of our faith that bring us closer to the life Jesus longs for us to enjoy.

1. Ask God to bless and guide you as you consider what's most helpful to bring families in your community closer to him in the coming months.
2. Glance through the four sessions so that you have an overview of the months ahead, noting down resources that will take time to source.
3. Use the downloadable planning sheets to share this month's session with your core team in plenty of time to shape the ideas together to suit your own situation.
4. If you're meeting face to face with the team, talk about this month's theme, using the Messy team theme provided.
5. Tell God your worries.
6. Ensure that the whole extended team has copies of your final version of activities, together with the Bible reflection provided to give them the background they need. You could give them the link to the passage on biblegateway.com if you're not certain they have their own Bibles.
7. Include take-home ideas on handouts, texts or a Facebook page.
8. Print copies of the mealtime question cards for the meal tables.
9. Encourage review and reflection from everyone after the session has taken place and respond to suggestions for change ready for next time.
10. Thank God for wherever you saw him at work.

▶ Planning suggestions

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Go to messychurch.org.uk/getmessyjan19 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

In our next issue

May: Pray, pray, pray!

June: Dazzling disciples

July: Everything worships God

August: Created for community

One more musing on Messy Church being, well, church, and then I'll be quiet about it. It's very hard to be objective about this subject, mind you, having just looked through the photos from a Messy Church confirmation at Église Saint-Georges Messy Church in Quebec, kindly sent by Revd Neil Mancor. What do I see? Smiles, concentration, engagement; older and younger people; men and women; children, teens and adults; people of different skin colours – all together. I see food and drink – LOTS of food and drink! I see formality (mitres, a wimple, best dresses, ties and dog collars, kneeling and sitting in rows) alongside informality (T-shirts and jeans, lounging and chatting, gatherings round tables). I see colour, creativity, celebratory balloons and clear messages about Jesus that build up faith. I see pride, tenderness, prayer, excitement and confidence. I see a full building. Is it a community I want to be part of? It certainly is! Does it remind me of the early church just after Pentecost? It certainly does! Am I ridiculously and undeservedly proud to be a tiny, distant and insignificant part of that church family? I certainly am! Does it make all the papers theorising about ecclesiology seem totally irrelevant? Well, no: we need people to consider things rationally and impersonally and to help us be even more effective.

But when I spoke yesterday to a minister whose Messy Church was the first point of contact for a heroin addict, who went on to make a miraculous recovery through Jesus and the local church there; when I chatted to a Regional Coordinator, Sandra from Brussels, who told me about a lady who had found sanctuary in her local Messy Church with her child and has now asked to be baptised – then I want to thank God purely and simply for the unstoppable love he is pouring out on his planet and for the microscopic but happy part Messy Church is playing in that, whether or not it ticks every box of what makes something 'church'.

In the last issue of the magazine, we borrowed from Claire Dalpra's chapter in *Messy Church*

Theology (BRF, 2013), specifically about how 'church' is 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic'. We thought about being 'catholic' with a small 'c' and belonging to the wider church. The three other touchstones for 'church' are also helpful as we keep reflecting on how to be church more fully.

'One' – we can always do more to be as unified and healthy as we possibly can. One aspect of disunity that Messy Churches might be prone to is to mutter about members of our teams or families behind their backs. This is a habit which puts up a wall between 'us' and 'them' and is extraordinarily destructive. We need to work together on a culture which recognises that we are all part of the same body and, when one part suffers, we all suffer. If one part is maligned, we are all maligned. The early church was pretty rubbish at this, but knew they had to work on it!

'Holy' – this is the aspect of church that is about our relationship with God. It's always worth pausing, as a member of my own team said recently, to stop rushing around busily and thinking it all depends on us. In making space for God, we acknowledge that this is actually God's work; we get the chance to play a small part in it, but it's up to him what happens. It's a huge benefit! Holiness is such a relief from the heavy false god of our own importance. Let's get every team member to be a little oasis of holiness.

And 'apostolic' means that we have always got one eye, one hand, one foot, one wallet, one ear turned towards those who aren't already there. We face outwards, away from the actual Messy Church, to think always about how we can let other people know they are welcome there and to help each household be church at home, not just in the church building once a month. We don't atrophy into a face that always looks solely at what happens within the walls, but keep loose and limber neck muscles, forever turning outwards to what lies beyond.

Let's be the best church we can be.



Lucy Moore writes...

One, holy, catholic and apostolic church

Session material: January



Go to messychurch.org.uk/getmessyjan19 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

#discipleship: individual

Messy reflection by Jean Pienaar

Every year Jesus' parents travelled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up as they always did for the Feast. When it was over and they left for home, the child Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents didn't know it. Thinking he was somewhere in the company of pilgrims, they journeyed for a whole day and then began looking for him among relatives and neighbours. When they didn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem looking for him.

The next day they found him in the Temple seated among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. The teachers were all quite taken with him, impressed with the sharpness of his answers. But his parents were not impressed; they were upset and hurt.

His mother said, 'Young man, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been half out of our minds looking for you.'

He said, 'Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I had to be here, dealing with the things of my Father?' But they had no idea what he was talking about.

So he went back to Nazareth with them, and lived obediently with them. His mother held these things dearly, deep within herself. And Jesus matured, growing up in both body and spirit, blessed by both God and people.

Luke 2:41-52 (MSG)

This occasion was not the first time Jesus had made the trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. His family would have been familiar with the crowds of people, traffic jams and crowd control as a few million people came to Jerusalem for the feast each year. (Exact numbers are unknown, but historians estimate between three million and four million Jews from the diaspora descended on Jerusalem for holy days.) But now, Jesus is a twelve-year-old boy and has reached the awkward stage of preadolescence. Science tells us that the brain changes during puberty, which may explain the heightened emotions, impulsive decisions and risk-taking behaviour at this time.

In many ways, it is not entirely surprising that Jesus stayed back in Jerusalem while his parents assumed that he was with them. Having three sons, with two at the start of their teenage years, I can understand Jesus' behaviour and his oblivion to any concern his parents might have had regarding his whereabouts.

Some societies intentionally celebrate the transition from childhood to adulthood. In the process, a group of mentors or elders (in addition to the parents) commit themselves to standing alongside the child, acknowledging the beginning of their journey to adulthood, and providing him/her with a set of role models. The African proverb that 'it takes a village to raise a child' bears this out.

As parents and grandparents (and aunts and uncles and godparents...), we need to ensure that our young people are safe from those who might want to harm them or lead them astray. Quite deliberately, we can gather and encourage a group of Christian mentors for our children and pre-teens, who can help them negotiate the transition towards adulthood. Messy Church can provide the safe environment for neighbours and people of the area to form part of the village needed to raise the child.

#discipleship: team

Messy health check

Which people groups in your community are you not reaching through Messy Church? Is there anything you can do to invite them?

Messy team theme

- Where do you go to learn more about Father God?
- How do you welcome and include others in the family of God?
- How do we extend that to people who are not yet a part of our Messy community here?

How does this session help people grow in Christ?

In this passage, we see the briefest glimpse of Jesus' childhood: a snapshot of his life between birth and the beginning of his ministry, and yet here is also a profound statement about who he was and where he found his identity. In this incident, Jesus revealed his true identity as both a son of an earthly family and member of the community gathered to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, and the Son of God who found his place with his Father in the temple.

Session material: February

#discipleship: families

Mealtime card

- What three words would you use to describe yourself?
- If an angel appeared to you and described you, what three words would you like them to use?
- What difference does it make to know that God thinks you are incredible?



Take-home idea

Give each family an empty test tube which they should fill with water and add a few drops of food colouring to (have a variety to choose from).

Put the stopper on and let them take it home, along with a single cheap white flower, for example a chrysanthemum or carnation. When they get home, they can put the flower in the test tube and watch the flower change colour as it absorbs the water over the next week. As you watch, remember that God can change us; we can receive his courage and strength, just like Gideon, when we feel weak and scared.

Question to start and end the session

So... how do you think of yourself? Brave and mighty or scared and weak?

#discipleship: extra

Get together and retell the story of Gideon and do just one activity together.

1



2



Activities

1. Shake it off

You will need: empty tissue boxes; wide ribbon or adjustable belt; six to eight table tennis balls; timer

Cut two slits into the bottom of the empty box of tissues and thread the wide ribbon or adjustable belt through the two slits to make a 'tissue box on a belt'! Remove the thin plastic barrier from the tissue box opening to make the game easier or keep it in place for a challenge! To play the game, strap the tissue box on to the player's back, and fill it with six to eight table tennis balls – then the player should shake, shimmy, jump and dance around to try to get the balls out of the tissue box. No using hands and no lying down! How many balls can people get rid of in a minute?

Talk about how Gideon was doing something nearly as ridiculous as this game at the start of today's story. He was trying to thresh wheat in a winepress, which was a big hole in the ground! You need to thresh wheat on a hilltop to let the wind blow away the chaff and keep the seeds for making into nice things like bread. It was a silly and embarrassing thing to do, and it showed how scared Gideon was. What kind of things make us scared and hide away?

2. God can help

You will need: glass tumblers; index cards; jug of water; basin

Fill the glass up with water (about half or two-thirds full). Place the index card over the top of the glass, ensuring that the whole of the rim is covered by it, and press down hard. Carefully flip the glass upside down, making sure you keep holding the card in place. You may get a few drips at this point, but don't panic! Slowly remove the hand holding the card out from underneath and the card should stick, holding the water at bay. It is probably sensible to have a basin underneath the glass when you do this. (You can also find this activity in *Messy Church Does Science* (BRF, 2017), p. 65.)

Talk about the fact that what is holding the card in place is the air pressure pressing upwards (stronger than gravity pressing downwards). We can't see the air pressure, but we know it must be working or the water would drop out. We know that God is there, holding us up and supporting us, just as he did for Gideon. God believed in Gideon even though Gideon didn't believe in himself. What things do you need to trust God for just now? How could doing so help you be more confident?

Session material: March

2



3. Second-chance craft

You will need: empty tin cans (make sure the exposed edge is not too sharp); hammer; nails (of different thicknesses); long-nose pliers; wire; heart outlines; Blu Tack (to hold outline in place) or permanent marker; spray paint (optional); tealight candle or electric tealight

Fill the empty cans with water and leave in the freezer overnight so they don't buckle when you punch the nails in.

Position the heart outline on the side of the can with Blu Tack or draw around it with a permanent marker. Use the hammer and nails (ensure adult supervision of younger people) to outline the shape. Long-nose pliers can be used to hold the nails in place as you go. Make two additional holes near the upper rim and thread some wire for a handle. On completing the holes, leave the can in the sun so that the water melts, or soak it in warm water to speed up the process. If the bottom of the can has bulged with the ice, bash it inwards once the ice has melted. When the can is fully dry, spray paint, if desired. Place a tealight candle in the bottom of the can.

Talk about how recycling gives unwanted items another chance. How did Jesus give the woman in the story another chance? How do you think that made the woman feel?

3



4



4. Ripple effect

You will need: basin or tray filled with water (a wide, shallow surface of water is best); small objects of different weights and sizes (e.g. marble, coin, paperclip, grain of sand)

Place the tray of water on the ground (or on a sturdy table). Starting with the larger objects and working towards the smaller objects, see which of these items cause a ripple effect in the water. Watch carefully.

Talk about how the things we do and say cause ripples in other people's lives. Is it just the big things that cause ripples, or can small things also cause the water to ripple? How important is it that we create ripples of kindness?

5



5. Paperchain of friendship

You will need: A4 sheets of paper; scissors; coloured pens

Fold the A4 sheet in half (from top to bottom) and then in half again, so that the original width of the A4 sheet is still available. Turn the folded paper so that it is tall and thin rather than short and wide. On the top column of paper, draw an outline of a person so that the arms and feet go right to the

6



7



Always with us by Greg Ross

Celebration

Easter is a good time of year to celebrate Holy Communion together or, if you have anyone in your Messy congregation who wants to dedicate their life to Jesus, to have Messy baptisms. You may like to incorporate these into your celebration.

Invite people to be part of the very surprising resurrection or new life story. Think of a time when you were very sad and remember how that felt. Also remember a time when someone did or said something that helped you feel warm, loved and safe. Be ready to bring those feelings to different parts of this story.

Ask for some volunteers to help tell the story. You need two people to be guards, two to be the Marys, one to be the angel and one to be Jesus. Everyone else can join in with sound effects as needed.

A few days after Jesus had died, two of his friends, who were both called Mary, got up very early and went to the graveyard where Jesus was buried. (*Invite your audience to make sounds of footsteps.*)

His grave was being guarded by two soldiers. (*Soldiers stand around, looking fierce and on guard.*)

Suddenly an earthquake struck the area. (*Make earthquake sounds – crashing and banging. The Marys and guards scream in fear and fall to the ground.*)

When the shaking stopped, the two friends of Jesus who were both called Mary stood up and saw that the earthquake had caused the stone that sealed Jesus' grave to open. A bright, shiny being was sitting on the tomb stone. (*The Marys shake in fear as the angel comes on.*)

The angel told them: 'Do not be afraid, for God's love has raised Jesus to new life. You are to gather Jesus' friends and go from Jerusalem to meet him at his favourite getaway spot near the lake.'

The women ran to share the news with their friends. (*Make running sounds.*) Suddenly, on the road in front of them, they saw Jesus. They fell down and worshipped him. (*The Marys bow down.*)

Jesus spoke the same message as the angel: 'Do not be afraid, my friends. Go and tell my other friends that I will meet them at our favourite getaway spot near the lake!'

This is the very surprising good news of Easter: we do not need to be afraid of death. God's love is more powerful than anything. Jesus is alive!

Three cheers for God's love!

Hip hip – HOORAH!

Hip hip – HOORAH!

Hip hip – HOORAH!

If some of your teams wrote their own Easter story song, you could put the words on the screen and invite everyone to sing it together. If your 'What Easter means to me' video is ready to play, show this now or play it while people are sharing a meal.

Prayer

If you have an 'Easter scene' set up in your church space, you may choose to give everyone a stone to lay at the foot of the cross or at the empty tomb as a way of offering a thank-you prayer to God for taking away our fear of death and being alone.

Alternatively, you may like to create a cardboard cross and invite people to come and write their thank-you messages to God all around the cross – during a time in which there is some quiet music playing. This could also be done with Post-it notes or similar. Then you can share a prayer like this one together:

Loving God, we thank you for the great mystery of Easter. We know that Jesus was born in a country far from here, that he grew up and spent his life helping people and bringing them close to you. We are sad that he was killed. We are so glad that your love brought him back to new life and that he is no longer in one place, but now he is in every place and every time and always with us! For this amazing gift of love we shout our thanks together: THANK YOU, GOD, FOR JESUS! Amen

Song suggestions

'Hosanna rock' – Yancy

'Lord, I lift your name on high' – Rick Founds

'In the bulb there is a flower' – Natalie Sleeth

'Oi, oi, we are gonna praise the Lord' – Doug Horley

'I see God in you' – Heather Price

Meal suggestion

Your nation or region may have foods that are commonly served at Easter celebrations. Otherwise, choose anything that will help you have a celebratory meal: party foods, foods for special treats, foods that remind people of milestones and new beginnings.