



# get MESSY!

Why  
Messy Church  
really is  
**church**

A **home**  
for good

Explore our  
**Bible overview**

Reaching  
(and keeping)  
**families**

## Sessions in this issue

**Which way?**  
Matthew 8:19–20

**Safe & sound**  
Luke 15:1–7

**Listening & learning**  
Mark 10:13–16

**God so loved the world**  
John 3:16–17

**Sep-Dec 2018**



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

**Cover photo:** Rebecca J Hall

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[messychurch.org.uk/resources/get-messy](http://messychurch.org.uk/resources/get-messy)

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Send in news, stories, photos and general enquiries to our Messy Church administrator on +44 (0)1235 858246 or [messychurch@brf.org.uk](mailto: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

The themes in *Get Messy!* 2018–19 continue to address issues faced by families today, specifically for this season those of worries about the future, feeling safe, the need to be listened to by adults and self-worth. We want to be honest about the hard decisions of being a disciple as well as the incomparable upside.

**September's** theme of 'Which way?' opens up Jesus' challenges to his first disciples. Some of them wanted to follow him on their own terms but Jesus wanted complete commitment. Our Messy teams and families may be just at the start of faith, but the high bar of whole-life discipleship is one we should delight in, not be anxious about.

In **October**, we know we'll have fun with the famous parable of the lost sheep. At a time when fear is a major player, this reminder of the safety of the shepherd's shoulder is a timely one.

**November** gives us the chance to hear again the story of Jesus welcoming the children, which reminds us that we are all God's children and we can listen to and learn from each other. And in **December**, we wonder at the mystery of God sending his only Son out of love for us. 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 [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.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

# Contents

Lucy Moore writes.....	5
Stories from Messy Churches far and wide .....	6
Messy Church International Conference 2019 .....	8
Getting creative starts before Messy Church .....	9
A welcome for every child.....	10
Youth column: reaching (and keeping) families.....	12
Discipleship pilot .....	13
Bible overview .....	14
<b>SESSION MATERIAL</b>	
September: Which way? .....	18
October: Safe and sound .....	23
November: Listening and learning .....	28
December: God so loved the world.....	33
Dear Jane.....	38



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## In our next issue

January: Where I belong  
February: Self-confidence  
March: Dusty drawing  
April: Always with us



# WHY MESSY CHURCH IS CHURCH

Lucy Moore writes...

At our recent village Messy Church, I was leading the celebration and waxing lyrical (in a rambling way, as jetlag from an overseas trip was just kicking in) about Jesus when I noticed a slightly pop-eyed look on several of the adults' faces.

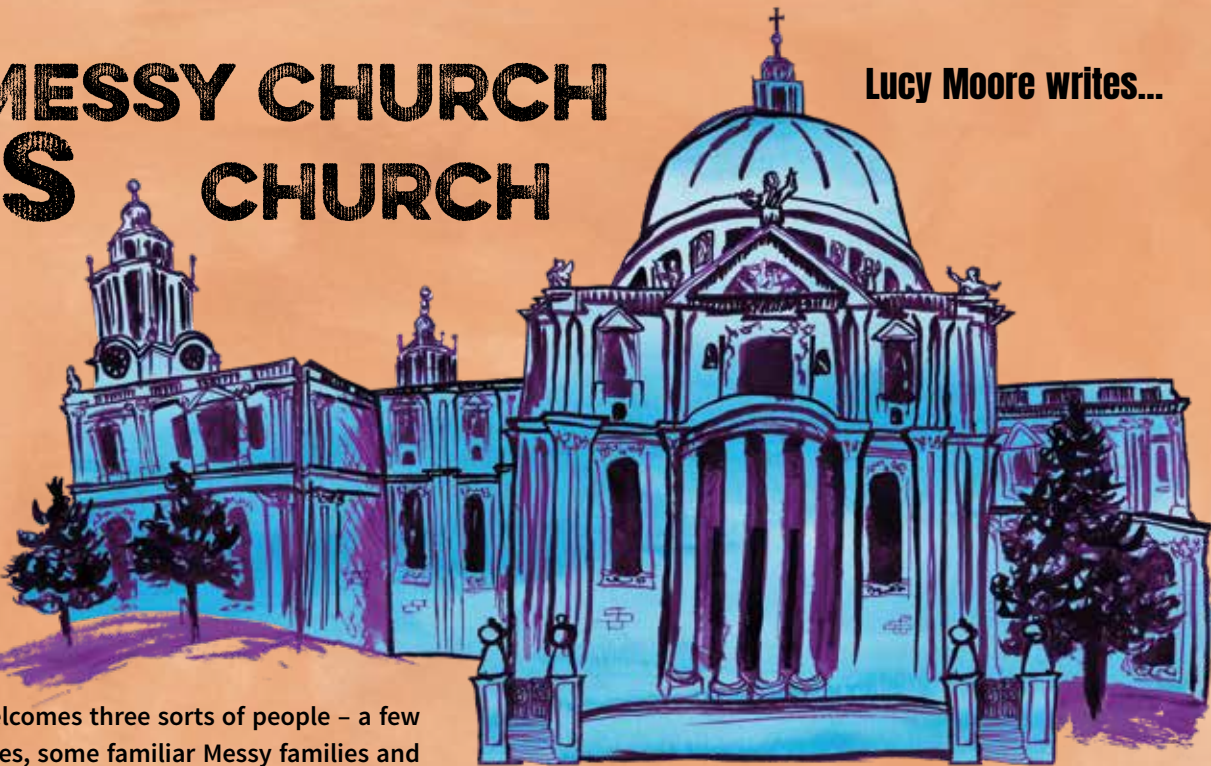
As many Messy

Churches find, ours welcomes three sorts of people – a few folk from other churches, some familiar Messy families and quite a few there-for-the-first-timers who may never have set foot in a church before (alleluia). This session was one in which we had lots of those first-timers, and I can only think it was the mention of Jesus (okay, if I'm honest, the enthuse about Jesus) that took them aback. They'd enjoyed an hour of wonderful activities with their children and relaxed into the welcoming atmosphere and barely noticed they were being invited to pray, to explore the Bible, to talk about spiritual things. So the overt mention of the person behind it all came as a bit of a surprise. But of course, it shouldn't, because Messy Church has that giveaway in the very name: this is no craft club; this is church. The name is on the can, what you see is what you get – and other clichés of that ilk.

Having been challenged by a bishop not so long ago that I was being unreasonable to insist Messy Church is church and that, in his opinion, it is completely okay that 'some people see it as "church", some do not', I think it's worth continuing to explore over this year's set of magazines why I think it does matter that Messy Church is church.

As Claire Dalpra points out in her chapter in *Messy Church Theology*, church has four aspects: being 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic'. Claire equates these aspects with the four directions in which a church operates: 'in' (one), 'up' (holy), 'of' or belonging (catholic) and 'out' (apostolic). It is on the 'catholic' part I'd like to cogitate now. 'Catholic' is the 'church in a circle' idea, the notion that the members of a church are connected to each other and to other expressions of church. The Methodist Church, with its emphasis on 'connexion', embodies this particularly well.

I think Messy Churches, too, find belonging easy to comprehend and put into practice. They are made up largely of friends and family who have told other friends and family about Messy Church, either in the school playground or



on the adult friendship networks. Indeed, yesterday, as I prowled around chatting to people, one dad was telling me happily how he'd bumped into another dad from his workplace there, and a mum was noting all the parents she recognised beneath the layers of paint and glue from the school run. It's very relational. There is also a growing awareness in Messy Churches of the need to take social action locally and be connected to the needs of the community.

On a slightly wider level, Messy Churches do 'catholic' well because they are conscious of being just one of the congregations of a local church, not the be-all and end-all but an interdependent ecclesial community within that church family.

And wider still, Messy Churches are usually delighted to feel connected to other Messy Churches around their own country and even around the world. There is a steady trickle of interest in twinning with another Messy Church (funnily, UK ones usually want to twin with somewhere hot). There is huge interest in sharing ideas on Facebook or at local Messy Meet-ups. Messy Church team members find they can talk endlessly about Messy Church, even if it's the first time they've met. It's a very connected network.

And another way we can encourage each other to be a generous, helpful and supportive 'church', rather than independent operators, is the Messy Church International Conference 2019. It's the second chance to bring together leaders from all around the world and enjoy each other's wisdom and company. See page 8 for more details.

Church – what an amazing, if weird, family to belong to. As Messy Church, perhaps by our very existence, we can remind the rest of our church family just how weird and amazing a family it really is!

# Session material: September



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18](https://messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## #discipleship: individual

### Messy reflection by Jen Robertson

Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.' Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

Matthew 8:19–20 (NIV)

This is not long after the sermon on the mount, which has been followed by numerous miraculous events: a man with leprosy has been healed, a centurion's servant is well again and, after Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, their house becomes the focus for all in the town who are suffering to try to meet with Jesus to be healed. Jesus does and says such amazing things that people want to be with him and to follow him.

Into this frenzied focus on Jesus, one person expresses what many are feeling: 'I am going to follow you everywhere, wherever you go!' Jesus' reply is realistic and confronts the reality of following him. There will be no rest, no stopping, no having a break or a sabbatical; this is all go. He could have added that he will not rest until the job is done and, if the crowds around him are to follow him, that is how it will be for them too. The healings they have observed are tasters of the great healing that will take place when his loving sacrifice is fully revealed on a Sunday morning outside Jerusalem.

How do we balance this with what Jesus says just a couple of chapters later, to come to him and to find the 'unforced rhythms of grace' (*The Message*) because his burden is light (Matthew 11:28–30)? The culture in the west encourages us to take time for ourselves, to rest, but today's words of Jesus remind us that we need to work hard.

## #discipleship: team

### Messy health check

What is each person on the team most worried about? Make space to share and pray about these worries.

### Messy team theme

- How can you ensure that everything that we do and all that we say as individuals and as a team demonstrates the five core values of Messy Church?
- How are you working towards inviting people of all ages to follow the way of Jesus?
- How are you helping your Messy Church congregation to know more of the stories of people who chose to follow Jesus – the men and women – and the choices they made?
- How can you make clear that the welcome of Jesus is for everyone?

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

This session is designed to help teams share the stories of Jesus and show how the followers of Jesus had to make choices. This helps us remind people that following Jesus is not an easy choice, nor will following Jesus make our life perfect or simple, but the sharing of personal stories always invites a response because they are real.

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- What is your favourite story/stories about Jesus?
- Who do you know who is a follower of Jesus?
- What shows that people are followers of Jesus?

### Take-home idea

As a family, you might like to find the stories of some people in your town who are known for helping others because they follow the way of Jesus. This may be people who help at low-cost food centres, or in family support centres, or goodwill or charity shops, counselling centres or other places. Most of the time, these people do not attract headlines, but their work truly reflects the life of Jesus. Your Messy Church leaders or minister/priest may be able to tell you some of these stories.

Gracious God, thank you so much for Jesus, who has helped us to know how to live in a way that brings your dream of heaven on earth to life. May your Holy Spirit strengthen us to choose to follow Jesus' way, even when it is hard. Amen

### Question to start and end the session

So... how do you show that you are a follower of Jesus?



# Session material: October

## #discipleship: families

### Mealtime card

- Have you ever been lost?
- Where do you feel safe?
- How does God keep you safe?

### Take-home idea

At this time of year, when many people like to focus on dangers and things that make you feel scared, talk as a family about what things help to make you feel safe. Is there something you can do to help other people feel safe? Perhaps sort out some unwanted clothes, blankets or toys to donate to a local homelessness project or women's refuge.

Father God, thank you that you hold us safe in your arms.  
Amen

### Question to start and end the session

So... how do you know when you are safe and sound?

## #discipleship: extra

Invite everyone to a pumpkin carving evening and design some fun 'holy' ones.

1



2



## Activities

### 1. Sheep pen

**You will need:** newspapers; masking tape; cuddly toy sheep

Roll the newspaper and secure with masking tape to form paper 'sticks'. Attach these together to create a freestanding, secure sheep pen in which to place the cuddly toy sheep. How long can the pen remain standing?

**Talk about** the way the shepherd keeps the sheep in the pen to keep them safe from harm.

### 2. Edible shepherds

**You will need:** gingerbread men; candy canes; marshmallows; icing and icing pens; paper plates; plastic knives

Roll the icing flat and cut a coat shape and head covering from it, to clothe the shepherd. Use the icing pens to add further details to the shepherd. Attach a marshmallow sheep and candy cane shepherd's crook.

**Talk about** the shepherd and the different things that he does to look after his sheep. How does God look after us?

### 3. Sheep money boxes

**You will need:** small clean plastic drinks bottles (with large lids); cotton wool; glue; black paper; googly eyes; scissors

Cut a large slot in the top of the drinks bottle, perhaps before the session – it should be big enough to slot coins into. Cover the whole bottle with cotton wool balls. Cut out a sheep face shape from the black card and attach to the bottle lid, before adding googly eyes to its face. Make sure that the coin slot remains uncovered and easily accessible, and that the lid can continue to be unscrewed so money can be taken out.

**Talk about** how we keep things safe that are valuable to us.

### 4. Shepherd's crook

**You will need:** old wooden walking sticks; marker pens or acrylic paints and brushes

Use the paint or marker pens to draw symbols on the walking stick and transform it into a shepherd's crook. These could

# Listening and learning by Jean Pienaar

## 7. Coded messages



**You will need: encrypted messages for people to try to decipher (download online); paper; pens**

See if you can discover what the coded messages say! Once you have done this, write your own messages.

**Talk about** how sometimes people hide what they are really trying to say, especially in difficult situations or if they are feeling uncomfortable. We sometimes need to look deeper to see what people are really meaning.

## 8. Masks

**You will need: paper plates; scissors; felt-tip pens; coloured paper; glue; stickers; hole punch; wool or elastic**

Clowns and actors use masks to try to pretend they are someone else. Cut out and decorate a paper plate to create your own fun mask. Once you have finished, punch a hole at either side and thread the wool or elastic into the hole so that you can wear it.

**Talk about** how we can hide behind masks because that is safer and we feel less vulnerable. Talk about what masks we wear, and how Jesus welcomes us and loves us for who we truly are – the person behind the mask!

## 9. Clay play

**You will need: clay or playdough; tablecloth to protect the table**

Use the clay to mould something that makes you feel sad. Then change the clay into something that makes you feel happy.

**Talk about** how listening to others explore their journeys helps them in the healing process. Talk about how hard it is sometimes to express things in words. By listening to the children, Jesus showed compassion and understanding, and the disciples learned something too!

## 10. Sign language



**You will need: a printout of sign language (download online)**

Learn how to sign your name or other simple words in sign language. If you have someone in your Messy Church who already knows sign language, they could teach whole sentences.

**Talk about** how not everyone can hear using their ears. Deaf people use sign language to communicate, so they can participate in a conversation. Talk about how you can still listen even if you are deaf or hard of hearing.

8



9



# God so loved the world by Jen Robertson

## Celebration

If your venue is suitable, start off by having an indoor snowball fight, whether you are celebrating Christmas in the sunshine or in the rain (or something in between). Indoor snowballs are easily purchased online or in discount stores. Split your congregation into two and create a barrier between the two teams that can't be crossed (a chalk line, a strip of masking tape, etc.) The aim of the game is to have no snowballs left on your side of the line when time up is called. Have fun!

The Christmas story shows us how much God loves everyone in the world. Have your cardboard Bethlehem and your LOVE blackboards displayed at the front of your celebration if you can. As you tell the following story, draw large pictures to accompany what you are saying; a flip chart works well. If you are uncomfortable doing this yourself, invite someone else who is more confident at drawing to do the pictures while you speak. However, it is more effective if you talk and draw the story (don't just hold up pre-prepared pictures as this is not really the idea. It may be helpful to practise beforehand.) The numbers indicate when you start a new piece of paper.

God so loved the world (1. *Draw a globe with vague shapes of the continents*) that he sent his only Son (add a big arrow to point out where Bethlehem is on your large globe) as a tiny baby (2. *Draw a baby's face*). God loves little people, tiny people who can't even speak or walk or talk yet! There was no room for the baby and his mum and dad in any of the places they tried to stay (3. *Draw a 'no entry' sign*) so they ended up having to stay in a stable with the animals, using the hay and straw for a bed. It was smelly, and cold (4. *Draw a stable with Jesus in the manger, cattle too if you want*). God loves people who have no home, who find themselves strangers in countries and towns that they don't know, who have nowhere to call home.

Some people came to visit this new baby. There were shepherds up on the hills behind Bethlehem (5. *Draw a hill and a night sky with shepherds and sheep*) who were looking after their sheep, when suddenly a huge number of angels appeared in the sky (draw lots of angels), singing songs of praise to God (add some musical notes) and telling the shepherds to go to Bethlehem and find this baby wrapped in cloths in a manger. The shepherds ran down the hill to the town (6. *Draw the shepherds running down the hill*) and found the baby in the manger just as the angels had said (7. *Draw the stable, the manger, the baby, Joseph and Mary and the shepherds*). No

one really liked shepherds, no one trusted them, they were outcasts, they were rough and ready. God loves people who feel like outcasts, who no one else wants to spend time with. God loves people on the outside.

There were some other people trying to get to Bethlehem. They were following a star (8. *Draw a large shiny star*); they had been following it for a long, long time! They were wise men (draw three wise men following the star) who understood stars. They knew that this one was special, so when it stopped they went into the place where Jesus was (9. *Draw Mary and Joseph with one of them holding the baby, with the three wise men kneeling down*). They gave Jesus presents – gold, myrrh and frankincense (draw in the gifts). The wise men were from far away, from a different country from Mary and Joseph; they spoke a different language, they looked different, they believed different things. God loves everyone in the whole world; there is no one outside his love. God sent Jesus so that everyone could believe in him and be with him always. He didn't come to make us feel bad or guilty. He came to save us, to bring us into his family (10. *Draw lots and lots of people with a cross in the middle*).

That is very good news!

## Prayer

Stand around the large world map you made during the activities, which should be covered in prayers for the world. Invite four or five people to sit nearer the map and to choose one prayer each to read out. After each prayer is read, all join in with this refrain: Come, Lord Jesus!

## Song suggestions

'Seed of hope' – Alison Davies and Heather Price

'Jesus, little baby' – Alison Davies and Heather Price

'Merry Christmas to you' – Ian White

'O come all ye faithful' – Rend Collective

'Wide' – Colin Pye

## Meal suggestion

If possible, to recognise that God loved the whole world, find a traditional Christmas dish from somewhere else in the world. Living in Scotland, I thought the Polish tradition of a beef and mushroom casserole looked quite tempting!

Cake is always welcome at Christmas as dessert – so much to choose from! Why not ask Messy families to bring their favourite cake? (Buying it is encouraged, home baking is not necessary unless wished.)