

Messy Church Shoebox Party

A Messy Church session on Operation Christmas Child



The mission of Operation Christmas Child (OCC) is to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to needy children around the world, and together with the local church worldwide, to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Operation Christmas Child has delivered 100 million gift-filled shoeboxes to needy children in the last 23 years, and we are trusting God for another 100 million. Could your Messy Church join in?

Benefits for Messy Churches taking part in OCC...

- It is fun for everyone!
- It is a great family activity.
- It brings the whole church family together.
- It helps everyone learn about giving and sharing.
- It teaches children and adults to think globally, but also participate personally, by sending a shoebox gift to another child.
- It shows the community that the church cares about those in need.
- It allows mission to become personal by including a letter and photo.

The following is a suggestion for a Messy Church Shoebox Party.

Getting started:

In Messy Church sessions and other church services leading up to the Shoebox Messy Church, send home lists of appropriate items which may be used to fill a shoebox, and ask people to start bringing them to fill a container in the church. You can send home leaflets from OCC or take the list from the [website](#) or print off the list below:



Yes, please! We'd love you to choose from each of these four categories:

Toys:

Bear, soft toy, tennis ball, finger puppet, jigsaw, yo-yo, building blocks, small musical instrument.

For boys:

Trucks and cars

For girls:

Dolls, clip-on earrings or similar

Educational supplies:

Felt pens, pens, pencils, pencil sharpener, eraser, colouring book, notepad, picture or puzzle book, chalk, pencil case, stickers and so on

Hygiene items:

Toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, comb, hair clips, bar of soap, flannel or similar

Other items:

Wrapped sweets (sell-by date to be at least March of the following year), gloves, scarf, sunglasses, cap, hat, bangles, necklaces

All gifts should be new. Please include items from each category.

No Thanks! Please note the items we do not wish to be included in the shoeboxes:

- No food, especially chocolate (non-chocolate sweets are allowed)
- No medicine or vitamins of any kind
- No war-related items, like toy guns, soldiers or knives of any kind
- No clothing, other than listed above
- No fragile items, for example, glass containers, mirrors
- No liquids, including blow bubbles, shampoo, bubble bath, toiletry sets or aerosols
- No dangerous items, for example, sharp objects, scissors or razors
- No novels
- Nothing of a political nature
- No hand-made stuffed toys without a CE mark. For knitted items that we can accept, please see the knitting patterns on the OCC website.

Ask families also to bring photos of themselves and £3 per box towards transport costs.

At the start of the session, [show one of the short videos from the website](#).

You'll choose one that's appropriate for you, but a good one is [The Journey of a Shoebox](#) from 2011 or the [Shoebox World Animated Video](#).

Make sure everyone knows the basics of what you're doing and why. You may want to reassure people that the boxes go to children regardless of religion and with no strings attached.

Activities



Before the session, ask each of the leaders to familiarise themselves with OCC in general and with one of the [30+ stories from their website](#), so they can talk about these with the families who come to their activity.

1. Labels

You will need: scissors and print-outs of [labels](#). Cut out the label for your box.

2. Wrapping

You will need: shoeboxes, wrapping paper, tape, scissors, glue. Wrap the box and lid separately in Christmas paper. When you've completed one box, you could wrap up another to take home and fill on your own.

3. Filling the box

You will need: the fillers divided into categories: boys/girls/educational supplies/hygiene items/other items. Invite families to choose items from each section to fill the box.

4. Personal touches

You will need: blank cards, coloured pens, decorations, glue, stickers and so on, computers, leads for connecting phones/cameras, camera and printer (optional).

Design a Christmas card to wish the child a Happy Christmas. Include a photo or picture of yourself or your family. Write them a letter if you can, or draw them a picture. Use Google Translate to find out how to say Happy Christmas in some languages of the countries where the boxes might go.

5. Finishing touches

You will need: moneybox, labels, glue, a Christmas tree, [cardboard print-offs of the children](#), hole punch, silver thread or gift ribbon.

Fill in your label and glue it to the cover of the box. Put £3 in the moneybox towards transport charges and put the box under the tree. Cut out one of the pictures of children and on the back, write or draw a prayer for the child your box will go to. Hang the prayer on the tree.

6. Knitting

You will need: knitting needles, wool, [patterns](#). Have a few knitters around a table, some to be knitting items from the patterns to go in the shoeboxes and some to teach people to knit.

7. Toys to go in the boxes #1 Monster Pegs

You will need: spring-loaded clothes pegs, funky foam, googly eyes, feathers, scissors, glue, some prepared cut-outs, pipe cleaners.

Make a monster or bird from foam shapes to decorate a clothes peg and glue it on to the peg securely or attach it with a pipe cleaner. Include cut-out shapes, decorations, a pipe cleaner, a peg and a glue-stick in an unsealed envelope for the child to make one of their own.

8. Toys to go in the boxes #2 Felt flowers

You will need: felt, needle, thread, scissors, templates of flower shapes, basic headband or hairgrips, stick-on decorations, small envelope.

Make felt flowers by sewing the felt shapes together securely and sewing the flower on to a hairclip or headband. Include a few stick-on decorations in a tiny envelope but don't stick them on yourself, so that the child can personalise your flower.

9. Toys to go in the boxes #3 Origami frogs

You will need: origami paper, print-outs of instructions from the Web, envelopes.

Make hopping frogs or other toys from origami paper. When you put them in the shoebox, include some extra pieces of paper and a sheet of instructions in an unsealed envelope so they can make their own.

10. Toys to go in the boxes #4 Colouring booklets

You will need: plain A4 paper pre-cut into four strips to make 'pages', needles and thread, black pens, stickers.

Make a personalised colouring book by folding each of the strips in half and fitting them together like a book, then sew down the centre to hold them together. On each page draw the outline of something from your life and label it simply: your family, house, school, church, pet, favourite toy or meal, so that the child can colour it in. Include a selection of tiny stickers that they can use to decorate the cover.

There are lots of ideas from Messy Church sessions elsewhere that will be suitable for gifts and practical to make. Other suggestions are: decorate jewellery boxes or pencil cases;

bracelets, necklaces; jigsaw puzzles from old cards made with a diecutter machine; pencil toppers.

If it's possible, don't just make the gift but give the child the equipment to make one of their own. So include a 'kit' to go in the box. Do follow the instructions above about what is and isn't suitable to include. And remember most children will have no basic craft equipment like glue, pencils or scissors, so make it easy for them by pre-cutting shapes.

Celebration

Song suggestion: 'Faith as small as a mustard seed' (Doug Horley, copyright 2009 Integrity Music).



Tell the reflective story based on OCC from the [OCC website](#) and ask a few of the suggested questions.

Invite each person to bring up a box from the Christmas tree to the front of your celebration and, as everyone stands together holding them, pray together:

Hold your box with both hands: God, thank you for all the gifts you give us to enjoy.

Hold your box out in front of you: You give us so many gifts that we have more than enough to share with other people who don't have so much.

Turn to face west: We thank you for Samaritan's Purse and the way God has made it possible for millions of children to receive a shoebox.

Turn to face north: Thank you for all the schools, churches and families around us who are packing shoeboxes too.

Turn to face east: Thank you for our brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe, for those who know you and those who don't yet know you. We pray that every box will go to the right child.

Turn to face south: Thank you for our brothers and sisters in African countries. May these boxes be a blessing to them this Christmas. May they know how much you love them.

Amen

Take a photo for your website or to send to Samaritan's Purse.

Song suggestion: 'It's great, great, brill, brill' (Doug Horley copyright 2000 Integrity Music)

At the meal, try to have a recipe with an overseas flavour or eat something that reminds you of Christmas!