

# JULY is Messy Month!

July is Messy Month! It's a chance to thank God for all he's doing through Messy Church® all over the world and in particular for what he's doing through your own Messy Church. It's a chance to celebrate and also to inform your other church congregations about what is happening in their Messy Church, to help them to feel part of the adventure and to encourage them to support both local and national Messy Church through prayer, practical offers of help in the different gifts they could use at Messy Church, and financial giving.

- **Why July?** It's a month when there are fewer 'classic' church focus days. There is also the prospect that the weather may be fine, so events like picnics and fun days to tie in with the celebrations become more possible.
- **Why a whole month?** To give flexibility to each Sunday church and Messy Church to celebrate on any days in July rather than on one specific one.
- **Why giving?** If your church has benefited from Messy Church, you might like to consider giving to the work of Messy Church 'central' through BRF, who publish the books, maintain the website and provide face-to-face training through Lucy Moore and Jane Butcher. BRF ensures the continued support of the Messy Church network and the development of ideas to enrich and sustain it. BRF is a charity and depends on the generosity of its supporters.

## This pack contains

1. Ideas for events to bring both Sunday and Messy congregations together
2. Worship / prayer suggestions, suitable for Sunday church or Messy Church
3. A PowerPoint presentation on Messy Church that can be personalised with photos of your own Messy Church



## Ideas for events to bring both Sunday and Messy congregations together

**A joint service:** instead of inviting the Messy congregation to Sunday church, why not invite the Sunday congregation to Messy Church as a one-off?

Or hold a special one-off Messy Church at a time suitable for Sunday church people for them to invite their own children, grandchildren, neighbours and to experience it for themselves.

**An outing:** steam railway, theme park, seaside, theatre, cinema, country park, museum, stately home (if suitable for children too)

**A project:** together with Messy and Sunday church, do a useful visible project in the community, like litter pick, garden tidy, clear out a pond, and so on, and finish with a meal together

**A Family Fun Day:** much can be achieved for your community with a bouncy castle, strawberries, beer, face painting and all the trimmings—and of course, a few Messy tables of crafts

**A Global Mess session:** have fun online together sending greetings and photos to Messy Churches across the globe via the website and a search engine

**A meal:** lunchtime, evening, picnic, barbecue, Safari Meal, afternoon tea, garden party, breakfast on the beach, in the park, fish and chips

**A Guest Lunch:** Encourage Messy and Sunday congregation members to sign up offering either to host a family for a meal or to be guests at a meal, and pair up the offers

**A Family Cook-in:** invite Sunday and Messy families and others to prepare and eat a three-course feast together, or simply to bake and decorate a cake together

**Messy Wave:** can you send a big messy wave to the other Messy Churches in the network? Take a photo of everyone involved giving a big wave and send it in to the website, with a written greeting caption. We'll post them all up—a big wave to each other across the globe

Messy Month might also be an opportunity to

- give out prayer bookmarks for Messy Church
- with permission, match up prayer partners between Sunday and Messy Church members
- hold a post-Sunday service 'cabaret', where people share their stories and reflections on Messy Church over a drink
- have a recruitment drive for more leaders
- make a Messy cake to go with coffee
- decorate a Messy tablecloth with signatures and drawings from all the Sunday church to Messy Church or vice versa
- give out Messy Church pencils or bags
- Messy Church could present Sunday church with a gift (banner, handmade cards, candle holders, flower arrangement, notice board decoration, set of mugs or tumblers)
- Sunday church could present Messy Church with a gift (particular equipment that would be useful)
- organise a 'here are the craft items we need' gift catalogue or display for people to contribute to in kind



## Worship suggestions

### Readings

Exodus 31:1–11: Bezalel and Oholiab, full of the Holy Spirit, use their creative gifts for God's glory

Luke 19:1–10: Jesus sits at Zacchaeus' table—the outsider is first at the feast

Acts 2:42–47: the first Christians learn together, praise together, support their community and eat together

### The story of Bezalel and Oholiab

God had a job for someone to do. This didn't need a great preacher or a great businessman or -woman or someone who was really good at maths or languages or science. It needed someone who could take the ordinary things of the earth and make them into the place where God himself could live: God called this place his 'tabernacle'. It needed people who were good with their hands.

'I want my tabernacle to be a beautiful place,' he thought. 'The place where my glory will rest should be made with all the skill a human being can bring to it. It needs to reflect my glory and make it easy for people to know that I am with them through its beauty and majesty, through

the loving care that goes into every part of it. I need someone who is good with their hands and who can teach others and lead them in a team. Who has what it takes to do this important job?’

And God saw Bezalel and Oholiab. He saw the way they worked so hard at their skills, learning the techniques they needed, patiently developing their talents and gifts as they made ordinary things for everyday use: chairs and tables, candlesticks and pots, swords and ploughs. He saw the way they were always willing to show other people how to do what they did, how they passed on their skills to younger people who wanted to learn. He delighted in the way they always wanted to do their very best for him, whether they were making a necklace or weaving a carpet. More than anything, he felt at home with these two men, because his Spirit was already living in them, helping them draw, paint, sew, forge metal, make perfumes and press oil with as much skill and joy as they did.

‘These two are the ones to help me now!’ God thought. ‘I am delighted with these craftsmen. I will ask them to make me a place I can enjoy being in.’

And God told Moses to ask Bezalel and Oholiab to make the tabernacle—the place where God himself would live among his people.

## To talk about

- God needed craftsmen to build the tabernacle. Who do you know who is a craftsperson?
- Bezalel and Oholiab wanted to pass on their skills to others. Who do we know who does this?
- The tabernacle was for heavenly use but was made out of earthly things. Where do we see ordinary earthly things being used for heavenly purposes?
- The crafts reflected God’s glory. What do we do or make that reflects God’s glory?
- The tabernacle was a place for God to live among his people. How do we show Jesus is living in us?

## Prayers

**Welcoming God**, we thank you for welcoming us into the family of faith. Thank you for Jesus’ welcome of young and old, of rich and poor, of outsiders and friends. We pray for all those who feel lonely, cut off from friendly human contact; for all those who are far from their family and friends. Thank you for the welcome we can give to families in our community through Messy

Church. We pray that everyone who joins us, young and old, rich and poor, outsiders and friends, will feel the warmth of your loving welcome.

**Creator God**, we thank you for making the world and everything in it. Thank you for making and sustaining life. Thank you for sending your Son to make and mend, first in wood, then in human lives. We pray for all those whose creative gifts are unrecognised and unused. Please pour out your Spirit on them, renew and refresh them in body, mind and spirit and help them to use those gifts for your glory. We thank you for all the fun we have being creative at Messy Church. Please bless all those who think of the crafts and those who prepare the activities. We pray that through the art and craft we will get to know each other and you better.

**God of celebration**, we thank you that you have given us the picture of heaven as a party, where we will enjoy ourselves with you forever. We pray for all those who feel they have little to celebrate at the moment and ask that you will comfort them in their distress. Thank you for the fun we have at Messy Church worshipping you in crafts and art, in story and song, in fellowship and friendship. We pray that we will always put you at the centre of all we do and that we will grow to know you better.

**Provider God**, you give us everything we need. Thank you for food and fellowship around tables at home and at Messy Church. We pray for families who don’t have enough, that you will help us to share what we have with them. Thank you for all who shop, prepare and cook the food we eat at Messy Church, and for those who clear away and wash up. May they all feel the joy of knowing that when they feed even the seemingly least important person, they are feeding you.

## Stories

(It will be more powerful and interesting by far to hear stories from your own Messy Team and congregation but here are just some of the ones sent in. You can read more on the Messy Church website [www.messychurch.org.uk](http://www.messychurch.org.uk).)

**Robin Peirce writes from New Zealand about fun, growth, young people in church, and the blessing of an all-age church:**

‘We have had such a wonderful year messing

up our church of St Stephen's in Marton! Your books have been simply super for helping us get out of our pews and have a lot of fun. Our Young Families Fellowship began two years ago with six families and we now have 40. We meet on the first Friday of each month, 4.30–6.30.

'We want to thank you for all the brilliant ideas and help we have had from your books, particularly in bringing back young people to our church. The other blessing is the support from the rest of the congregation—the grannies and grandpas who regularly come to our meetings, join in the fun and enjoy seeing a completely different kind of church.

'Next year we are going to have two meetings a month and holiday programmes. We'll see how this goes, as this is a rural parish. Most of our families are farming and spread around a wide area.'

**Alison Thurlow from Yate writes about putting a toe in the water, dads, excitement, the team and all-ageness:**

'We had our first Messy Church on Saturday, which was actually a taster session for the folk in the church before we open our doors to Joe Public in January. Numbers were a little lower than hoped for—it was a dreadful stormy evening and some of the older members just couldn't make it—but we still had 34 and an excellent time was had by all! These 34 included two dads who never normally come to church, and they were amongst the most enthusiastic participants!! The format worked really well with everything flowing well from one section to the next and all joining in enthusiastically with the four sections; welcome and games, craft, celebration and meal.

'There was a huge sense of anticipation and excitement, which was great. One of the very exciting things—also a massive answer to prayer—is the excellent team of people from St Nix who have signed up for Messy Church.

'The team work was exemplary with some people doing things they had never done before. I have got great hopes and dreams for some of these people and can see promising signs of growth already. The ages of the team members ranged from twelve to 60+(!)—from my point of view a very positive thing as the whole concept of all-age church is something that has always been very close to my heart.'

**Lucinda Calvert writes from Stanborough about a God of surprises and a great team:**

'Just wanted to share our opening Messy

Church experience with you. Our theme was "I am the Good Shepherd" and we had a turnout of over 80 kids and 50 adults. We were astounded by the amount of people who had attended and this was only advertised at our local school and church. We started with registration at 15h45 and kids assigned a loyalty card—after every third visit they get a gift. We engaged with different crafts from sheep plate to hand print and sheep treasure hunt. We ended with a rousing praise and worship and story and everyone joined us for dinner of shepherd's pie and vegetables with lamb-shaped cookies.

'God really blessed us and we are looking forward to our next one. Our team really did you proud! Thank you for such great inspiration.'

**Jean Pienaar from South Africa writes about her church's desire to reach out to their community:**

'We are very interested at exploring (attempting) the Messy Church concept in our suburb in northern Johannesburg, South Africa, and were very excited when we 'stumbled' upon in on the Web. We have become increasingly aware that we need new and fresh ideas to reach out to the people in the vicinity (many of whom don't think they need a spiritual relationship—but are willing to do almost anything for their children!)

**Craft activities suitable for use in a Sunday service (that is, not too messy!)**

These are suggestions that could be used during a Sunday church service to give a small, relatively tidy taster of what happens at Messy Church. It might be worth using glue sticks for these activities as they're less messy than PVA glue.

I've advised pre-cut shapes, so that no messy scissoring is needed, but you might be able to be messier in your church and do the cutting out there and then.

Of course, these activities can also be used at a Messy Church session, where you would want to get gluier and have more cutting out done in situ.

**Prayer with the logo:** print copies of the Messy Church logo on to postcard-sized cards. At the end of each 'arm' of the 'splat', write or draw a person or family you know for whom life has got a bit messy at the moment, through illness, unemployment, broken relationships, war or

pressure of other kinds. Ask God to bless them, and post the logos into a post box you have made.

(Messier version: paint the splat, or drop an eggshell of watery paint on paper to make your own splat, then pray as above.)

**Origami:** what do you think is the best thing your church can give to families? Write it on a square of paper. Make the paper into a model boat and float it on a paddling pool / baby bath / font full of water. Ships take good things from their home port far away overseas to where they're needed. Pray that the good things your church can bring to people will spread out from the church to homes across your area.

**Pipe cleaners:** Make a pipe cleaner model of your dream for Messy Church and place it in front of the cross.

(Messier version: make models from air-drying clay, Play-Doh or junk.)

**Cross stitch:** Messy Church needs all sorts of people to make it work. Add one or more cross stitches to a big pattern to show how each one of us is an important part of the whole picture, whether that's through our ideas, our help, our prayers or our giving.

**Tables:** at Messy Church we make things at tables, we eat at tables and we celebrate around the Lord's table, all as a foreshadowing of the heavenly feast we'll share one day in heaven. Prepare some cut-outs of little cardboard tables and invite people to glue streamers, coloured stickers or foil confetti on to them to represent the fun we have in church now and the fun we look forward to in heaven.

(Messier version: make a really huge table altogether.)

**Thread beads:** there are four parts to Messy Church: *welcome*, when we greet everyone and show how happy we are that they're there; *craft time*, when we explore God's word through art and craft; *celebration*, when we bring all our discoveries and dreams to God in worship; *food*, when we eat together as Christians as the early Church used to do. Make a bead reminder of these four parts of Messy Church by choosing a bead to represent each one, and threading them together, then tying them through a punched hole on the bottom of a prayer bookmark on to which is printed:

Dear Lord Jesus,  
Thank you for welcoming us; help us to welcome everyone, young and old.  
Thank you for coming to us; help us to make you better known.  
Thank you for showing us who God is; help us to praise you more.  
Thank you for providing all we need; help us to share with others.

**Bunting:** prepare thin triangles of coloured paper with holes punched at the base. Write on or print 'Messy Church' on each one. Also prepare some pre-cut shapes of things or people from Messy Church: family groups, old people, babies, children, adults, cups of tea, biscuits, games, gluepots, scissors, paint pots, easel, spanner, hammer, guitar, praying hands, candle, music notes, Bible, spoon, knife fork, plate, saucepan, cake, and so on.

Choose one of these pictures that represents your favourite part of Messy Church (or if you don't go to Messy Church, the part you like the sound of most). Glue the shape on to one of the triangles. Thread the triangle on to a string or line to make bunting. It may need stapling in place to get the bunting spaced evenly. Display inside the church or in a local school or library.

**Doves:** stick a dove shape on to a picture of your neighbourhood to show the Holy Spirit reaching all parts of the area with his love. Messy Church gives families a chance to take God's love into their homes, schools and workplaces.

(Messier version: make a dove from scratch.)

**Model map:** build a plan together of your area using craft straws. (They could be laid down flat for roads, or stuck together three-dimensionally as houses, important buildings, and so on) Sprinkle the finished model with glitter to symbolise God's love filling up the whole area. Messy Church is one way for church to go outside normal church boundaries and reach people outside.

(Messier version: make a junk model or a huge one with cardboard boxes.)

**Growing the kingdom:** draw a house on a J-cloth or paper towel, using a felt-tip pen. Sprinkle cress seeds on to the picture and moisten. Just as the seeds grow up, so does Messy Church help God's kingdom grow in homes across your village / parish / area.

## 3 PowerPoint

This is a brief, colourful summary of what Messy Church is so that you can bring it to life for your Sunday church.

Change the wording in slide 4 if you shape your Messy Church differently.

Slide 5 just needs a text box inserting, and you can fill in the names of any local Messy Churches you know of, or simply delete it.

Change any photos to your own. But please include the logo / website at some point.

After the final slide, we have included five other slides with 'messy' backgrounds in case you want to use them for other ideas personal to your situation at different points in the slideshow.



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