



**Lucy Moore and Jane Leadbetter**



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# Introduction

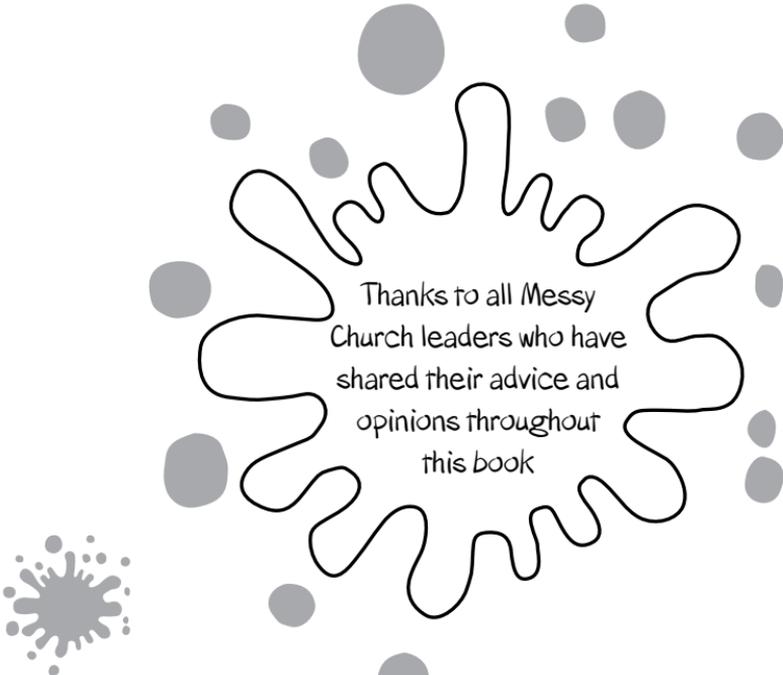
If you're wondering about starting a Messy Church, this book is for you. It's short, punchy and easily passed round a team who may not have time to read the longer Messy Church books or watch the DVD. It gets the basics across quickly and will give you a good idea of whether or not Messy Church is for you. It sets out clearly just what you'll need to consider and will also help you avoid some of the pitfalls other teams have encountered on their Messy Church journeys.

Combined with the downloadable material on the Messy Church website, you should now have all the help you need to get going with a Messy Church in your community, but don't forget that even more help will come from other people. Your neighbouring Messy Churches will be delighted to cheer you on and share their experiences. The network of Regional Coordinators grows each year and you'll find expert help and news of local events from the one nearest you (contact details on the website). You can also contact the BRF Messy Church team via the website, so you need never be alone with a problem to solve or a wonderful story that you simply have to share with someone.

God has graciously and inexplicably chosen to work through many Messy Churches, drawing

together teams of Christians who have suddenly found the opportunity through it to share his story and their own story of faith in a non-threatening way, and drawing in families with no church connection to show them how warm, welcoming, relevant and fun a church can be. This may be for you too. Our prayer is that every Messy Church will be an opportunity for congregations and teams to meet Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and a place where the kingdom of heaven has the space to grow within individuals and families to the glory of God and for the healing and wholeness of the local community.

*Lucy Moore and Jane Leadbetter*



Thanks to all Messy  
Church leaders who have  
shared their advice and  
opinions throughout  
this book

# Messy Church: the bigger picture

Before you leap into a morass of glue and spaghetti, ask yourself a question:

Why are you thinking about starting a Messy Church?

There may be any number of honest answers, but what matters is that you want to help families meet Jesus. With that in place you can't go far wrong, whatever you do.



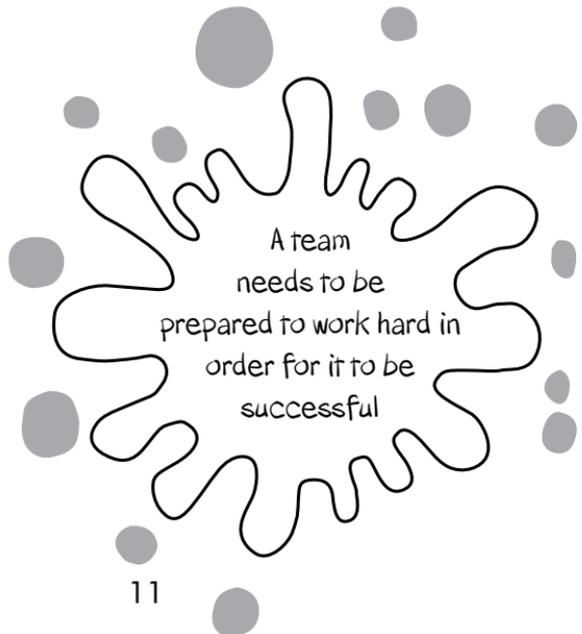
I love the idea of  
Messy Church. This is  
what we need. I suppose  
we just need to get on  
with it

## Possibly good reasons for starting a Messy Church

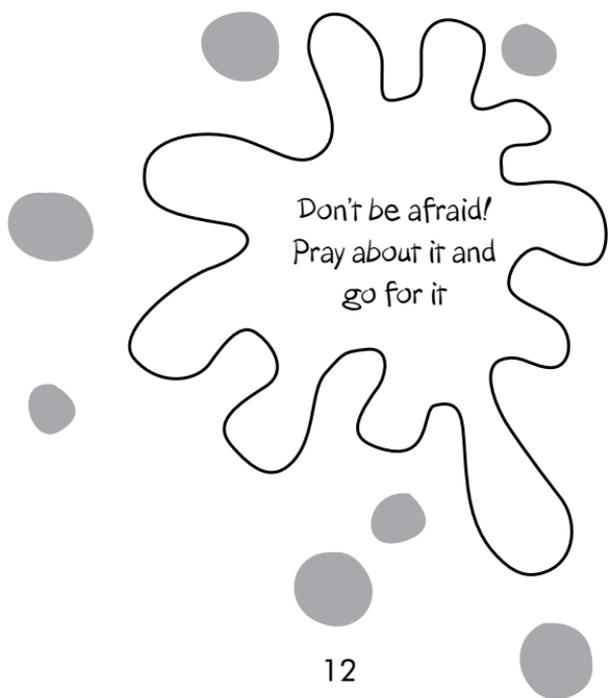
- We want to make disciples.
- The people in our area who don't belong to church would like coming to a Messy Church.
- We want to share the love of God in Jesus in a way that's as accessible as possible to families.
- We believe that the best way for people of all ages to come closer to God is by journeying together.
- We want to share Jesus more than we want to share our particular denominational traditions.
- We want to model who Jesus is to those around us.
- We believe God is in Messy Church and we want to follow where he leads.
- We think Jesus is the person to give people in our community life in all its fullness.
- And many more. (In fact, *many* more good reasons than bad ones, we find, as we hear people getting excited at Messy Church training events. Which is reassuring.)

## Possibly less good reasons for starting a Messy Church

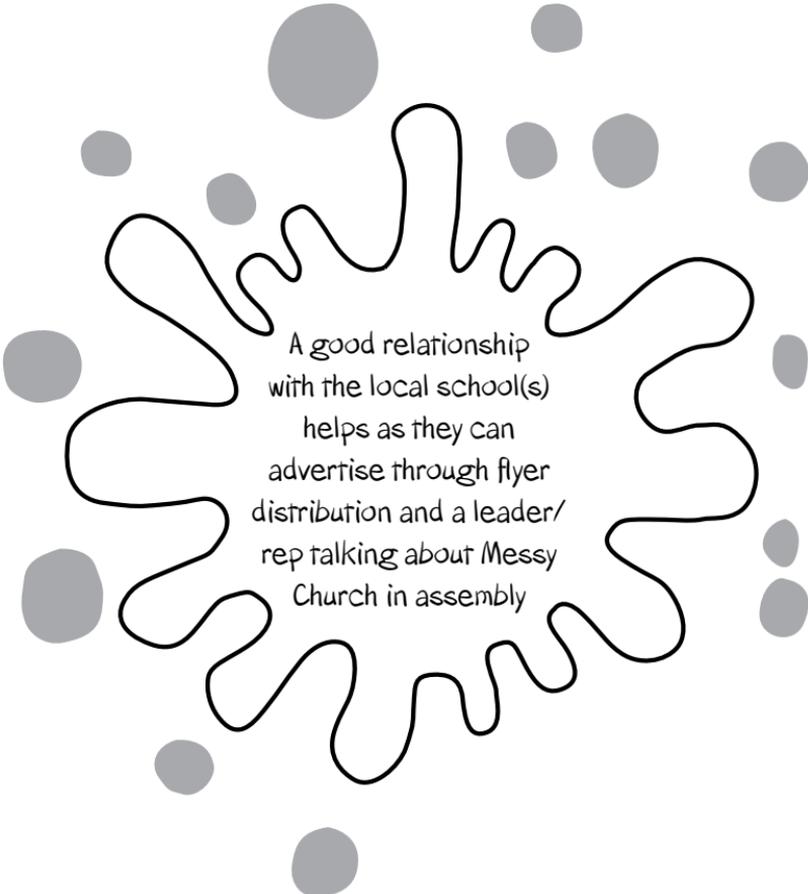
- It's the latest thing so it must be good.
- The church up the road is running a Messy Church so we need to or we'll get left out.
- The minister says we need one.
- We need younger people in our church to do the jobs we used to do when we were young.
- We want to revamp our Sunday congregation.
- We want to get together for a nice sociable time with knitting and paint.
- It sounds fun.
- We're bored with sermons and want a change.
- I have a stationery fetish that I can indulge shamelessly.



Running a Messy Church is hard work, tiring, relentless, may make you vulnerable to deep disappointment and hurt, and may bring you into conflict with people who don't get it or who take you for a ride. (Sounds like the experience of Jesus already.) It will bring you into a greater intimacy with heaps of raw sausages than you really want. It will make you search your soul for answers to questions you've never thought about or cared about before. It will send you into a panic about your own Christian journey and how you articulate and live out that story. And it will be exhilarating, eye-opening, moving, radical and might/will/should change the way you look at Christ and his church. We thoroughly recommend it.



All this is to say that starting a Messy Church is about involving you and your team and community in something bigger than 'a little kraft klub for the kiddies'. You are being a pioneer, taking on the role of a church leader, whether you're ordained or not: this is serious stuff and not to be undertaken lightly or without due reverence, as the Marriage Service says. But it's also a huge amount of fun and adventure: just save yourselves a lot of grief by deciding right from the start that you are all in the business of making disciples. The way you go about making disciples may involve horrifying amounts of icing sugar and glitter glue, but it's always there, this priority that will keep you all going through the hard times: we're here to make disciples, not to try to get people coming to our church service or to give them a Nice Time. It's like an artist imagining the whole picture in her head before she knuckles down and starts painting in the detail of the clouds in the top left-hand corner: she knows in the broadest terms what the big picture will be, even if it changes hugely in the process. Messy Church, like other forms of church, traditional or new, is ultimately about making disciples.



A good relationship  
with the local school(s)  
helps as they can  
advertise through flyer  
distribution and a leader/  
rep talking about Messy  
Church in assembly