



# get MESSY!

Join us as we say  
a fond farewell to  
**Martyn Payne**

Take the **Messy  
Splat Challenge!**

Find out  
what Messy  
**social  
action**  
looks like

## Sessions in this issue

**Stairway to heaven**  
Genesis 28:10-19

**True family**  
Matthew 12:46-50

**Second chances**  
Luke 23:32-43

**New life and healing**  
Matthew 9:18-26

**Jan-Apr 2018**



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

### Photocopying

You're welcome to photocopy the Bible reflections and session outlines for use only within your team. Copying other parts of the magazine is not permitted.

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## Meet our session writers for this issue



**Kai Bland** lives in Lancashire with her husband and a hyperactive kitten. She works as an Anglican Family and Young People's Worker, which she loves – challenges and all! She is also a Messy Church Regional Coordinator so she is privileged to see some fantastic Messy work happening.



**Jonathan Brooks** heads up the Messy Church team at St Michael's C of E Church in Highgate, north London. His Messy Church experience began on a cool summer's afternoon in 2014, and has specialised in a good bangers 'n' mash supper ever since! In his spare time, Jonathan uses lots of trains and reads more newspapers than is good for him.



**Rachel Harper** lives in Suffolk with husband Stuart and young son Joshua. She is Messy Church Regional Coordinator for Suffolk and is involved in running Messy Church at the Salvation Army on Bramford Road in Ipswich. She loves all things Messy!



**Helen Laird** is the Youth and Children's Worker at Bromyard Road Methodist Church in Worcester, and has been running a Messy Church there for six years. She is also a Mission Enabler for Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District. She is passionate about telling children, young people and their families about God's love, and helping them to start their own discipleship journey.

## Themes in this edition

We love the story of Jacob on the run in the desert, having made a complete mess of things at home. In **January** we look at how God sends him a life-changing dream just at the moment when he is arguably most lost. Angels going from heaven to earth and back on God's mission... what better way to reveal the hidden dimension of God's work?

In **February** we take a look at a moment when Jesus is hardly at his most gentle, but where he reveals something tough about family life and our primary place of belonging. We explore the joys and challenges of being 'family' together.

In **March** another challenge comes up as we celebrate Good Friday and Easter once again: can we avoid the temptation to reduce Easter to bunnies and chocolate eggs? Can we share the pivotal story of Jesus' death and resurrection with the families who come?

And in **April** we enjoy the amazing work of Jesus in healing a woman and raising a child from the dead. How might this healing and loving power be at work in our lives today? How powerful is Jesus? How much does he care about 'the last, the least and the lost' and which character in this account might our Messy families most identify with?

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

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Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessyjan18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessyjan18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## In our next issue

May: God 24/7

June: The money puzzle

July: Wonderfully made

August: Creating and caring



# Getting our hands messy

**Kathy Bland is the Messy Church Regional Coordinator for Herefordshire and South Shropshire and team leader of the Leominster Messy Church, which has been running for seven years now. She works for the Diocese of Hereford, not, as one colleague mistakenly put it, as the 'Intergalactic Church Enabler', which would be awesome, but as the 'Intergenerational Church Enabler'. Still pretty awesome. Added to all this, she finds time to be the Messy Church Coordinator for Social Action on a national level, something she talks about here.**

## **Kathy, tell us about your involvement in social action.**

In the past, I've been involved with Christian Aid, including a trip to Israel/Palestine and campaigning around the issues there. And I've been involved with Traidcraft, especially all things Fairtrade. In recent times, I've been helping refugees, especially those in Calais and Northern Europe. I'm also involved in the local food bank, which is a good combination and gives me the opportunity to 'join the dots' for people who sometimes need a bit of help to extend their thinking about whether they really only want to give aid to British people. Herefordshire is a very rural county, so we're good at thinking locally but sometimes need challenging to act globally!

## **Has your Messy Church in Leominster caught your passion?**

Our Messy Church families were the first to offer to drive vans of aid to Calais. Alongside the charity People in Motion, we have driven 40 vanloads either to Calais or to Birmingham to send to Syria. And we don't just take 'things', we take a team of volunteers to meet the people in Calais so they can share stories first-hand when they come home again. We heard the refugees' food parcels were very bland, especially for the people who are used to spicy food, so our Messy Church got involved by bagging up spices to add to the staples. One of the dads is a photojournalist and comes and shares stories of the refugee family he's been following in Greece, while another guy from the army who's been working in the Calais camps keeps us in touch with what's happening there. Many people think the refugees have all gone now that the large camps have been dismantled, but this isn't the case and refugees in France are still very much in need of food. We take volunteers to France

for a few days at a time and help chop vegetables and cook meals for lots of people (a bit like at Messy Church really).

We're involved with our local food bank, so at an outdoor event our Messy Church organised a Food Labyrinth, with opportunities to give food and to pray. We've created a prayer activity focusing on the wall that separates Israel and Palestine. We've written Christmas cards for prisoners through Amnesty International. And we just look out for opportunities in any Bible theme to share the idea that we can and should 'love one another' as Jesus told us to.

## **Why is social action so important for churches and for discipleship?**

Jesus said, 'Follow me', 'Love one another' and 'Love your neighbour'. To me, this is what he meant. How can we claim to be the body of Christ (because that's what the church is, isn't it?) and not be compassionate, just as he was? I don't think Jesus said, 'Go and sing songs and listen to sermons'; he said, 'Love one another.'

## **So what might someone leading a Messy Church do if they want to do some social action?**

Look around and see where the opportunities are – there will be something either locally or nationally. I'd love every Messy Church to twin a toilet! It might be something to help your local environment, not just people, like a clear-up. And an apparently little thing can have a big impact. One Messy Church raised £15 for Calais, which was a big deal for them as they've never raised money for anything before. And they saw the sacks of potatoes that their money bought. That's important. Messy Church has a great deal of potential to do social action, because it's already about doing stuff – learning happens by participating, not sitting passively listening, so action leads on quite naturally. We're doing it already.

If you'd like Kathy to help you think through social action in your Messy Church, or if you've got stories to share, please contact her at [kathy@this-place.com](mailto:kathy@this-place.com).

**I'd love every Messy Church to twin a toilet!**

# Session material: January



Go to [messychurch.org.uk/getmessyjan18](http://messychurch.org.uk/getmessyjan18) to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

## Messy reflection

### Helen Laird

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

Genesis 28:10–19 (NIV)

Jacob is on a long journey, fleeing because he and his mother deceived Isaac, his father, into giving him a blessing that was rightfully due to Esau. This is a story of forgiveness and could be noted as a 'conversion experience'. It is clear that Jacob is not an honest, law-abiding, humble man. Yet in this dream, God repeats the promises to him that had been given to his grandfather Abraham and to his father Isaac. God is willing

to bless the children and the children's children of this sinful man. God is truly a God of grace, and he will continue to mould Jacob and bring him to a place where he will bring glory to his name. I am sure for many, including me, this is a relief. I once heard a saying that 'Christians are not perfected saints, but forgiven sinners'. I take comfort from both this quote and this passage – I need more moulding and more perfecting and I am sure God hasn't finished with me yet.

The ladder/stairway is interpreted as the 'perfect ladder' – that of Jesus Christ. Jesus refers to this ladder himself in John 1:51: 'And [Jesus] said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"' (ESV). The pathway to God is through Jesus alone.

Tithing is attributed to the very end of this passage, where Jacob after his 'conversion experience' pledges to return a tenth of God's blessings, back to God. Do we see each gift and moment of joy as a blessing from God? What difference would it make to our communities and churches if we each give back a tenth of God's blessings to us?

### Mealtime card

- What's the strangest dream you've ever had?
- Have you ever seen an angel? What was it like?
- What would you ask an angel to do for you?
- How do you think Jacob felt when he woke up?

### Take-home idea

Set up a place in your house that can be your family's Bethel; a place that you can make special for God and where you can be close to him.

Alternatively, get hold of some angel costumes (or make your own) and film yourselves going up and down escalators. We'd love it if you posted these to the Messy Church Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/messychurchBRF](http://www.facebook.com/messychurchBRF)) for everyone to see! Make sure you take safety into account, especially if you are wearing long clothes or wings.

### Messy health check

Which part of your community is most in need at the moment? How can your Messy Church help?

# Session material: February

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## Activities

### 1. Mother's Day/Thank-you card

**You will need:** A4 card, plain or coloured; envelopes to take A5 paper; felt-tip pens; stickers or other adornments; creative hole-punches

Encourage those at the table to create a thank-you card for someone who cares for them and looks after them, the person who makes them feel special. This may not be their parents or caregivers, so be sensitive.

**Talk about** how that person makes them feel loved. What do they do or say that makes them feel at home and part of that family?

### 2. Anchor paper chain

**You will need:** anchors cut out of stiff card; slips of paper or card to create a paper chain; felt-tip pens or coloured pencils; glue or sticky tape

Help those who come to the table to create a paper chain either for the people in their own family/wider family, or for the friends that they hold dear, or for those they know who know and love Jesus. When the links have been created, add the anchor to the last link. You could write the word 'Jesus' on the anchor as a reminder.

**Talk about** how Jesus should be the anchor for Christians. As an anchor holds a boat where it should be, Jesus by his teachings can help us to be where we should be and do the things that would please him.

### 3. Prayer table

**You will need:** a selection of pre-printed prayers (many can be found online); loom bands; key-ring loops (optional); paper and pens; battery-operated tea lights, glow sticks or sensory items (optional)

Set up your table with tea lights or glow sticks, if using. This could be a significant table for anyone who has lost a family member; please be sensitive as you talk to people. Encourage the participants to weave together the loom bands, creating anything from a key ring to a bracelet. As they do their weaving, encourage them to read the prayers by themselves or out loud. Allow a time for peace and quiet, and see if they would like to

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# Second chances by Rachel Harper

of soda. Continue to drop the food colouring colours over the heart prayer. What reaction does the vinegar have with the bicarbonate of soda? Bicarbonate of soda and vinegar react with one another because they both have a lot of energy they don't want and they can help each other get rid of it!

**Talk about** how we can say sorry to God through prayer. God loves us so much he forgives unconditionally. As soon as the fizzing in the experiment stops – God has forgiven us for the wrong we have done. God takes the energy out of our wrongdoing by using his awesome energy!

## 8. Rocky road Holy Week

**You will need: a handful of green sweets such as jelly tots; four 100 g bars of chocolate; orange oil/flavouring; two handfuls of raisins; 30 silver sugar balls; five sweet biscuits; twelve glacé cherries, chopped; three Mars bars; two handfuls of small white marshmallows; one 135 g bag of Maltesers; one bag of mini chocolate eggs; baking tray; mixing bowls; wooden spoon**

Put the green sweets in a mixing bowl. These remind us of the green palms waved on Palm Sunday. Break the bars of chocolate into pieces to represent Jesus turning over the tables in the temple; add the chocolate to a separate bowl and melt, then add a drop of orange oil/flavouring to the chocolate. The scent of the orange oil represents the anointing of Jesus at Bethany with perfume.

Put the raisins in the mixing bowl with the sweets. This reminds us of Jesus' lesson of the fig tree. Use 30 silver sugar balls and put these into a separate dish; these represent the 30 pieces of silver Judas was paid to betray Jesus.

Break the biscuits into small pieces and add to the mixing bowl. This represents Jesus breaking bread. Add the cherries to the bowl; these represent the red wine Jesus shared.

Cut the Mars bars into small chunks and add to the mixing bowl; the three layers of the Mars bars represent the three times the cock crowed. Add the white marshmallows as a reminder of the linen that Jesus' body was wrapped in. The Maltesers represent the sealed tomb; add these to the mixing bowl.

Add the melted chocolate to the dry ingredients and pour the mixture into the baking tray; put the silver balls on the top. Lastly, put the mini chocolate eggs on the top to remind us of the resurrection of Jesus. Put in the fridge for 15 minutes and then cut and share.

**Talk about** how we can share the Easter story with others.

## 9. Masking-tape cross picture

**You will need: paper or card; masking tape; crayons or different colour paints and paint brushes**

On your paper or card, create a cross using masking tape on the paper, then have fun painting or colouring over it. When finished, take the masking tape off to reveal a cross.

**Talk about** how Jesus took our sins away on the cross.

## 10. Casting lots

**You will need: coins; Twister game plastic sheet; kitchen timer; paper; pens**

Lay the plastic sheet on a table. Line up some coins along the edge of the table. Set the timer for one minute. Attempt to flip the coins, one at a time, across the cloth. How many land on one or more of the circles in one minute? Record all attempts.

**Talk about** how the soldiers cast lots for Jesus' belongings. The practice of casting lots is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament. The closest modern practice to casting lots is probably flipping a coin. Do we need to cast lots to decide how we live our lives or can we ask God for help?



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# New life and healing by Jonathan Brooks

## Celebration

**You will need: a large, clear plastic tube stoppered at one end; lots of rice; a bowl**

This is a true story. It's a story about a little girl who was dying. It's a story about a woman who was ill. It's a story about Jesus. And it happened in a little town on the edge of Lake Galilee.

Jairus was an important man, but he was very worried. His daughter was twelve years old (who here is twelve?) but she couldn't get out of bed. She was very ill, and the doctors couldn't make her better.

*(Hold up the tube filled with rice, with a cap at the top end, and your hand at the other. Move your hand so that it partially covers the end of the tube, allowing some of the rice to fall into the bowl. Gradually increase the speed at which you let the rice out, but don't empty the tube.)*

'I know!' said Jairus. 'I'll go and see Jesus! Jesus can heal my daughter and make her well again.'

His daughter was dying, and didn't have much longer to live. So Jairus ran out of the door. He ran down the steps, through the streets, up the hill to the place where Jesus was. *(Get everyone to stamp their feet quickly throughout this.)* He fell at Jesus' feet. 'Please come!' he gasped. 'My daughter is dying. Please come and make her well!'

Jairus knew that they had to be quick, or it would be too late. *(Keep the rice flowing through here.)*

Jesus came straight away and crowds of people followed him. *(Back to the stamping.)* Suddenly he stopped. *(Stop the rice flow by turning the tube sideways.)*

'Who touched me?' Jesus said. 'Someone touched my robe, and power went out from me.' Everyone was nervous and looking around. Then a woman came forward, trembling and scared.

'It was me,' she said. 'I have been ill for twelve years and no one can cure me.'

It was as if time had stopped. Jesus looked at the woman and smiled. 'Daughter,' he said. 'Your faith has made you well.'

Jesus and Jairus started walking again, and Jairus was almost running through the streets. *(Fast rice flow and lots of running noises.)*

He could see his house and the steps to the door. But as they ran, a servant came out of the door. He was crying, and came to Jairus. 'Master,' he said. 'It's too late. She's died.' *(Let the rice run out in complete silence.)*

Jesus turned to Jairus. 'Do not despair,' he said. 'Only believe and she will be saved.'

Inside the house there were people crying and wailing and weeping. Jesus sent everyone away, and went into the girl's bedroom with just her parents and his closest disciples. Lying in the corner, completely still, was Jairus' daughter. Everything was quiet. *(Turn the empty tube sideways.)*

Jesus knelt down beside her bed and held her hand. 'Little girl,' he said. 'It's time to wake up.' Jesus reached down into death, and brought her back to life.

The little girl rubbed her eyes and sat up. 'Now give her something to eat,' said Jesus. *(Turn the tube until the stoppered end is at the bottom and refill with new rice.)*

Jesus made lots of people better. He healed the sick, he gave sight to the blind, he freed prisoners and brought good news to the whole world. Jesus brings a brand new life to everyone he meets. And he's still doing it today.

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, you gave the woman and Jairus' daughter a new life, and you give us a new life in you as well. In all we do this week, help us to make time for you, and teach us to trust you just like Jairus did. Amen

### Song suggestions

'Be still (For the presence of the Lord is here)' – David Evans (Thankyou Music), especially verse 3

'God always has time for us' – Alan Price (Daybreak Music)

### Meal suggestion

You could cook the home-made pizzas made in activity 9. Alternatively, sausages and mashed potato arranged into a clock design in serving dishes. Finish up with fruit set in jelly.