



get MESSY!

Messy Church
(still) does
science

Companions
for the journey

The lowdown on
Messy Vintage

Mothers' Union
gets messy!

Sessions in this issue

May-August 2019 £4.60

Pray, pray, pray!
Luke 18:1-8

Dazzling disciples
Genesis 15:1-6

**Everything worships
God**

Psalm 8

Created for community
Genesis 2:4-7, 18-22



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Messy Church is part of The Bible Reading Fellowship,
a Registered Charity (233280)

ISBN 978 0 85746 775 1

First published 2019

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

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Editor: Olivia Warburton

Subeditor: Rachel Tranter

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Designer: Rebecca J Hall

Cover photo: Lesley Cox

Printed in the UK by Stephens & George Print Group

Note for subscribers

Print copies are dispatched to arrive six weeks prior to the date on the cover of the magazine. The September 2019 issue should be with you around the middle of July 2019. The PDF version of the magazine is also available for purchase and immediate download from the beginning of July. messychurch.org.uk/resources/get-messy

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Meet our session writers for this issue



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Martyn Payne retired from the BRF Messy Church team in December 2017. Since then, he has managed to carry on being messy, particularly through the leadership of his own Messy Church in east London, taking local services of all-age worship and writing for BRF. He enjoys running and walks in the countryside, and is currently trying to learn the piano.

Themes in this edition

The first four Holy Habits in this issue are prayer, making more disciples, worship and fellowship. In **May**, which you might want to link to the Thy Kingdom Come prayer movement, we look at Jesus' parable of the persistent widow who never gives up on the judge. Imagine inspiring a generation of people who refuse to give up praying!

In **June**, we go to the very core of what it means to be a community of believers and look at the way the early Christians lived in the Spirit and how their numbers grew in Acts 2. The resonances with your own Messy Church may well be striking.

In **July**, we ponder what it means to worship God, enjoying the psalmist's worship in Psalm 8 with its archetypal awe and wonder, and in **August**, we look at the first couple, Adam and Eve, and their community of God, humanity, earth and animals – all living in joyful community together. We try not to repeat Bible stories too often in *Get Messy!* and surprisingly, perhaps, we haven't looked at Genesis 2–3 before, so I'm looking forward to the Facebook photos from this session.

As you enjoy these familiar stories and themes, do reflect for yourselves on what they might mean in your own walk with Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to draw your life and attitudes even more into line with God's purposes for you.

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 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/getmessymay19 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

In our next issue

- September: God loves a cheerful giver
- October: God's armour of light
- November: Feast of faith
- December: Small is mighty

Lucy Moore writes...

Let's do this... together!



It's six years exactly since the first issue of *Get Messy!* appeared. And as this new year gets underway with the theme of *discipleship* running through every month, we're just about to go into our second International Conference, also on the theme of discipleship. When Messy Church began in 2004, 'discipleship' wasn't really something we had on our mind. (Pasta was.) It's a sign of the journey God's brought us on that the question of 'living as a Christian' has come so much to the fore since then, and has become one of the main concerns in our BRF team: how do we help people grow in Christ in and through Messy Church? How do people come closer to God and to each other? How does our Messy Church team grow? How do we discover 'life in all its fullness' unique to each person? Where does comfort stop and challenge start? How can we tell when someone starts walking the way of Christ? What can our church traditions teach us and what do we need to reimagine for today's society and for an all-age community?

It's a challenge that we've gladly taken up, knowing there's no way we can meet it solely in our limited resources at BRF, but delighting in the way we're discovering, as a global network, how we 'crack' this *together*. BRF acts as a catalyst, throws in resources, permissions, blessings, ideas, encouragement, opportunities to share and feed back, but the real pioneering and discovery happens in Messy Churches like yours: in Canada, South Africa or Germany, in the Methodist, Lutheran or URC church... (*Why not add your own country and denomination here?*) Jesus' invitation to join his rag-tag band of followers is one to grow closer to him in community, and you and I, my Messy friends, have the incredible gift of doing just that without any of the normal barriers of church tradition or national barriers: we're in this *together*.

Will we 'crack discipleship'? Is that even the right question? (Many of my church friends would wince at the idea of 'cracking discipleship' or even at calling the Christian life 'discipleship' in the first place.) Yes, we will. We can do this thing! I think we need to be robust and let the nuances look after themselves, afterwards. Once people in walking boots have trodden a path, those in flip-flops (or thongs, dear Aussie friends, but not UK ones for reasons of decency) can follow. We need to '*carpe the diem*', because we know exactly how short the '*diem*' can be for a child growing up, or a family moving on after a short sojourn in our area. So let's commit to working *together* to try out the ideas from the Discipleship Pilot and others of our own, and to sharing those results with the rest of the network through the BRF hub, so that everyone can benefit and together we can find a fruitful way forward. Let's communicate better what seems to work and what seems to be a failure or just a very slow boil. We can build up a body of wisdom that will be as robust as Messy Church itself, in order to bless those in all churches, not just in Messy Churches.

So how do the sessions in these 2019–20 magazines help? The session themes reflect the ten 'Holy Habits' Andrew Roberts explores in his book and resource materials of the same name: **prayer, making more disciples, worship, fellowship, gladness and generosity, biblical teaching, eating together, sharing resources, service and breaking bread**. The stories we explore are the usual range from the whole Bible, not just the 'easy' stories, as we try to be church for everyone. And the writers have given helpful inspiration, not just to wheel out a Messy machine, but to try out ways to enrich and deepen what we do and how we do it in the suggestions surrounding the actual activities: make the most of them!

To share your Messy Discipleship ideas and experiences, email lucy.moore@brf.org.uk

Session material: May

Holy Habit: Prayer



Go to messychurch.org.uk/getmessymay19 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet

#discipleship: individual

Messy reflection by Lindsey Goodyear

Jesus told his disciples a story. He wanted to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said, 'In a certain town there was a judge. He didn't have any respect for God or care about what people thought. A widow lived in that town. She came to the judge again and again. She kept begging him, "Make things right for me. Someone is treating me badly."

'For some time the judge refused. But finally he said to himself, "I don't have any respect for God. I don't care about what people think. But this widow keeps bothering me. So I will see that things are made right for her. If I don't, she will someday come and attack me!"'

The Lord said, 'Listen to what the unfair judge says. God's chosen people cry out to him day and night. Won't he make things right for them? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, God will see that things are made right for them. He will make sure it happens quickly. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find people on earth who have faith?'

Luke 18:1-8 (NIRV)

When I was a child, I used to write letters to my great-grandmother. Although it took some time for each letter to make its way to her, and then for her response to make its way back, it was worth the eager anticipation when I'd check the mail and see her letter. I'd swiftly read it, tuck it away with the others and get busy writing another. I was disciplined in my determination to stay in close contact with her despite the distance between us.

We live in different times, now. Gone are the days of handwritten letters that outline the details of our daily lives and events. Instead, we can pass along a short, impersonal email to anyone, anywhere around the world, and, once they've written their own quick response, mentally check a box as though we've held a great conversation.

The widow was diligent in her quest for justice. She never wavered despite the fact that the judge was unjust and

unwilling to meet her requests. The judge openly says he doesn't fear God, nor does he respect anyone. He has no patience for the nagging widow until she finally wears him down and, out of annoyance, he gives up and gives her what she wants. She is exactly what God wants us to be.

The widow is the antithesis of what communication is today. There is no instant gratification for her. Instead, like the way God calls us to pray to him, she is persistent, knowing what she wants and waiting patiently for her request to be answered. These are the two words we should be focusing on: persistence and patience. We aim to be persistent in our prayer and communication with him, and patient for how and when he answers these prayers.

For a world now used to instant gratification, this is a seemingly impossible task. We want things done now. So praying persistently and waiting for our own 'justice' is going to take practice. Although it's hard to admit, in many cases we can relate better to the unjust judge. It's easier to think only of ourselves and forget about prayer at a time when we feel on top of the world or untouched by burden. However, we need to remember that praying consistently does not mean prayer only in a time of crisis. We cannot send an email to God and expect a response within the hour. So, instead, we have to practise the same amount of determined prayer as the widow in order to find satisfaction with our own life cases, no matter what the status of our life at the moment.

Like the determination and diligence I had for staying in communication with my great-grandmother, I will endeavour, like the widow, to stay unwavering in prayer and keep striving for the same communication with God. Will you join me?

#discipleship: team

Messy health check

How important is prayer to my life?

Messy team theme

- How can we make sure that prayer still stays top of our agenda when it comes to all the preparations for and busyness of running a Messy Church?
- What sorts of unfairness might drive us to pray for the people of our community?
- How can we remember to keep on praying for each other and for those who come to our Messy Church once the session is over?
- Encourage each other with stories of how God has answered prayer because God is a faithful judge.

Session material: June

dazzling disciple for God? Think about others who would like to be dazzled by God's love. Maybe add their names to your stars and pray for them at night. Perhaps you could think about inviting them to the next Messy Church.

Question to start and end the session

So... can I be a dazzling disciple for Christ?

#discipleship: extra

Plan a Messy Outdoors event to reach people even Messy Church doesn't reach.

Social action

Tell the story of someone in your church who is a 'star' in all they do for social action.

1



3



4



5



Activities

1. Acrostic disciple challenge

You will need: notice board; pins; nine pages of A4 paper; smaller pieces of coloured paper; pens

Using A4 paper, write each letter of the word 'DISCIPLES' on a separate piece of paper. Pin these at the top of a large notice board. On the strips of coloured paper, ask people to write under each letter words (beginning with that letter) relating to being a disciple e.g. D – Devoted. Pin them in columns to the board. See how many words people can come up with. See how long the list gets! Or take it further:

1. Choosing one word from anywhere in each column, see if you can make an interesting sentence working across from left to right e.g. Devoted – Inspirational – Servants – Committed – In – Prayer – Lovingly – Engaging – Spontaneously.

2. You can also work down a column and see if you can come up with alliteration – using at least four words starting with the same letter e.g. Daring disciples dutifully dedicated to God, or People pondering prayerful promises proclaiming peace poetically.

Talk about how Jesus calls us all to be his disciples. A disciple is a dedicated follower of Jesus. We can do this in our everyday lives sharing God's love with the people we meet, praying, being in fellowship with other Christians, breaking bread together and learning from the scriptures.

2. Bread making

You will need: pre-prepared bread dough; paper plates; baking trays; oven facilities

Have some pre-prepared bread dough ready to work and divide into small ball shapes. Shape dough as you like, maybe into people or the first letter of your name. Place on baking tray for baking and sharing together at meal or celebration time.

As Christians, we need to develop these Holy Habits such as breaking bread together. At the last supper, Jesus broke bread with his disciples and told them to 'do this in memory of me' (Luke 22:19, GNT).

Talk about how we can remember Jesus every time we eat or break bread.

Everything worships God by Anne Offler and Sharon Pritchard

7. The night sky

You will need: star and moon cookie cutters; plates; slices of bread; assorted sandwich fillings; knives (not sharp)

Make a sandwich using the filling items provided. Using the cookie cutters, cut out shapes from the sandwich and make a night sky. Put your cut sandwiches on your plate for later.

Talk about how the night sky is lit up by the stars and the moon. Have you seen the moon? Have you seen the stars? Do you think we will be able to see them tonight?



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8. Amazing angels

You will need: chenille wires (pipe cleaners); ribbon

Make a loop in the middle of one of the wires. Join the ends of the wire by twisting them flat and form into a triangle for the body. With the other wire, twist two loops for the wings, leaving a few centimetres at each end. Lay the head and body part on the wings and twist the ends of the wings around each side of the body. Attach the ribbon to hang up the angel.

Talk about angels being very special to God. How/why do you think they are special? People are nearly as special as angels. Do you think that makes people special?



8

9. Worship words

You will need: a Scrabble board and letters

Use the letters to make words used to worship God. Build them up on the board, overlapping them as you do when you play Scrabble.

Talk about the words you have made. Look at the words made by others. Which words do you think you would use to worship God?



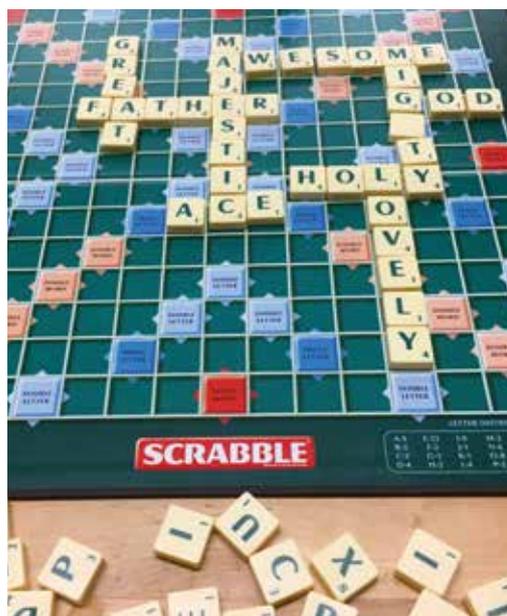
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10. Egg-box animals

You will need: egg cartons with each egg cup cut out; pens; scissors; chenille wires (pipe cleaners); glue; googly eyes; paint; paint brushes; scraps of felt, fabric, etc.

Make a range of animals using egg cups. Paint or colour the cut-up egg box, using the materials on the table to make the animals.

Talk about the animals God made and how we look after them, protect them, value them.



Created for community by Lindsey Goodyear

Celebration

In the very first garden, God instructed Adam and Eve, the very first humans, to stay away from the tree that was forbidden. However, after some bad influence from the serpent, the two of them gave in, thus changing the world we live in with sin. In reality, we will all deal with our own versions of the 'serpent' every day. Pressures and temptations to do what we would like, instead of following God's word, are all around us. For example, standing up to peer pressure can be nearly impossible. Though it may be hard, we have to stay strong in our faith and follow what our heavenly Father asks of us. There is a reason they call it 'the road less travelled'! If it were easy, everyone would be walking it perfectly. Keep God's word nearby and do your best to separate yourselves from the 'serpents' of the world.

Divide the congregation into small groups (maybe five or so). Give each group ten water bottles and one rubber ball. Nine of the water bottles should be full and one should be empty. Have the group experiment with different ways of setting up the bottles and hurling the ball toward them. They must figure out a way to knock over all of the full bottles and leave the empty one standing. At the end of the experiment, have the groups explain which formation worked best for them. Ultimately, for the empty water bottle to remain standing, it is best to keep it as far away as possible from the others.

Explain that the full water bottles represent the things in life which God loves us to enjoy. These are things that will 'fill' our lives with goodness but may be harder to knock over, just like staying on the road of righteousness is a difficult task. The empty bottle represents something that would disappoint God. These decisions bring us 'emptiness' in life. The empty water is easier to knock over and, like sometimes in life, this road seems easier to take than the road less travelled. The further we keep away from the things that bring God sadness, the more we will please him.

Prayer

Since a huge part of fellowship is working together and supporting one another, invite a small group of members up to do a multipart prayer, each person thanking God for something relating to Messy Church. Have one member start and, before they finish, let another join in by saying their thanksgiving, and so on and so on. All will say 'Amen' when the last person has finished.

Song suggestions

'Blessed assurance' – Third Day

'We're on this road' – Fischy Music

'I am loved' – Heather Price

'In the sweet by and by' – Ben Hester

'How great thou art' – Lauren Daigle

Meal suggestion

Pizza with every topping (save some with no meat as a vegetarian option) to represent all of us together in fellowship. Sides can include seasonal fruit or salad.

Give each person a dry cupcake and set out a bowl of frosting, sprinkles and other edible decorations to let them decorate their own desserts.