



get MESSY!

New Zealand
Messy conference



**Courageously
creative**

Dear Jane

**Includes
Messy Church
at home
ideas**

Sessions in this issue

September-December 2020 £4.70

It only took one
stone
1 Samuel 17:32-50

Paul and Silas
Acts 16:25-34

Shine like a star
Matthew 5:14-16

Christ(mas) is
here Luke 2:4-18



BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE
+44 (0)1865 319700 enquiries@brf.org.uk
brf.org.uk

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Subeditor: Rachel Tranter

Designer: Rebecca J Hall / Alison Beek

Proofreader: Daniele Och

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Meet our session writers for this issue



Claire Dawe is a minister in the Uniting Church in Australia, where she has worked as a family and youth worker and is now in her second ordained placement. She has three teen/young adult children and has been involved in Messy Church since it migrated to Australia.



Rob and Robyn Douglas are joint Regional Coordinators for Messy Church in Western Australia. Rob is pastor of the Maida Vale Baptist Church in the Perth suburb of High Wycombe. Robyn is the children and families worker there and has led Messy Church since 2012.



Dave Martin is part of the BRF Messy Church team. He has a passion for connecting people to Jesus and a desire for churches to flourish as intergenerational faith communities. Previously, he was children's youth and families minister at a church in Radlett, where he was involved in leading a Messy Church and starting a sister project, Messy Café.



Carolyne Rasmussen is a Messy Church Regional Coordinator for The Salvation Army in Denmark. One of the major areas she sees in her ministry is how Messy Church embraces not only families but also includes single people of all ages who have 'adopted' a family and vice versa in Messy Church.

Themes in this edition

It only took one stone – the story of David and Goliath is one of those Bible classics and a great way to start off a new term in **September**, especially for those school-goers who feel like the smallest in their new school or class. And even if you have a different start to the school year, this story is a cracker.

In **October**, when we remember our prisons, we look at the story of Paul and Silas escaping from prison. It's a story of liberation from oppression, or, in the context of Halloween, of moving from darkness to light, and a reminder that Jesus keeps working in his church well after Pentecost.

In **November** we invite everyone to shine like a star, as the church calendar reminds us to commemorate the saints who have shone like stars before us. Remembrance helps us celebrate the lives of those who gave up so much.

Of course, **December** is our annual celebration of the birth of Jesus, with its total lack of reindeer, elves and snowmen and its huge joys and sorrows as families experience life together at its most intense.

What do the different parts of the session mean?

Messy health check: As part of your team planning, share thoughts and feedback about your Messy Church and congregation.

Messy team theme: With your team, choose one or two key messages to focus on.

How does this session help people grow in Christ? Is everything theme-connected and helping all ages to be more like Jesus?

Mealtime card: Reflective questions to consider during mealtime conversations.

Take-home idea: Continue family activity/exploration between sessions.

Question to start and end the session: Use on social media/posters/flyers too.

Social action: Link the theme with additional activities, charities and events or explore international issues.

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Go to messychurch.org.uk/getmessysep20 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet



If you are using these sessions for a Messy Church at home, look out for this symbol! These are easier activities that can easily be adapted to the home.

In our next issue

January: Good Samaritan

February: Choosing God's voice

March: Mum's big day out

April: The stone's been rolled away

Lucy Moore writes...

Lockdown experiences



I realised lockdown was getting to me when my reaction to the scheduled daily Bible reading – Genesis 3 – was along the lines of ‘God! No! You can’t send Adam out of the garden of Eden! He needs to stay at home and stay alert and... oh.’ Everyone has their own personal story of lockdown. What has been the experience of Messy Church as a movement?

There has been a huge determination to carry on being Messy Church in a different way, be that online, ‘in a bag’ or by keeping in touch. This is balanced against all the Messy Churches who have fallen silent, often through no fault of their own. Only time will tell whether the enforced ‘time out’ from our normal way of meeting has resulted in fewer Messy Churches surviving. Might it mean that the remaining ones or the ones that pick up again after lockdown are fitter, tougher and more focused on the essentials?

It has been a clarification of what Messy Church is all about, with the discovery for some that it’s so much about the opportunity to meet face to face and to be in the same room as people of different ages, different backgrounds and different stages of faith that if you try to reduce that grounded, material, tangible, sensory ‘stuff of the earth’ experience to a virtual one, it is so unlike the real thing that it isn’t worth the attempt. For others, it’s been about finding a different margin to go out to; a different ‘edge’ to take the gospel to; a new and often bigger audience with new and different needs and requiring a new way of communicating.

Many have learned how to use technology effectively and been able generously to share those good practices, while others have felt disenfranchised and disempowered through lack of broadband, lack of skills or lack of anyone to teach them.

There’s been the fragility of being a lay-led, often unrecognised movement, which in many cases was the first service to be abandoned when church leadership was put under pressure.

It has been a time for discovering what it means to take Messy Church into the home and put it in the hands of carers and parents. It’s given us the chance to send out some form of ‘Messy Church at home’ on a weekly basis rather than just meeting monthly. At the time of writing it’s too early to tell what effect that may be having on family discipleship, but it is certainly something to keep an eye on over the coming months.

Have the values held true? When George Lings advised us in the early days to hang on to the values and let them

create the ‘shape’ or ‘form’ of Messy Church, he may not have had this very radical situation in mind. Have we seen Christ at the centre, creativity, hospitality, being all-age and celebration? There has been a telltale ‘stream of living water’ flowing through the network, a bubbling up of unstoppable adaptability that speaks to me of Jesus’ Spirit alive and well in us as a whole. Leaders have responded to the challenges with imagination and flexibility of approach that reflects a deep-rooted creativity. Hospitality is harder to express online, but that generosity of spirit that Messy leaders have shown to one another across all our different traditions and countries speaks volumes about our willingness to give welcoming space to the beliefs and practices of others and to learn from them. I have found it a challenge to write and adapt materials to be more ‘all-age’ than ever, as many Messy households currently hold one adult and no children. In the rush to provide for the majority, I have often forgotten the minority, and it’s a relief that so many of the network generously tweak the materials on offer to improve them and carry on with a smile of indulgence for my failings. And I hope that we are indeed managing to keep a celebratory feel to things in all the disorientation of the unknown, the dreary and the difficult. It’s hard to feel gloomy when racing chariots pulled by cuddly hippos, packed with dinosaurs representing the Ethiopian and Philip.

And finally, for me personally, at a time when I feel bereft of my team members, it’s been a time of realising how generous and caring you are as a network and how grateful I am for the prayers, love and messages of hope you’ve shared with me throughout, across countries and denominational divides. Thank you for your support and concern for the three of us, expressed in so many ways. As Solomon might have said if he were faced with the coronavirus, ‘Many lockdowns cannot quench love; pandemics cannot sweep it away.’



Session material: September



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Bible story

1 Samuel 17:32–50 (NIV, abridged)

David said to Saul, ‘Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.’

Saul replied, ‘You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.’

But David said to Saul, ‘... The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.’

Saul said to David, ‘Go, and the Lord be with you’...

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield-bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David...

David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied...’

David ran quickly towards the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

Pointers

The story of David and Goliath is one of the best known in the Bible and is one of my all-time favourite stories.

- My Sunday school teacher in Kenya, where I grew up, compared David and Goliath to a mouse and an elephant. There’s an African myth about the elephant fearing the mouse. My father always says that it is the unpredictability of the mouse’s movement that keeps the elephant on edge. How might you relate this story to your time and place?
- David had no fear. He knew that his God was bigger than Goliath. So, while all the other military men sat and trembled, he volunteered to face this giant who had hurled enough insults at God’s people. What are you afraid of? Do you think it’s bigger than God?
- With a sling, David stepped on to the battle ground. He used just one stone from his sling and hit Goliath in the centre of his forehead and he fell face down, dead. What little can you bring to God for his use?

#discipleship: team

Messy health check

What one step could you take, as you plan this session, to change from plastic to something biodegradable?

Messy team theme

- When was the last time you met a giant challenge or an impossible situation? Can you see the issue more clearly if you use God’s vantage point?
- How can we as a team exercise courageous action in the face of insults and intimidating situations?
- God has given each one of us a special talent. Are you using yours?

How does this session help people grow in Christ?

We are bound to encounter all sorts of challenges in life, but the size of these challenges doesn’t really matter. In this session, we learn that God can defeat any problem in our lives, whatever the size and nature. If size mattered to David, as it did with the Israelite army, he wouldn’t have had the courage to take on Goliath. Faith in God was all the armour he needed. He boldly declared to Goliath, ‘The battle is the Lord’s.’ The Bible says, ‘For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline’ (2 Timothy 1:7, NLT). God gives us different talents – let’s use them to build his kingdom here on earth.

#discipleship: families

Mealtime card

- Do you know what your talent is, and do you find it easy to use it?
- What does courage look like for you?
- Have you ever been discouraged from doing something you knew you were good at? How did that make you feel?

Take-home idea

Consider whether you have confidence that God can help you in even the most impossible and incomprehensible situations. Take your courage jar home and encourage each other to use it. Pray for God to help you in this process.

Question to start and end the session

So... how do we get courage to face the difficult things in our lives?

Shine like a star by Rob and Robyn Douglas

#discipleship: extra

Watch Messy Adventure: USA at youtu.be/sfKBxKK3oP0 – a whole hour all about this story with wonderful Messy things to see and do from Messy Churches across the USA.

Social action

What do you consider to be a 'dark' situation locally? How can your Messy Church community shine a light into it?

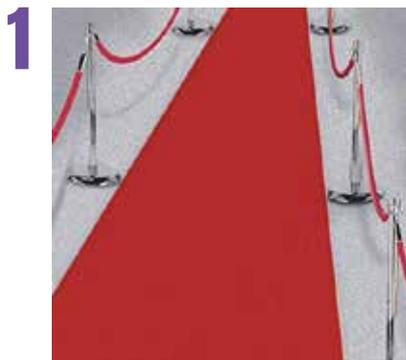
Activities

1. Red-carpet entrance

You will need: a long strip of red fabric; star-shaped name tags; pens; cameras (optional)

Treat everyone as a VIP! As they come in, give them a name tag on which they can write their name. Have a red carpet laid out, and even have your own 'press photographers' taking photos of people as they come in (ensure people that you have permission). If you have the equipment, you can then print the photos for people to take home afterwards or show on the screen as they have their meal.

Talk about how our theme today is that we are to be shining like stars for Jesus. Do you feel like a star yet?



2. Popcorn stand

You will need: popcorn in different flavours; a popcorn-making machine (or microwave); small bags

Have a popcorn machine (or microwave) near the entrance producing popcorn, so that people can smell popcorn as they enter the building. Ideally give people a bag of popcorn as they come in, or you can invite people to cook their own (supervised).

Talk about whether you have heard of the Hollywood Walk of Fame. We're building our own Walk of Fame tonight, so we need some popcorn to help us.

3. Photo booth

You will need: various costumes, props and wigs

Set up a photo booth near the entrance where people can dress up and take photos of themselves or their family on their own phones (or use a communal one). Be as creative as you can. People may put these photos on their own social media pages to help advertise Messy Church.

Talk about whether dressing up makes you feel special or important. Are you ready for our Walk of Fame?



Christ(mas) is here by Dave Martin

with the hair dryer. Write 'Christ is here' on the bauble with a sharpie pen.

Talk about why we are called 'Messy' Church. Discuss how our world, our families and our lives are messy. Talk about how the Christmas story, like this bauble, is messy, but God meets us in whatever mess we are involved in, just like the special colour interwoven around the other colours. Explore how God is here to support us in our mess and how this Christmas he wants to hear from us.



9. Messy Christmas cards

You will need: coloured card; envelopes; felt-tip pens; colouring pencils; paints and paint brushes; accessories to stick on (e.g.

pom poms, stickers, googly eyes, pipe cleaners, tissue paper, foam sheets); PVA glue

Design and make cards for your loved ones and groups you want to reach out to in your local community. Groups could include another local Messy Church, a homeless shelter, a school or charity or people in hospitals or prisons. Use all of the resources to make truly special cards while encouraging participants to go beyond just writing 'Merry Christmas'. Instead, help those making the cards to identify specific people who would benefit from hearing the message of Christmas this year.

Talk about who needs to hear God's Christmas message this Christmas. Who needs encouraging? Who often gets left out or underappreciated? What relationships could your Messy Church build? Explore how participants can love and include those on the edge of society, just like Jesus did.

10. Découpage stars

You will need: small papier mâché stars; découpage paper; scissors; PVA glue; water; container; brushes

Start by mixing equal amounts of water and PVA glue together in the container. Have a selection of Christmassy or shiny découpage paper available. Instruct participants to cut up small pieces of paper and glue them on to the papier mâché star until the whole star is covered. The paper does not need to be the same all over – feel free to mix and match if desired.

Talk about what sort of things we can follow: sport, celebrities, your boss or teacher. How would the wise men have felt on their journey to find Jesus? What about when they found Jesus? Did you know that Jesus is here this Christmas and wants to meet you? What could following Jesus look like, and what can you do as a family to find Jesus and celebrate the real meaning of Christmas?

Celebration

Picture this: you have a job. You're in charge of looking after a whole field of smelly sheep, day in and day out. You are a shepherd. Now imagine that you're getting a little bored – bored of standing outside in this field, bored of pongy sheep, bored of people looking down at you because, let's be honest, no one thinks shepherds are that important anyway.

Then suddenly – BAWMMWWGLEEEEEEM – an angel appears in your field, and he's looking right at you! You take a quivering step back in amazement. You're stunned, you're terrified, you've never seen anything like this before in your field!

Then the angel tells you not to be afraid and that he's got good news for you. You? Little old you? Yes, he says that the world's greatest leader is just about to be born, and it's all about to happen up the road from you very soon.

Then guess what? More angels start to appear. I know! And they are all praising God. You don't quite know what to make of this. This is a lot more action than you normally get on a Thursday night.

Then suddenly all the angels head back to heaven, leaving you, the other shepherds and your smelly sheep in a bit of a daze. With an unexpected rush of boldness, you lead the other shepherds out of the field and set out for Bethlehem, leaving everything behind in search for this very special baby, who is to be called... Jesus.

I wonder what it would have felt like to be there 2,000 years ago on Jesus' birthday. You see, the shepherds took off and set out to find this special baby. And that is still what 'Christ' mas is about today: knowing that Christ is here and God is with us, then setting off to find him!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you so much for Christmas! Thank you so much, God, that you came down as a man to meet us. Thank you that you are here with us right now, and thank you for inviting us to meet you. May we all find you this Christmas. Amen

Song suggestions

'O come all ye faithful' – traditional
'Silent night' – traditional
'O little town of Bethlehem' – traditional
'Mary, did you know?' (by the Messy choir)

Meal suggestion

A traditional Christmas dinner (with vegetarian options available).