



Messy Church

I am aware that some churches are thinking of moving forward with this project. In order to help you I have set out A Messy Church Guide. If you wish to learn more or simply like me to visit your church and talk about the possibilities then contact me Hannah Middleton 07548900290 email hannah.middleton@urc-northernsynod.org

Messy church- is a 'fresh expression' of church which launched in 2004 for those who are on the outside or fringes of the Christian community.

Life for many people is Messy. Messy in terms of busy lifestyles, time is at a premium, messy as many children no longer live with both parents, and therefore travel between different family units at weekends. Sport, leisure, and social opportunities have changed the very nature of what weekends were. Sundays especially have become just another day to many, especially if employment or family commitments determine their day off is at another time, to what we may know as the traditional weekend.

However Messy Church aims to reverse some of the changes.

The name, too much pressure, too little time, not the smooth organised family unit many strive to achieve and in reality cannot attain.

Messy is:

- A Family Friendly sharing time:
- It meets monthly, always check local arrangements as some differ.
- It is family worship at a time to suit the needs of the locality.
- It welcomes church families of all ages
- Those with some previous faith background
- And those with none as yet.
- It reaches out to the community and engages with it.

- It breaks all the church rules!
- It allows children to jump and praise God.
- It allows children to be creative, in a spiritual way.
- It encourages lively worship.
- It allows families to spend time being families.
- It is relaxed non threatening worship.
- It encourages families to grow in faith in a relaxed manner, while allowing space to ask and challenge faith values and beliefs.

Messy is Not:

- A means to growing Sunday congregations, it is church in its own right.
- It is not a children's club - it is all ages and families staying and sharing together.
- Does not have to be expensive to run.
- Does not have to meet monthly although that period of regularity is useful.
- Does not have to include 'a cooked meal' the choice of food belongs to the Messy Group and can include sandwiches, pizza, fish and chips takeaways or cupcakes and squash.

What is required for a Messy church project?

- A Budget - Messy church runs on donations only.
- A team of volunteers - minimum of 10.
- A Publicity guru.
- Games, art and craft and food.

What does a typical Messy church session look like?

4pm

- ✓ families arrive and are welcomed
- ✓ Name badges given to all.
- ✓ Register noted and new folk can complete a simple form.
- ✓ Refreshments of drinks hot and cold are available
- ✓ A selection of toys and board games are already set up, for families to play with. These need to be mindful of children's ages 0- 14 years.

4.30 pm

- ✓ Team leader welcomes all and introduces themselves and the theme for this session.
- ✓ Craft tables are introduced and families choose which ones their children would like to engage with.
- ✓ There should always be a pre-school table set up with toys / equipment suitable to them e.g. play-dough.
- ✓ Each table has a leader who explains how the activity fits into the bible theme.

5.15pm

- ✓ Worship
- ✓ This would be best conducted in a different space to that of craft.
- ✓ The worship area is decorated according to theme of session.
- ✓ Chairs are placed in an arc to invite all to sit together.
- ✓ Children are invited to sit on the floor at the front.
- ✓ The worship leader invites children to show what they have made, and say what the best bit has been etc.
- ✓ Worship power-pointed, or with songs on sheets lasts no longer than 10 minutes ending with the Messy church grace with actions.

5.30pm

- ✓ Families return to craft area which has been cleared and set up for meal.
- ✓ Meal can be formal two courses, or a snack.

6. pm Families depart with an invite for the next Messy Church.

Points to reflect upon:

Will the church provide funding should donations not meet expenditure?

What is the sustainability of this project? It is no good wetting the appetite of a community, if no thought has been given to planning with a longer term view.

Volunteers do you have enough with the skills required and committed to this project with a long term view?

How will this project be advertised and who will produce the invites and posters? Through local school, playgroup, mums and toddlers, cubs, brownies, childminders, community centre, local shops, the whole Kingston Park estate? Cost implications??

Messy Church - Church but not as you know it- aims to welcome all families no one is too young or too old so long as it is still cool to be seen with your family. E.G. Mum, Dad, Gran, Auntie etc.

Messy church will not necessarily grow your Sunday congregation, it is church in its own right at a different time, and should be upheld for this not criticised.

Messy church is a national project and there is a website available for more information.
www.messychurch.org.uk.

Hannah Middleton March 2017