



### **Giving is part of Discipleship**

Some churches view Messy Church as a gift from the church and so do not charge or have a collection. While this is laudable it does not allow the Messy Church attenders to grow in this area of their Christian commitment. Some Messy Churches ask for a contribution towards costs or even charge for attending – again this is not really helping those attending to start to give to God. Some Messy Churches encourage those attending to give to some worthy project like sponsoring a child through [Compassion UK](#) – again this is very worthwhile but does not develop discipleship or look to Messy Church becoming self-sustaining. Look for the right opportunity to introduce a collection after some appropriate teaching on the subject.

### **Helping 'Church' see Messy as 'Church'**

Make sure that Messy Church is listed alongside all the other services both in the notice sheets and also on the web site. It is not an optional extra, it is one of the regular services. Report regularly what is happening in Messy Church. Invite key individuals to come and observe Messy Church, especially PCC members. Have Messy Church on the PCC agenda with regular reports to PCC and an AGM Report. Include it in the church statistics.

### **Helping Messy Church see itself as part of 'Church'**

Give out the notice sheet to those who come to Messy Church. Include Messy Church in all invitations to courses, special services, social events etc.

### **Discipleship is for Boys too!**

Boys are seriously under-represented in church and this is often reflected in Messy Church, and their specific needs seem a current blind spot in mission-shaped thinking. Educationalists are now addressing the underachievement of boys in schools; will churches also accept the challenge to become more boy-friendly?

- Boys, God and the Church: How church can help boys grow in faith... and why they do not! Nick Harding Grove Series P111 ISBN:9781851746668.
- Top Tips on Working with Lads: Practical pointer for anyone working with children and young people. Richard Witham & Maggie Barfield Scripture Union. ISBN 9781844275670

### **Key Messy Discipleship Resources for All:**

- [Arthur Rank Centre - Messy Discipleship](#)

Here's a website that regularly adds new resources for Messy Churches. It has a wide range of articles, tips, insights to help you.



## **Messy Church Discipleship**

Once Messy Churches are up and running, leaders start to ask; 'People are coming, now what?'

The key to the future development of Messy Church is discipleship, people coming to know Jesus and follow him as Lord of their lives.

Paul Moore's Book [Making Disciples in Messy Church](#) (well worth a read) shows us that many people who come to Messy Church are massively distanced from church (using the [Engel Scale](#) and [Gray Matrix](#)) and there's a great deal to do to win trust and break down barriers before they have any interest in the person behind it all.

All will have different start points for their faith journey with many routes to the same destination with many decision points along the way. It will help to have a variety of options to offer people to help them with their spiritual journey. Here are some ways people have found helpful.

### **Adding more Discipleship into your Messy Church events**

Logically, discipleship for Messy Church can be done well in a Messy Church style and in MC time; enrich the content of your MC events. Multiply depth of experience in what you're already doing; in table conversations, for all ages in the Bible story, interactive prayers etc. You could also plan some themes around discipleship or Christian basics.

Provide sacred space. Some Messy Churches set up prayer stations where people can go and spend time with God.

### **Making (New) Disciples**

People with little or no church background need to trust those introducing them to Christ, which comes through relationships. Be intentional about making friends and talking about Jesus. Create opportunities big and small in your MC meetings for people to make closer commitments to Jesus. Continue conversations in your MC community both in your MC events and in the times in-between gatherings. Keep connected; use social media to keep people up to date with MC events, community life and for individuals to explore discipleship.

Help people to explore faith through the internet. There are various sites which you can recommend:

- [www.rejesus.co.uk](http://www.rejesus.co.uk): ideal for those exploring faith
- [www.christianity.org.uk](http://www.christianity.org.uk): ideal for those exploring faith
- [www.nowachristian.org](http://www.nowachristian.org): for those exploring the first steps of faith

A useful way to do this is to highlight useful online resources in a Messy Church meeting (one at a time) or have a card (credit-card size) with them printed on so you can give them to anyone interested.

### **Encouraging Discipleship in the Home.**

Discipleship is for all of life; not just at your MC event. What does discipleship mean for families? Bible Reading Fellowship are producing some excellent materials which can be used in this context. Examples are:

Family Fun for [Easter / Summer / Christmas](#) (3 titles), [Story Box Bible Tales](#)

These resources can be recommended in a Messy meeting (best advertised by families who've used them). In addition to this, why not produce 'take home sheets' for families to do, based on your Messy Church session?

The 'Faith in Homes' website has plenty more; [www.faithinhomes.org.uk/](http://www.faithinhomes.org.uk/)

### **Encouraging Lifelong Discipleship**

Following Jesus doesn't stop at eleven. Nurture adult discipleship, not just Children's in all you do as Messy Church. Make your messages, prayer opportunities, discussions multi-layered with something for adults as well as children for example. Nurture young people's discipleship too when they seem to be too old for Messy Church; give them opportunities to lead, develop gatherings for them, try a youth cell group etc.

### **Discipleship is for the Team**

Discipleship is for the team and leaders as well as the congregation; we come alongside people humbly as ordinary non-experts. Value every planning meeting, every leadership or serving opportunity as an opportunity for training to be more like Jesus for all of your team.

### **Complementing Messy Church with other activities and gatherings**

Discipleship is an ongoing activity; the process from unbelief to following Jesus as Lord often involves the stages of: belong, believe, behave.

Messy Churches are increasing the quality of their community to aid this through additional meeting opportunities between MC events. This can be:

All Age MC style, Social or to go deeper, Messy Mornings, Messy cafes, Storytelling workshops, Messy Walks, All Age Prayer Schools etc. Using festivals works well too; 'Messy Crib Services', 'Messy Easter', 'Messy Harvest.

Additional services in-between MC events, offer opportunities for people to go to child-friendly services on Sundays etc.

Activities for specific groups of people; Messy Mums, Dad's Breakfasts, Pub Meetings, Book Clubs, Cell groups etc. Sometimes adults benefit from exploring faith away from the children. It's not pure Messy Church as these gatherings are not All Age but many are finding these separate activities really work to grow disciples.

### **Try some Messy Social Action**

Offering Messy Church participants the chance to share in social action can help grow disciples – from supporting Mums having babies to providing clothes for Romanian orphans to supporting the bullied and everything in between. Jesus discipled his people by mobilising them in action focused on kingdom issues.

### **Keep your Focus**

MC needs to meet at least monthly to be sustainable long term. Increasing the frequency of Messy church creates greater opportunities for growing disciples. When Messy Church first starts out it is very missional but can soon settle down to its 'regular members'. It needs to keep being open and missional; allowing all to explore faith more deeply.

### **Discipleship through Courses**

Many churches run enquirers courses; so invite Messy Church members too. Whether it be Lent groups, Enquirers groups, Confirmation classes, or home groups. Many Messy attenders may be a long way from commitment but many have questions and be spiritually searching. Courses like [Puzzling Questions](#) may be more appropriate. There are many [nurture courses](#) available.

### **Provide Opportunities to Go Deeper**

If Messy Church is indeed 'church' rather than an outreach activity, then there are various things that need serious consideration as the 'church' develops:

**Baptism.** There will be some present who have thought of baptism but because they did not have any relationship with the church have put it off. Now that they 'come to church' they may be considering this and may need encouragement. Some may want the baptism service to be 'in church' (i.e. Sunday morning), but others will count 'Messy Church' as their church and want it at that time and venue. What a great opportunity to talk about faith and going deeper and mark this with a definite step of commitment!

**Communion.** If you view 'Messy Church' as a church then there will be a point at which to consider the sacrament of communion. There are various ways to approach this: Agape – made part of the meal after Messy. There are various simplified liturgies available. The Diocese encourages 'communion before confirmation' which is accepted by the Church of England nationwide. Lichfield practices are explained [here](#)

**Confirmation.** Again, where appropriate Confirmation should be offered through Messy Church. Some will opt for this in the traditional Sunday service but some will view Messy Church as 'their' church and want to be Confirmed there. If this is offered, you might be surprised at the number who opt for it – and the preparation gives a wonderful opportunity for deepening faith.