

Is Messy Church Just A Children's Program

OR IS IT SOMETHING MORE?



“We already have a kid’s ministry. Why would we do this?”

Fresh Expressions are about reaching people who are not attending your church. Messy Church is no exception. This is not about creating another program for church people. It is about creating a form of church that can be engaged by families not likely to attend your Sunday morning worship and existing programs.

Often this is something families in your church feel like they can safely invite friends or neighbors to explore.

Sometimes, Messy Church has been developed as an opt-in community for families with children that congregations have gotten to know through missions like food pantries, tutoring programs, or ESL classes.

Sometimes a Messy Church is the best way to connect with families in a particular neighborhood or apartment complex.

We’ve even heard that Messy Church was the bridge that opened the door for grandparents to explore faith with their grandchildren with the blessing of their adult children who were not active in any church.



“Starting a Messy Church is about involving you, your team, and community in something bigger than ‘a little craft club for the kids’...you are not just trying to get people to come to your church service or give them a nice time. You are in the business of making disciples.”

LUCY MOORE AND JANE LEDBETTER, “MESSY CHURCH: FRESH IDEAS FOR BUILDING A CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY”



Children’s Program vs. Messy Church

Age segregated

Curriculum-driven

Drop-off Model

Focus on teaching kids

Program alongside existing church

Intergenerational

Experience-driven

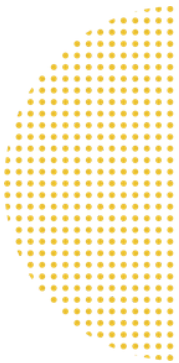
Whole family participates together

Focus on building faith community

A form of church that may be the only church many participants take part in, especially in the early stages of their faith development



ONE MESSY CHURCH STORY



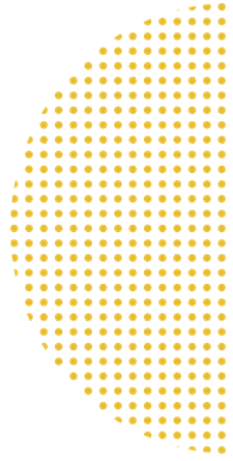
Messiah Episcopal Church has been experimenting with Messy Church as a way to create space for spiritual curiosity, outreach, and intergenerational connection among two cultures: Anglo and KaRen (Burma). What began as a one-time “Messy Christmas” event has grown into a series of seasonal gatherings and now a weekly “Messy Summer” rhythm in July. Both cultures with whom they are connecting tend to be more introverted, and Messy Church has provided a low-pressure environment where people can engage at their own pace through hands-on activities, shared meals, and simple storytelling from Scripture. While relationships between the two cultural groups are still developing, both Anglo and KaRen families are consistently showing up and participating.

One of the most significant outcomes has been the way Messy Church creates a natural bridge between generations, especially for grandparents. Many have shared that they don’t feel comfortable inviting their grandchildren to traditional services but are eager to bring them to Messy Church, where they can explore faith together. For some children, this is their first exposure to Bible stories—one child even asked her grandparents after an event if she could have a Bible of her own. Leaders have also observed the impact of adults participating alongside children, noting that it builds connection and models a more approachable experience of faith. The team continues to adapt scheduling to better fit the work patterns of KaRen families, but they are encouraged by the growing sense of community—a place where people are known, welcomed, and invited to encounter Jesus in accessible ways.

MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church isn't a better children's ministry.

It's a different way of being church—
one that forms faith through relationships, creativity, exploration,
shared meals, and joyful worship.



Why it Works

- It reaches people not attending church
- It builds relationships across generations
- It creates low-pressure entry into faith
- It encourages participation, not observation

[LEARN MORE](#)

God works in miraculous ways, but that miracle happens over a long period of people learning to trust the church, learning to enjoy themselves in church, learning to trust the Christians.

LUCY MOORE, FOUNDER OF MESSY CHURCH UK

WANT TO GET STARTED?

Fresh Expressions partners with Messy Church USA to support and grow this movement across the country. If you are interested in starting a Messy Church, they have Messy-specific training to get you grounded in the values and the logistics of this mission and can connect you to a vast library of ready to use resources.



Please note that while the resources can be used by anyone, to use the Messy Church name and logo, churches need to register with Messy Church USA. You can find out more information about that membership [here](#).



[Learn More About Messy Church Training](#)

[Connect with a Coach to Explore if Messy Church might be right for your setting](#)