

How to use the Messy Adventures

Messy Church Goes Wild is the movement within Messy Church which aims to encourage Messy Churches to meet God outdoors, love the natural world, experience a sense of awe and wonder there and to be more eco-aware in all we do, both inside and out, as gathered and dispersed church, for the good of the planet.

The Messy Adventures are twelve units of materials to give both the most unconfident or experienced leader the tools and confidence to take their Messy Church outdoors. There is a strong scientific focus and encouragement to experience worship, awe, wonder and questioning in an all-age, hospitable, creative, celebratory and Christ-centred framework.

Themes

1. Wild and wilderness! (wild places): Jesus tempted in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–13)

2. Wet and wild! (water): Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan (Mark 1:9–11)

3. Wild and rocky! (soil and rock, sand and mud): Jesus' parable of the two builders (Matthew 7:24–25)

4. Wild and weedy! (plants and moss): Jesus' parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1–13)

5. Wild woods! (trees): Jesus' parable of the mustard seed (Luke 13:18–19)

6. Wild weather! (sky, weather, sun, moon, planets and stars): Jesus calms the storm (Mark 4:35–41)

7. Wild on the wing! (birds): Jesus teaches about faith by pointing out the birds (Luke 12:23–25)

8. Wild and wiggly! (insects and other minibeasts): little things, little people, little details matter to Jesus; Jesus meets Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10)

9. Wild safari! (animals and fish): Jesus' teaching on the good shepherd (John 10)

10. Wild me! (human beings): Jesus turns over the tables in the temple (Mark 11:15–18)

11. Wild on the move! (movement and energy; stillness and space): Jesus walks on the water (Matthew 14:22–32)

12. Wild life! (change, growth, life, death, birth, seasons, rhythms): Jesus' death and resurrection (any of the gospel accounts)

Three different approaches

The Adventures look very different to the familiar Messy Church sessions in Get Messy! magazine and at first glance the amount of information may look a little overwhelming!

Within each unit there are materials for:

Section 1: On the move – a walk with stations

Section 2: Adventure area in one spot – a session at a fixed site away from your usual meeting place

Section 3: Activities – ideas for exploring the theme in a churchyard, garden or car park.

Pick an approach that suits your context or 'pick and mix' suggestions from each section to build your own session. The pilot churches have all used the materials slightly differently. Some have taken their 'inside' Messy Church outdoors every month and either adventured in one spot or on the move, and sometimes a combination of the two! Some have introduced Messy Church Goes Wild as an 'extra' to their regular Messy Church, putting on sessions in the school holidays. Others have retained their 'inside' Messy Church and planted a new Messy Church Goes Wild which has attracted a different group of people. We hope that however you choose to use this material, it will attract new members to your Messy Church who share a passion for the natural world.

Whichever approach you choose, please don't feel the need to cover everything listed! The feedback from the Messy Churches who have been field testing the Adventures is that you need far fewer activities outdoors than you might in an indoor setting so you could revisit a particular Adventure in a different season with a completely different set of activities.

Videos

The consultant scientists who helped us with the 'big thinking' around each theme has recorded a short introductory film. You may wish to share this with your team as you meet to plan the session or use it in your Messy Church Goes Wild session itself. You could provide a QR code link to the video to enable people to watch it on their phones before you set off or when you arrive at the place you're using, as an introduction to the theme.

On the move (Section 1 in each Adventure)

This approach invites you to go on a trek around your area, pausing at different points on your Adventure to play/talk/think/question/wonder together about the ideas that the spot inspires. There are suggestions in the material for activities and conversation-starters about science and about God. You'll need to adapt, of course, as every group's setting is different. You might plan slightly more 'stops' in the summer than you do in the winter. Use the ideas in any order. Feel free to swap in ideas from the section 3 activities if any appeal. You might want to plan to finish up in a space where you can have a short celebration and have food comfortably, with space for those who want to, to run around.

Your Adventure could look something like this:

- 3.00 pm – gather in the (e.g.) station forecourt/welcome/introductions/health and safety notices/watch film
- 3.10 pm – walk together from point to point for 40–60 m
- 4.00 pm – finish in suitable space for celebration
- 4.10 pm – food
- 4.45 pm – leave

In one spot (Section 2 in each Adventure)

This is a very straightforward approach and perhaps simpler to organise than an 'On the move' trek. Basically, you walk to or meet at the venue and stay there for the whole time. The material is deliberately unstructured and tries to make space for the group to explore freely but with purpose. There's less up-front direction in this approach. Again, you could draw in ideas from the other two sections of the units to suit your circumstances and your group.

Your Adventure could look something like this:

- 10.00 am – if you are walking together to the venue, meet to distribute equipment among everyone's rucksacks. Welcome/introductions/health and safety notices.
- 10.15 am – arrive/watch film/remind everyone of the theme and offer suggestions for what to do next
- 10.20 am – all ages use the space to explore/do the challenge/complete the activity...

- 10.40 am – regroup to talk about what you’ve discovered, leading into the celebration

- 10.50 am – food

- 11.15 am – set off back home together

Activities (Section 3 in each Adventure)

If you simply want to do a ‘normal’ Messy Church outdoors, you could use these activities as suggestions to get your own creative ideas flowing. You could also pick and mix ideas from sections 1 and 2 along with these activities to support the session theme.

For each approach, make sure all your safeguarding is in place, create a risk assessment and issue the health and safety warnings needed for that day’s Adventure. If you’re ‘on the move’, you may need to do this in every place you stop.

In advance, you may wish to send a reminder to participants to wear weather appropriate clothing and check weather reports for any severe weather warnings. Leaders should take a charged mobile phone and first aid kit in case of emergencies when ‘on the move’.

Celebrations

Some celebration ideas are embedded in the material itself for each unit. Or you could use the same shape for every Celebration, as below. Please check out the separate ‘**Celebration**’ suggestions, which have many more details and prayers to use for the shape here.

- Gather
- Pause
- Opening prayer
- Sing (or not)
- Story
- Response
- Prayer
- Send out

Each Adventure features a particular Bible story in the celebration section which fits with the theme, but this is not intended to be prescriptive. Indeed, many of the Adventures include multiple Bible references for you to draw examples from or to choose as the main focus of your session.

Food

You'll want to keep up the Messy Church tradition of hospitality. There are lots of suggestions for snacks, meals, drinks and portable food in the '[Messy Take-out menu](#)'.

Suggestions came in from a whole range of outdoor food experts, including meat dishes and alcoholic drinks. Whilst there are a range of opinions in this area, we have decided to include all the suggestions, leaving you to discern what's best for your group. As we seek a more sustainable approach to care for our planet, please consider sourcing food locally and think about animal and human welfare for these Adventures. This includes working out what to do with any waste food and rubbish disposal. Don't forget to provide handwashing facilities when you're 'on the move'.

Our hope is that these Adventures will give you a greater appreciation of the interplay between science and faith, as well as giving you a greater confidence in the practicalities of taking an all-age group outside to worship and explore. We pray for a flourishing of attitudes that grow respect for the planet and all its inhabitants, which also permeate into 'inside' Messy Churches and lead to changed behaviour towards the use of craft materials and food preparation.

More than anything, please have FUN!