

**The
Children's
Society**



Messy Christingle at home

Introduction

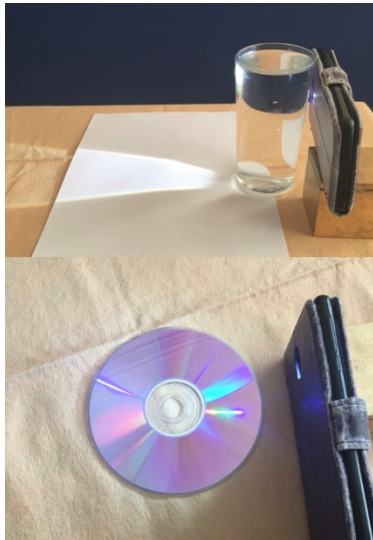
The Christingle is a treasured part of our Advent, Christmas and Epiphany celebrations each year. However, this annual lighting of a candle can be so much more. How might it become a flame of happiness and hope that is passed on to others every single day? This 2020/21 BRF Messy Church Christingle has been written in partnership with [The Children's Society](#) and offers a resource that focuses on helping us do just that.

In his teaching near the start of the sermon on the mount ([Matthew 5:14-16](#)), Jesus compared his followers to a lit candle. But this was more than simply an image of private and personal devotion; it speaks rather of a dynamic influence that can transform households, cities and the world! To reflect this, the activities suggested in this resource will explore ideas associated with sharing light, using materials we hope you can find around the home.

Mental health and well-being have been of particular concern for many over this last year, especially during the lockdown because of COVID-19. This continues to be an ongoing challenge for many, in particular for those among whom The Children's Society works. Loneliness, depression and hardship put a good childhood out of reach for so many, if they are not offered practical expressions of compassion and support. The flickering flame of a candle isn't just there to give us a warm glow and to make us feel good once a year. This would be like keeping the light to ourselves 'under a basket', as Jesus warns us. Instead, The Children's Society Christingle light is for passing on, so that it can displace the darkness of unhappiness, fear and despair among children and young people all year long.

This is an 'at home' version of the full Christingle Messy Church session, which can be [downloaded from the Messy Church website here](#).

1 Making rainbows



You will need: a tall glass of water; a piece of white paper; a mobile phone with a light; CD or DVD discs

Place the glass of water on the long edge of the paper. Shine the light from your mobile phone through the water onto the paper. Move the light up the glass slowly. You should see the light refracted on to the paper into rainbow arcs. You can obtain a similar effect by shining the light on to a CD or DVD disc, shiny side up, creating multiple rainbows.

God's multicoloured light became the tiny light of a baby at Christmas so that Jesus could shine God's light into and through us, bringing to life a variety of gifts and fruits of the Spirit that can light up the world.

Talk about how light is made up of a spectrum of colours and how the Christingle light, when it shines through us, will bring out our God-given gifts and personalities so we can care for everyone in this world. What special colours of God's light can you bring to a world in need? And rainbows were of course a common sight in windows earlier this year in response to COVID-19. They are a sign of hope for all facing hard times.

2 Lights in the darkness



You will need: world template printed of pieces of card (see end of PDF); shoeboxes; some pins; battery-powered tea lights

Print on the sheet of paper with the world template and stick to some card. Fix this over the open shoebox once you have placed the tea light inside. Make sure the light cannot escape from the box with the card over it. Now remove the card and prick a small hole in Israel/Palestinian territories (the Middle East) to represent Jesus coming as the light of the world. Put the card back and see the effect of this one bright pinpoint of light in our world. Now remove the card again and add more pinpricks randomly among the continents. When you put this over the box, you should see how the light Jesus brought has now spread right across the world.

Talk about how Jesus came to one place at one point in history with God's light but now his followers are to be those lights right around the world, pushing back the darkness.

3 A Christingle that lasts



You will need: tangerines or oranges; red tape or ribbon; sticky tape; sharp knives; an apple corer; cocktail sticks; tin foil; small sweets or dried fruit; some sort of small Play-Doh sculpture of a human or other flat representation of a person

Make your own Christingle. Stick the red tape or ribbon around the tangerine or orange. Slice off a small section from the base so that the tangerine or orange stands up on its own. Using an apple corer, create a space where a candle could go into the top of the fruit. Put the four cocktail sticks into the orange or tangerine, each bearing some fruit or small sweets, etc. Sculpt your human figure from clay or Play-Doh.

Talk about the symbols of the Christingle: God's red ribbon of love around the world and God's good gifts in creation. But this Christingle is not complete. God sent Jesus not just for a one-off visit, but rather God planned by the Holy Spirit to pass on his light to each and every one of us in every place. The light of the Christingle candle can go on forever, if we become the candles! Add the human figure to your Christingle in the place the candle would normally go. We are to be the light now that brings God's love and healing to the world.

4 Prayers for the light to shine

You will need: a large outline of a person, who represents the children and young people that The Children's Society supports; information about The Children's Society (find at childrenssociety.org.uk); card; glue sticks

Cut up the short paragraphs of information and stories from The Children's Society and mount them on cards. Invite adults and children to pick up a card and talk about the work. Having read it, turn it into a prayer as they stick that on to the outline of the person.

Talk about how prayer is one way in which the light of the Christingle candle can go on burning throughout the whole year.

Celebration

Sing your favourite Messy Church song from YouTube. This modern version of '[This little light of mine](#)' is popular.

Read the words of Jesus from [Matthew 5](#).

Use the Christingle you have made, but now put a candle in the top where before there was a person. Light the candle. Here are some reflections to talk about together:

A candle cannot light itself. It needs to receive light from another. What does this mean when linked to our faith in Jesus?

A candle when lit can give away its light without losing the light it has. Perhaps you could demonstrate this by lighting a small tea light from the Christingle candle. What might this mean about our caring for others?

A candle burns as bright when it is new, as when there is only a small amount of the original candle left. Perhaps you can demonstrate this by lighting another candle that is not as tall because it has already burned lower. What might this mean for us and the children and young people The Children's Society cares for?

A candle's light is sensitive, reacting to the slightest movement of the air around it. You could demonstrate this by blowing gently - though beware, this might encourage young ones to copy you, so be careful. What might this tell us about our response to those in need?

A candle's light is the same whatever the size, shape or colour of the candle. Perhaps you could introduce some other candles, of different shapes and colours. What does this make you think about?

A candle's light is designed to be seen and is best placed high up so that it can give light to all. Demonstrate this by carefully lifting up the Christingle higher. How is this linked to the words in the Bible passage?

Unless the candle's light is passed on, that light dies when the candle itself comes to an end. Light up other Christingle candles from the first one and watch how the light grows bigger and bigger, all from the one light. How might this illustrate the work of The Children's Society?

At the heart of the candle's light there is a death happening, as the wick is burnt up and the wax around it melts and evaporates. Talk about how the light of Christ in us and for us comes from the birth, life and then death of Jesus on the cross.

Prayer

Turn the main lighting down in your room.

Teach a simple response to each of the following prayers, namely:

We are the light of Christ for the world.

Thank you, Jesus, that you are the light of the world and that you have passed on that light to us through your cross and resurrection.

We are the light of Christ for the world.

Thank you, Jesus, that your light is stronger than darkness and you have passed on the power of that light to us by your Holy Spirit.

We are the light of Christ for the world.

Thank you, Jesus, that your light is shining through the work of The Children's Society, bringing hope and happiness to children and young people in dark times.

We are the light of Christ for the world.

Thank you, Jesus, that as we pass on your light in the care we give to others, your light never dies but continues to give light to the whole world.

We are the light of Christ for the world.

In this Advent/Christmas/Epiphany season, may your light shine brighter and brighter as we celebrate your light in us and through us for your glory.

We are the light of Christ for the world.

Amen

Make sure the Christingle candles are extinguished carefully and put down safely before ending with the [Lord's Prayer](#) and/or the [Messy Grace](#).

Mealtime

Organise a *light* meal with a range of *light* bites: snack foods, *light* desserts and *light* drinks (e.g. Coke lite).

