



Self Review Toolkit

Meeting regularly as a Messy Church team provides invaluable space for those who coordinate and lead Messy Church to discuss, plan and pray together.

This Self Review Toolkit will enable you to use some of that time to pause and reflect on your Messy Church and to identify some ways you would like to develop your Messy Church in the future.



How to use this tool effectively?

This resource is designed to be used by Messy Church planning groups. It consists of six review exercises, one for each of the five Messy Church values plus one additional review area. We suggest choosing one value to review at a time and scheduling that exercise into your regular planning meeting.

Each review exercise, centred around a Messy Church value, consists of four steps:

STEP 1 REFLECT

Reflect on how this value is present in your Messy Church

STEP 2 REVIEW

Review your Messy Church using the eight questions posed

STEP 3 EXPLORE

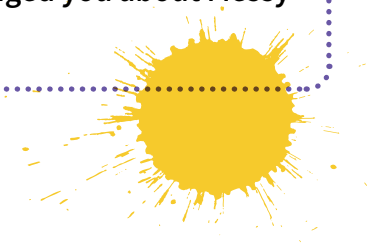
Consider the suggested ideas for exploring this value

STEP 4 DEVELOP

Identify some actions to take to develop your Messy Church within this value

You might also like to begin by considering the following questions

1. **Why did you start Messy Church?**
What did you want to achieve from it, where did it fit within your service pattern, who were you hoping to attract to it.
2. **What are your aims/objectives for Messy Church?**
Why do you run it? What are you hoping to achieve? What is the current vision?
3. **What has encouraged you about Messy Church so far?**



Where to access support

Further support to assist you with using this resource may be available from the [Alongsiders support team](#) in the UK; your regional denominational children, youth or family advisor; or from other Messy Church leaders in your area.

Messy Church Values

There are five underlying core values:

1

Christ-centered

Messy Church is a church, not a craft club, that helps people encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

2

All-age

It is for adults and children to enjoy together - every element should be relevant and accessible to all ages.

3

Creativity

It uses hands-on activities to explore Bible stories, to reflect a God of creativity and to give people a chance to interact and play together.

4

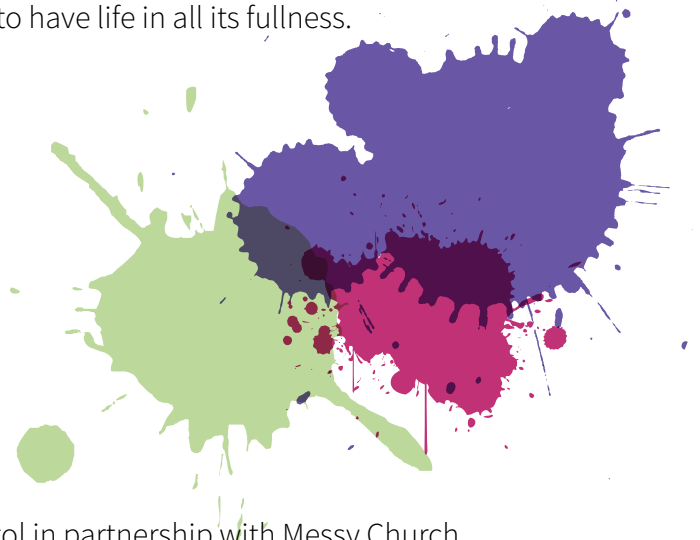
Hospitality

It reflects a God of unconditional love and is a church for people outside church, providing an oasis of welcome and a safe space in which to thrive. Messy Church is about hospitality, expressed most evidently by eating together – whether it's a plate of sandwiches to share, or sausage and mash.

5

Celebration

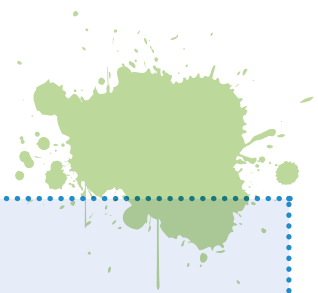
It reflects a God of joy who wants his people to have life in all its fullness.



¹ messychurch.org.uk

Messy Church Value Christ-centred

Christ-centered - Messy Church is a church, not a craft club, that helps people encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour.



REFLECT

As you explore the Christ-centred value, begin by reflecting upon and discussing these two questions.

In what ways does our Messy Church effectively express the Christ-centred value?

In what ways have we found it challenging to effectively express the Christ-centred value at Messy Church?

REVIEW

Briefly discuss each of the eight questions below and circle the response Yes, No or Maybe for each one.

For each statement where you answer 'No' or 'Maybe', you might like to discuss the question: *Why have we identified that as our answer and would we like to address this in some way?*

Messy Church is described as *'a church, not a craft club, that helps people encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour.'* Yes / No / Maybe
Does this statement reflect your Messy Church?

Are you confident that people who attend Messy Church recognise that they are coming to a church service and not a special event or church activity? Yes / No / Maybe

Does the wider church acknowledge Messy Church as a congregation that exists as a core part of its pattern of worship and not simply a pathway to attending Sunday morning worship? Yes / No / Maybe

Do the leaders pray regularly for Messy Church and those who attend? Yes / No / Maybe

Are there opportunities to talk about faith openly through every aspect of Messy Church: its activities, its celebration and its meal? Yes / No / Maybe

Do you hold a giving collection as an act of worship as part of Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Does Messy Church provide people with an opportunity to explore and grow in the Christian faith, regardless of where they may be in their journey of faith? Yes / No / Maybe

Do you cover a wide range of Christian themes within your Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

EXPLORE

Briefly discuss the suggested ideas below.

These suggested ideas represent good practice and ideas gathered from other Messy Churches and Messy Church leaders.

Consider whether this idea could be explored at your Messy Church at this time and ticking the Yes, No or Maybe box as appropriate.

Provide 'take home' sheets or small 'take home' gifts which enable families to continue to explore the theme of Messy Church at home in the week to come. Remember to keep it all-age accessible, simple and creative.	Yes / No / Maybe
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Invite leaders/helpers and church members that are happy and confident sharing their testimony to talk at Messy Church.	Yes / No / Maybe
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Experiment with different styles of worship that are multi-sensory and accessible to all ages within Messy Church.	Yes / No / Maybe
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Make a prayer post box (or think of another creative way) that promotes the prayer life at Messy Church and encourages people to share their prayer requests confidentially.	Yes / No / Maybe
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Provide a library of books/resources on life, faith and discipleship for people to borrow.	Yes / No / Maybe
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Create a Messy Church Homegroup or host a Christianity Explored/Alpha-type course (for all ages or adult only) where themes of faith can be explored.	Yes / No / Maybe
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Hold baptisms within your Messy Church services, when families who attend Messy Church want to have their children baptised.	Yes / No / Maybe
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Arrange to hold a Messy Church Eucharist at various points during the year and do this with an approach that is appropriate to the context of Messy Church.	Yes / No / Maybe
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DEVELOP

Having reflected, reviewed practice and explored ideas within this Messy Church value, now identify some actions you would like to take as you seek to develop your Messy Church.

These could be actions to address the questions that you answered Maybe or No to, or suggestions that you answered Yes or Maybe to, that you plan to try out from the suggested ideas list.

Action we have decided to take	Who will take this action?	When will we do this?

Messy Church Value

All-age

All-age - It is for adults and children to enjoy together - every element should be relevant and accessible to all ages.

REFLECT

As you explore the All-age value, begin by reflecting upon and discussing these two questions.

In what ways does our Messy Church effectively express the All-age value?

In what ways have we found it challenging to effectively express the All-age value at Messy Church?

REVIEW

Briefly discuss each of the eight questions below and circle the response Yes, No or Maybe for each one.

For each statement where you answer 'No' or 'Maybe', you might like to discuss the question: *Why have we identified that as our answer and would we like to address this in some way?*

Do you offer a range of activities at Messy Church that people of all ages interact with together? Yes / No / Maybe

Do you provide opportunities for all ages to participate in the celebration? Yes / No / Maybe

Are there adequate opportunities for adults, as well as children, to learn about and explore faith? Yes / No / Maybe

Is there a sense of excitement, joy and fun at Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Do children and young people contribute to the planning and running of Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Does everyone sit down together to enjoy the meal? Yes / No / Maybe

Are parents/carers/grandparents aware that Messy Church is for their own spiritual needs as it is for their children/grandchildren? Yes / No / Maybe

Is the worship relevant and engaging for all ages? Yes / No / Maybe



EXPLORE

Briefly discuss the suggested ideas below.

These suggested ideas represent good practice and ideas gathered from other Messy Churches and Messy Church leaders.

Consider whether this idea could be explored at your Messy Church at this time and ticking the Yes, No or Maybe box as appropriate.

Involve young people in all aspects of your Messy Church leadership – leading activities, the celebration or supporting the preparation of the meal. Yes / No / Maybe

Invite families to lead prayers at Messy Church. Yes / No / Maybe

Invite people of all ages to give you feedback on what they like about Messy Church and how they would like it to develop. Yes / No / Maybe

Introduce a more difficult activity to your Messy Church, one that would require an adult to support their children in undertaking. Yes / No / Maybe

Offer a variety of multi-sensory activities for people to explore together. Yes / No / Maybe

Find out what people (of all ages) like to eat and drink at Messy Church and build a menu around these suggestions. Yes / No / Maybe

Have a suggestions box available into which people can contribute ideas for Messy Church. Yes / No / Maybe

When planning your Messy Church, consider how the youngest and the oldest member of the congregation will engage with the service. Yes / No / Maybe

DEVELOP

Having reflected, reviewed practice and explored ideas within this Messy Church value, now identify some actions you would like to take as you seek to develop your Messy Church.

These could be actions to address the questions that you answered Maybe or No to, or suggestions that you answered Yes or Maybe to, that you plan to try out from the suggested ideas list.

Action we have decided to take	Who will take this action?	When will we do this?

Messy Church Value Creativity

Creativity - It uses hands-on activities to explore Bible stories, to reflect a God of creativity and to give people a chance to interact and play together.

REFLECT

As you explore the Creativity value, begin by reflecting upon and discussing these two questions.

In what ways does our Messy Church effectively express the Creativity value?

In what ways have we found it challenging to effectively express the Creativity value at Messy Church?

REVIEW

Briefly discuss each of the eight questions below and circle the response Yes, No or Maybe for each one.

For each statement where you answer 'No' or 'Maybe', you might like to discuss the question: *Why have we identified that as our answer and would we like to address this in some way?*

Do you provide a range of activities for people who prefer not to do crafts? Yes / No / Maybe

Are the activities well signposted and explained, and are people encouraged to join in as they approach each activity? Yes / No / Maybe

Are people encouraged to talk about the activities and the theme as they participate? Yes / No / Maybe

Are the activities creative, engaging and fun? Yes / No / Maybe

Do you provide enough time for people to engage and interact with each other during Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Is the Christian story shared creatively through Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Is there an opportunity for volunteers to contribute their creative gifts and skills to the planning Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Is there an opportunity during Messy Church for volunteers and congregation members alike to contribute to Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe
(e.g. Playing instruments, cooking, tidying up, acting, reading aloud, etc.)

EXPLORE

Briefly discuss the suggested ideas below.

These suggested ideas represent good practice and ideas gathered from other Messy Churches and Messy Church leaders.

Consider whether this idea could be explored at your Messy Church at this time and ticking the Yes, No or Maybe box as appropriate.

Use the BRF *Messy Church Does Science* book to introduce some creative scientific ideas into the elements of Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

Creativity does not simply mean providing craft activities. Think beyond scissors, glue and colouring. Consider how you could incorporate new, interesting and different ways of enabling people to be creative at Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

Plan a one-off 'alternative' Messy Church service with an unusual theme or in unfamiliar surroundings. (e.g. *Outdoors Messy Church, in the local woods, Sporty Messy Church at the sports ground or a special party at Halloween*)

Yes / No / Maybe

Provide activities that are specifically linked to different learning styles.

Yes / No / Maybe

Introduce times of silence and stillness (perhaps using candlelight) into Messy Church celebrations.

Yes / No / Maybe

Use worship CDs or online videos to enable you to introduce new songs into Messy Church celebrations.

Yes / No / Maybe

Provide a creative prayer space during Messy Church where people can engage more quietly with the theme or topic.

Yes / No / Maybe

Provide a meal or a specific food which is linked in a creative way to the theme or topic (e.g. *a feast, unleavened bread, fish, grapes, figs*)

Yes / No / Maybe

DEVELOP

Having reflected, reviewed practice and explored ideas within this Messy Church value, now identify some actions you would like to take as you seek to develop your Messy Church.

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Action we have decided to take

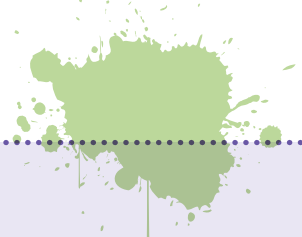
Who will take this action?

When will we do this?



Messy Church Value Hospitality

Hospitality - It reflects a God of unconditional love and is a church for people outside church, providing an oasis of welcome and a safe space in which to thrive. Messy Church is about hospitality, expressed most evidently by eating together – whether it's a plate of sandwiches to share, or sausage and mash.



REFLECT

As you explore the Hospitality value, begin by reflecting upon and discussing these two questions.

In what ways does our Messy Church effectively express the Hospitality value?

In what ways have we found it challenging to effectively express the Hospitality value at Messy Church?

REVIEW

Briefly discuss each of the eight questions below and circle the response Yes, No or Maybe for each one.

For each statement where you answer 'No' or 'Maybe', you might like to discuss the question: *Why have we identified that as our answer and would we like to address this in some way?*

Is an effort made to give people a warm welcome as they arrive to Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Are enough leaders available to welcome, speak to and support people as well as organising the activities? Yes / No / Maybe

Are people attending for the first time given information regarding what happens at Messy Church and practical details such as the locations of the toilets? Yes / No / Maybe

Do you encourage everyone to sit and mix with/meet new people during the meal/refreshments? Yes / No / Maybe

Does the meal/refreshments convey a positive experience of generosity and care? Yes / No / Maybe

Does the meal/refreshments consider people with special dietary requirements so that everyone can enjoy eating together? Yes / No / Maybe

Have you run any special Messy Church events?
(e.g. picnic, BBQ that extends the invitation of hospitality) Yes / No / Maybe

Do some leaders have a specific pastoral/relational role during Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

EXPLORE

Briefly discuss the suggested ideas below.

These suggested ideas represent good practice and ideas gathered from other Messy Churches and Messy Church leaders.

Consider whether this idea could be explored at your Messy Church at this time and ticking the Yes, No or Maybe box as appropriate.

If it's difficult to recruit a team to produce a meal/refreshments at the end of Messy Church, consider creative alternatives.

(e.g. Ask a local chip shop to provide chips for you, provide rolls and sandwich fillers and invite people to 'create-their-own-sub', pre-cook sausages and serve hotdogs, involve families in the speedy preparation and serving of a basic meal)

Yes / No / Maybe

Some Messy Churches work best when people arrive, register and are able to dive straight into exploring the activities. Other Messy Churches work best when people arrive, sit in the church, are welcomed all together, the theme introduced and then people are sent off to seek out and participate in the activities.

Yes / No / Maybe

Do you need to consider again which approach would work best for those who attend Messy Church?

Coordinate a Messy Church 'bring and share' meal so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the hospitality that is offered.

Yes / No / Maybe

Train and equip the Messy Church team to be confident in offering a warm welcome to everyone who attends Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

Make sure that toilets and baby-changing facilities are clean and clearly signposted within your Messy Church building.

Yes / No / Maybe

Hold an annual 'thank you' event for the Messy Church team.

Yes / No / Maybe

Encourage people to invite people to come to Messy Church. You could produce some invitations for the congregation to offer to those they wish to invite.

Yes / No / Maybe

Celebrate special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries at Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

DEVELOP

Having reflected, reviewed practice and explored ideas within this Messy Church value, now identify some actions you would like to take as you seek to develop your Messy Church.

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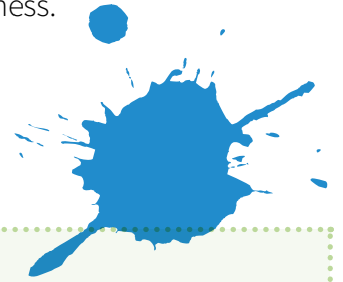
Action we have decided to take

Who will take this action?

When will we do this?

Messy Church Value Celebration

Celebration - It reflects a God of joy who wants his people to have life in all its fullness.



REFLECT

As you explore the Celebration value, begin by reflecting upon and discussing these two questions.

In what ways does our Messy Church effectively express the Celebration value?

In what ways have we found it challenging to effectively express the Celebration value at Messy Church?

REVIEW

Briefly discuss each of the eight questions below and circle the response Yes, No or Maybe for each one.

For each statement where you answer 'No' or 'Maybe', you might like to discuss the question: *Why have we identified that as our answer and would we like to address this in some way?*

Does the celebration link to the theme and reinforce the teaching from the activities? Yes / No / Maybe

Is the Bible story told in a fun and engaging way? Yes / No / Maybe

Is the celebration planned and well prepared? Yes / No / Maybe

Do adults and children sit together for the celebration? Yes / No / Maybe

Can adults and children participate together in the worship and teaching at the celebration? Yes / No / Maybe

Does the wider church connect with the life/achievements/celebrations at Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Is the worship at Messy Church a celebration of praise? Yes / No / Maybe

Do people recognise and respect the celebration as a time of worship? Yes / No / Maybe

EXPLORE

Briefly discuss the suggested ideas below.

These suggested ideas represent good practice and ideas gathered from other Messy Churches and Messy Church leaders.

Consider whether this idea could be explored at your Messy Church at this time and ticking the Yes, No or Maybe box as appropriate.

Small children probably can't read song lyrics off a projector screen, and if they can, often songs run so fast that it is hard for their reading to keep up. Teach the song words or the chorus lyrics to everyone before you sing the song. Yes / No / Maybe

Routine can be helpful within the celebration. Introduce a set pattern for worship to your celebration. (e.g. *begin with a creative prayer or call to worship, end with grace*) Yes / No / Maybe

Not everyone enjoys singing – try alternative ways of enabling people to engage with sung worship. (e.g. *everyone closing eyes and listening to a recorded piece of worship music*) Yes / No / Maybe

Invite people to hold up what they have made in the activities as you explain clearly the link between each activity and the Bible story or theme. Yes / No / Maybe

Make a Messy Church candle to be lit during the celebration. You could personalise the candle or candle stick so that it clearly represents Messy Church. Yes / No / Maybe

Find creative ways to involve the congregation in the telling of the Bible story and prayers. (e.g. *actors, holding props, reading prayers*) Yes / No / Maybe

Introduce songs that the children will know from their school assemblies or those that the adults will know from when they were at school. Yes / No / Maybe

Buy some worship CDs to play in the background before, during or after the celebration and during the meal/refreshments. Yes / No / Maybe

DEVELOP

Having reflected, reviewed practice and explored ideas within this Messy Church value, now identify some actions you would like to take as you seek to develop your Messy Church.

These could be actions to address the questions that you answered Maybe or No to, or suggestions that you answered Yes or Maybe to, that you plan to try out from the suggested ideas list.

Action we have decided to take

Who will take this action?

When will we do this?

Messy Church Value Additional elements

Additional elements - These questions and suggested ideas enable you to review and explore additional elements of Messy Church that are not covered by the five Messy Church values.



REFLECT

As you explore these additional elements, begin by reflecting upon and discussing these two questions.

What are the things we do at Messy Church that work really well?

What have been some of the challenges we have faced at Messy Church?

REVIEW

Briefly discuss each of the eight questions below and circle the response Yes, No or Maybe for each one.

For each statement where you answer 'No' or 'Maybe', you might like to discuss the question: *Why have we identified that as our answer and would we like to address this in some way?*

Are members of the church leadership supportive of Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Are members of the church leadership visible and available to the congregation at Messy Church? Yes / No / Maybe

Do you have a Messy Church budget that covers resources, materials, food and refreshments? Yes / No / Maybe

Has your team received training and do they understand the values of Messy Church and the reasons behind how Messy Church operates? Yes / No / Maybe

Is Messy Church well advertised?
Do you have a poster in the church, a banner outside, a poster in the local school, an advert on the website and an advertisement on social media, the church noticeboard and in the parish magazine? Yes / No / Maybe

Is your Messy Church registered with BRF?
Registering can be done online and means that your Messy Church is advertised on the Messy Church website, and you receive updates about the latest resources that are being produced that could help your Messy Church to develop. Yes / No / Maybe

Do you invite those who attend Messy Church to other events, services and celebrations within the life of the church? (e.g. Harvest, Christingle, BBQ, Hospitality Sunday, Back to Church Sunday) Yes / No / Maybe

Do you plan the themes and dates in advance and publicise these to people? Yes / No / Maybe

EXPLORE

Briefly discuss the suggested ideas below.

These suggested ideas represent good practice and ideas gathered from other Messy Churches and Messy Church leaders.

Consider whether this idea could be explored at your Messy Church at this time and ticking the Yes, No or Maybe box as appropriate.

Consider appointing someone to be 'Messy Church Communications Leader'.

They would be responsible for advertising Messy Church services, Messy Church notices and social media advertising too. BRF have produced some excellent books that would assist someone in this role.

Yes / No / Maybe

Support a local charity for harvest or Advent or other season. This could be donating food to a foodbank or items for a homeless charity or fundraising for an international appeal.

Yes / No / Maybe

Provide everyone with an invitation to the next Messy Church service when they leave Messy Church. Include the date, the theme and a question for them to consider, related to that theme, before they arrive.

Yes / No / Maybe

Give everyone a take-home sheet and gift at the end of Messy Church. The sheet could include a recap of the theme, the Bible story reference and some questions for families to explore together as they continue to think about the theme at home. The gift could be something small that reminds people of the theme when they are at home.

Yes / No / Maybe

Place a Messy Church prayer request box in the local school or shop. Collect the prayer requests in regularly and pray for them during Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

Provide volunteers with badges or T-shirts so that people can easily identify who to talk to if they have questions or concerns during Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

Make Messy Church invitations as one of the Messy Church activities. Talk about how God invites us into his family and then encourage people to take those invitations home and use them to invite someone they know to Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

Write an article in the Parish magazine about the themes that the Messy Church congregation has been exploring recently and invite the other congregations to pray for Messy Church.

Yes / No / Maybe

DEVELOP

Having reflected, reviewed practice and explored ideas within this Messy Church value, now identify some actions you would like to take as you seek to develop your Messy Church.

These could be actions to address the questions that you answered Maybe or No to, or suggestions that you answered Yes or Maybe to, that you plan to try out from the suggested ideas list.

Action we have decided to take

Who will take this action?

When will we do this?
