



Outdoor Suggestions for January's Messy Church Session: The parable of the lost coin

You may want to take your Messy Church outdoors for a few months in these uncertain times. Here are some extra ideas you could use outside alongside the session ideas and inspiration in [Get Messy!](#) One activity may be all you need for a shorter (chillier) session!

You'll find the Messy Church Goes Wild logo [here](#) and a risk assessment document [here](#).

Activity time!

1 A treasure hunt looking for coins

Use unwanted change from holidays or cardboard circles. Once found, these could be traded with the leader for a chocolate coin. (Don't hide chocolate coins in a place used by dogs, as some may be missed and chocolate can be dangerous for dogs). A metal detector adds to the fun. Talk about how it feels when a coin is found.

2 A family game of hide and seek

If you're concerned about losing younger members, invite the whole family to hide together or in pairs. Could be played in the dark, if the terrain allows, followed by playing with torches, to pick up on the idea of the woman lighting her lamp. Talk about the frustration of not being able to find someone you know is there!

3 A sweeping contest

Drop leaves, twigs or hay over a hard surface with a coin hidden in it and challenge two people to take brooms and sweep the debris away until they find the coin. Talk about how urgently (or not!) each person sweeps.

4 Making brooms

Provide sticks, string, scissor, twiggy branches and heather or similar, and see who can make the most effective broom or brush with the natural materials. Talk about the woman using all the means at her disposal to find the coin she wanted so much.

5 Making lamps

If you need to avoid naked flames, search for ‘mini-LED lights’ or ‘balloon lights’ for tiny light-up bulbs you could use in a paper lantern, decorated glass jar, pierced tin can or whatever style of lantern you feel is most fun. We’ve all made lanterns or candle holders so many times, you will have your own favourite style. Being outside might be a good opportunity to hammer holes in cans or build lanterns with the sticks and leaves you can find in your area. Talk about the woman shining her lamp into every dark corner of her house and ask why she bothered taking so much trouble over just one coin?

Celebration

Gather together in a socially-distanced but intimate-as-possible way and open with a prayer. You could use this one from the Messy Adventures:

The group could use simple actions like [BSL ones](#) to go with their responses as they say them.

In faith: touch your forehead and bring the side of your hand down onto your other hand in a chopping action

And hope: cross your fingers on both hands

And love: cross your hands over your heart

Leader: We’ve come together on this patch of earth

All: *In faith and hope and love.*

Leader: We’ve come together under this sky

All: *In faith and hope and love.*

Leader: We’ve come together with the creatures we can see and those we can’t

All: *In faith and hope and love.*

Leader: We’ve come together with the people we can see and those we can’t

All: *In faith and hope and love.*

Leader: Creator God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, we’ve come together in your name

All: *In faith and hope and love. Amen*

Invite everyone to **share what they’ve enjoyed** about the activity/activities and say they’re all to do with one of Jesus’ parables – a story with secrets. Can you work out the secrets of this parable together? **Tell the parable** from Luke 15:8–10 and ask everyone to think about the games you’ve been playing, the things you’ve been making, the story you’ve just heard and to **share what you think the parable is all about...** what its secrets are. They will probably be different for every person, so welcome every suggestion.

Finish with a **prayer** thanking God for [mention what you’ve learned together] and the Messy Grace or other prayer. Another suggestion from Messy Adventures, based on Philippians 2:15 and 4:8, is:

Wherever you go, walk lightly. (*Point out the way in front of you or in any direction.*)

Wherever you go, shine brightly. (*Raise your arms above your head like a star.*)

Wherever you go, hold tightly. (*Hold hands with people next to you, possible option here to hold a leaf or something – hold tightly to nature as well as people.*)

To everything true and pure and good, both daily and nightly. (*Shake hands on each beat.*)

In the name of Jesus Christ (*Let go of hands and touch each palm of your own hands.*)

Amen (*Punch the air.*)