

LICHFIELD DIOCESE MESSY DISCIPLESHIP REVIEW 2013

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THE REPORT

The Questionnaire.

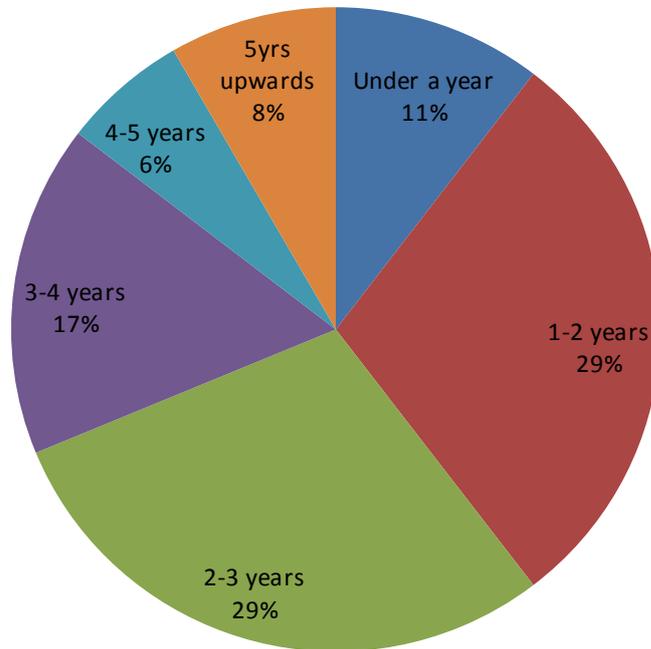
- a. We did a pilot of the questionnaire with 12 churches in October 2012 and then adapted it from their responses to the copy which was sent out. See Appendix A.
- b. It was sent out to 125 churches in April 2013 which we knew ran Messy Churches of some form through the database maintained by Cerys Hughes, our Messy Church Adviser. This included churches which are not Anglican.
- c. We received 47 replies of which 41 are Anglican, 4 Methodist, 1 URC, and 1 Free Evangelical church, and our analysis is based on these responses. A full version of these responses can be found at <http://bit.ly/16Kasvc>.
- d. In view of comments received in this second round we would probably adapt question 6 to avoid the use of the word 'outsider' and ask: "In your estimation, how many of those attending have no background in the church?"

A summary of the responses to each of the questions follows after which our findings are summed up in **'Top Ten Conclusions for the way forward for discipleship in Messy Church'** which is found on pages 21,22.

A summary of ideas on Messy Discipleship, which covers quite a few of the issues raised by this report, can be found in Appendix B.

Question One: How long has it been happening?

Messy Churches length of operation



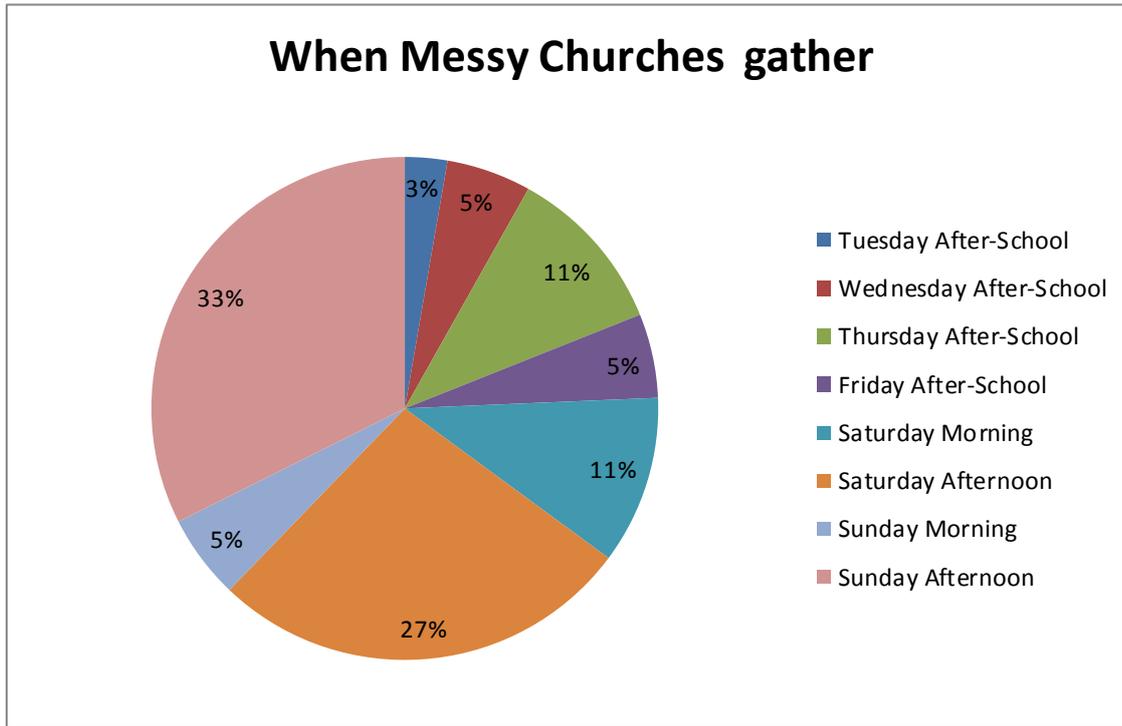
We were not surprised that the majority of our Messy Churches have been running two or three years. Mark Hatcher, our Diocesan Youth and Children’s Officer spotted it early on at conferences and set up training sessions, two in Stafford and one in Telford and incorporated it into other training events he was running. The appointment of Cerys Hughes as Messy Church Adviser in 2010 gave Messy Church a higher profile and added significantly to the work Mark was already doing to develop it.

| Length Running | Tally |
|----------------|-------|
| Under a year | 5 |
| 1-2 years | 14 |
| 2-3 years | 14 |
| 3-4 years | 8 |
| 4-5 years | 3 |
| 5yrs upwards | 4 |

Some of the longer term ones had developed from something else e.g. Craft Days, Children’s Clubs, Holiday Clubs, and this continues to be the case.

A further breakdown in terms of Episcopal Area, sociological background, and church tradition can be found [HERE](#).

Question Two: When it all happens

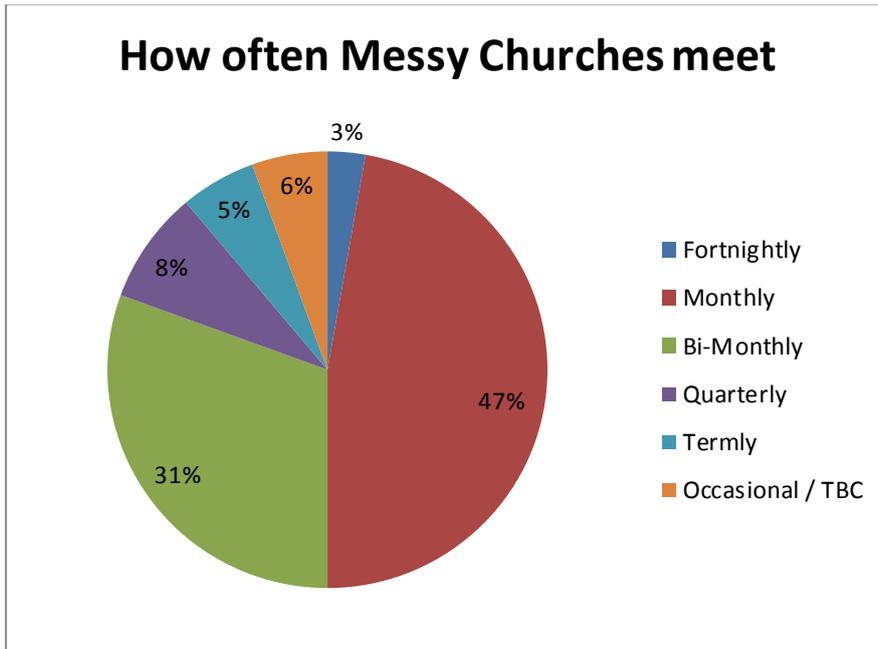


The surprise was how many of them operate on a Saturday, even Saturday morning. It shows that they happen every day of the week (except Monday!). All of these midweek ones happen straight after school which may limit which adults attend. We are aware of one which takes place on Friday at 6pm and families do come, including dads. Clearly Saturday and Sunday afternoons are the most popular, with all the other activities out of the way such as swimming and football.

A critical question when setting Messy Church up is when to do it. The key always is to ask the community. There is a sample questionnaire [HERE](#) which can be used with contacts (toddlers, uniformed organisations), on the school gate, or given to every child in school to take home. It is important, of course, to know when your leaders and helpers are mainly available and this will inform the options you offer in the questionnaire (but always add the category of 'other' as it may surprise you).

| When it runs | Tally |
|------------------------|-------|
| Tuesday After-School | 1 |
| Wednesday After-School | 2 |
| Thursday After-School | 4 |
| Friday After-School | 2 |
| Saturday Morning | 4 |
| Saturday Afternoon | 10 |
| <i>Sunday Morning</i> | 2 |
| Sunday Afternoon | 12 |

Question Three: How often does it happen?



| Regularity | Tally |
|------------------|-------|
| Fortnightly | 1 |
| Monthly | 16 |
| Bi-Monthly | 11 |
| Quarterly | 3 |
| Termly | 2 |
| Occasional / TBC | 2 |

The surprise was that less than half of them are monthly. This is a concern as opportunities to grow community and develop discipleship are limited even on a monthly gathering so less than that is a great challenge if churches are wanting to develop this. Here were some of the comments (all of which can be seen in the full version):

We started meeting once a month for the first 12 months or so which was quite demanding & now meet termly.
 We would like to build up to once a month but struggle for help from the church. Those who help are this are our busiest people and they are getting older.
 We started meeting once a month for the first 12 months or so which was quite demanding & now meet termly.

The following comment revealed the limitations even of a monthly meeting

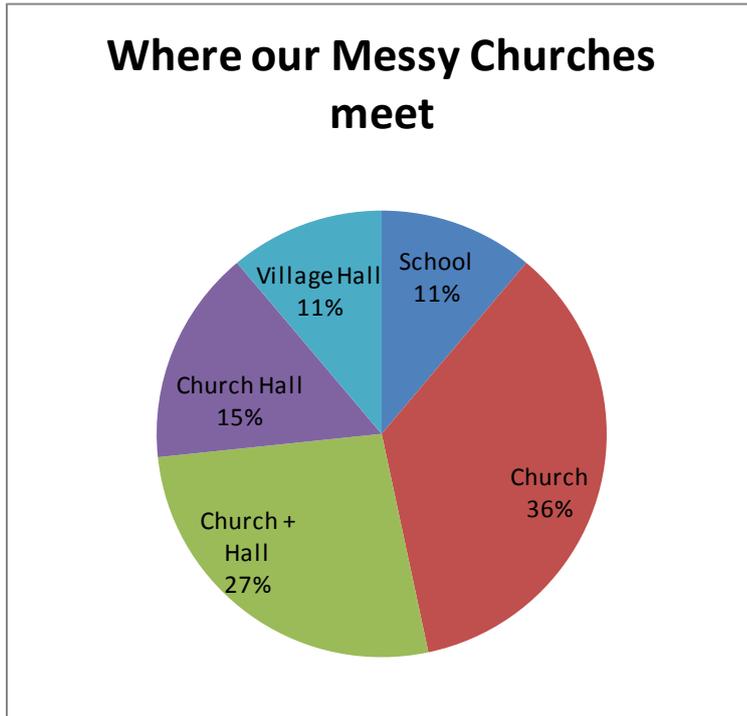
Monthly. No we would not change this, although we would now like to explore having a weekly children’s club and setting up a Messy Church Alpha course at a similar time. This is part of our explorations of family orientated discipleship.

Even some of the Monthly Messy Churches do not meet ‘every’ month, stopping near Christmas and in the summer. If the venue used is a school (see later section) then there may be practical issues of using the buildings.

All this shows the importance of having names and contact details of those who attend. This is good practice anyway for health and safety but also vital for reminding by text or email of the next Messy Church, even if it is holiday time. An example of a contact sheet can be seen [HERE](#) and the Messy Church website has an official form for collecting details which also includes things like permission for photographs – see www.brffonline.org.uk/pdfs/messy_registration_form.pdf

P.S. If it is really ‘church’ should we be cancelling at holiday times – we don’t do that with our other church services do we?

Question Four: Where does it happen?



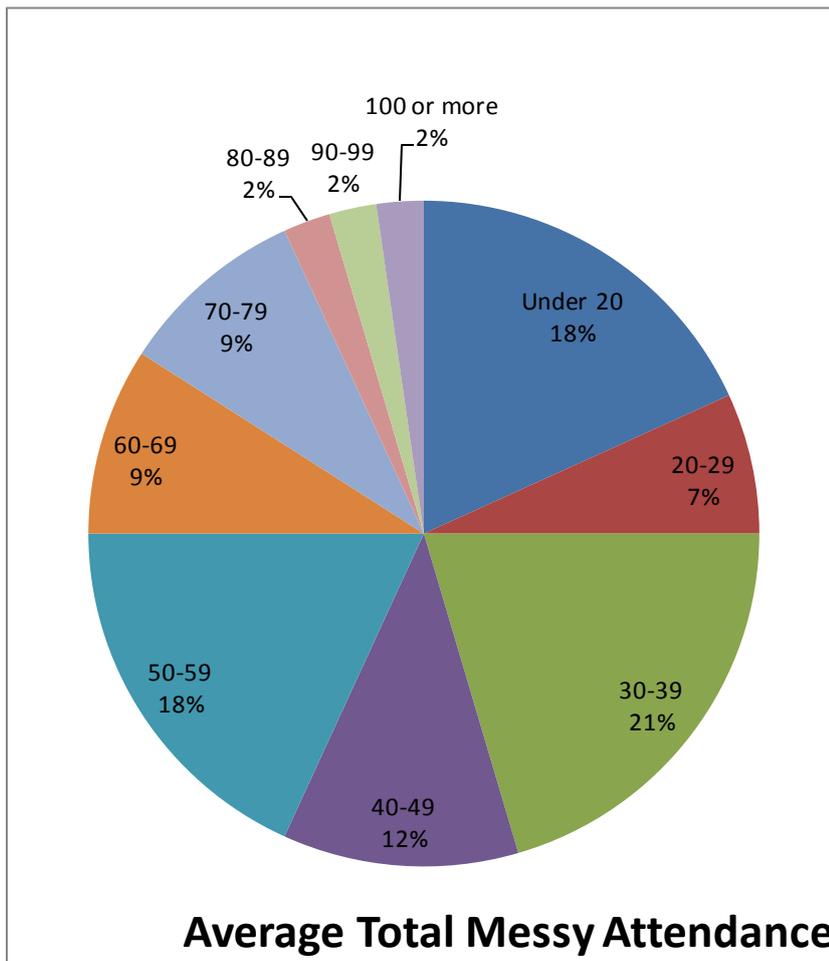
| Location | Tally |
|---------------|-------|
| School | 5 |
| Church | 16 |
| Church + Hall | 12 |
| Church Hall | 7 |
| Village Hall | 5 |

We were surprised by there being so few schools – we expected more. It may not have occurred to people that schools can be a good venue as there are good facilities whereas some churches and even church halls are limited. Schools are also a place where many who are not used to church feel comfortable and so are more likely to come. Often members of staff will also be involved and it enhances greatly all the links between church and school. The reason why so many use churches may be because they prefer to remain in their comfort zones, but also it is an opportunity to get families ‘over the threshold’. Also, sometimes facilities for making food can be very difficult in schools, depending on the Head and/or Local Authority (even the bringing in of equipment such as slow cookers can be difficult because of PAT testing). It can also be difficult if there is more than one school in the community although this can be overcome by running one in each school and having a joint celebration (if you have sufficient people power). For some it is considered to be harder to involve the parents and it is difficult to attract people not associated with that particular school and even more difficult when they are beyond the age of that school (particularly an issue if there is a system of First and Middle schools).

As with the previous question, it is worth including a question about the venue in the questionnaire although wider factors may be the dominant part of the decision.

Here is a response we received from later in the questionnaire: “Hopefully we will have grown our numbers in five years. This is difficult because our church is tucked away on the edge of a nature reserve so not many people pass by to see our posters. Also the local schools are nowhere near the church. Our vicar does go in to the schools and tell them about us but this has not increased our numbers so far. Sometimes I think we should transfer to the school buildings instead of asking them to come to us!”

Question Five a: How many come?



| Total Attendance | Tally |
|------------------|-------|
| Under 20 | 8 |
| 20-29 | 3 |
| 30-39 | 9 |
| 40-49 | 5 |
| 50-59 | 8 |
| 60-69 | 4 |
| 70-79 | 4 |
| 80-89 | 1 |
| 90-99 | 1 |
| 100 or more | 1 |

We were surprised that for more than a quarter of our Diocesan Messy Churches who responded, their total attendance was more than their total Usual Sunday Attendance – and more than 2/3 of them see more children than on Sundays.

It seems to be the case that in some lower socio-economic areas Messy struggles, especially with any parental involvement but this is common to other groups and agencies in these areas.

Also, please look at socio economic and church tradition factors.

Many Messy Churches start with high numbers then go through a slump. This is the normal growth pattern for anything and needs to be worked through and not become discouraged. This is known as the 'peak of inflated expectations' or the 'Hype Cycle'. More details can be found at:

www.gartner.com/technology/research/methodologies/hype-cycle.jsp



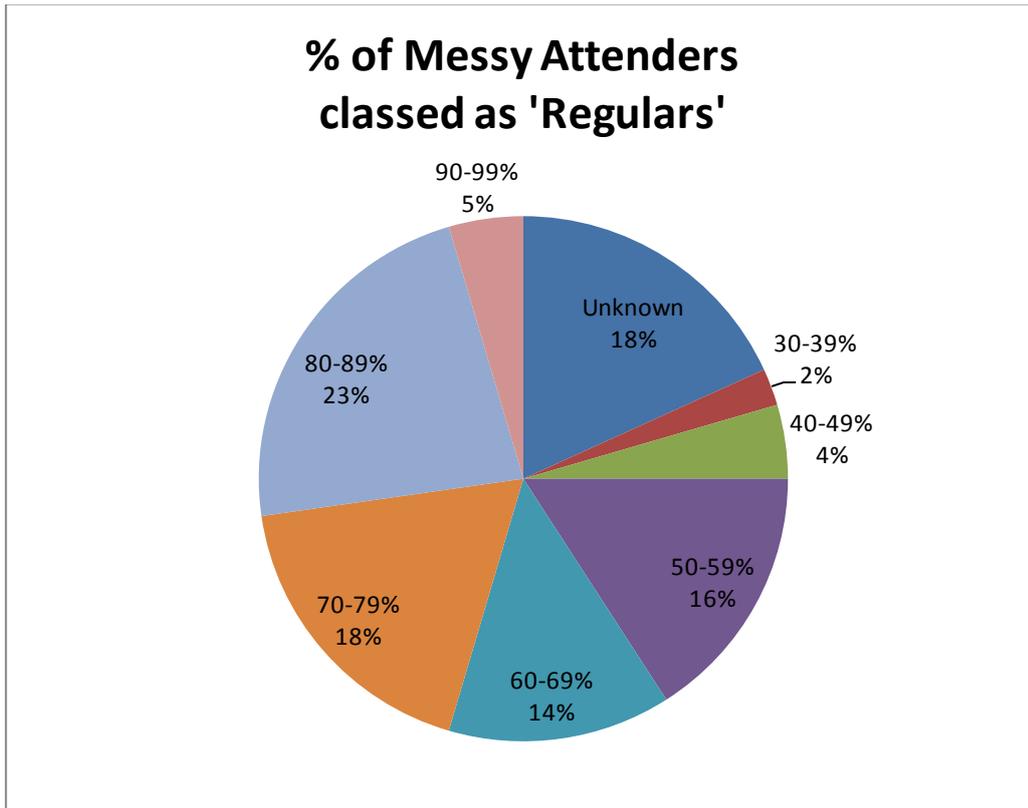
The important thing is not to give up in the trough of disillusionment.

When we did the survey we were disappointed to discover five Messy Churches has ceased to meet and felt that with encouragement and advice several of these could have continued and developed to the plateau of productivity.

Many Messy Churches find a lot of fluctuation in their numbers due to seasonal factors or other competing

activities. Those who have relied on word of mouth to keep the numbers up have found that with proactive reminding through text or email the numbers are boosted. There are some situations where there are Messy 'groupies' who travel round from Messy Church to Messy Church, but also several situations where the local church is eclectic but Messy Church is genuinely reaching out into the local community.

Question Five b: How many of those who attend are 'regulars'?

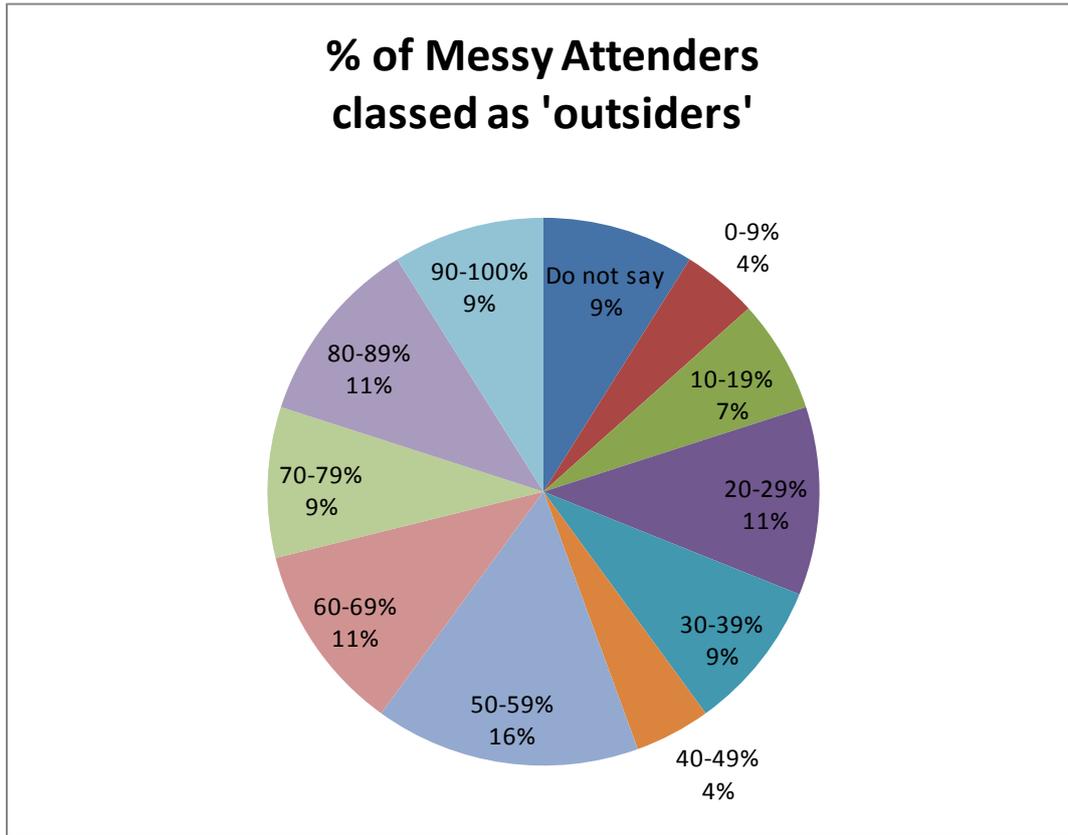


| | |
|---------|----|
| Unknown | 8 |
| 30-39% | 1 |
| 40-49% | 2 |
| 50-59% | 7 |
| 60-69% | 6 |
| 70-79% | 8 |
| 80-89% | 10 |
| 90-99% | 2 |

The surprise was the number of those who attend who are regular. Over 75% attend at least half of the sessions. This is good because it means relationships and a sense of community are developing through which discipleship can grow. We felt a concern where there is such a high rate of regulars that it reveals that the Messy Church is no longer reaching out to new people and has become too settled. In some situations this may be simply because the venue is too small to allow for further expansion and in this case perhaps multiple Messy Churches should be considered, using some of those growing in regular attendance and commitment to become leaders themselves.

A further concern is that the regular numbers of Messy attendees does not always show up in the church's annual returns, especially the Church Participant figures (details [HERE](#)). If you are running a Messy Church please ensure that your figures are included in next year's annual return for your church.

Question Six: How many of those who come are classed as 'outsiders'?

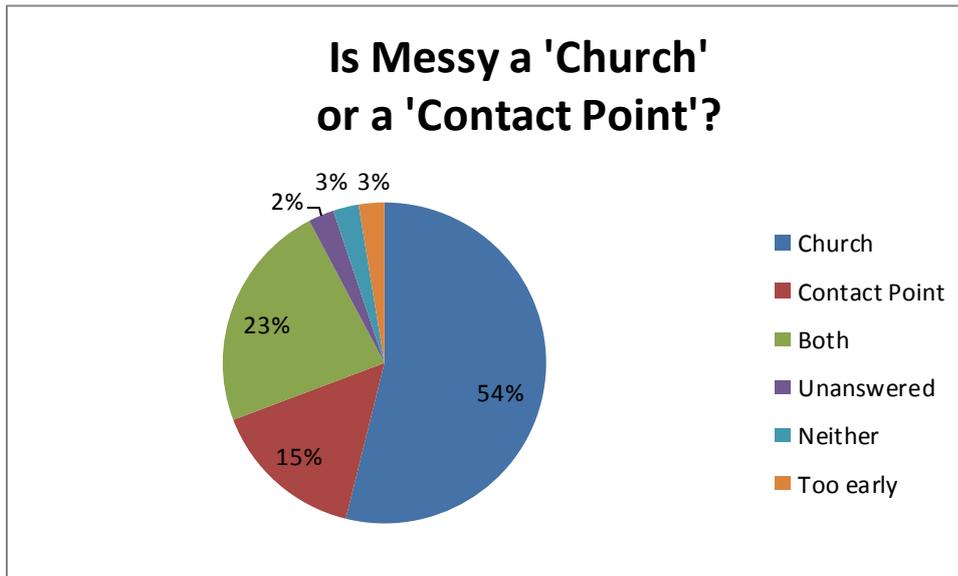


It was pointed out to us that the term 'outsider' was not a helpful one and have changed the wording of this question to read, "In your estimation, how many of those attending have no background in the church?"

The surprise to us was the number of people who attend Messy Church who have not been to church before – just over 50%. Some respondees counted attending Sunday school as a child and in some rural situations many consider themselves 'church' even if they do not attend, so the percentage is probably even higher. It is exciting that Messy Church is attracting 'un-churched' people as well as 'de-churched' people but this means that discipleship is even more important.

| Total Outsider Attendance | Tally |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Do not say | 4 |
| 0-9% | 2 |
| 10-19% | 3 |
| 20-29% | 5 |
| 30-39% | 4 |
| 40-49% | 2 |
| 50-59% | 7 |
| 60-69% | 5 |
| 70-79% | 4 |
| 80-89% | 5 |
| 90-100% | 4 |

Question Seven: Do you view your Messy Church as a 'church' or do you view it as a good contact point for those who do not come to church?



| Description | Tally |
|---------------|-------|
| Church | 21 |
| Contact Point | 6 |
| Both | 9 |
| Unanswered | 1 |
| Neither | 1 |
| Too early | 1 |

We were surprised that so many considered Messy church to be a 'church' rather than a contact point. Many saw it as both 'church' and a contact point. Here are some typical responses:

We see it as their church, they do too.

We see it as both and do not see these as mutually exclusive.

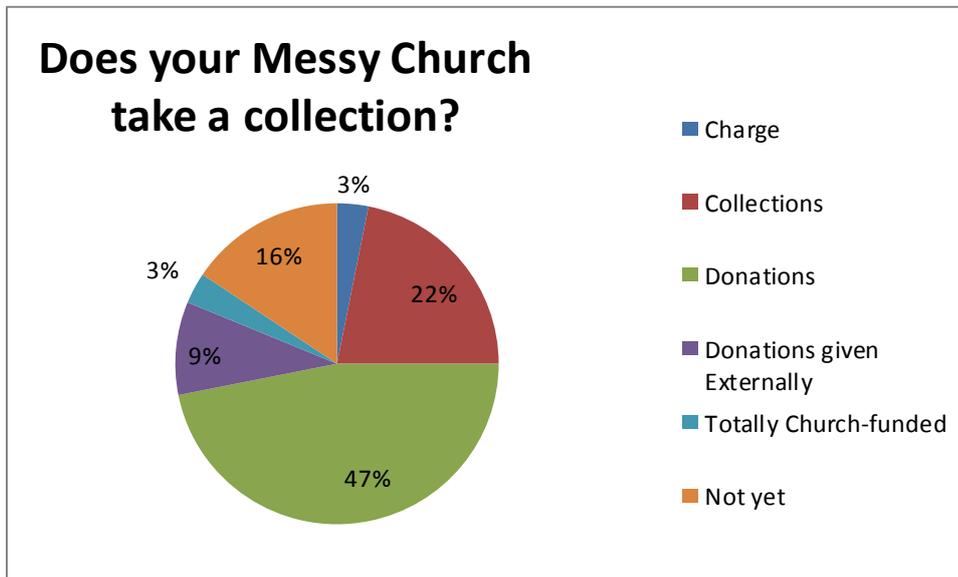
It is Church! Although I'm not sure the rest of church sees it that way.

Certainly those involved in leading and preparing MESSY Church view it as one of the congregations of St Matthew's Church

Most aspired to see it as 'church' but some of the other comments betray a lack of understanding of what 'church' is, as well as some confusion about what their Messy Church is. Even where it is seen as 'church' by the team who run it, there is a real challenge to teach and show this to the rest of the church. The key is to keep the Messy Team thinking of it as 'church' through the team planning times and discussion.

There is also the challenge that it is one thing to think of Messy Church as 'church' but is this reflected in the practice. The next few questions looked at some of the things which would be considered essential in any other church congregation and asks if they are present or being considered in the Messy Churches.

Question Eight a: Collections.



| Any Contributions | Tally |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Charge | 1 |
| Collections | 7 |
| Donations | 15 |
| Donations given Externally | 3 |
| Totally Church-funded | 1 |
| Not yet | 5 |

We were surprised that most of the responses were about ‘covering the cost’ with little or no reference to Christian giving, which is part of discipleship. One church charges £5 per family to cover costs and several develop ways for people to make voluntary contributions to cover costs. Several feel it is too much in its infancy to approach this and the question was raised that if hospitality is a value of Messy Church, is it right to ask people to pay for what they receive. Here are some of the comments:

The participants make a voluntary donation into a money box teddy bear as they come in to the meeting

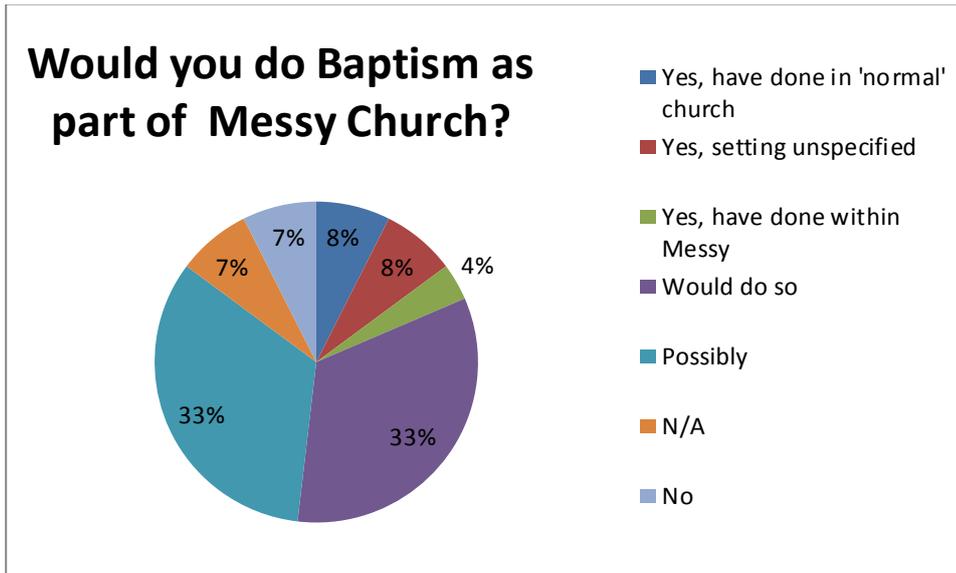
We ask for contributions to cost of materials and food – generally get around 1/3 of what it costs ... Costs about to increase with move to Village Hall.

We do not take a collection during our service but do leave a donation plate by the serving hatch. Most attendees give a donation for their drinks which are available throughout the session. Messy Church is funded by donations from our mainstream congregation and by the Messy Team. We also ask for donations for our local food bank. We feel this is as far as we want to go with what is still a fledgling group.

This would be important as a part of discipleship to introduce - but we are not at the stage yet to be able to raise this issue with the families who come. I would rather we did a Messy “giving” session to introduce it rather than just having a “collection” plate passed around.

Materials are being prepared for sessions on generosity with giving as part of this. Whatever method is used for giving, we feel it is essential to find a way to have a prayer said over it, where it is offered to God’s work as part of our thanksgiving for all He gives us.

Question 8b: Baptism.



We were surprised by the number who expressed openness to this once it had been suggested but had not thought of it prior to this. If Messy Church is truly church then this will be a natural expression of belonging for those who are attending. There will be some, of course, for whom Sunday mornings will be preferred either because it is traditional or because that’s when friends and family are free to attend (and celebrate with a party afterwards) but we should expect to find more and more baptisms happening in Messy Church. Here are some of the comments:

| Baptism | Tally |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Yes, have done in 'normal' church | 2 |
| Yes, setting unspecified | 2 |
| Yes, have done within Messy | 1 |
| Would do so | 9 |
| Possibly | 9 |
| N/A | 2 |
| No | 2 |

We have had enquiries through Messy Church but baptisms still take place on Sunday mornings

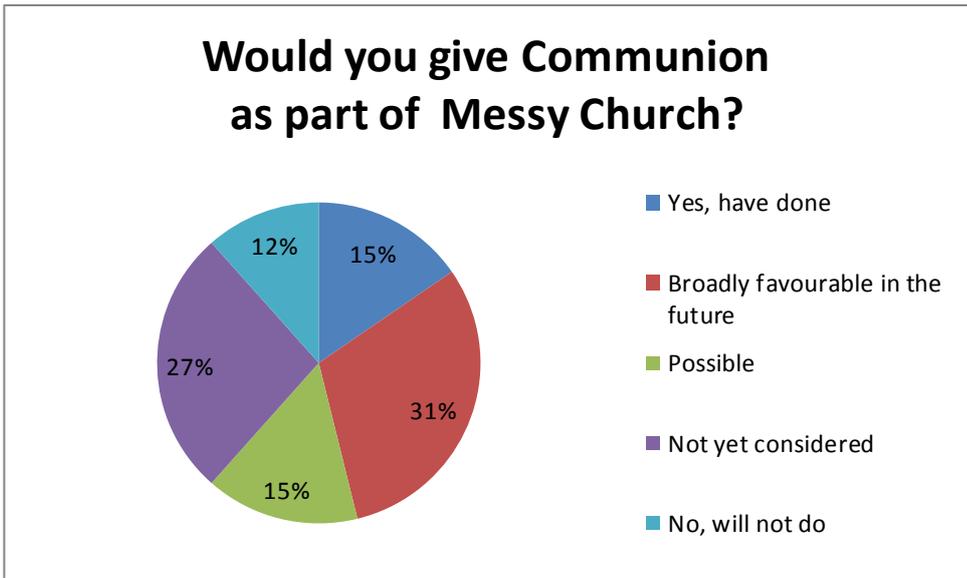
We have experimented with Baptism preparation in the style of MESSY Church for groups of families bringing children to baptism. We plan to do a MESSY Church session on the theme of Baptism this year and hope this may lead to Baptism itself becoming part of Messy Church.

We have not in the past felt the time was right for this. However, our Autumn term programme will involve baptism themes after which, if appropriate, we will then offer families the opportunity to have a Messy Baptism

We have had one so far, and it really made people think, and perhaps begin to appreciate a deeper level in what we are about. It certainly created a buzz.

It presents us with the challenge of the long liturgy of the baptism service. Whilst people will expect some formal language, the present services will not easily work within Messy Church and will need considerable adaptation. A further challenge is where Messy Church is lay led.

Question 8 c: Communion.



| Com munion | Tally |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Yes, have done | 4 |
| Broadly favourable in the future | 8 |
| Possible | 4 |
| Not yet considered | 7 |
| No, will not do | 3 |

We were pleasantly surprised by the great openness to this showed in the responses, although several had left this blank. Lucy Moore’s book, ‘Messy Church 2’ contains information on the Eucharist and gives a sample liturgy, which some have used.

Messy Communion raises certain challenges:

- What exactly is communion?
- What do we do about the lengthy wordy liturgy?
- Children taking communion
- Lay presidency where Messy Church is led by lay people

Some of the comments are as follows:

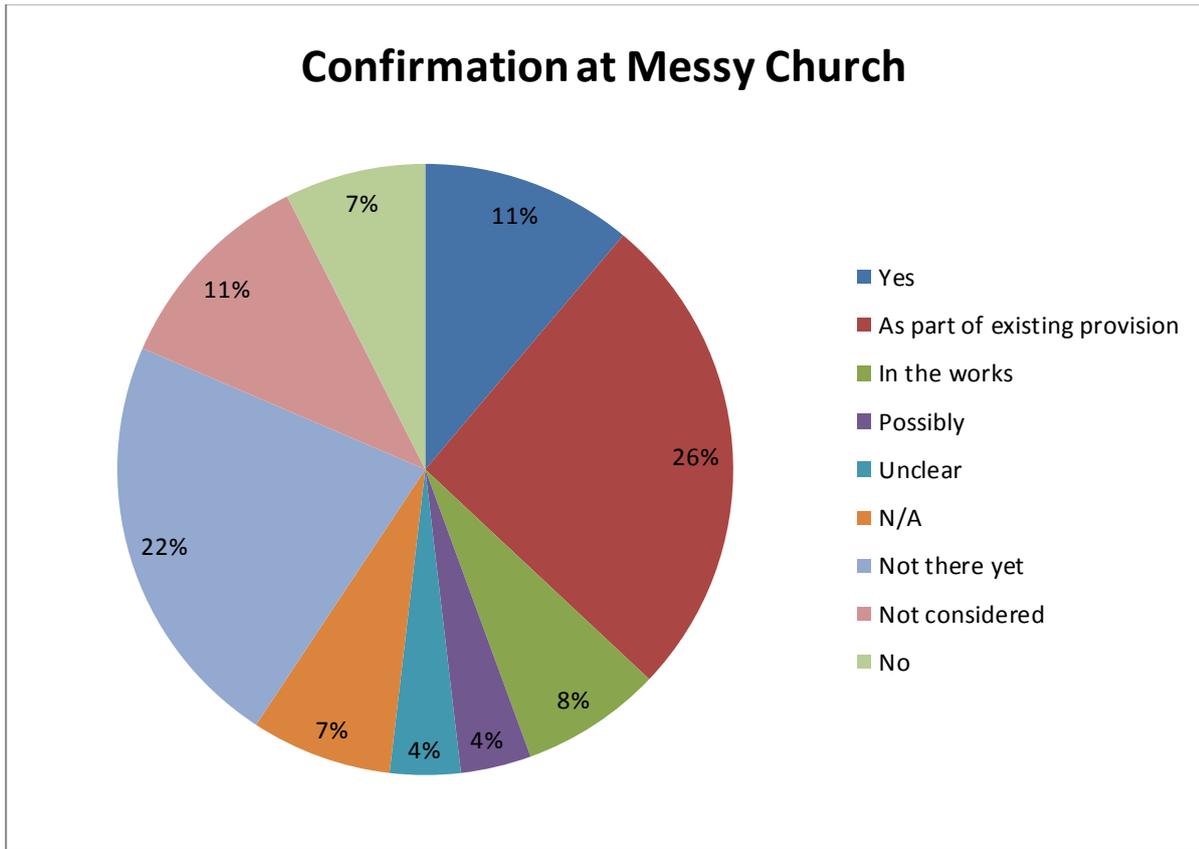
Depends what you view communion to be... Every Messy Church we break bread together, eat together, share together, pray together. It isn’t however a traditional Eucharist. It would be interesting to develop the idea of a Eucharistic messy church though...

We are discussing the idea of introducing the concept of Holy Communion in MESSY Church- rather like what we do when we have children coming into church from school.

Haven’t done it yet, but I would like to in time... needs some careful thought and planning

Communion in church schools is becoming increasingly popular. Communion readily lends itself to craft. We need to explore a workshop on this for people to explore if further.

Question 8 d: Confirmation.



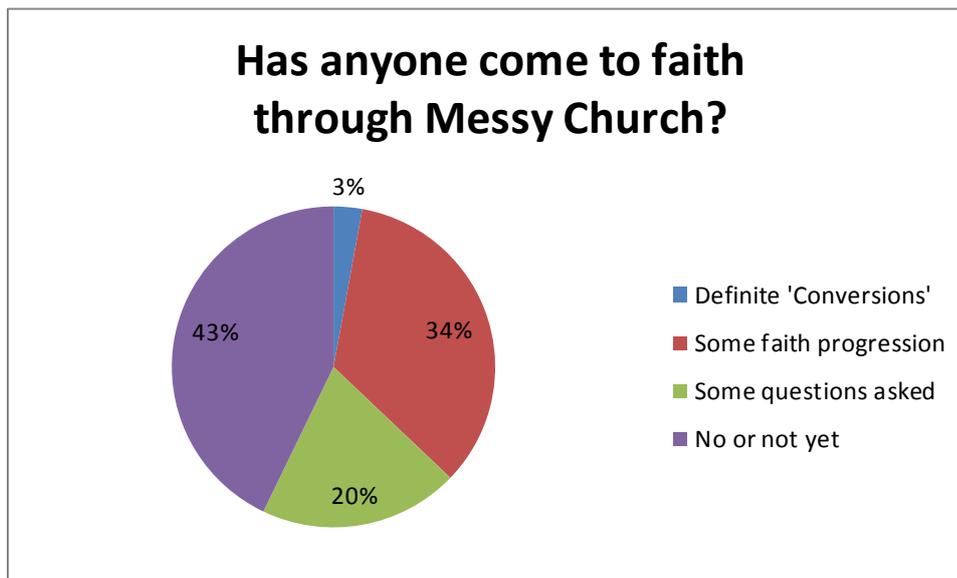
| Confirmation | Tally |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Yes | 3 |
| As part of existing provision | 7 |
| In the w orks | 2 |
| Possibly | 1 |
| Unclear | 1 |
| N/A | 2 |
| Not there yet | 6 |
| Not considered | 3 |
| No | 2 |

It did not surprise us that many of the responses were muted or negative. Nationally there are very few examples and we know of one due in the Autumn in Lichfield Diocese. Since so many who come are unchurched, then Confirmation is not on their radar. It is often difficult to get a bishop for confirmation anyway and so to get one for a separate service with low numbers could prove very difficult. One possibility to explore is an Episcopal Area or Deanery Messy Confirmation.

Other interesting comments:

We have a Messy wedding in June too !! All the trapping of church mentioned above are not really important are they? What we worry about is developing discipleship and Faith in the Adults. It's got to be more than a children's craft club. How do we make that big jump? Do we have to?

Question 9: Have you had any who you feel have come to faith through Messy Church?



| Conversions | Tally |
|------------------------|-------|
| Definite 'Conversions' | 1 |
| Some faith progression | 12 |
| Some questions asked | 7 |
| No or not yet | 15 |

We were pleasantly surprised that so many are seeing significant developments in faith. This leads to the challenge of how we take people further in their journey. The question itself provoked a lot of thought about faith development that may not have been articulated or recognised previously in some churches.

a. Not so much 'come to faith' but there are those who come who haven't had a lot of contact with any church for many years who feel comfortable in this setting and whose faith is re-emerging.

b. There are at least 3 people who are developing leadership skills

Conversations with both adults and children during the sessions show a growing awareness of what the Christian faith is about as we chat informally about the biblical stories or themes while we do the activities. As leaders, we agree that we see seeds of faith being sown and signs of faith growing.

There are people new to the church who come to Messy Church as well as other services and have chosen to be baptised, and two confirmed.

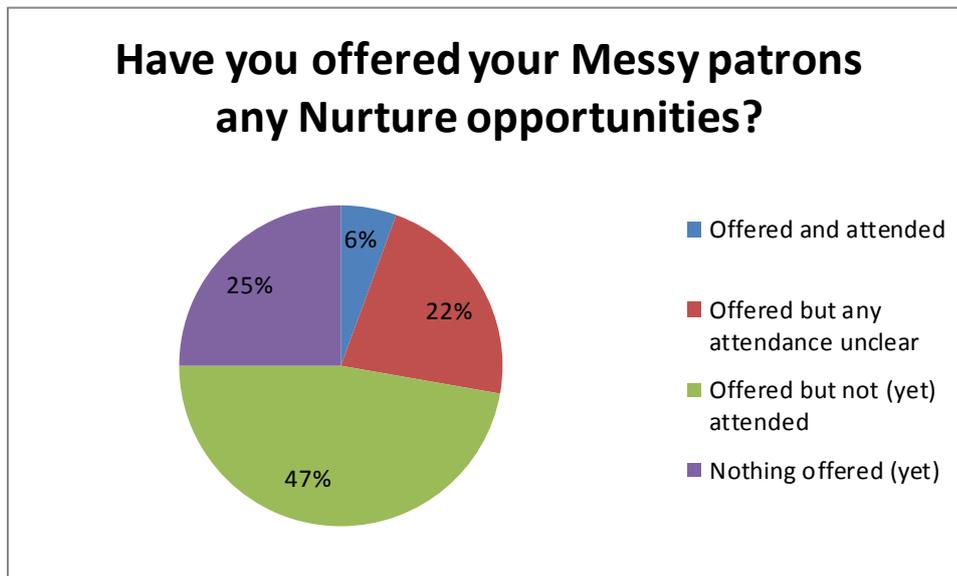
How can you tell? Maybe if you have been coming regularly for nearly 4 years you might have more faith than someone who has been coming to big church for social reasons for 30 years! Certainly the two families who have been baptised I would hope have come to some sort of faith. The kids starting to come to Junior Church on a Sunday was the first step. We tried running a "Start" course but no-one came!!

I don't think anyone has come to faith as yet; but it has certainly provided the opportunity for people to ask questions about their faith, or things they don't understand –and in some cases to pursue these. Above all, it is creating relationships with a group of church members.

We have Adults who have rediscovered their faith. One is exploring his/her faith with a view to some sort of ministry. Two families now take their children to their local Church on a Sunday (they live out of the area but have a connection with our Messy Team). We would like to hope that people don't feel that Church is exclusive and can move the ideas of faith forward from their time at Messy Church.

There is a mother who has come back to church. We have another mother who with no previous church experience is attending regularly, and as RE coordinator in her school is hoping with the local church to start a Messy Church in her school. She is considering confirmation.

Question 10: What things are there in your church for helping new people come to deeper faith e.g. Nurture courses, home groups? Have any of your Messy contacts been drawn into these?



| Nurture Groups | Tally |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Offered and attended | 2 |
| Offered but any attendance unclear | 8 |
| Offered but not (yet) attended | 17 |
| Nothing offered (yet) | 9 |

We were not really surprised that few had joined enquirers groups from Messy Church as this seems to be the national picture. We have come across one church where a significant number of people from Messy Church have gone to an Alpha course. We do wonder how many churches have been intentional in inviting personally their Messy contacts. For many of them, however, courses like Alpha would be too

far along the faith path and many need a way of exploring pre-Alpha questions. For many Messy Churches they felt it had not been going long enough for this step to be offered and it is true that the example above where people have attended Alpha is one of our longest running Messy Churches. Another problem is that the ethos of Messy is 'all-age' and enquirers courses tend to be for adults only and not for families. Another church we know of has discovered what questions the children and parents are asking and then set up a messy-style event where these can be looked at. Courses are often in the evenings and when those we have coming to Messy Church have young families, it is often difficult to get out to anything in an evening.

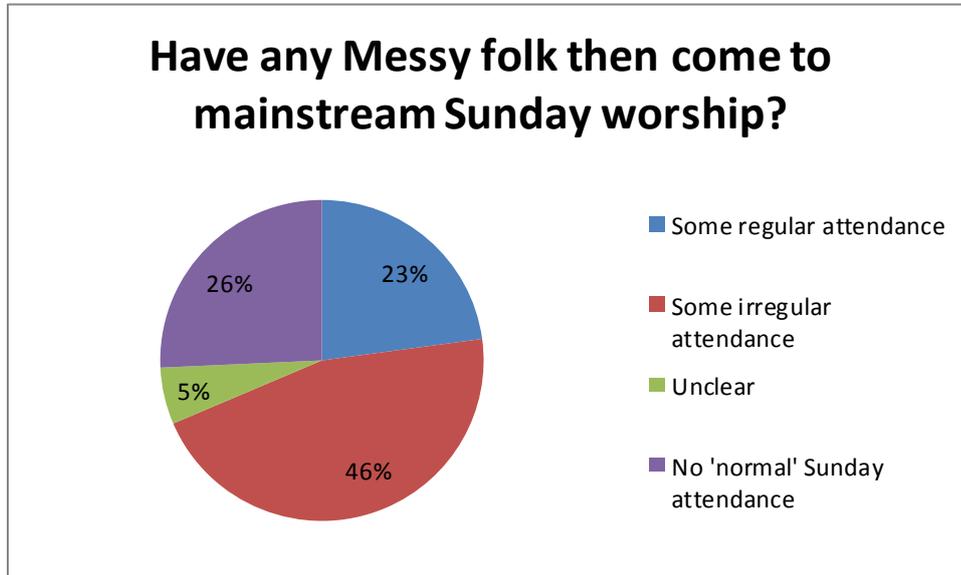
People will only go to additional things if invited personally by people they are in a good relationship with and so a church and the Messy Team need to be intentional about this if it is to stand a chance of working and go along to the enquirers course themselves to be with those who attend from Messy Church.

You can find a list and description of Enquirers courses [here](#) but is important also to recognise that there are many ways of intentionally helping people to develop their spiritual journey apart from enquirers courses, which we will examine later.

Have found that many of the parents are very keen to help and so have drawn some in to be on the organising group. It is with this group that hope to develop a 'housegroup' as these are the folk most interested in talking about faith. Would appreciate help in finding suitable material to interest them – Alpha a bit too far down the line.

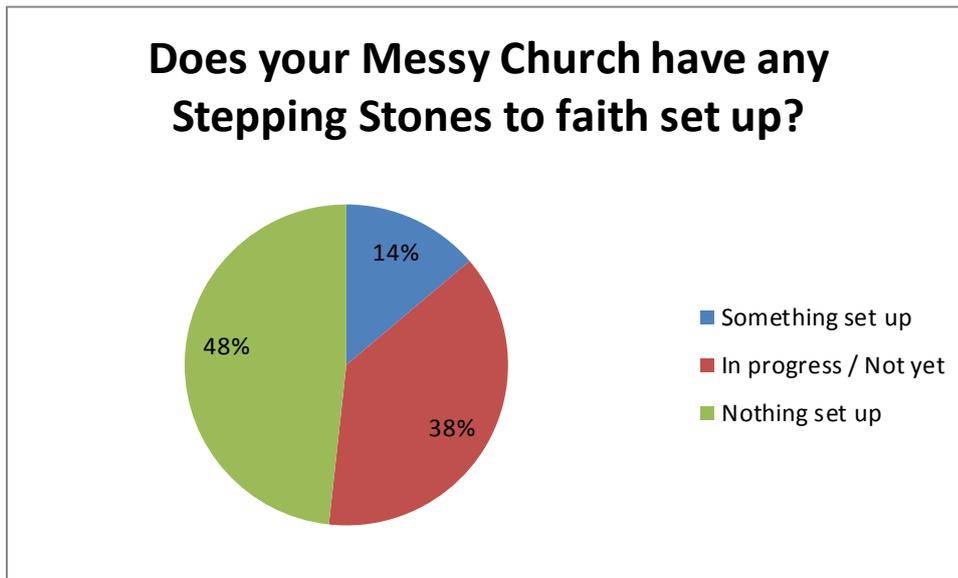
Question 11: Have any of your Messy Church contacts started attending a Sunday Family Service if you have one?

We were surprised at the number who are starting to come to main Sunday services. We do understand that Messy is not there simply to be a conduit to main Sunday services, but we felt it necessary to ask this question and if Messy Church is monthly or bi-monthly then other things are needed to grow community and discipleship and this is one of the options in many churches.



| Sunday Worship | Tally |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Some regular attendance | 8 |
| Some irregular attendance | 16 |
| Unclear | 2 |
| No 'normal' Sunday attendance | 9 |

Question 12: Are there things you have set up as stepping stones to faith for your Messy contacts?



| Stepping Stones in Place | Tally |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Something set up | 4 |
| In progress / Not yet | 11 |
| Nothing set up | 14 |

We were surprised that more people did not think in terms of stepping stones. There is a need for churches to deliberately create opportunities for those who attend to explore faith as they do not know what to do themselves. A variety of options need to be offered and we will examine some of these at the end of the paper.

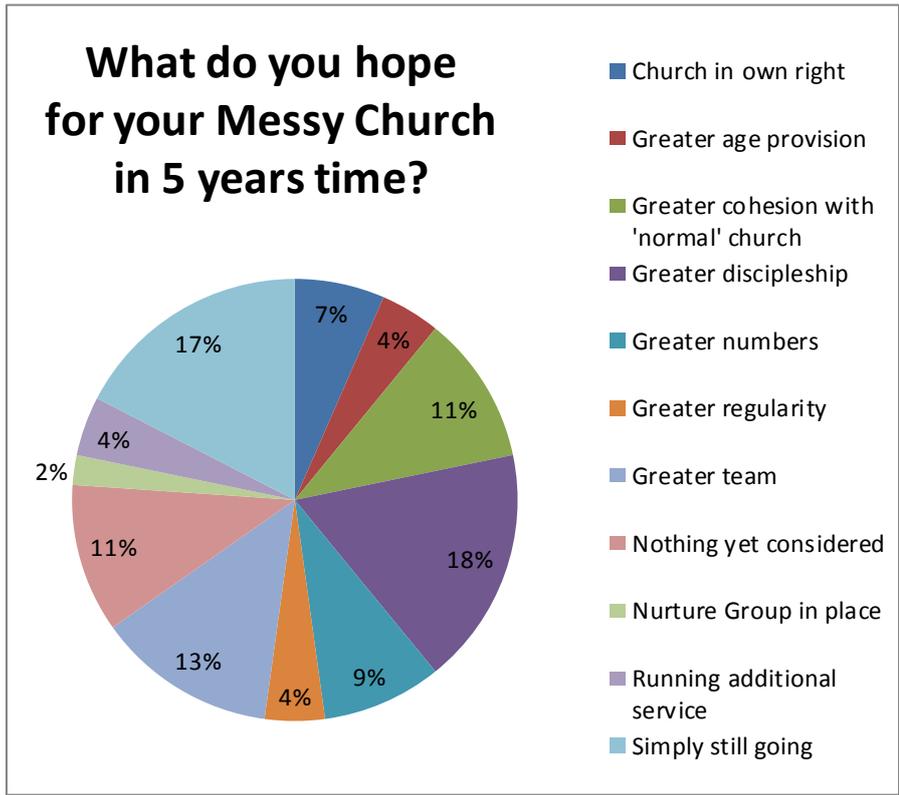
Here are some of the comments:

We talk to our families and respond to their comments. They wanted the day changed to better fit with their circumstances, and when they wanted to do a craft session we encouraged them to organise it and invite their friends. We have Messy coffee mornings scheduled in occasionally. We try to plan our sessions that would fit in with family requests or that we think would benefit our particular group. Deacon Annie invites new baptism families along to Messy Church prior to the baptism to allow them to see what’s on offer for families at our Church.

We are offering them our pastoral care. We give them opportunities to join us in other events such as Holiday Clubs for children. We advertise fundraisers and other social family events where they can enjoy more fellowship. It is an informal/ no pressure approach.

We give take home sheets with puzzles for the children based on what we have been doing and with courses suitable for the adults on although we have had no real success with this. We have now decided the time is right to offer a session mid way between each Family Feast which will be held at the same time and will offer a workshop (dvd, singing, discussion....) for the children and a space for adults which may start off just answering their questions and then develop as appropriate to the groups needs. We will finish with tea together. It will not be as intensive as a normal session but hopefully will appeal to some of our families who wish to know more. We are going to sound out our families later this term with a view to starting in September.

Question 13: How do you see your Messy Church in 5 years' time?



| Aspiration for 5yrs time | Tally |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Church in own right | 3 |
| Greater age provision | 2 |
| Greater cohesion with 'normal' church | 5 |
| Greater discipleship | 8 |
| Greater numbers | 4 |
| Greater regularity | 2 |
| Greater team | 6 |
| Nothing yet considered | 5 |
| Nurture Group in place | 1 |
| Running additional service | 2 |
| Simply still going | 8 |

We were not surprised that 'Still going!' was the so large but delighted that 'greater discipleship' had the same number. There were a huge variety of responses and it was encouraging to see that so many are forward-thinking. Here are some of the comments:

We would like a bigger group of people to be available during sessions to just talk to the adults in particular. We would like to grow our teams to include teenagers and parents who come with their children – we are producing a slip to encourage this. We also feel that this would be part of the discipleship of our families. We are continually thinking about how we develop our celebration

Growing in strength and having experienced Baptism and Messy Communion....becoming disciples of Christ.

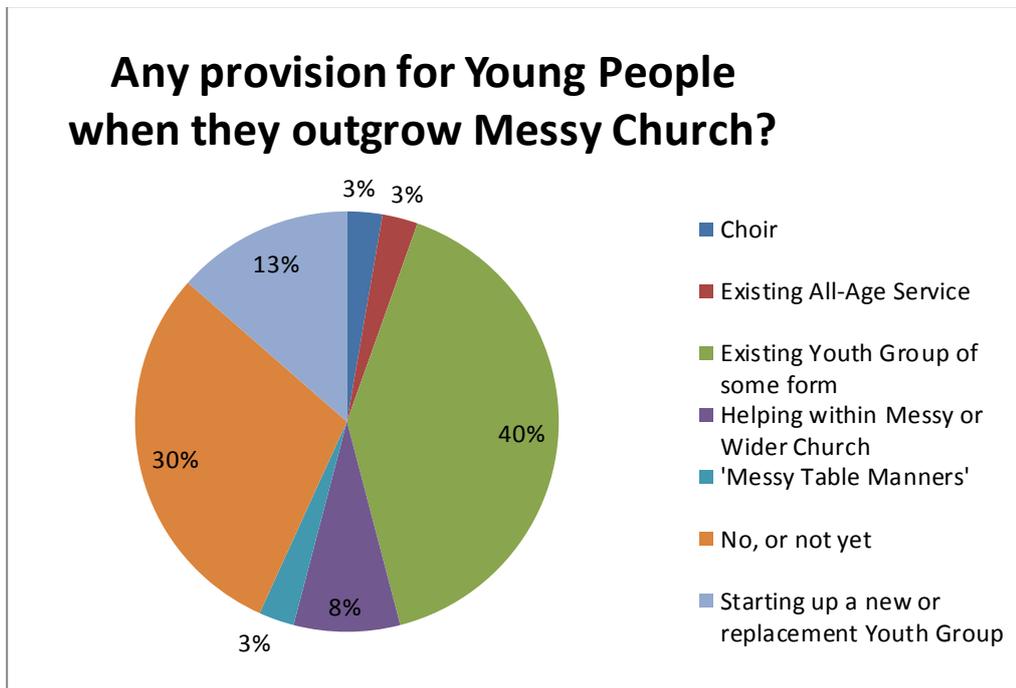
Hopefully still running and with a new core set of families with the current children taking on some other responsibilities suitable for their ages such as helping with IT, in kitchen, planning and art work etc...

Still healthy if kept fresh with new ideas and not predictable. We have a dedicated group of volunteers who really enjoy and believe in Messy Church. We will probably also have a follow on in some way eg 'Messy Moments Café' for those who want a deeper faith

I hope new members will be attending and present members will be leading it and that the present members will be fully involved in Church life

We would love to see Messy Church being seen and valued as a valid expression of church in our area. We hope that people will come to Messy Church and find God meeting with them, and that they will want more of Him. It would be great to have Communion and Baptisms happening within the Messy Church family of God. Also ... seeing people moving on to other areas of discipleship (homegroups, youth cell groups and, where appropriate, Sunday worship)

Question 14: Do you have any plans for what to do for the families where they feel their children growing out of Messy Church?



We were pleasantly surprised that so many churches are looking seriously at the provision for young people (11-18). It is vital that we look at the whole of the timeline of the faith development of our young people. However, we must remember that it is not only the young people we need to make provision for, but their families also, and most responses missed this aspect of the question and only talked of provision for the young people themselves, not their families. Only two churches mention young people being part of the Messy Church Leadership. Here are some of the responses which highlight the issues:

| Any plans for Older Children? | Tally |
|--|-------|
| Choir | 1 |
| Existing All-Age Service | 1 |
| Existing Youth Group of some form | 15 |
| Helping within Messy or Wider Church | 3 |
| 'Messy Table Manners' | 1 |
| No, or not yet | 11 |
| Starting up a new or replacement Youth Group | 5 |

No –HELP! Already lost a couple.

Not at the moment. As we meet in a school it is very closely linked to attendance at that school. as people move to another school they don't come back. We do text and email too.

Not so much for the adults, but I try and maintain contact with the young people through events at the vicarage.

We have some 'teenage' members who help and also do more challenging activities e.g. making videos.

We haven't reached that point yet at St Johns, however the group has got to grow organically according to the faith of the group. Our job is support the people who come and meet group needs as well as individual needs in terms of their faith journeys. In a previous job I had been running a messy church style event for a while, which had different age rooms for the crafts etc. We had a normal messy church age room for children and parents, a teenagers room which was more like a 24/7 prayer room with a few activities and music and an adults room with one or two more difficult crafts. We all got together for the worship and the food at the end. It was a great way of being church with lots of different ages, especially the food at the end when people would share about the things they had learned.

Question 15: Have you seen change and faith development in any of your Messy Church leaders and helpers?



| Development within the team | Tally |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Leaders already very 'on board' | 5 |
| No team in place | 1 |
| No | 3 |
| Real positive developments | 14 |
| Some positive developments | 11 |
| Too early to say | 2 |

It was no surprise to us that this had such a positive response as we hear it from many churches. The team members really develop in faith as they find a place of service. If that is the case, then perhaps it is important to draw some of the Messy contacts into leadership so they can grow alongside them. Just a few of the comments were:

Sharing one's faith and planning the teaching helps the individuals faith to grow. We have 2 helpers who find Sunday attendance difficult, but their faith is growing through involvement. One has a daughter, confirmed at the age of 11, who has not been to church for about 15 years, who is very keen to help and will take a day off work for the Easter & Summer activities.

The change in the leaders and helpers has been the most visible. Growing leadership skills, developing new talents, gaining confidence, thinking more clearly about their own faith and belief.

A lot of our leaders/helpers are already Christians – no-one stands out as having developed in their faith at the moment. We do have parent helpers too who are becoming regular helpers, so it will be interesting to see if they begin to think more about their faith or develop a faith

Feedback from leaders is that they are growing in faith and gaining in confidence and beginning to develop a sense of ministry. Some have many skills in place which they can just use. Others are developing skills and therefore their growth is more obvious. Over the last few months we have been growing into a team as we learn to work together, pray together and read the Bible together as part of our planning.

Yes... Messy Church makes everyone who helps think about the topic covered – and they have to cover it in simple terms ... so that means you have to understand it well. People involved have gone out on a limb for God and that is always something which helps us grow in faith- people have discovered gifts and are using them

Top Ten Conclusions for the way forward for discipleship in Messy Church.

1. Invest in the team of leaders. If they are alive in faith and keep the vision for what Messy Church can achieve, then they are the ones who will be talking to the parents and children about faith and sensitively inviting them to take further steps.
2. Look for those you can draw into leadership in Messy Church. This can be their most significant point of growth as they join with those who plan and pray and become part of the team. Don't change how you do it because they are there – keep praying together and talking about the importance of people coming to faith in Jesus.
3. There is no 'magic bullet'. There need to be a variety of options not only to suit different churches but also to suit different people. Some may explore through internet, others may want a group where they can explore faith, and others may wish to talk to one other person. The Messy Discipleship paper in Appendix B gives many options.
4. Be intentional about wanting people of all ages to grow in faith. We are not doing this to boost church numbers or so people can have a good time (although we hope both will be true), we are doing this so people can come to know personally the God who loves them and grow in faith. We need therefore to be constantly looking at this in our preparation and seeking for ways to sensitively help people during the sessions and services. Don't be afraid of the teaching challenging people about their beliefs and faith. If you visit a computer store, you expect someone to try to sell you a computer, if you go to something like church.....
5. If Messy Church is 'church' then look at the things which are important. Obviously prayer and relationships are but don't be afraid of the other things mentioned in the questionnaire. These can be important milestones for people. Look at the role of giving, baptism, communion and confirmation. The introduction of these can lead to decisions people make which mark important milestones in faith development.
6. Pastoral care. Keep careful records. This is easy to do as we need that information for health and safety. Regularly remind people about Messy Church – email or texting can make all the difference to them coming. If families go missing, sensitively check they are OK, it may be that someone is ill or in trouble and contact from their Messy Church could be just what they need and speak volumes about God's love. If you hear of illness or trouble in a family, contact or visit.
7. Prayer is the key.
 - a. Pray for your Messy Church and those who come and get the rest of the church praying too.
 - b. Teach those who attend how to pray. This is the essence of the Christian life but many do not know where to begin. Model it from the front and teach about it.
 - c. Give opportunities for prayer whether in the service or through prayer stations. Offer to pray with people, especially prayer for healing where there is illness.
8. Relationship, relationship, relationship. People will continue to come because of the relationships which develop with the leaders and fellow attenders. In the context of good relationships people will share problems, ask questions and be open to invitations to other things. Build community together but be aware that this takes time. It also takes time to find faith. John Finney in his book 'Finding Faith Today' estimated that it took the average adult 4 years to come to faith, and it may be longer with some of the people we have coming to Messy Church as they have such little background in the faith (question 6). It is relationships which will hold them in while they discover what Christianity is and explore it for themselves.

9. Window of opportunity. Many drift away from Messy Church as the children grow older either because of alternative pressures on the monthly diary of activities, or they feel it is no longer suitable for them. When the children stop attending, so do the adults. Therefore:
 - a. Be intentional about developing faith in the period we have them. If they come to a living faith we are much more likely to keep them either in Messy Church or in other areas of church life.
 - b. Have other things for the children to move into as well as becoming potential helpers in Messy Church.
 - c. Have other things for the parents to move into as well as becoming potential helpers in Messy Church. Members of other 'congregations' are involved in many aspects of the church life, not only their specific congregation – the same should be true of Messy members.
 - d. We need to explore what a long term Messy Church looks like which holds all age groups together for a long time. At the moment Messy Church is age specific – can it develop into something beyond that and remain Messy Church?
10. Keep going. All activities and ventures go through dips (see question 5a). It is long term relationships that lead to discipleship and so even if you go through a period when there are only a few, work through it. It may well be those 'few' are the key to the development of Messy Church in the future.

APPENDIX A. The Questionnaire.

Messy Questionnaire 2013

Church _____ Your name _____

1. How long has your Messy Church (or equivalent) been running?
2. What day and time do you meet?
3. How often do you meet?
4. Where do you meet?
5. How many.....
 - a.adults and children do you have in an average meeting?
 - b.adults and children do you have on who come with some regularity (e.g. 50%)
6. In your estimation, how many of those attending have no background in the church?
7. Do you view your Messy Church as a 'church' or do you view it as a good contact point for those who do not come to church??
8. If you view your Messy Church as 'church' what are your views on developing in your Messy Church:-
 - a. collections
 - b. Baptism
 - c. Communion
 - d. Confirmation?
 - e. Other things?
9. Have you had any who you feel have come to faith through Messy Church? if so, please give some details.
10. What things are there in your church for helping new people come to deeper faith e.g. Nurture courses, home groups? Have any of your Messy contacts been drawn into these?
11. Have any of your Messy Church contacts started attending a Sunday Family Service if you have one?
12. Are there things you have set up as stepping stones to faith for your Messy contacts?
13. How do you see your Messy Church in 5 years' time?

14. Do you have any plans for what to do for the families where they feel their children growing out of Messy Church?
15. Have you seen change and faith development in any of your Messy Church leaders and helpers?
16. Any other comments or suggestions about Messy Church or how the Diocese might help you with Messy Church?

Appendix B. Messy Discipleship. This document can be found [HERE](#).

Messy Discipleship.

The key to the future development of Messy Church is discipleship, people coming to know Jesus and follow him as Lord of their lives. I recommend Paul Moore's book 'Making Disciples in Messy Church' and agree with him that we need to be patient in this area of discipleship as the journey is a long one. He uses not only the [Engel Scale](#) but also the [Gray Matrix](#) to show this. He gives a biblical summary which shows the importance of family, children and inter-generational learning. As Messy Church 'reinvents discipleship' (Bishop Paul Butler) it will have much to offer other Fresh Expressions and the wider church. In the context of this invaluable book I offer these practical suggestions as a menu of options for those concerned for Messy discipleship to consider.

Individuals.

Many will prefer ways to explore faith through the internet so that it is anonymous and there is no commitment. There are various sites which you can recommend:

www.rejesus.co.uk/ ideal for those exploring faith

www.christianity.org.uk/ ideal for those exploring faith

www.nowachristian.org for those exploring the first steps of faith

www.foundations21.net from beginners to deeper theological explorers

A useful way to do this is to highlight these in a Messy Church meeting (one at a time) or have a card (credit-card size) with them printed on so you can give them to anyone interested.

Home

What does discipleship mean for families? [Bible Reading Fellowship](#) are producing some excellent materials which can be used in this context. Examples are:

[Family Fun for Easter](#)

[Walking with Jesus through Lent and Easter](#)

[Family Fun for Summer](#)

[Family Fun for Christmas](#)

[Play and Pray through Advent](#)

[Creative Ideas for Quiet Corners](#)

[Story Box Bible Tales](#)

These resources can be recommended in a Messy meeting and if you have any families who have used them you can ask them to tell the others about it (children as well) rather than just the leader 'advertising' it.

In addition to this, why not produce 'take home sheets' for families to do, based on your Messy Church session?

[Faith in Homes](#) is a specialised area of the BRF web site looking at these issues.

Going Deeper

If Messy Church is indeed 'church' rather than an outreach activity, then there are various things that need to be considered seriously as the 'church' develops. Here are a few of them.

Baptism – there will be some present who have thought of baptism but because they did not have any relationship with the church have put it off. Now that they 'come to church' they may be considering this and may need encouragement. Some may want the baptism service to be 'in church' (i.e. Sunday morning), but others will count 'Messy Church' as their church and want it at that time and venue. What a wonderful opportunity to talk about faith and going deeper and mark this with a definite step of commitment.

Communion – if you view 'Messy Church' as a church then there will be a point at which to consider the sacrament of communion. There are various ways to approach this:

- Agape – made part of the meal after Messy.
- Simplified communion service – there are various simplified liturgies available (see also 'communion before confirmation below').

Confirmation – again, when some come to faith, then Confirmation should be offered through Messy Church. Some will opt for Confirmation in the traditional Sunday service but some will view Messy Church as 'their' church and want to be Confirmed there. If this is offered, you might be surprised at the number who opt for it – and the preparation gives a wonderful opportunity for deepening faith.

Communion before Confirmation. The Diocese encourages this, which is accepted by the Church of England nationwide. Lichfield practices are explained in a [letter from Bishop Jonathan](#) and the [guidelines](#).

Collection. Giving is part of our discipleship. Some churches view Messy Church as a gift from the church and so do not charge or have a collection. While this is laudable it does not allow the Messy Church attenders to grow in this area of their Christian commitment. Some Messy Churches ask for a contribution towards costs or even charge for attending – again this is not really helping those attending to start to give to God. Some Messy Churches encourage those attending to give to some worthy project like sponsoring a child through [Compassion UK](#) – again this is very worthwhile but does not develop discipleship or look to Messy Church becoming self-sustaining. Look for the right opportunity to introduce a collection after some appropriate teaching on the subject.

Missional. When Messy Church first starts out it is very missional but can soon settle down to its 'regular members'. It needs to keep being open and missional.

Sacred space. Some Messy Churches set up [prayer stations](#) where people can go and spend time with God.

How to get Sunday morning church to see Messy as ‘church’.

- Make sure that Messy Church is listed alongside all the other services both in the notice sheets and also on the web site. It is not an optional extra, it is one of the regular services.
- Report regularly what is happening in Messy Church.
- Invite key individuals to come and observe Messy Church, especially PCC members.
- Have Messy Church on the PCC agenda with regular reports to PCC and an AGM Report.
- Include it in the church statistics.
- Messy Month – see Messy Church website for resources

How to get Messy Church to see itself as fully part of St Agatha’s.

- Give out the notice sheet to those who come to Messy Church.
- Include Messy Church in all invitations to courses, special services, social events etc.

Courses – many churches run enquirers courses. Make sure Messy Church members are also invited, whether it be Lent groups, Enquirers groups, Confirmation classes, or home groups. Since many Messy attenders may be a long way from commitment (Engel Scale) it does not mean that they do not have questions and are spiritually searching. Look for courses like ‘Journeys’ and ‘Puzzling Questions’ which may be more appropriate for the enquirer. There are many [nurture courses](#) available.

Added Services – in-between

- Link to a child-friendly service on Sundays.
- Messy mornings – St Martin’s Walsall have done this where they run a Messy Church in parallel with their main service.
- [Messy Café](#) – Hadley Holy Trinity and Christchurch Wellington.

Other Key Issues:

Lads: boys are seriously under-represented in church and this is often reflected in Messy Church, and their specific needs seem a current blind spot in mission-shaped thinking. Educationalists are now addressing the underachievement of boys in schools; will churches also accept the challenge to become more boy-friendly?

Boys, God and the Church: How church can help boys grow in faith... and why they do not!
Nick Harding Grove Series P111 ISBN 9781851746668.

Top Tips on Working with Lads: Practical pointers for anyone working with children and young people. Richard Witham & Maggie Barfield Scripture Union ISBN 9781844275670

What to do when the children are too old, apart from a few nice ones becoming helpers (we lose the parents too!).

This list is not by any means exhaustive and new ideas and ways are emerging all the time. If you have any suggestions to offer please send them to the Lichfield Local Mission Department so that we can share them with others.

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Appendix C. Additional Resources.

Messy Church Website: www.messychurch.org.uk/

See also: www.messychurch.org.uk/search/discipleship

Making Disciples in Messy Church by Paul Moore. www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/making-disciples-in-messy-church

Faith in Homes. www.faithinhomes.org.uk/

Arthur Rank: www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/rural-discipleship-a-nurture/item/9064-messy-discipleship