



## Godsend App

### A. Overview

### 3 New Christian community

'In, out and shake it all about.' The Hokey Cokey is a great source of spiritual reflection and we could dwell for a long time on the question of putting 'your whole self in' to your Messy Church ministry and 'your whole self out' of the structures of inherited church in order to serve God wholeheartedly in a new context and immerse yourself in the new congregation to which you've been called.

But instead, let's sober up and consider the important matter of who's in and who's out of your Messy Church. This is a question to ask as you start planning a new one and is a question to ask every time you review your practice. What *place* helps households to come along? Are families actually itching for a chance to call the ancient church building their own, inconvenient though it may be? Is there parking nearby? How tempting is the toilet? What do the furnishings say about the community? If you're thinking about a primary school, will the adults feel infantilised by the size of the chairs? How accessible and safe is your building to wheelchairs, pushchairs, people who like to run around and those who have no idea that not everything in a bottle is drinkable? What *day* suits more than just the team running it? Have you asked around for the best day and time of day to avoid the plethora of activities that families can choose from?

And alongside these very practical ways of helping people belong, a Messy Church team could usefully think about the people who might feel 'out' – perhaps those without children or those who assume their income level, sexuality or lifestyle will exclude them; perhaps families where the disabilities of one member make things particularly difficult to belong to any group. Are there people to whom a very deliberate and intentional hand of welcome needs to be extended?

The other area to keep an eye on is the 'in or outness' of the team. This might be symbolised in the decision of whether or not to set the team apart with a special T-shirt or hoodie. What does it say to families either way? It's no bad thing for the families to see a rather stretched and struggling team – it shows there is a space that one of them might helpfully fill, rather than remaining as a 'taker' on the outside forever. A new Christian community can make space for people to take risks and fail in leadership. It will involve a lot of 'shaking it all about' for the team leader who has a tough job on their hands already, but if they go into their Messy ministry with a determination to include anyone and everyone (with safeguarding firmly a priority), the shaking about becomes part of the ministry itself.