



Godsend App F. Church

15 'Church' emerges

1 Keep the values and contextualise the shape

The 'shape' of a Messy Church is completely open to being contextualised. It's the values – being Christ-centred, hospitable, creative, all-age and celebration – that are the DNA. So be open to suggestions for developing your Messy Church in different directions, but use the values as touchstones for whether or not you're moving into something different from the Messy Church 'family'.

2 Start by sharing leadership

Look out for unlikely leaders. Remember some young children are already excellent leaders. Build on the experiences of the Messy Churches from the Deepening Discipleship pilot, who intentionally worked with their young Messy leaders as a way of growing disciples.

People don't need to be recognisably Christian before they begin leading – leadership responsibilities may well be the stepping stone that helps them walk closer to Christ. A good question is, 'What's the worst that could go wrong?' Welcome the 'strangers' God sends you, rejoice in their gifts and encourage them to help shape your Messy Church.

3 Introduce worship

The whole of a Messy Church two-hour session can be worship, if approached in the right spirit. Or the whole two hours, including the celebration, could be entertainment. 'Garbage In, Garbage Out' is a bit of a harsh aphorism from the IT world, but flipped into 'Gold In, Gold Out' and we start to see how important attitudes are within the team and the supporting church leadership and congregation members.

Baptisms, Communion services, confirmations and even weddings have been held in Messy Church or with Messy Church values and 'feel'. You'll find advice and resources to help you on messychurch.org.uk, though everyone's context is different. One church's joyful baptism with water pistols by the whole Messy congregation is another's worst nightmare. One church's intimate, if chaotic, family Communion around a picnic rug is another's anathema.

Connecting to the wider church is a great way of growing in faith, realising that there are many ways of worshipping, serving and learning. It's worth pondering how much your team respects the Messy

Church intergenerational, celebratory, creative, hospitable journey of discipleship, or whether the team members only value a more traditional, cerebral, 'well-behaved' approach. Be prepared for potentially challenging discussions – this could be the moment where push comes to shove over the question of whether or not 'success' actually means feeding people from Messy Church into your existing way of being church!