

## 7 Advice on Running Ecumenical/Joint Messy Churches

Increasing numbers of churches – especially in rural areas – are planning and starting a Messy Church that involves more than one ‘parent’ church. These can be either a group of churches from the same denomination (e.g. within an Anglican Multi-Parish Benefice) or an ecumenical group (e.g. started through Churches Together in a particular location). There are many reasons for the creation of such joint Messy Churches but in many rural cases it is due to the relative smallness and dispersal of the churches involved (and of the communities they represent). Sharing resources, personnel and premises can be a real boon to churches that individually are not well-supplied with these.

Groups who have started an ecumenical Messy Church have said the following:

- One person or church needs a clear vision and then shares this with the wider group.
- Get the church leaders on board at an early stage, they may be nervous.
- Be ready to persist as it will take time.
- Take care in giving leadership away to someone who may not be good at team work.
- I think you need two or three from different churches who really have a vision for Messy Church and can work together to inspire their own church members.
- Once people have tasted Messy Church I think it is easier.
- We visited a local Messy Church to get a taster before we started.
- We were in the position of having worked together for two years on Holiday Clubs, again which a friend and I organised; so a lot of our team already knew each other and had worked together before – half the battle really.
- Allow 6 months of planning and prep before you start.
- Delegate an organised person to head up the craft team each month.
- Find a good cook, willing to help run a kitchen team.
- Make sure the whole team communicates what is going on.
- Always encourage those that help ... in whatever capacity.
- It is a lot of work, but worth it.

A booklet on Messy Church in ecumenical contexts is in production. It will contain case studies and a short report based on ecumenical research conducted with Churches Together. It will be available for free download from the Messy Church website for the Week of Christian Unity 18-25 January 2012.