

1 The Basic Shape of Messy Church

Messy Church began in April 2004 in an Anglican church near Portsmouth. It is a church for families who find it hard to go to church on a Sunday, and a typical session would include chilling, creating, celebrating and chomping. It meets once a month at a time most suitable for a local area, either after school or at the weekend. Perhaps the most significant aspects are those of:

- welcoming the whole family together not just the children
- being a church not a club
- eating together

A session would typically run along these lines:

3.30 Welcome (at weekends, this half hour bridging time was not needed in the same way as it was on weekdays)

4.00 Crafts

5.00 Celebration

5.15 Meal

The overall aims of Messy Church are:

- to provide an opportunity for people of all ages to worship together
- to help people of all ages feel they belong in church and to each other
- to help people have fun and be creative together
- to introduce Jesus through hospitality, friendship, stories and worship

The concept has spread by means of the first Fresh Expressions DVD, *Messy Church* the book, the website www.messychurch.org.uk, Messy Fiesta training days and the series of Messy Resources that BRF are publishing as the network grows and spreads. There are currently hundreds of Messy Churches listed on the website Directory and many hundreds more that are not listed.

Messy Church is enabled, supported and resourced through BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship) which has been able to establish this ministry thus far with the generous backing of a small number of trusts and individuals who have caught the excitement of what God is doing. The Messy Champions scheme enables churches, trusts and individuals or families to support this ministry in prayer, encouragement and money as BRF derives no direct income from Messy Church.

With the release of *Messy Church: the DVD* (which is presented by Lucy Moore) it is possible for anyone to get a really good look at how a real-life Messy Church operates, alongside helpful discussion of what is done ... and why! There is substantial input to this DVD from team members and participants at the Messy Church in question. All of these contributions add up to a very helpful guide to what Messy Church is all about.