



Ideas for under-fives at Messy Church

This is by no means a definitive list of things to do, but is more a selection of things that have worked for us (at Holy Trinity Claygate) over the last two years.

Welcome time:

- **Refreshments** - make sure under 5's are included as adults have tea and coffee – offer squash in plastic cups and biscuits.
- **Selection of toys** – to keep little children occupied before the craft time:
 - place on the floor and on low tables
 - don't include toys with small parts which are unsafe for under 3's
 - it's probably better not to have messy toys at this stage – keep that for the craft session

Examples:

- plastic model animals on a play mat
 - construction toys such as Duplo or Stickle Bricks
 - wooden train & track set such as Brio (children can set it up)
 - play food with cups, plates, trays etc
 - giant jigsaw puzzles (especially of bible scenes)
 - picture dominos, memory cards etc.
- **Simple colouring pictures or outlines** relating to that session's theme – there are some good ones online or in books.

Craft Activities

- **Very Messy Activities:**

Most children love these but rarely get a chance to do them. Usually it's the messier the better and it's the sensations and experience rather than an end product that are important. We can often tell how much fun the children have had by the state of our toilet basins at the end of Messy Church after lots of hand washing!

Examples:

- slime - made from cornflour, water and food colouring (Creation)
- painting with feet, hands or fingers
- foam/bubbles – blow down a drinking straw into a bowl of water with washing up liquid in
- pig's swill – jelly & food scraps (Prodigal Son)

Be aware that although hugely popular, some children do not like getting messy and should never be forced to.

- **Food Activities**

This is the table my daughters head to first!

- icing biscuits – you can do this for any theme
- making animals or objects out of fondant icing – use it like playdough
- making things out of cakes e.g. a whale from a cup cake, a horse from a mini roll
- fruit kebabs (supervise with the sharp sticks)
- cocktails – mix fruit juices and food colouring, add fruit
- making bread rolls from pre-prepared dough
- necklaces or bracelets from hooped cereal



- **Cutting And Sticking Activities**

Small children love the freedom of cutting or tearing pictures out from magazines or catalogues. Younger children will not be able to manage scissors, so may need to use pictures that have already been cut out. Also use scraps of paper, fabric or ribbon of different colours and textures. Save your shiny coloured sweet or chocolate wrappers. Cotton wool is great for clouds, sheep, white hair & beards. Use glue sticks to be safe or if you're feeling messy, PVA glue.

- paper plates – these are inexpensive canvases for all sorts of things. Suggestions include animal masks, plate of food pictures, Christmas angel, basket, mosaic, fish, rainbow
- large or small collages – e.g. of God's creation, journeys, space, fruits of the earth, animals
- cards to give to someone – Easter, Christmas, Thank You, Invitation
- bookmarks, door hangers, fridge cards (with a memory verse on)

- **Junk Modelling**

Small children are very imaginative and love to be able to choose and design things with no boundaries. They may need help with the tape but resist the temptation to take over and control their creation! Things like this are great to show others at the Celebration part of Messy Church.

Large scale joint activity:

Put out lots of big junk boxes, cardboard tubes, plastic bottles, tin foil trays and any other thing you would otherwise recycle. Stick together with masking tape.

Make things like a Noah's Ark, a space rocket, a whale, a nativity scene, a car

Individual activity:

e.g. binoculars or telescopes out of cardboard tubes, houses, trains, cars, animals, space rocket.

Celebration@

- **Songs**

Small children love songs with actions and repetition. Look out for songs from Ishmael, Julia Plaut and songs on the "Little Angels" (New Wine) collection of CDs.

Our older children like Doug Horley and although, not always sure of the words or the exact actions, the little ones join in enthusiastically too.

Favourites for Under 5's

- Great Big God (Nigel & Jo Hemming)
- Jumping For God (Julia Plaut)
- If I Go Climbing (Julia Plaut)
- Mister Cow (Julia Plaut)
- Jesus Love Is Very Wonderful
- Jump Up And Down (Doug Horley)
- Great Great Brill Brill (Doug Horley)
- Lovely Jubbly (Doug Horley)
- Nothings Too Big (Doug Horley)

Useful songs to reinforce a story

- Sad Day (for Easter)



- Jesus Went A Walking (for choosing disciples, we are Jesus friend etc)
- These 10 Rules Are All You Need (10 Commandments)
- Plus lots of songs by Ishmael

- **Prayers**

Always tell children that we are going to pray and that just means 'talking to God'.

To get the children's attention we quite often do our 'prayer drill' i.e.

- hold out your arms wide and waggle your fingers
- clap your hands together
- bow your head – let's talk to God

Prayers for under 5's should use simple language and be fairly short. Rhymes can be effective e.g. choose the tune or rhythm of a nursery rhyme and put your own words of prayer to it.

Messy Grace – 321 123 Thank you God for loving me
321 123 Thank you for our Messy tea

Doing is more powerful than just listening to someone say a prayer. Get the children to do an action, hold a picture or say something out loud.

- **Stories**

Vary your methods of telling a story/sharing a message e.g.

- hand puppets
- silhouette puppets
- drama – spoken
- drama – narrated
- props
- items taken out of a bag
- large pictures
- Powerpoint slide show
- video – e.g. Miracle Maker, Veggie Tales
- sitting down quietly and telling the story (Jackanory style)

Mealtime:

Keep the food tasty and simple and bear in mind that it has to be palatable to adults too.

Popular meals for us:

- Fish Fingers, potato wedges and baked beans
- Pasta Twirls with tomato sauce and cheese served with cucumber and carrot sticks
- French Bread pizzas
- Jacket Potatoes with a choice of fillings
- Lamb Burger with pitta bread, cherry tomatoes and cucumber
- Sausages in a bread roll

We always have fresh fruit and cakes (donated by church members and parents) for desert.