



ASCENSION TO PENTECOST



WHAT IS MESSY CHURCH?

Messy Church enables people of all ages to belong to Christ together through their local church. It is a way of being church which is particularly suited to families, but welcoming to all. It meets at a time and on a day convenient for local families and is aimed at people who have never belonged to a church before.

YOU CAN EXPECT:

- A warm welcome
- An hour of different hands-on activities with a Bible theme
- A short celebration with a story, songs and prayers
- A meal together
- A new session each month

FACTS: MESSY CHURCH:

- gets 500,000 people involved each month
- takes place in more than 30 countries worldwide
- is found in a variety of Christian denominations
- is for people of all ages, from 0–100 years old

MESSY CHURCH VALUES:

- Christ-centred
- Creativity
- Hospitality
- Celebration
- All-age

WANT TO START A MESSY CHURCH?

messychurch.org.uk/starting

WHO IS THE BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP?

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is the home of Messy Church; it supports, resources and enables its work. BRF is passionate about making a difference through the Christian faith. We want to see lives and communities transformed through our creative programmes and resources for individuals, churches and schools. For more information on the work of BRF, visit brf.org.uk



BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE
+44 (0)1865 319700 | enquiries@brf.org.uk
brf.org.uk

The Bible Reading Fellowship is a Registered Charity (233280)

SESSION THEME

The theme is the Ascension to Pentecost story, inspiring us to pray together and tell everyone about Jesus (Acts 1:3–2:4).

1. BOTTLE ROCKET LIFT OFF

Jesus said a final goodbye to his disciples on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem. He needed to go so that the Holy Spirit could come and be with anybody, anywhere, anytime.

You will need: paper; duct tape; a plastic water bottle; Play-Doh; thin card; a cork; a bicycle valve and pump; water (optional). (www.wikihow.com/Build-a-Bottle-Rocket)

Roll a piece of paper into a cone. Wrap the nose of the cone with duct tape and attach this to the base of a plastic bottle. Take thin cardboard and cut out three to four triangles. These will be the fins of your rocket. Tape these around the open end of the bottle so they help the rocket stand straight. Add a Play-Doh ballast around the open end to give the rocket weight. Cover the whole thing with duct tape to keep it secure.

Fill up the bottle with water (optional – if you do use water you will need to launch this outside or within a paddling pool to contain the water expelled on lift off!)

Make a very small hole through a cork. Make sure the hole is the same size as the valve of your bicycle pump valve. Stuff the cork into the bottle opening.

Place the needle-like valve of a bicycle pump into the opening of the cork, making sure it fits into the cork tightly. Turn the rocket right-side up, holding it by its neck, and ensure it is aimed away from your face.

Launch the bottle rocket by pumping the bicycle pump. The rocket will go off when the cork can no longer withstand the pressure building up in the bottle. Do not approach the rocket once you start pumping, even if it appears that nothing is happening with the launch, as this can lead to injury. When it does launch, the rocket will shoot up quite fast and high so remove any obstructions and warn anyone around you first.

Talk about how the disciples must have felt when they saw Jesus disappear back into heaven. How could this be good news?



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2. TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Before Jesus left, he gave his followers instructions about what to do next. These included waiting in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit and what Christians call 'the Great Commission' (Acts 1:4–8).

You will need: a cereal box; black paint; coloured cellophane; glue; a cardboard tube; scissors.

Cut out three equal-sized circular holes on one side of the cereal box, and then paint the box black. While the paint dries, cut out three circles of cellophane slightly larger than the holes in the box and in three colours, red, yellow and green. Glue the cellophane circles behind the holes from inside the box – from top to bottom: red, yellow and green. Seal up the base of the box and make a hole for the cardboard tube to be inserted.

Talk about the meaning of the 'stop, get ready and go' instructions that Jesus gave his disciples. Would you say you are ready, nearly ready or not ready to share the good news of Jesus with people you meet?

3. THE GREAT COMMISSION SPIRAL

Jesus told the disciples that they should share the good news of God's love in Jerusalem first, and then move outward to Judea, on into Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth.

You will need: paper plates; felt-tip pens; pencils; glitter pens; scissors.

Decorate your paper plate with names of countries, cities, towns and villages that you know, starting with those closest to you at the centre, working outwards to those furthest away.

On the other side of your paper plate, draw a spiral in pencil from the centre outwards with roughly the same width between the lines. Using a glitter pen, write the sentence from Acts 1:8, 'Tell everyone about me', in the space between the pencil lines, repeating it as many times as you need to reach the end of the spiral.

Cut along the pencil lines to create your spiral.

Talk about how sharing the love of God and the story of Jesus starts at home first and only then are we ready to move outward to new places. How about telling each other your favourite story about Jesus?

4. HIDDEN ANGELS

When Jesus finished speaking with his disciples, he was taken up into a cloud and then two angels appeared to reassure them that one day Jesus would come back again. Most Christians believe that this will happen when the good news has been taken to everybody everywhere.

You will need: a white candle; grey paint; crayons; a picture of Jesus to colour in, printed in the centre of a piece of A4 paper (landscape).

On the paper, draw with a white candle the outline of an angel either side of the outline picture of Jesus. (If you like, you could prepare the candle angels first and leave them invisible while families are invited to colour in the outline of Jesus.)

When Jesus is coloured in, paint over the whole sheet with grey paint, obscuring Jesus (like the cloud) but revealing the two angels.

This could be a big mural activity that everyone contributes too. The painting over with grey paint could then be part of the celebration, when the angels are revealed.

Talk about what Jesus said as he left and then about the message of the angels. Could you be one of God's messengers too? Who might he want you to tell good news to?

5. ALL TOGETHER NOW

The disciples returned to Jerusalem and most likely gathered regularly in the upstairs room where, weeks earlier, Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper with them. Acts 1:15 records that there were 120 of them; it must have been crowded!

You will need: a box, possibly a large shoebox, that will become the upstairs room in Jerusalem; plenty of salt dough or clay; paints; brushes.

This is an ongoing activity as all who come are invited to shape, paint and add a salt dough or clay person (about 6–8 cm high) to the room. Depending on the numbers at this event, there may need either to be two 'rooms' or perhaps each family can make more than one person. The people added should represent a cross section of men and women, young and old. In many ways, this was the first 'church' waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit before they went out to witness to the world.



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Talk about who was there (see Acts 1:12–14). Can you be too old or too young or not clever enough or not beautiful enough to share the good news of Jesus with your friends?

6. THE LORD'S PRAYER SPINNER

The story in Acts tells us that the disciples in the upstairs room 'prayed with a single purpose of mind' (Acts 1:14 CEV). All evangelism must start (and continue!) with prayer. It is likely that they would have used the special prayer that Jesus taught them to unite their voices as one.

You will need: pre-cut circles of card divided into eight sections; felt-tip pens; coloured pencils; scissors; a pencil to insert in the centre to make it all spin.

Cut out the circle of the spinner. Have eight key words of the Lord's Prayer written out ready to be copied, one into each of the eight spaces on the spinner: Father, Holy, Kingdom, Will, Bread, Forgiveness, Temptation, Rescue. Invite people to illustrate each of the words in each section as you talk about what they mean.

Insert the pencil through the middle and spin the disc on the sharpened end. Wherever the spinner lands, pray that part of the prayer for yourself, your family, your community and the world.

7. TEAM BUILDING

During the days between the Ascension and Pentecost, the original eleven disciples decided they needed to find a replacement for Judas, who had betrayed Jesus. They wanted a full core team again before they set out on God's mission. Working together in teams is vital for sharing the Gospel with the wider world.

You will need: a copy of these words in large print; yoghurt pots; tape; sharpies; scissors; rice or lentils.

Here's song about the twelve apostles, including the name of the new disciple they elected in Acts 1:26 and also the name of Saul, who became Paul and who many think is the one who made up the important original number of twelve. Author unknown; can be sung to the tune of 'Jesus loves me, this I know' (Anna Bartlett Warner 1827–1915).

**Jesus called them one by one,
Peter, Andrew, James and John,
Next, came Philip, Thomas too,
Matthew and Bartholomew.**

Chorus:

**Yes, Jesus called them,
Yes, Jesus called them,
Yes, Jesus called them,
He called them one by one.**

**James, the one they called the less,
Simon, also Thaddeus,
Twelfth apostle Judas made,
Jesus was by him betrayed.**

Repeat Chorus.

**So they added on Matthias
Twelve disciples still known by us.
They were joined by one called Paul
They said 'YES' to Jesus' call.**

Repeat Chorus.

Decorate the yogurt pots with sharpies. Half fill them with the rice or lentils and then seal two pots together with tape.

Learn the song, accompanying it with your new shaker percussion. You may like to consider providing or making other instruments. You could use this song in the celebration.

Talk about the way Jesus wanted his disciples to share the good news together, not just on their own. Who could you be in a team with to share the good news about Jesus with other people? What could you do together?

8. MANNEQUIN CHALLENGE

The disciples didn't know how long they had to wait in Jerusalem, nor did they know what it was they were waiting for! However, they obeyed Jesus. It must have seemed like a long wait. Waiting for God's time to do his mission his way is a vital part of how we share the good news about Jesus.

You will need: stopwatch; paper; pen.

Standing still as mannequins is a popular group game. Gather a family group or groups and set out the scenario that they are in the upper room waiting for the promise of Jesus, like the disciples in Acts 1. They must all choose to be doing something (praying/writing/reading/eating a meal etc) in different positions around the floor space.

Count them down to the word 'waiting' at which everybody becomes as still as a mannequin. Start the



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stopwatch. Have an upper limit of time in your mind but don't tell the group. Who can stay still the longest? You might like to film this on your smart phone and use this as part of the celebration later.

Talk about how the waiting must have felt for the disciples. Has anyone had to wait for God's time like this? How do you know when to wait and when to talk to someone about Jesus?

9. BREAD OF LIFE

It is clear that the disciples used the Old Testament to encourage themselves as they waited and also to help them know what to do next—see Acts 1:20. The Bible was their daily bread that kept them going. God's rescue plan—his good news—is sometimes called 'salvation'.

You will need: loaves of sliced white bread; milk; cups; food colouring; thin paint brushes or cotton buds; toaster (optional).

Print off a range of short Bible verses from the Old Testament about God's rescue (do a search on 'salvation'). See www.biblegateway.com

Fill cups a quarter full of milk then add a few drops of food colouring to each one—have as many colours as you can. Paint the verses on to the bread and also decorate the verse.

Learn and eat the bread verse! You might want to toast the bread before you eat it.

Talk about which Bible encouragement might have helped the disciples and also why each chose the verse they did? How might it be good news for their friends?

10. SETTING OUT WITH GOOD NEWS

Finally the day of Pentecost arrived. The way the Holy Spirit came took them by surprise as the wind blew, the room shook, the flames appeared over their heads and they received the gift of speaking in other languages. They were quite literally blown away and blown out on to the streets to share the good news about Jesus. The church was born and began to spread around the world.

This activity involves constructing and playing a game that is a simple version of what happened at Pentecost. It is a game for two players and could therefore be constructed in twos or as a family group.

You will need: the lid of a large shoe box (link with activity 5 which uses the bottom part of the shoe box); a landscape map of the world the same size as the lid; four wooden blocks; 13 chickpeas; paints; an apple corer/screwdriver; straws.

Cut the landscape world map to fit inside the shoebox lid. Using the apple corer or screwdriver to make twelve neat holes in the map and lid on the land masses of the map, spacing them out evenly but leaving the area of the Middle East free. Mount the lid on four wooden blocks, one at each of the four corners of the lid.

Paint the chickpeas: six green, six yellow and one red. When they are dry, arrange the green and yellow chickpeas in the centre of the map over the Middle East. These represent the core twelve of the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

The game starts as you drop the red chickpea (the Holy Spirit) on to the group of disciples, which will scatter them. Each player picks a colour. The aim for each of the two players is to use the straws to blow their colour of chickpea into the holes, taking turns with one blow each and not touching the chickpeas. The winner is the first who has all six chickpeas of their colour in the holes.

Talk about how the good news is still spreading around the world and about how we too are part of God's unchanged mission today. Sharing the good news is a wonderful gift to give people!

CELEBRATION

Gather everyone with some music.

Celebrate what everyone has been making and doing during the activities and begin to link it up to the story of the 10 days between Ascension and Pentecost.

Sing the song that they have learned in Activity 7.

Now tell the story of Ascension to Pentecost. Here's a possible outline.

Introduction: keep this speedy.

Christians have just celebrated a special day. It was SAMTSIRHC day. Show everyone this word written large on a big piece of card. Has anyone any idea what this special festival anniversary is about? Maybe tease out some silly answers but also slowly move towards the fact that it is CHRISTMAS written backwards. It is 'Christmas



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backwards' day. That explains everything, doesn't it!?

What happened at Christmas?

God sent Jesus to earth as a baby for us. Now on this 'Christmas backwards' day, God takes Jesus back to heaven from earth as a resurrected man. Because we often think of heaven as 'up there' and earth as 'down here', Christmas is seen as a descent, or going down, whereas 'Christmas backwards' day is a going up, or an ascent. Its proper name is Ascension Day.

Let's explore what happened that day.

Story

It was 40 days since that amazing Easter morning. Jesus had kept appearing to his friends: on the road, in a room, one to one, one to 500 and by a lake. He really was alive again. But gradually they began to realise that it was time to say goodbye. I wonder how they felt?

Briefly explore with the whole group how the disciples might have been feeling.

Jesus walked with the disciples to a place outside Jerusalem called Olive Hill (the Mount of Olives).

Act out 'climbing' to the top.

Then Jesus said: God has it all organised. I will come back as a king but not the sort of king you are expecting. I will be a king in people's hearts. So here's what you must do.

Now teach the following version of 'the Great Commission' with the suggested actions:

Go (point forward with one arm and finger outstretched)

Into all the world (draw a tiny circle with your outstretched finger and then make that circle bigger and bigger)

And share the good news (cup hands together and offer 'the contents' around to people left and right)

With everybody, everywhere (rapidly point to everyone in the whole group and beyond)

And I will be with you.

Just wait; stop in Jerusalem until you receive the promise.

Talk with the person you've come with about who you could share the good news of Jesus with. Maybe you could share with them your favourite story about Jesus, or invite them to your church, or ask them what they think about Jesus.

A song

Sing this song to the tune of London's burning. Try singing it as a round!

**Spirit burning, Spirit burning
Fell upon them, Fell upon them
Good news! Good news!
Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord.**

**Spirit burning, Spirit burning
Falls upon us, Falls upon us
Good news! Good news!
Jesus our Lord, Jesus our Lord.**

Pray the Lord's Prayer together. You may like to teach and include some simple actions. See www.pinterest.com/MessyChurchBRF under 'prayer'

Extra idea

You could bring the whole story together using the following simple poem to the tune of 'Two little dickie birds sitting on a wall...'. Maybe the congregation can learn the chorus.

**Eleven amazed disciples, sitting very still,
Listening to Jesus, up on Olive Hill.
'Time to go', says Jesus and then a cloud came down.
'I'll send the power that you need, just wait inside the town.'**

**Fade away Jesus, walk home friends
Come soon Spirit, the promise that he sends.**

**Jesus was in one place, in Israel where he came
But soon he will be everywhere, with all who call His name.**

**Fade away Jesus, walk home friends
Come soon Spirit, the promise that he sends.**

**Jesus had begun his work and showed us what is true
He went... but comes with power again. Over to me and you.**

**Fade away Jesus, walk home friends
Come soon Spirit, the promise that he sends.**

THE MEAL

Whatever style of meal you go for—high tea, buffet or hot food—try to include dishes from around the world as a reminder of the Christians family all over the globe.