

Messy Church at Home

With many vital community outreach opportunities curtailed by lockdown, Wesley Hall Methodist Church in Crookes, Sheffield has continued with its popular Messy Church sessions in a new way. Children and Families worker Claire Eaton writes:

Each month we focus on a person in the Bible, and I make up activity bags that can be picked up from the church in the week before the Saturday Zoom event (or delivered to families who are shielding) and used to explore the theme at home with their children. The bags include:

- An introduction to the story and the person we are focussing on, and discussion points to work through as a family
- Two or three crafts, with Bible memory verses
- Colouring pictures and puzzles
- A recipe or baking ideas
- An extra activity, like how to make a bird feeder
- A craft relating to an upcoming event such as Mother's Day
- Some info for parents about relevant parenting courses, or general encouragement for them on their journey (they're all doing a fantastic job!)
- Biscuits!
- A flyer for the next event, and Zoom details

I always make up twenty bags. Sometimes all of them go, sometimes I am left with two or three. Not all join us on Zoom but usually we have around fifteen families. When we meet on Zoom, we share what we've made, hear a story, and sing together. We consider our chosen person in the Bible, looking at their lives and how God helped them. We discuss how God helps us too, and the importance of faith and trust, and we look at how we can help others.

I also made Advent bags for each child within our church family, and have plans to make an Easter bag for them.

It's a great community outreach, especially while in lockdown. We advertise through our local community groups on social media as well as our own church website and posters on the church building. Some of our church members take bags for their neighbours and family members.

We have had some great feedback from the families. Those who pass Messy Church bags on to someone always tell me their friend or family member has really enjoyed it. Jo, a parent to two children age

5 and 8 years, whose family attend our church and are regular Messy Church goers, has this to say:

"It is so lovely to know that the children of the church aren't forgotten. Having our monthly Messy Church is always great fun and the kids love the excitement to see what Claire has prepared for us to make. Having a personal Advent bag was a great way for the children to know they are loved and thought of. We are really grateful for all the effort Claire has put in over the last few months."

Claire Eaton

