

LEADERSHIP OF MESSY CHURCH

BY LUCY MOORE, DIRECTOR OF MESSY CHURCH FOR BRF

Lucy Moore, Director of Messy Church for BRF, reflects on what is required of leaders of Messy Churches, one of the fastest growing fresh expressions of church in the UK. Whether you're considering starting a Messy Church, have been running one for years, or are simply keen to learn from the principles and values Messy Church embodies, we hope you find Lucy's insights helpful and thought-provoking.

Indulge me for a moment, as I ponder what a training course might look like for training up leaders of Messy Church. This exercise highlights something about the shape of the person, family and society that Messy Church could help bring about.

So read on for the details of your all-new imaginary Messy Church training course!

NOT JUST WHAT, BUT HOW

The most important element of this course is not what is learned but how it is learned because in church, the means can be as important as the end. Listening to formal lectures is at an absolute minimum, while personal study, apprentice-style learning, opportunities to engage experts in dialogue, as well as peer-led seminars are common.

Expect regular visits to Messy Churches in the area and also to other pioneering work in churches of many different denominations. The whole course is an opportunity to explore what the Bible and writings of Christians through recent and ancient history have to say about these subjects: theology applied en route. Recording and reflection will be in a form that suits the

personality of the student themselves, such as video journals, tweets, essays, bullet point lists, journals, poetry, photobooks, blogs or notes. An expert on theological reflection will advise and mentor throughout.

MODULES

- **What are you worth?** This will help you see how valuable you are in God's eyes so that you can let go of the props that stop you being the person you are meant to be. It will help you lead more effectively because you won't need to waste time proving how important you are to others.



- **Personal Christian disciplines** of prayer, Bible study, appreciation of God in the world around us, seeing him in others, making time for loving and serving God and people, praying as a family.
- **Hospitality.** A catering element with Basic Food Hygiene and a specialism in cake-baking and decoration, all in the context of hospitality as a Christian virtue.
- **Not everyone is the same as me** looks in detail at learning preferences, personality types, Enneagrams, Myers-Briggs or whatever it takes to convince us that church can be different for different people and that's ok.
- **Safe spaces** will include safeguarding training including First Aid, with an emphasis on exploring the importance of creating safe spaces of all sorts, writing risk assessments, creating sacred spaces, also exploring sacraments.
- **Social skills.** How to talk and listen to people of all ages and how to make friends with them appropriately. How and when to talk about faith. This course is led by extroverts, stand-up comedians, evangelists and principals of finishing schools.
- **Social networking.** How to use the web, Facebook, Twitter and so on. Led by teenagers.
- **The spirituality and development of children.** With significant lengths of time playing with children at local toddler groups, schools and sports clubs and learning from early years experts as well as theologians.
- **Helping people worship.** Working with actors and writers on effective communication, with storytellers on how to tell stories well, with directors on the importance of good stage management, with monks, nuns or others steeped in prayer on how to help others encounter God. Also architects will share what buildings can and can't do; there will be training in leading or enabling singing and using music in different ways in worship and how to work church sound systems without fear.
- **Money.** How to budget and fundraise, alongside the theology of generosity, grace and giving.
- **Graphic design and marketing techniques.** Basic rules to use for publicity and displays on walls or via projectors.
- **Generational needs.** Working with children, teenagers, adults and seniors to explore what they need at different stages of life and what their generational traits may be.
- **Servanthood.** A course on being the first to arrive and the last to leave, about footwashing, being transformed by the renewing of your mind, with hands-on training in lifting and carrying, washing up and specialist toilet / furniture / floor / wall / ceiling cleaning techniques.
- **How to encourage people.** A three line whip unmissable compulsory module.



- **Being creative.** A course exploring the creativity of God and techniques of releasing that creativity in ourselves and others, including 'how to play and why we play'. This course provides the opportunity to serve time as apprentices alongside scientists, artists, poets, engineers, dancers, business tycoons or actors. It will include techniques of searching the web and books for ideas.
- **Thinking big.** God and his Church through history – a course to equip leaders to have a bigger vision of how God has worked in the past so that they can look prophetically to the present and future.

What fun! I'd sign up for this like a shot.

The imaginary course suggests a good deal about the leaders we need in Messy Churches: people of God in their own personal and family lives, whose faith shines out of them brighter than any words can express but nonetheless trained to talk about their faith, equipped and determined to serve, not to be served, treating everyone equally but responsive to their differences, prepared to see where the Church is going rather than simply maintaining what has gone before, encouraging both team and congregations to grow in their own discipleship, able to wield a Bible, mop or digital projector with equal confidence ...

But it's fascinating to observe that while I can dream about wacky courses like the ones outlined above, in reality, Messy Church leaders don't appear to need specialist training. They are quietly getting on with leadership, drawing on skills learned from being human. 'We can do this!' is something we hear over and over again.

The course above is a blend of the extraordinary and the everyday and deliberately so, because God has given us the skills we need to lead through just getting on with life and learning on the job. A day's introduction to Messy Church to inspire them, the books to resource them, the website, network and regional coordinators to sustain them and

people are just getting on with it. How amazing that 'ordinary' lay people are effectively bringing in (currently approximately) 200,000 new people into churches each month and getting on with mission, evangelism, pastoral care and worship with so little formal training.

Leadership in this context appears to be 'open source', more akin to the spirit of Creative Commons than to creating an elite.

To me the present situation says something about what Mary sings about in Luke 1:46-56, about God turning the present order of things topsy turvy. We don't want to create a hierarchy of 'Messy Experts', 'the Chosen Messy Few' 'the Inner Messy Circle'. We simply need to let the priesthood of all believers respond to their calling to wash feet (and floors and faces and plates) and encourage, resource and inspire them on their way.

www.messychurch.org.uk



MESSY CHURCH...

Is a way of being church for families involving fun.

Is a church, not a craft club, that helps people encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Is found across the world.

Has values which are about being Christ-centred, for all ages, based on creativity, hospitality and celebration.

