Messy Money

Reflections on giving in Messy Church

Giving is an important Christian principle and if Messy Church really is church rather than a club or outreach activity, then consideration needs to be given as to how we introduce this principle.

Of course Messy Church can be demanding on resources and does require funding from somewhere but if Messy Church is to grow disciples of Christ, our giving needs to be less about covering the costs and more about giving back to our generous God. Messy Church aims to meet people where they are without the expectation of anything in return and also models hospitality as one of its core values, therefore, we need to introduce God as a generous, loving God and nurture families to grow in relationship with him because it is through this relationship that they will feel that they belong and eventually will want to give something back, financially or otherwise.

How do we currently give at Messy Church?

Through visiting Messy Churches across the diocese, it seems that giving currently happens in the following ways:

Voluntary Donations Many Messy Churches collect voluntary donations, usually in some form of fun, creative or handmade container. Typically the container is left somewhere for donations rather than passed around and this tends to be near the door.	**Things to consider:** • Why are you collecting donations? Is it clear to everyone? • Think about the wording that you use. Saying something like *'donations for craft materials'* suggests that the money is just to cover the cost of Messy Church.
Donations for Food Some Messy Churches ask for donations towards the cost of food. This could be as a voluntary amount or a suggested donation per family and is usually taken through a basket placed in the area that meals are served.	**Things to consider:** • Messy Church models hospitality and eating together is a vital part of that. What does charging for food/offering it for free say to families about God and the church?
A charge or suggested cost per family A few Messy Churches ask for a payment or a suggested donation per family to attend.	**Things to consider:** • What other forms of church ask people to pay to come in? • Could Messy Church be viewed as a club if you pay on entry? • Which says more about God: a charge or an open church?

How can we explore giving at Messy Church further?

Typically, giving in Messy Church is quite low but this is probably because little emphasis is placed on it and families that attend are unchurched and perhaps not familiar with the Christian principle of giving.

One way that this principle could be introduced is by exploring "giving" as a Messy Church theme.

Some session outlines have already been written that may help you:

- There is a session outline called "Money Matters" in the book "Messy Church 3" by Lucy Moore.
  Visit *www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-church-3* for more details and to buy.

- The material produced for Messy Month, July 2013 is on the theme of "Generosity" and is available to download for free here *www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-month-2013*

- There is a session outline based on the widows offering (Luke 21:1 -4) in Get Messy! Magazine, January – April 2016. For more information and to buy Get Messy! Magazine, visit *www.messychurch.org.uk/resources/get-messy*

- I recommend the book Messy Hospitality by Lucy Moore which includes a session outline exploring how offering hospitality gives back to you far more than you give out. See more details here *www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/messy-hospitality-changing-communities-through-fun-food-friendship-and-faith*

Other things you could try:

As well as financial giving, there are many other ways that a Messy Church can be generous and families can share what they have. Some suggestions include:

The Can-Can: An initiative from the Messy Church of Hadley and Wellington near Telford at http://bit.ly/2ckDuMy

Regular Donations to a Foodbank: This could simply be asking people to bring an item each month to be donated. Messy Church aims to build a Christ Centered Community and supporting local charities is a good way to do this.

Toy and Clothing Collections: As children grow, can you encourage families to donate used toys and clothes? Could you facilitate some kind of "Swap Shop" or are there local charities or projects that you can donate items to?

Sponsor a Family Overseas: Collect donations to support a family overseas. You could theme a Messy Church meeting around the country that you are supporting and families can see how their donation is being used. Christian Aid *www.christianaid.org.uk* and The Mother's Union *www.mothersunion.org* have ideas for donating in this way and produce many All Age resources that may help you to prepare a Messy Church.

Giving Plate: This is a plate that a family takes away from Messy Church and fills with a gift such as a homemade cake or some biscuits, to give to another family. The idea is that the plate continues to travel around the community and people are giving to and sharing with one another. Some ideas for verses to accompany the plate can be found here *https://uk.pinterest.com/explore/giving-plate/*

Volunteering: Could you encourage families to be generous with their time? There are Messy Churches that have taken part in community litter picking events and volunteered at their foodbank. You could also encourage people of all ages to be part of your Messy Church team.