

Feedback from Positively Rural – Family engagement 18/1/2022

Feedback/comments from chat following messy church input

I find posters to local schools/village websites/ parent Facebook pages really effective for advertising events.

I communicate directly with regular families via a WhatsApp group. Good to circulate pics, ask for food contributions or other parent help

We've just got a MC email address and phone number. Previously we weren't very pro-active in keeping in proper contact with our regulars.

Due to GDPR, we ask new families for contact details on a pro forma, inc permission to add to WhatsApp.

Talked about how a team to help is essential (obviously) and not sure how you begin if you don't have that. Also - pondered how it's tricky sometimes to make activities intergenerational and suitable for adults too. In the MC I help run, the adults want to chat and drink tea (and why not?!) rather than engage with the activities.

Blessing of Covid is that it's encouraged us to use technology to work collaboratively. People in our group talked about planning together over zoom - one church planning each month and sharing ideas with the rest. Bulk-buying and sharing of resources. Circuit youtube channel with messy church resources to back up the messy church in a bag.

Positive outside works mostly all the time ,safer Negative loss of contact with families

Our breakout strongly identified the benefits of small churches working together to mount good quality faith celebrations, within denominations or ecumenically.

Also talked about working with other churches, cross fertilisation, children and families going between two different church events

Yes, during covid, we found we could only have contact with the families for whom we had information about where they lived. We're a lot cannier about asking for contact details now!

Due to closure of several local churches, ecumenical occasional events on bigger scale help broadcast our presence, so families know we are alive and kicking!! I call these splash events and they draw new families

Being able to use Zoom for planning avoids travel in Rural areas

Love zoom planning!

children did not find zoom very interactive.

Real strengths in working ecumenically, planning over zoom to help busy people, people love to come out to something especially now

we talked about the different events we have held outside, and the value of animals in various ways

Messy church bags taken out during covid.

Recognised need to work across areas and share resources

Having something else to invite them to later - agree is key. We've just started making a semi regular family newsletter. Dates for Messy Church, a games night and a family film night planned.

posters/ flyers/invites for upcoming dates (several dates ahead if possible) always available at each meeting.

Feedback/comments from chat following Forest Church input

We valued the wisdom of looking at our context and seeing where God is already at work.

Reassured in our group that we can "start small"

Started by going for walks together and then expanded on it. Promoting spirituality - 'sit spots' - find a place to sit and look and listen quietly.... return and reflect together

We need to have confidence to try new things and take risks

Community allotment - outreach

Story of using church outside space during lockdown as a creative space which engaged people passing by and gave opportunity for conversation.

The URC Annual Church Returns actually include Messy Church and Forest Church in their counts of people attending worship - quite pleased with that :)

we spoke about how the conversation around a fire can be deep

We started doing outdoor family church events because seniors said they felt closest to God outdoors/by natural phenomena as 'THIN' moments. we hoped those same seniors would engage with families...a work in progress.

"We don't see them at church on a Sunday" "No, and we don't see you at church on a Wednesday evening either - how wonderful that we can all worship God in the time and ways that suit us best"

Caroline - yes I would agree that coming to faith/growing in faith is often very communal. Thank you for the presentation.

There is Muddy Church which has some ideas for worship outdoors.

Yes, I've done the MSM course. It's really helpful. Helps you to see the possibilities, new ways of thinking about mission. We have show cased Messy activities at Village Fair and School summer fair.

In our group we talked about outdoor spaces and having a focal point - having a presence

Like the idea of a "pop up" Messy Church.

Recommended books

Rachel Summers' book 'Wild Worship' also wild Advent/Lent. Very easy to use

Other links

Messy Church Goes Wild (outdoors / environmental): <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/goeswild>
www.messychurch.org.uk

Messy church email - jane.butler@brf.org.uk

A Voyage of Discovery – discipleship <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/deepening-discipleship>

Magazine full of stories and session ideas <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resources/get-messy-magazine>
<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2021/14-may/books-arts/book-reviews/being-interrupted-reimagining-the-church-s-mission-from-the-outside-in-by-al-barrett-and-ruth-harley>

Email for Caroline Hewlett carolinejhewlett19@gmail.com

Future events

Wednesday 27th April 2022 10-11.30am Wellbeing and Mental health. Looking at general mental health issues in rural communities.

Thursday 14th July 2022 1-2.30pm Rural/urban development of spaces & stories.