



# Church doesn't have to be neat and tidy!

Messy Church is church for all ages. It is a way of being "church" for families, especially those who are not part of a



church. The focus is on building a Christ-centred community that is welcoming and fun. From its 2004 beginning in England, 3,800 Messy Churches currently exist in over 20 countries. **Lucknow Presbyterian Church** has been hosting Messy Church for a year, and the program continues to grow. Their next step will be Messy Vintage — a Messy Church for seniors living in retirement homes.

**O**n the fourth Wednesday of every month, the basement of Lucknow Presbyterian Church in Lucknow, ON bustles with Messy Church participants who range in age from under one to over eighty. Everyone energetically engages in activities that encourage an encounter with Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

In November 2016, the Rev. David Chung, now the minister at St. Timothy's in Ajax, was our minister. He and others from Lucknow attended a Messy Church event in Stratford, where the seed was planted. Student minister, Nicholas Metivier's leadership made Messy Church a reality last July during his summer in Lucknow. The Lucknow United and the Community Christian Reformed Churches heard about Messy Church and are now sharing in this ministry.

When you join us for Messy Church, you'll be welcomed at the registration table where you'll pick up your passport and be introduced to the Bible theme. During the first hour, you'll participate in as many as you like of the 10

creative activities that will have you using your hands and your mind. These stations are led by welcoming volunteers and include crafts, games and prayers that help to unfold the Bible story.

Playing a cooperative game helps transition from hands-on activities to the Celebration.

During the fifteen-minute Celebration, you'll sing songs, and as we explore the Bible Story, it's likely that you'll be asked to participate in some way.

You'll finish the evening with a delicious meal and warm hospitality. Participants aren't in a rush to leave. In good weather, some cross the street to the park to continue to socialize.

Attendance at Messy Church in 2017 ranged from 32 to 58 people. New people came each month. During the summer, vacationers, exchange students and cottagers joined us. Youth Group members are among the volunteers. Two members of our Messy Church attended the 2017 national conference in Toronto.

God calls all of us to be involved in mission and evangelism. Lucknow is a small, rural congregation with a vacant pulpit. We are amazed at how the Holy Spirit is moving among us, in the ecumenical volunteers, in the participants and in the community.

A planning group member says, "Messy Church has a positive influence on us, as volunteers, renewing and reconnecting us with our own faith through prayer and Bible study."

We're learning to trust and obey God on this Messy Church journey. Through creativity, hospitality and celebration, all ages are given opportunities to come closer to God and experience his amazing love in Jesus.

*Written by Messy Church Committee Members,  
Lucknow Presbyterian Church*

## Read: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

### Reflect

In our rapidly changing society, busy work and extra-curricular schedules mean that more and more families struggle to attend church services on Sunday mornings. Our congregations today are being challenged to reach these families: but how?

The apostle Paul was more than willing to step outside of the norms of his culture and upbringing to share the gospel. When Paul said that he became all things to all people, he did not mean that he compromised his convictions or become someone he was not. Rather, he was instructing other believers to meet people where they were at for the sake of building relationships and sharing the love of Christ.

As disciples of Christ living out our faith in today's world, we are being asked to do the same as Paul's fellow believers were asked to do. We must find new and creative ways of sharing the gospel message and the Messy Church movement is one way that the Holy Spirit has been guiding congregations across the globe to minister to families who might not otherwise hear this message.

Lucknow Presbyterian Church's story is an inspiring example of how small, rural congregations can build strong and meaningful connections with their community. All it takes is a little bit of boldness and courage to reach others.

### Discuss

1. Jesus encountered people in the course of their everyday lives (in the market, outside the synagogue, on the shores of the Lake of Galilee). Each time he did, people's lives were transformed. Where do you encounter people in the course of your everyday life? How could you use these encounters as opportunities to share Christ's love?

2. One of the reasons Messy Church is reaching so many families is that it is fun and joyful. How might your congregation incorporate more joy and fun into the activities you are doing?
3. Can you identify one activity that your congregation could create to welcome people that are not currently attached to your congregation? Can you identify one activity in your community that your congregation could join, participate in or support?

### Sing

#755 – Go ye, go ye into the world

#765 – We've a story to tell the nations

### Prayer Focus

Please pray for Lucknow Presbyterian Church and for Messy Church programs across the country. May these programs continue to reach families and bless their communities. Pray for congregations to be inspired to reach out to neighbours in new and creative ways and to seek fresh expressions of church. Pray for guidance in programs that are being developed, and for strength and encouragement for the volunteers that bring these new forms of ministry to life.

### Pray

Loving and Holy God, you call us to reach out to others, showing your love and kindness wherever we are. We give you thanks for the communities we call home and ask that you would use us to bring your blessings to those living around us. Help us to discern new ways of opening our doors and hearts, so that all might come to know the saving grace offered through Christ Jesus.