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2014 has been another exciting year for the growth and development of Messy Church in Australia. The number of Messy Church expressions has continued to increase, many Messy Churches have continued to grow and there has been much work behind the scenes to “scaffold” the on-going development of Messy Church in Australia. One unforeseen, yet pleasing, feature of 2014 has been an upsurge in people keen to undertake formal research into Messy Church in Australia. Whilst in 2014 there has been much to celebrate, there remains much to look forward to for 2015!

Wishing you a very Messy Christmas,

Chris.

Australian Messy Church Survey

Thank you so much to all who responded to the first ever Australian Messy Church survey! As anticipated, there is much diversity in the Messy Church expressions across the country in terms of size, shape and situation. Whether a particular Messy Church is small, large or in-between, the reality is that it is a blessing for all those that participate in it. Whilst each Messy Church expression is unique, based on the survey responses we can say with some confidence that the typical Messy Church in Australia meets monthly on a Sunday afternoon with an attendance of around 50 people, of whom around 50% are adults (18+) and of whom 50% (of all ages) do not attend any other congregation, and has a core planning team of 4-5 people.

Snippets

Thought you might be interested in a couple of photos we took during our last Messy Church. The theme was “the armour of God” from Eph 6:10-18. We made the armour out of silver cardboard and foil. Each piece of armour was named. At the end they all dressed up for the worship time. It was one of the best evenings we’ve had and everyone, including the parents, took part with joy.

Miriam, Kincumber (NSW)



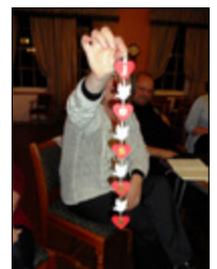
Our Messy Church is going well with superb backing of our Supply Minister Julianne who last Monday did a home blessing for a rather fragile woman and her three small kids. Then she mentioned Messy Church to them and they all enjoyed the session and want to come again. It was great Julianne had something appropriate to invite them to!

Nancy, Bendigo (Victoria)



At the start of the year (Australia Day Sunday) we had a Messy Backpacks with the blessing of backpacks for the new school/kinder/office etc. year. It was very well received, and all the children brought along their backpacks for a blessing during the worship time. I can recommend this!

Pamela, Buderim (Queensland)



NB: If you would like an outline of the Messy Backpack program, please email chris.barnett@ctm.uca.edu.au



Messy Church

Creating Community

Having been asked for my thoughts on building a strong Messy Church community, I am struggling a bit to define what it is that makes our Messy Church in Yate a strong community. I know it has a lot to do with having a strong Messy Church team, and I think I can also identify three principles that help to answer this question:

- longevity
- time
- people above programmes

Alison Thurlow (read the [full article here](#))

Messy Meals – Food for Thought



We all know that the family meal is an endangered species in most homes nowadays, and therefore Messy Church's inclusion of this element is distinctly countercultural. But at the same time most of us also recognise the huge value of sitting down to eat together, as an intergenerational community learns to listen to as well as share with each other. It's not without good reason that most of the major religions in the world have

opted to pass on the heart of their faith story via some sort of festival meal, where all ages are gathered and all contributions welcome. If we are serious about nurturing faith and growing disciples in Messy Church, then the sit-down meal is definitely one of the first places to explore what this means in practice. Let's keep it on the menu!

Martin Payne (read the [full article here](#))

Messy Church

An Artist's Perspective

The experience I've had with my Messy Church days reminds me of a course I did in Art Therapy in 1995 at the Manley Park Centre. Some of the art I did there helped me work through visually what I couldn't discuss verbally. Picture making was a form of release from stress and gave you a chance to create Art in a group. You came away feeling energised and ready to face the world - it had a cathartic effect very similar to the mood I feel as I leave church after painting, modelling or printing on truly Messy Church Days!

Andy Bax (read the [full article here](#))

Messy Nativity Sheep Trails



As Messy Churches all over the world celebrate Christmas, many creative ideas are coming to fruition. One of these fantastic ways of engaging local communities is through a [Messy Church Nativity Sheep Trail](#). Why not share your creativity via the [Messy Nativity website](#) or the [Messy Church Australia Facebook page](#)?

Get Messy! Writers needed

Writers are required for the excellent [Get Messy!](#). The next team of expert writers is being sought and it would be wonderful to have an Australian voice (or two included). To find out more, [click here](#)



Messy Church International Conference

May 16-18, 2016

An unmissable opportunity for all those involved in or interested in developing Messy Church in their country to come together to share good practice and discover the latest developments in the fields of Messy mission and discipleship. Most importantly it is a chance to meet the Messy Church team and other practitioners from across the world. For all of us it will be a joy to seek God's help with the way forward in our different nations and to make sure that, as it grows, it remains a global interdependent network based on godly friendship and mutual respect. For more information, [click here](#).

Introducing Messy Church

Looking for an easy way to give people an idea of what Messy Church looks like?

This [clip from Highton](#) (Victoria) is an excellent introduction to the reality of Messy Church for smaller congregations.

