

IT'S a concept that started in our diocese – and has now spread around the world!

'Messy Church' began as a children's after-school club at St Wilfrid's, Cowplain. It combines games, art and craft, food and worship, giving children the chance to learn about faith in a fun way each month.

One of the organisers, Lucy Moore, wrote about the idea in her book, *Messy Church*, which was published by Bible Reading Fellowship last year.

Now churches across the UK – and as far afield as Canada and New Zealand – are running their own versions of Messy Church.

So this month, those who do Messy Church will get together for the first 'Messy Fiesta' – a chance to compare craft ideas and recipes, to celebrate, and to examine problems and opportunities they have in common.

It happens at St Wilfrid's Church from 10am-3pm on



Messy Church goes global



Messy Church at St Wilfrid's includes both art and craft (left) and food (above) as vital parts of the experience

November 10, and includes slots for demonstrating craft ideas that work, talking about how God might develop the concept further, and eating a

'Messy Lunch' together.

"Isn't it wonderful that so many families who otherwise wouldn't set foot in a church are coming happily every month?" said Lucy.

"There's lots to give thanks to God for, and to look forward to, as we do this messy outreach with families, and there are lots of new ideas, and lots of issues cropping up in common. That's why we thought it would be good to share all this so that we are energised, enthused and equipped to carry on.

"This will be a very hands-on celebratory day, and we'd love to see people who've been running a Messy Church for years, or those who are still thinking about it."

Other Messy Fiestas are likely to be held in other parts of the UK dur-

ing next spring and summer, with another get-together in Cowplain on July 12.

You can book for the November date in Cowplain on www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk or by ringing 01865 319704 and asking for Martin Gee. The November day costs £10 each, and the 2008 dates will cost £15.

Messy Church at St Wilfrid's draws together dozens of children who learn by choosing which art and craft activities they'd like to do, rather than by listening to adults talking. It's run by a team of

volunteers who set up 10 or more tables, each featuring a different art or craft activity relating to the overall theme.

Activities relating to 15 of those themes are explored in Lucy's book, *Messy Church* (pictured below), which was published by Bible Reading Fellowship last November. It costs £8.99 and is available on www.brf.org.uk or from Christian bookshops.

A new book with some more ideas, entitled *Messy Church, Volume Two: Ideas for Discipling a Christ-centred Community*, will be published next May.

Messy Church was also featured on the DVD produced by the Fresh Expressions team, who aim to find new ways of being Church for the 21st century.

Messy Church next meets at St Wilfrid's Church on November 15 and December 20.



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Christmas is known as a time for giving. From our childhood years we enjoy the excitement of receiving gifts, not because of their monetary value, or greed, but simply it's because someone has remembered us. 'Father Christmas' may have delivered the gifts, but they were given by a favourite aunt, our parents or friends.

When we grew older we also learned that it was good to give as well as receive, and we would save our pocket money and learned the joy that mum's smile could bring when she opened her gift. It could be the central theme of the Christmas story of Mary and Joseph looking for somewhere safe where their child could be born that helps us to think of those in need. It could be our understanding of the baby Jesus as a gift from God himself, or the gifts brought by the wise men and the humble shepherds but we certainly understand that Christmas is not only a time of giving to each other, but as a time of giving to those less fortunate. There are many charities that appeal for funds at this time of year because it is a time when folk are a little more generous, take your time and search around, which will benefit from your thoughtfulness this Christmas time?

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What one person can do

the last word

by Canon Nick Ralph
 Social responsibility adviser

She started by describing the Pontius Puddle cartoon, which is reproduced here.

The implication, of course, is that if all those individuals would work together then they certainly would be able to make more of a difference both to the peace of the world but also those in need. This is the basis of all political action.

If we really want to make a difference, we have to get together with like-minded others, and make our voice count, election or no election.

AT the recent diocesan conference, many of us were shocked into deeper thought and action by the knowledge, expertise and passion of a young woman that was quite out of proportion to her size.

This was Dr Sabina Alkire, an ordained economist who has recently come to the UK from Harvard to head the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.

She is an expert in assessing the real progress – or lack of it – being made towards achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, which include the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal primary education, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases by 2015. You can see them all on www.un.org/millenniumgoals.