



## Get Messy: Aussie Add-Ons



Welcome to Get Messy Aussie Add-Ons. In our third edition Beth Barnett will be exploring how we use the bible in Messy Church and our guest contributor, Catherine Hingley, shares a story from her Messy Church's garden.

We have resources for the experience and celebration times from

- Eph 2:12-20 Walls and houses of hospitality
- Matt 25:1-12 Share your light while you can!
- John 14:15-27 Peace and comfort

### Being Messy - Being Church



#### Australasian Messy Church Gathering

6 pm 16 Feb 2018 to  
3.30 pm 18 Feb 2018

Uniting Church Centre for Ministry,  
29 College Cresc, Parkville,  
Melbourne.

Presenters will include Lucy Moore and a host of brilliant New Zealand and Australian Practitioners as well as interactive learning and networking. Places are limited to the first 100 registrations and cost includes meals and all resources needed.

Conference Cost  
AUD \$185 p/p  
Early bird AUD \$160 p/p  
If paid before 31 Oct 2017  
Register at:

We are also thrilled to announce that the inaugural Australasian Messy Church Gathering 'Being Messy, Being Church' will be held in Melbourne on the 16th to 19th February in 2018. Our very special guest speaker, Lucy Moore will share her valuable experience as we explore what it means to be and do Messy Church in Australia. Save the date, bookings will open in the next few months.

For anyone interested in going deeper with their team: Messy Church Intergen communities of practice are open to Messy Church leaders and core teams in Victoria and Tasmania, offering a set of 5 monthly sessions exploring each of the Core Messy Church Values - All age, Christ Centred, Hospitality, Celebration, Creativity.

Register at <https://jointhedots.joinateam.org/start/>

or contact Kate Kumnick  
phone: 0413180991 or via email: [kate.kumnick@vcce.org.au](mailto:kate.kumnick@vcce.org.au)

# Messy Church



by [Beth Barnett](#)

## Bigger bites of the bible? Bring it on !!

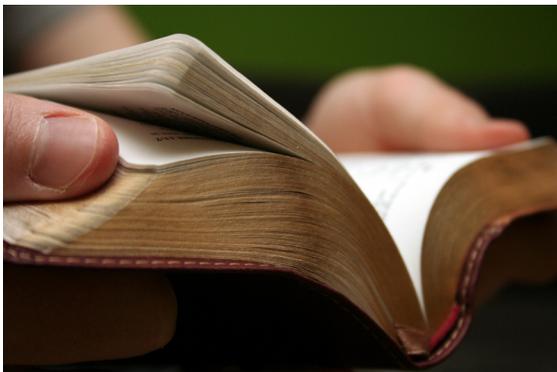
### Reviewing the way we offer the Bible in Messy church

Ever noticed your team or yourself asking 'What's the Bible Story for this session?' I hope so. I hope when you are thinking about your gathering, the word Bible is right there in the mix of your important and impassioned questions.

And I hope you aren't tripping up on the 'close, but no cigar' question of 'What's the theme for the session?'

No really. Don't think in themes. Think Bible. Trust me, you can get themes at the supermarket, the bargain store, the party supply place, the craft shop, and Pinterest. And children can get them at school; and grown ups can get themes at parties and charity events and fundraisers. But it's unlikely they are going to get any Bible there. Besides, the Bible is awesome –it's interesting, multi-layered, tricky, earthy, mind-boggling, mind-blowing, heart-stirring. The Bible is about real things.

But there is a trend in children and families ministry, and in Messy Church resources too. We did an audit of the bible texts used across the Messy Church



resources. And we found a trend to be cautious and conservative and constrained about the Bible. We might look playful and creative in our Bible-ing – look at all the craft and colour and chaos! But behind the noise and mess and laughter, when it comes to serving up portions of Bible, we have been not as adventurous as would be consistent with the general disposition of Messy church.

When it comes to the Bible, we tend to stick to the gospels, and few classic Old Testament stories, and just occasionally, we might pick a pithy verse from an epistle. But not very often and - oh dear, how embarrassing - just a sentence or two, out of context!

What are we thinking? We know this is no way to read the Bible honourably or fruitfully. This is what we get frustrated by when atheists pluck a verse out of context with no attention being paid to genre or whose voice is speaking or

# Bigger Bites of the Bible

the historical political situation or whether the text is being ironic or comedic or subversive or reflecting on the past or directing future action. There is a great difference between a command and a love song. Between the moralizing of the Deuteronomist\* and the rough working class humour of twinkle-eyed Jesus. Dicing the Bible up into such small pieces, and treating them like they are all the same, and makes for misunderstanding, and makes for boring.

What makes for better? We know what is better! To read from across the full spectrum of genres – digging in with the confidence that all the text is narrative in some form – there is always story!

And to read larger chunks – read whole chapters – read two stories together that help us find what each is saying – for example, the story of David and his band of outlaws eating the bread set aside for worship, and the Story of Jesus' disciples eating the grain in the fields on the Sabbath. Or reading the story of a city of compassionate Samaritans in 2 Chronicles 28 binding the wounds and taking the beaten up Judeans back to safety on their donkeys, along with the parable Jesus tells in Luke 10 of a compassionate Samaritan, tending a beaten up Jew. Or reading two different versions of the 'same' story – like Jesus' last meal with his friends – across all four gospels and 1 Corinthians. Let's feel the tensions, let's be upfront about the different perspectives and voices that bring us these texts. Let's not strip all the muscles and nerves from the bones of the Bible. Let's let the Bible live.

When we think of the Bible as story we are able to take in much larger armfuls. There is a thinking that supposes that those who have scant knowledge of the Bible need small, easily understandable chunks with a readily accessible meaning. But we know that we appreciate and understand a moment in a movie more when we know the whole plot. That the sub-plots make the whole story more interesting, more intriguing and more meaningful.

To think that simplifying a story makes it more 'accessible' is to misjudge what stories are in human experience. Stories can carry whole worlds of meaning in them, to be unpacked over a lifetime.

So let's be brave – in fact let's be sensible and wise and let's be ethical in our Bible engagements in Messy Church.

# Bigger Bites of the Bible

## \* Resources that take bigger bites

In this issue of Get Messy: Aussie Add Ons in September explore a 10 verse section from Ephesians which tells a dramatic story of tearing down a wall of division and reworking it to build a place for God's presence. In October we tackle the tricky apocalyptic parable of the ten girls waiting for the arrival of a groom. In November we explore a long section of Jesus' 'last supper' speech to his disciples.

Another source worth exploring for more robust bible binges, in the Authorised Mess project which is freely available for download here <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/resource/authorised-mess>

This resource takes a whole book of the Bible in one session. This is great for orientating your community to the big picture context of the book – through your Messy Church gathering and sets up perfectly for encouraging households and individuals to read through the whole book during the month following, perhaps meeting up with others to explore and share and discuss along the way.

\*Deuteronomist – a name given to personify one of the traditions that have formed some of the texts of the Old Testament, including Joshua, Nehemiah and Ezra.

## Stories from the Church: Living Parable

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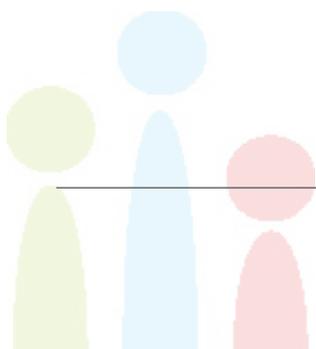
If you were to pop over to my place on a Sunday afternoon it's likely that you would be invited in to share in our little neighbourhood church gathering. Our house is small: just enough room for a few local families that meet regularly and space to welcome some other neighbours along the way. Lately we have been dwelling on some of the parables that Jesus told especially those in Mathew 13.

We have explored the garden looking for seeds and dug up the compost heap, as we unpacked the meaning of kingdom fertility in the parable of the sower. We have made treasure maps and found hidden treasure in the sandpit as we have wondered what it means to seek the Kingdom above all else...and most recently we have wondered: if Jesus was always speaking to the crowds in parables how do Christ's words continue to speak to us and our communities today? What is the fresh kingdom parable for our neighbourhood today? These wonderings involved a messy and imaginative interaction with some empty match boxes.....

Dwelling on the words of Mathew 13, we explored our ideas through the tactile and visual medium of seeds, feathers, sand, beads, fabric, tissue, glitter etc. This opened up a rich landscape of possibilities as children and adults retold and reinterpreted the parables for themselves and their community. The children lead the way, initially more adept at this kind of exploration, but as the adults warmed up some surprising insights and understandings were emerged for them too.



We especially became alive to the way the Kingdom can “zap” us in surprising ways even through the seemingly ordinary things in life. And there were a host of different ways that we took these parable insights into our lives in the weeks ahead....



# September



by [Stacey Wilson](#)

## Walls that divide or shelter?



**What this is:** Messy Church experience



**Where it's used:** Messy church



**What's needed:** Mixed lego bricks, lego figurines (use as big a variety as possible, even yoda!)



**Time:** 10-15 min



**Bible focus/theme:** Ephesians 2:12-22



*Encourage the table to use the lego to build some walls.*

*Join your walls together to create a X*

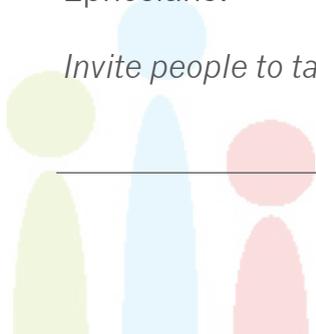
*Have each person on the table to choose a lego figurine to represent themselves and use these to divide your group according to eye colour or hair colour, football team, clothing colour etc.*

The text for today talks about some of the differences that were challenging to the early church: jews and gentiles, slaves and free people, wealthy and poor, ethnic background.

*Invite people to talk about some of the ways we build walls between each other, the things that separate us now.*

In what way are these divisions similar to those that were present for the Ephesians?

*Invite people to take the walls down and use them to build a house.*



# Walls that divide or shelter?

We are now part of a new household, the household of God. We will need lots of things to make this a place of welcome, love and safety- for example tables where hospitality can happen.

I wonder what kind of things we might need to make our house a home?



*Use the lego to build the things we will need for the household of God.*



*If you have access to enough lego it will be good to put each house to one side on display.*

## Ephesians 2:12-22



**What this is:** Bible engagement



**Where it's used:** Messy church celebration time



**What's needed:**

- Youtube clip and data projector (Optional) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvIWQyvEI38>
- Images of famous walls
- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/13-famous-walls-around-the-world-photos\\_us\\_5810eec2e4b02b1d9e644643](http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/13-famous-walls-around-the-world-photos_us_5810eec2e4b02b1d9e644643)
- 4 cardboard cartons (fridge/washing machine/TV screen boxes)
- Brown or Grey or neutral coloured A4 paper
- Gluesticks
- Thick permanent markers
- Glue pieces of brown or grey A4 paper in a brick pattern covering the boxes on both sides.



**Time:** 15 minutes



**Bible focus/theme:** Eph 2:12-22

This may be time consuming if you are inexperienced, so here are a few tips to speed things along.

- Get a team of people to do this as an activity
- Don't be too concerned about symmetry of getting things to line up. Most real stone walls have odd shapes and directions
- Divide into 'gluers' with gluestick who quickly apply three long stripes of glue to each 'brick' and 'stickers' who take the pre-glued bricks and stick them on the cardboard wall.
- When the walls are done, the gluers can check to see if a little extra glue under some of the bricks is needed.

When the walls are complete, write the text on the stones, using both sides of the walls. Alternate verses on either side of the wall, numbering them clearly.

# Ephesians 2:12-22

## Breaking walls of division & building spaces of hospitality & shelter

### Summary

Ephesians Chapter 2 tells the story of Jesus breaking down the wall that divides people as enemies, and rebuilding them

### Connect

As you can see – we have an enormous wall here.

This wall is a model of the largest, most effective wall ever made.

I wonder if together we can guess which wall this is.

Perhaps we can try brainstorming some really large, famous walls.

To get our imaginations going, let's start with this:

Play youtube clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvIWQyvEI38>

\*Ad for Broadband network, in which a child doing their homework asks their dad why the Great Wall of China was built. The Dad is caught unprepared and makes up a story (during the time of Emperor Nasi Goreng, to keep the rabbits out).

*Let this spark suggestions of the Great Wall of China; the Rabbit Proof fence (Western Australia).*

- Let the stories that people have heard about these structures emerge too ...
- Can the Great Wall of China be seen from space?
- Why did Australia need a rabbit fence?
- What other famous (or infamous) story is associated with the Rabbit Proof Fence.
- Who has built political walls -Berlin Wall and Palestine
- What does Trump hope to achieve by suggesting a wall between Mexico and the US?

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/13-famous-walls-around-the-world-photos\\_us\\_5810eec2e4b02b1d9e644643](http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/entry/13-famous-walls-around-the-world-photos_us_5810eec2e4b02b1d9e644643)

### Context

Our reading from the Bible today is from a book called Ephesians. It was named after the second largest and most important city in the Roman Empire in the first century, in the years after Jesus' visible human life in Israel.

Rome was the Capital and Ephesus was the next largest city, kind of like Sydney is to Melbourne (or the other way round) Or Los Angeles is to New York.

And like many cities in the ancient world that were within marching distance or rowing distance of Rome, it had endured a turbulent history, being conquered and resettled and re-conquered and resettled and then conquered and resettled and re-conquered and resettled by the various rising and falling superpowers.

# Ephesians 2:12-22

So this left a mix of races, cultures, traditions and religions in Ephesus. Everywhere in the ancient world, cities had walls – to show who was in and who was out. Who belonged and would be protected by the city. And of course to keep unwanted forces out.

Ephesus had a long large wall. A wall that went all the way around the city.

But in chapter 2 of Ephesians we here a story about a different kind of wall.

This wall is the wall that divides people, separates them. segregates them, and makes them into enemies.

Let's see how that works.

*Invite some volunteers to help you set up the wall through the middle of your gathering, dividing your group in two.*

Look what's happened – we're separated by this wall. Now one side can't see the other side.

You know that everyone on the other side of the wall, are friends, that you belong together, that they are all only as different to you as they are to one another.

But sometimes, when there are walls, we start to wonder if the people on the other side aren't up to something? That they might behind that wall for a reason.

This is exactly the kind of situation that our Bible Reading has in mind. When humans have built walls and become enemies or even just strangers to one another.

After we have read from the wall, we are going to do the thing that it describes Jesus doing – breaking down the dividing wall and rebuilding it into a place of hospitality where God's presence can be known.

## **Content**

Read Eph 2:12-22 with those on each side of the walls, reading the parts of the passage that are in front of them. Take your time with this as a community. The object isn't to rush through the reading, but to take it slowly and reflect along the way. Reading corporately, and switching from side to side of the wall will help to slow it down. Be affirming of this measured pace, reminding the community that there are no points or rewards for reading the Bible quickly or superficially. Slowly and awkwardly is fine.

# Ephesians 2:12-22

## Consider

Once you have read the text once, invite your gathering to dismantle the wall, and use the pieces to build a shelter/house. As you do this ask people working together to tell one another

- How they think a place can show that God is present?
- What difference the presence of God makes
- How we can be careful to build places of welcome not walls in our community?

## Consequence

Use one of the following two prayer activities for responding to the text

*OR*

Sing

“We were strangers”

[https://www.resoundworship.org/song/we\\_were\\_strangers\\_one\\_body](https://www.resoundworship.org/song/we_were_strangers_one_body)

## Prayer, Ephesians 2:1-12



**What this is:** Messy church prayer resource



**Where it's used:** Messy church



**What's needed:** Posters of humans walls from space

- ladder (optional)
- copies of prayer liturgy



**Time:** 5 minutes



**Bible focus/theme:** Ephesians 2:12-22

Place the poster of human built walls from space on the floor. Invite your gathering to walk around the poster, viewing them from above. If you have small people in your midst, help them get the perspective of looking down from space by having their strong muscled family members lift them up and hold them.

If you have sturdy pews and a sympathetic OHS protocol, some older people might stand on pews to look down at the posters, or if you have appropriately sturdy ladders – and n atmosphere of calm, and are cognizant of your denominations Culture of Safety policies – some ladder climbing might be an option...or if you ave a balcony...

Remember to always keep your language open and invitational - not imposing expecatins that everyone will participate in the same way - allowing for the rich divesities of mobility and confidence and interest to be expressed with full affirmation amongst the community.

Encourage your community to share what they notice or wonder with those around them informally.

After some time of individual exploring and sharing, gather and read the following prayer liturgy.

# Prayer Ephesians 2:1-12

Loving God

We know that nothing is hidden from you. You are present among us, not far off in space.  
**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

And we know that from far off in space we would see things differently too  
We know that even our largest and longest walls can't be seen from space.  
Walls that are so important to rulers and governments and armies, are invisible from far away.

You Lord are not far away, but we know that you see all things in right perspective.  
**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

We know your peace covers both sides of every kind of human wall that divides.  
Your peace covers east and west, north and south, male and female, healthy and diseased, secure and besieged, imprisoned and freed.

**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

Though we are impressed by the great wall of China, we celebrate your great grace which breaks down walls that divide people.

**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

Though we are horrified by the wall of Palestine we look forward to the day when all people will be reconciled in your Love and Peace.

**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

Though we are sorry for the walls of our country's detention centres, and we confess the hard heartedness of Australia.

**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

We ask for your Spirit to move our leaders to generosity, and our communities past prejudice to joyful celebrations of diverse cultures. Let all who cross borders to come here find peace, bring peace, share peace.

**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

Though we are astounded at the length and distance of the rabbit-proof fence, running through outback we are ashamed of the decimation of indigenous communities both to the east and the west of it. And the history of oppression and struggle that runs long across our country.

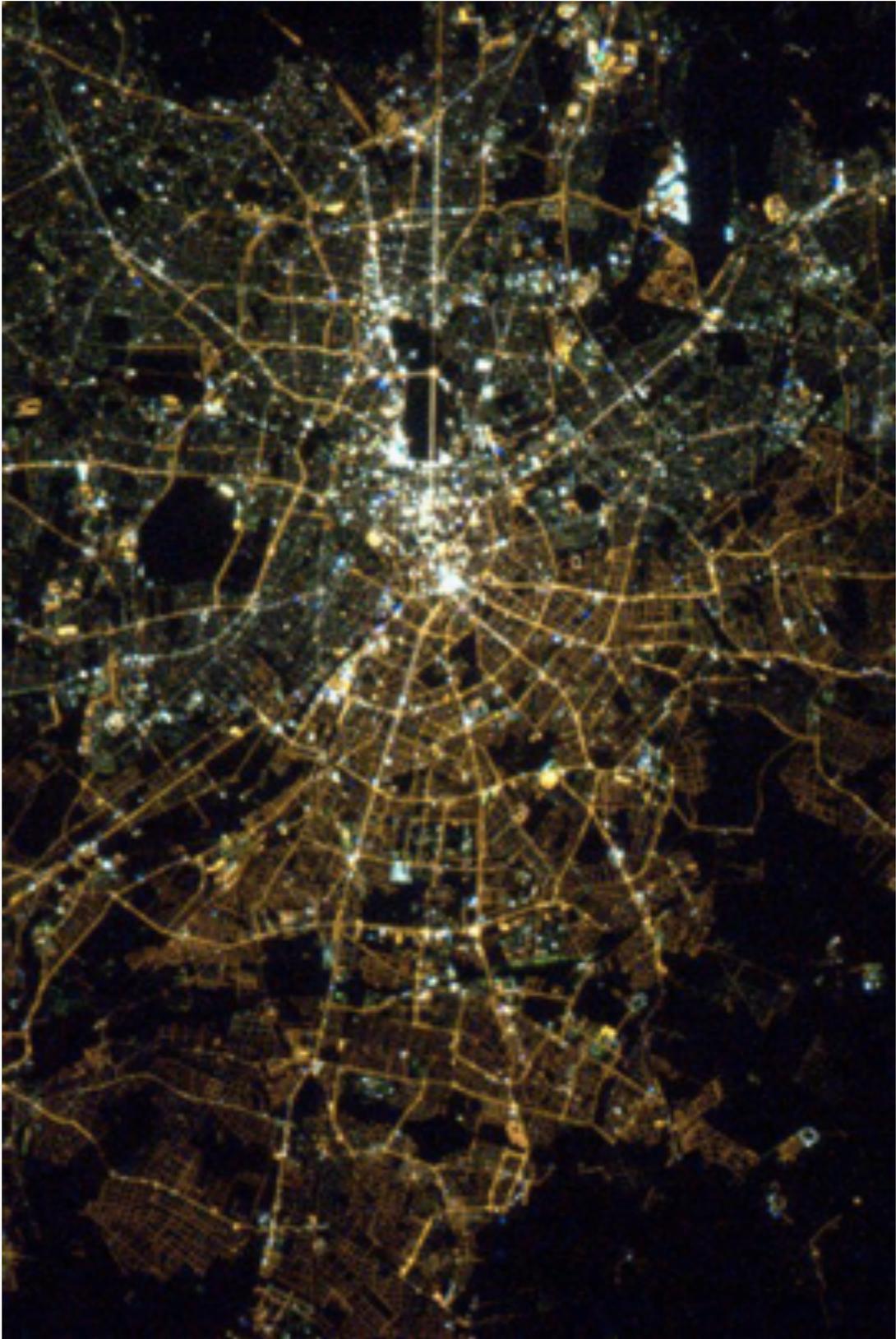
**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

We pray with gratitude for those who farm land in Australia, their properties bounded by long long fences. We pray for connection and support across distances. We pray for just policies and financial practices to prevail, protecting their labour and investment from exploitation. We pray for understanding and empathy between city and country cultures.

**You Lord are not far away – break our walls – bring us your peace.**

**You are our peace, our home. Hear our prayers.**

**In the name of Christ, Amen.**



Berlin



North and South Korea



Border between Pakistan and India

# September



by [Stacey Wilson](#)

## Prayer, Ephesians 2:1-12



**What this is:** Messy church prayer resource



**Where it's used:** Messy church



**What's needed:**

- Postcards with Art Image and Bible Texts and Reflection Questions
- Display of 'A Cup of Kindness' Art by Joy Marshall



**Time:** 5 minutes



**Bible focus/theme:** Ephesians 2:12-22



**“We’ll take a cup a kindness yet” Romans 12:20**

Artist: Joy Marshall  
Acrylic on cotton canvas. 150 x 30 cm

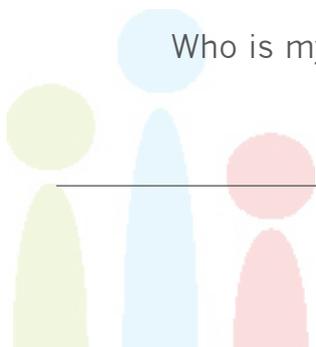
This side is light, this side is right. They live in the darkness, austere and foreboding.

Safe from the enemy beyond, the path goes on and on.

Yet there is one who breaches the wall that divides.

Who shares a cup and finds kin.

Who is my enemy? Them? The Wall? The power systems that entrap?



Join the Dots...  
VCCE Children and Families ministry formation through Communities of Practice



# Prayer Ephesians 2:1-12

## Introduction

In the Bible in Ephesians, we hear a story of a wall which divides people, it causes conflict, it excludes some people, keeping them out, and shutting other people in so they don't see all of the world as it really is.

Here is a little bit of that story, again:

**For Jesus is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are...members of the household of God.**

What is this painting of a wall was part of this story? Let's look and think.

- What can you see? Name what you can see – things and actions.
- What can you feel? What are the emotions of the image and its stories?
- What is the child doing?
- Who or What do you think is on the other side of the fence?
- The circuit diagrams painted on the fence are security alarm systems – what thoughts does that imagery prompt?

*Allow space for wondering and sharing. Keep a list of some key words on a whiteboard or butcher's paper as you do this wondering.*

Perhaps this painting can help us find our prayers for the world and for ourselves today.

Here are some of the words that we have used in describing the painting: add your own

- Child
- Wall
- Security
- Alarm
- Dark
- Path
- Systems
- Water
- Climb
- Look
- Ladder
- Offer
- See
- Reach

# Prayer Ephesians 2:1-12

Let's turn these words into prayers, keeping our eyes open looking at the painting. I will begin the prayer, then leave ops silence for anyone to read one of the prayer words listed here – you can just read the one word, or you can turn the word into a sentence prayer. If more than one person reads the same word again - that's ok too. If some of the words are missed out that's ok too. We trust the Spirit of God to shape our prayers well today.

“Loving God,  
We give thanks that you call us to peace with you and to live in peace with one another. Thank you that there are no walls that keep us from you. We bring you our prayers for one another, for our world and for ourselves...

*[leave space for prayer words from others]*

Join us together in you, build us into a place of welcome and peace, where your presence is known and celebrated by all with no divisions.

In the name of the wall-smashing and peace-bringing Jesus,

Amen”



Joy Marshall

# October



by [Stacey Wilson](#)

## While we wait



**What this is:** Messy Church experience



**Where it's used:** Messy church



**What's needed:** Printed images of people waiting and oil lamps timer, clay or plasticine



**Time:** 15 min



**Bible focus/theme:** Matt 25:1-12

Look at these pictures

What are these people doing?

I wonder what they are waiting for?

I wonder what they are feeling while they are waiting?

*Allow people to respond.*

Waiting can be hard. Sometimes we know we will have to wait for something – like our birthday or Christmas. But sometimes it is a surprise - like if your friend is running late, or the bus doesn't come.

What are some of the things you do while you wait for something?

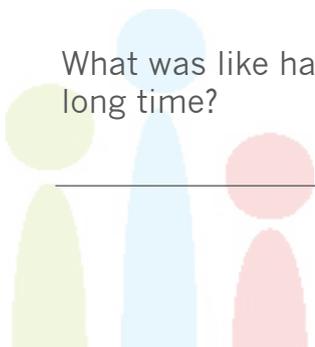
*Listen to the answers.*

In today's story the girls are waiting for a wedding. They had to wait so long they fell asleep. Some of the girls knew they might need to wait a while so they brought extra oil for their lamps, just in case. The other girls didn't, so when it was time to go they believed they weren't ready.

Now we are going to practice waiting. I'm going to set my timer and we are going to wait for two minutes. While we wait you have to be completely silent and completely still. Let's see if you can do it!

*Set timer for two minutes*

What was like having to wait like that? Was it hard or easy? Did it seem like a really long time?



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# While we wait

Now we are going to do it again, and this time I am going to set my timer for 5 minutes! But this time you don't have to be quiet and you don't have to stay still. This time you can use this clay/plasticine to make a lamp like the ones they have in the story. I have a picture here of what they might have looked like. Let's try that again and see how we go.

*Set timer again.*

How did you go this time? Was it harder or easier?

When Jesus told this parable he was reminding the churches that they would need to wait for his return. Thankfully we don't need to sit around doing nothing while we wait. In fact, Jesus told his followers what they needed to do just a little earlier- "love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love our neighbour as ourselves." This is the light we can share while we wait.

*Matthew 22:37-39*

*He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'*







# October



by [Beth Barnett](#)

## Matthew 25:1-12



**What this is:** Bible engagement



**Where it's used:** Messy church celebration time



**What's needed:**

- Copy of Text Displayed on screen or printouts for individuals
- Person familiar and well rehearsed with actions for story



**Time:** 15 min



**Bible focus/theme:** Matt 25:1-12

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### Connect

There are at least two kinds of stories I know that can be really really, very strange and but also very wonderful.

The first is futuristic Sci-Fi. Where the story creates words that are full of mind-boggling creatures and life forms and weird kinds of powers, and exotic environments and eco-systems.

I wonder if you have a favourite future world that is really weird – either in a book or a film or a TV series.

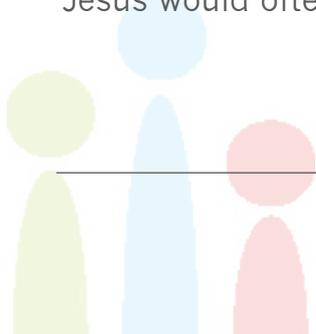
Tell the people around you about the weirdest world you know and maybe like.

*Give 2 or 3 minutes for this. During this time play the opening credits music to Dr. Who or your favourite Sci-fi show.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fnzcAFy8d8>

### Continue

The other kind of story that I like that is really really really really weird are the stories of Jesus – the parables that Jesus told to help us understand God's ways. Jesus would often start these stories 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like...'



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VCCE

# Matthew 25:1-12

When we hear Jesus say “The Kingdom of Heaven is like....” We should get ready for what he has to say to sound a bit way out, weird and whacky.

Let me give you a couple of examples.

There was that time Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven was like a fabulous banquet that no friends turned up for, so strangers off the street – the homeless beggars - were invited instead.

And he pulls out a story of a shepherd who left 99 sheep without anyone looking after them to go and rescue one lost sheep. How ridiculous! What if someone stole the 99 he'd left, or animals had attacked them! Outrageous ethics.

Ok, and how about this one, Jesus says a woman is baking, she takes a little bit of yeast, and mixes it into three measures of flour to bread make it rise...Now which bit of that is like the kingdom of heaven – maybe the bread- yummy and filling? Nope.

The woman that does the good work of baking? Nope.

It's the yeast, the small bits of smelly sour dough mixed in - disappearing – that make the bread soft and rise.

Maybe you can think of some others?

*(give space for suggestions – but check to make sure that the stories suggested do begin with ‘The kingdom of heaven is like...’ as not all parables are positive representations of the Kingdom of Heaven; some are negative critiques of the earthly empires.)*

Now, we are about to hear another ‘The Kingdom of heaven is like....’ story. So are we ready? Ready for weird? Ready for quirky? Ready for curious, freaky, odd, offbeat, and brainstrainingly bizarre?

## Content

*Display the text on screen. Read slowly and clearly and expressively.*

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this.

Ten bridesmaids

took their lamps

and went to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish,

and five were wise.

When the foolish took their lamps,

they took no oil with them;

but the wise

took flasks of oil with their lamps.

As the bridegroom was delayed,

**Hold up 10 fingers**

**two thumbs up**

**wave**

**Hold up 5 fingers (left hand)**

**Hold up 5 fingers (right hand)**

**left hand 5 fingers**

**left hand fist (thumb down)**

**right hand 5 fingers**

**tap left hand wrist as if pointing to**

# Matthew 25:1-12

all of them became drowsy and slept.  
But at midnight there was a shout,  
'Look! Here is the bridegroom!  
Come out to meet him.'

Then all those bridesmaids  
got up and trimmed their lamps.  
The foolish  
said to the wise,  
'Give us some of your oil,  
for our lamps are going out.'  
But the wise replied,  
'No! there will not be enough for you and for us;  
you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'  
And while they went to buy it,

the bridegroom came, and those who were  
ready went with him into the wedding banquet;  
and the door was shut.

Later the other bridesmaids came also,  
saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'  
But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.'  
Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

## Consider

This weird and wonderful story is a parable. It is like a code. The different characters and things in the story represent other things - and we are going to try to match them up.

*Invite 5 volunteers to take a piece of blank card (or a small blackboard) each. As invite each one to 'stick figure' sketch one of the elements of the parable, holding them up for the gathering to see.*

*Invite 5 other volunteers to hold up 5 other cards with words of the things the elements in the parable represent.*

fold hands under head as a pillow  
hands to mouth as if shouting.

10 fingers up  
two thumbs up  
left hand 5 fingers  
right hand 5 fingers  
hold out both hands 'begging'

right hand 5 fingers  
hold up has in 'stop' sign

left hand fingers like legs  
'walk away'

hands up parallel, then 'swing'  
them together as double  
doors.

left hand 5 fingers  
"knock" in door  
both arms out in a shrug  
10 fingers up

# Matthew 25:1-12

- 10 young girls
- lamps
- oil
- groom
- wedding banquet
- Churches
- the goodnews story of Jesus
- the Holy Spirit
- Jesus
- The kingdom of God

Even knowing the code doesn't make this story much less weird.

10 girls are all waiting to be married.

5 miss out because they lack oil for their lamps, and are sent away by those who could have shared, to find some more.

What mistake did the girls make? **It's not that they didn't have enough oil.**

The advice given at the end of the story **isn't what we'd expect** -

It isn't "make sure you have enough oil".

This story isn't like a Cub Scouts reminder to always "be prepared!"

All the girls fell asleep.

What mistake did the girls make? It's that they thought they needed to have a lit lamp for the banquet, when all they needed was to turn up and be known by the groom.

When they are locked out at the end - all that is said to them is 'I don't know you' not 'you fell asleep' or 'you didn't have a lamp' or 'you didn't have any oil'.

The problem in this story is the scandal that when those who had plenty, wouldn't share, the foolish went away and so missed out.

We don't need anything else other than knowing Jesus in order to be welcomed at God's great banquet which is for all of us in the kingdom of heaven.

This weird story is sadly familiar to us.

There are times when those who have plenty send those who have nothing away - and they are excluded and miss out.

The kingdom of heaven isn't just for those who have enough, who are wise, who are prepared, who are strong, but for all who would come, even empty handed to meet Jesus and join his big banquet.

# Matthew 25:1-12

## **Consequence.**

Invite your group to move freely around the following prayers stations to pray in response to the parable.

You might use just some or all of these, or just one in your celebration time, or use them to create a prayer space as one of your activities/experiences before the celebration time.

## **Light a tea light or taper candle in sand**

**Lord, let us be a light for others that shines in hope that you are drawing near.**

*Name those who people or places that are in need of the light and hope of God's presence.*

## **Feast on some fruit and crackers**

**Lord, we pray that all people will be welcomed and filled as your kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven.**

*Name people or situations for whom justice and welcome are needed*

## **Rest your head on a pillow (scatter some pillows/cushions and rugs on the floor)**

**Lord, we pray for those who are weary and worn out. Give them rest and patience in waiting for your kingdom.**

*Name those whom you would hold before God's tender care.*

## **Watch the clock (Using a large face analog clock, replace all the number with stickers saying 'Now')**

**Lord, we pray that we would remember that this, now, is the time for sharing good news and hope, sharing what we have with others.**

*Name the ways in which your community can share goodnews and hope now.*

## **Pouring oil between jugs and jars**

**Lord, some of us have great resources some of us have few. Some of us have much faith, some of us have a little. Some of us have plenty of hope and love and light, and some of us only a scraps. May we share all that we have.**

## Precious Reminders



**What this is:** Messy Church experience



**Where it's used:** Messy church



**What's needed:** Print out of the passage.

Glue, scissors, matchboxes, fabric, tissues paper, ribbons, twine, mesh and plastic cups/bowls filled with small objects such as:

Nature- stones, seeds, shells, seedpods, flowers, feathers, twigs

Sparkling- glitter flakes, plastic pearls and jewels, confetti

These objects need to be small enough to fit into the matchbox and small children will need to be supervised while completing this activity.



**Time:** 10 minutes

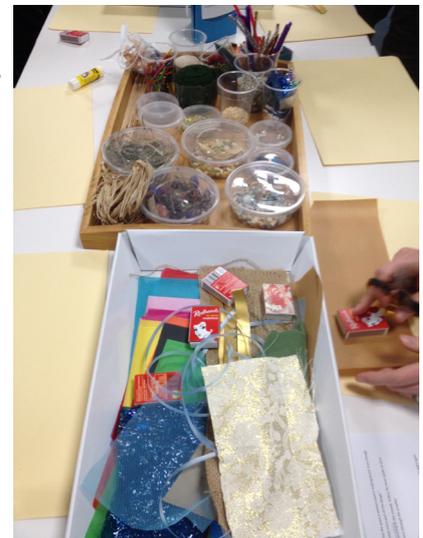


**Bible focus/theme:** John 14: 15-27

Invite people to read through the passage.  
There are lots of ways that we know that God is with us.  
Take some time to think about the ways you experience God's presence.

Take a matchbox and decorate it, so that it become a precious container.

Put things inside it that remind you of God's presence in your life or represent ways you have or would like to know that God is with you.



# Precious Reminders

## John 14:15-27

“If you love **me**, you will keep my commandments. And **I will ask the Father**, and **he will give you** another **Advocate, to be with you forever**. This is the **Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he **abides with you**, and he **will be in you**.

“**I** will not leave you orphaned; **I** am **coming to you**. In a little while the world will no longer see **me**, but you will see **me**; because **I** live, **you also will live**. On that day you will know that **I** am in my **Father**, and you in me, and **I** in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and **those who love me will be loved by my Father**, and **I will love them** and **reveal myself to them**.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” **Jesus** answered him, “Those who love **me** will keep my word, and my **Father** will love them, and **we will come to them and make our home with them**. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the **Father** who sent me.

“**I** have said these things to you while **I** am still with you. But the **Advocate**, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the **Father** will send in my name, **will teach you everything, and remind you** of all that **I** have said to you. **Peace I** leave with you; **my peace I** give to you. **I** do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.



## John 14:15-27



**What this is:** Bible engagement



**Where it's used:** Messy church celebration time



**What's needed:**



**Time:** 15 minutes



**Bible focus/theme:** John 14:15-27

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### Connect

In our Bible reading, we are dropping into the story of Jesus' life near the end – he knows he will soon be arrested and executed. So Jesus has some important things to say to his friends. And he has some parting gifts – some saying goodbye gifts. Let's find out about what he had to say.

What do you think might be some of the important things Jesus wanted to say to his friends before he died?  
(Turn and tell the person next to you what you think...)

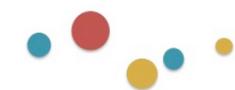
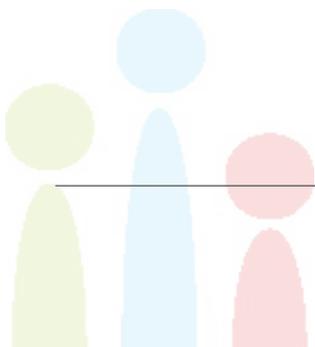
### Context

In John's gospel, the things Jesus has to say to his friends goes on for **Three Thousand words!!!** We are not going to read them all today!

In fact we are going to compress those words down into just 3 words.

Three words.

The three words that summarise God's great message and call to us all. The thing God wants us to hear. The thing God wants us to live.



Join the Dots...

VCCE Children and Families ministry formation through Communities of Practice



**VCCE**

# John 14:15-21

## Content

*Divide your gathering into 3 teams.*

*Team I*

*Team love*

*Team You*

*Give the teams some time to look over the text and find the occurrences of their word.*

*Run a vocal warm up – and ask each team to call out their word when you point to them.*

*Give each team several turns, but randomize the order and repeat until the groups are responding with some cohesion and gusto.*

*Read the passage slowly, clearly and deliberately, leaving space for the teams to call out their*

*Team words as they arise. You might find it helpful to ask someone to ‘conduct’, pointing the teams when it is their turn.*

“If **you love** me, **you** will keep my commandments.

And **I** will ask the Father, and he will give **you** another Advocate, to be with **you** forever.

This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. **You** know him, because he abides with **you**, and he will be in **you**.

“**I** will not leave **you** orphaned; **I** am coming to **you**.

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but **you** will see me; because **I** live, **you** also will live.

On that day **you** will know that **I** am in my Father, and **you** in me, and **I** in **you**.

They who have my commandments and keep them are those who **love** me; and those who **love** me will be **loved** by my Father, and **I** will **love** them and reveal myself to them.”

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that **you** will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?”

Jesus answered him, “Those who **love** me will keep my word, and my Father will **love** them, and we

will come to them and make our home with them.

Whoever does not **love** me does not keep my words; and the word that **you** hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

“**I** have said these things to **you** while **I** am still with **you**.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach **you** everything, and remind **you** of all that **I** have said to you.

Peace **I** leave with **you**; my peace **I** give to **you**. **I** do not give to **you** as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

# John 14:15-21

## Consider:

God's first commandment to his people has always been to Love – It's in the Ten commandments – straight up.  
But we all know that loving means more than just these three little words I love you.

How can we see God's love for us in Jesus' words in John 14?

*Either as a whole group or in smaller groups, take a look at the passage again, and highlight the words or phrases that demonstrate God's love.*

For example:

- "I won't leave you orphaned" - shows God's parental love and care
- "make our home in them" - shows God sharing closely in our everyday lives, and giving us belonging.

## Consequence

*Invite participants as they finish sharing with their conversational partner to come and choose a symbol of the gift of peace, and return to their seat, reflecting quietly on peace or joining with the song "A Gift to a Friend" (Jude Waldron, Welcoming Voices, 2011)*

*When the song finishes and everyone has a symbol, read this prayer together:*

**"Holy Spirit of Jesus,  
We welcome your gift of peace among us.  
Peace with God who does not leave us orphaned.  
Peace with one another so that the world might see and know your love.  
Peace to share with a world in war and pain and fear.  
May our lives say to all 'Peace be with you'  
Amen."**

*Invite everyone to give their symbol of peace to another person, with the greeting of peace :*

"Peace be with you"  
"And also with you"

# Meet the Contributors

VCCE staff generate intergenerational engagement and collate material for Get Messy Aussie Add-Ons from Australian Messy Church practitioners. Submissions of original resources are always welcome!

General resource sharing (such as links to pinterest and website ideas) is also encouraged through the Messy Church Australia Facebook page and Website.

**Beth Barnett** works for the VCCE in Staff Synergy & Supervision and Learning & Theological Engagement

**Stacey Wilson** works for the VCCE in Intergenerational and Inclusive Ministry Resource Developer

**Catherine Hingley** works with the Churches of Christ (Vic/Tas) on the Community team, as a Neighbourhood Engagement Catalyst.

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