



# Messy Church Research

**PLAYFULLY  
SERIOUS**

**HOW MESSY CHURCHES  
CREATE NEW SPACE  
FOR FAITH**

Church Army's Research  
January 2019

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# Defining discipleship

## Five sets of dynamics

- i. Formal learning - informal learning
- ii. Key moments of decision - lifelong journey
- iii. Head knowledge - heart response
- iv. Owned individually - owned in relationship
- v. Inner transformation - outer transformation

### Messy Church is growing disciples

#### What is discipleship?

As our background paper [Discipleship Definitions](#) explains, 'discipleship' is a word that is hard to define precisely. We have identified five different dynamics at play:

- i. Formal learning - Informal learning
- ii. Key moments of decision - Lifelong journey
- iii. Head knowledge - Heart response
- iv. Owned individually - Owned in relationship
- v. Inner transformation - Outer transformation

However, as a simple working definition, we define discipleship as:

"a journey of following Jesus throughout the whole of your life"





# Discipleship: What is working?

Some encouragements within confirmations,  
informal learning and self-reproducing dynamics

Baptisms	In Messy Church	Messy Church but another time	Sunday am congregation
All MES	14%	7%	50%

	Confirmations	Adult	Child
All MES	13%	7%	9%
FxC MES	18%	13%	11%
Outreach MES	7%	2%	6%

*“...had been looking for a church for thirty years, and she’d never found anything that she thought was real and authentic - until she came to our Messy Church... she asked about confirmation”*

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# Discipleship: What is working?

Discipling methods	All MES	FxC MES	Outreach MES
Adults serving in teams	32%	43%	21%
One-to-one	31%	47%	15%
Small groups	29%	36%	22%
Children/teens serving in teams	28%	33%	23%

*“Anyone can be a Messy Church leader... that can be a medium through which you grow into a better, deeper relationship with God.”*

*“It waxes and wanes like a lot of these things... none of our journeys are a trajectory in one direction, let’s be honest... particularly when you’re further back.”*

Self-reproducing	Indigenous leaders	New believers	More virtuous lives
All MES	34%	31%	31%
FxC MES	43%	46%	46%
Outreach MES	24%	16%	15%



# Discipleship: What needs more work?

## Being more intentional about discipleship

*“It’s important that we don’t use churchy language... it’s very easy to slip into words that we would understand which mean precious little to the man in the street”*

*“You might be very hopeful that they become disciples but we don’t - you know, that’s not - in our heads.”*

Discipling methods	All MES	FxC MES	Outreach MES
Discipleship through wider parish	36%	38%	35%
Not our intention	17%	1%	33%

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# Discipleship: What needs more work?

Follow-up of adults after their children have left Messy Church

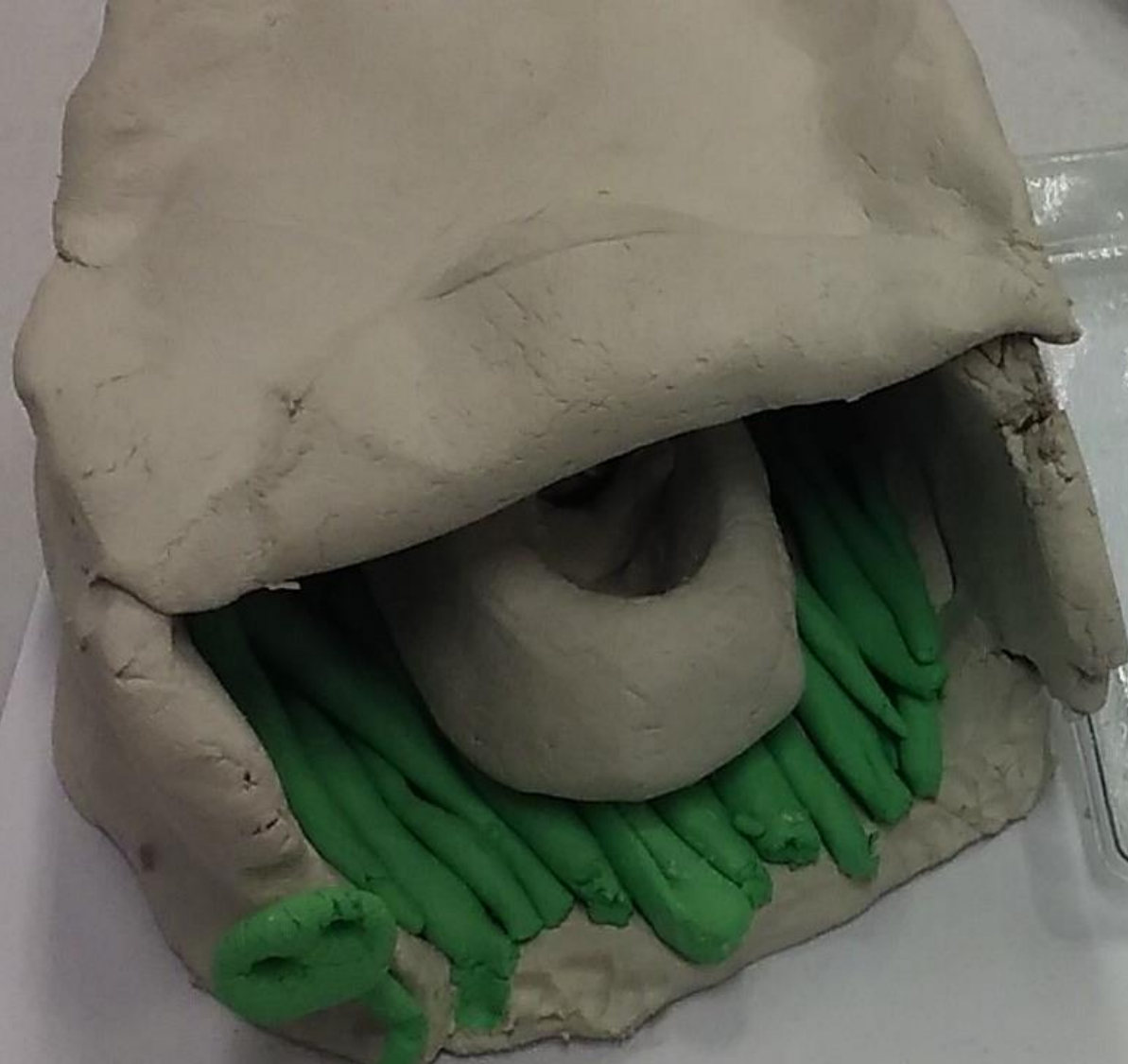
Type of youth provision	All MES %
Separate youth group	28%
Serve as helpers	21%
Further group/activities	8%
Changed MES to be youth focused	2%
Confirmation	1%

But...

*“It just hadn’t occurred to me, the question of what happened to parents - when their children moved on... however much Messy Church is for the family... [it] hadn’t really occurred to me”*

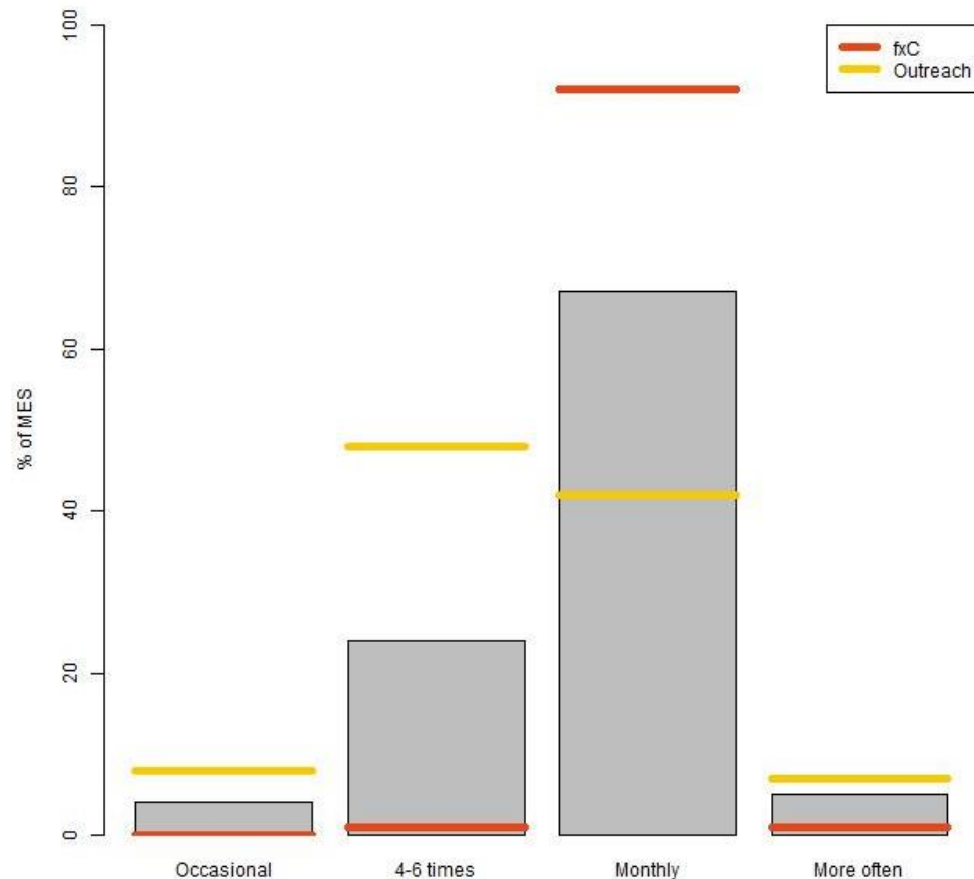
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# Maturity as church: What is working?

Teams are finding patterns that work for them



But also:

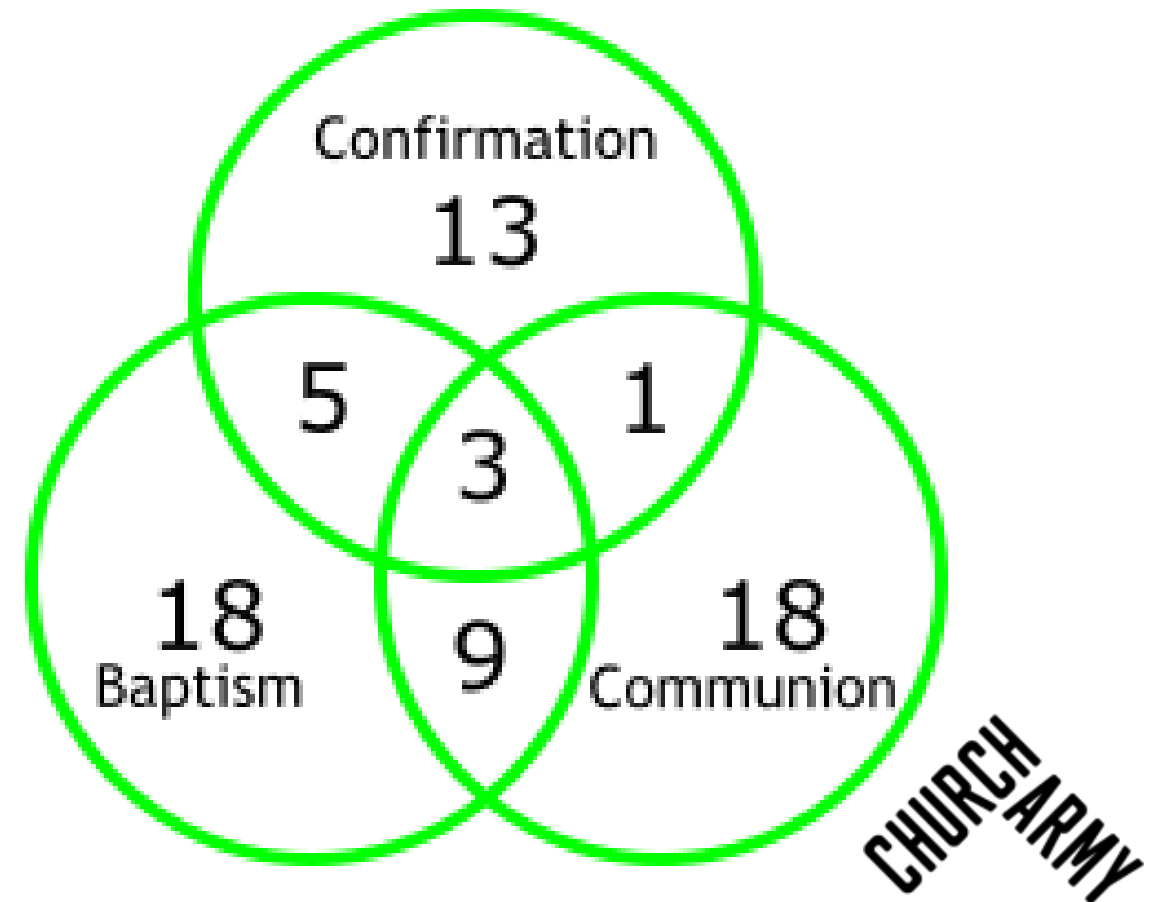
- Prayer request email groups
- Social media chat groups
- Meal rotas or for families in tough times or babysitting
- Social activities/outings/Christian conferences
- 19% reported further outreach activities

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# Maturity as church: What is working?

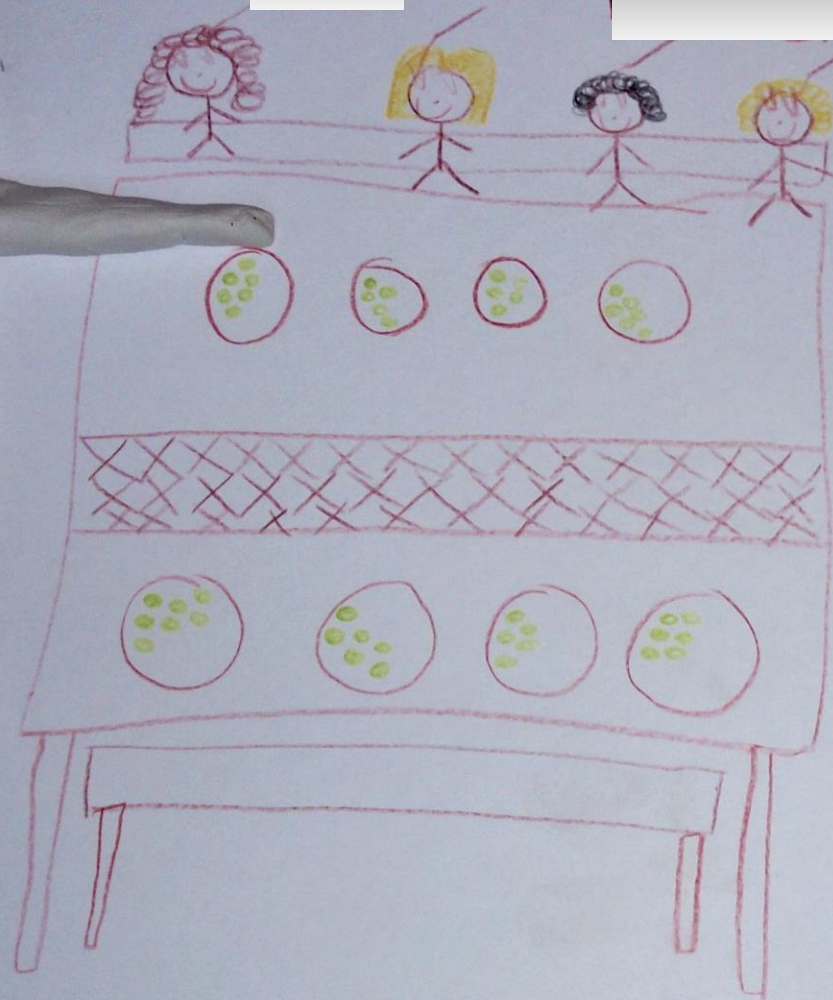
Word and *some* exploration of Sacrament

Story- telling	96%
Creative activity/ resource	95%
Talk	70%
Take home activity for families	32%
Passages read in public	31%
Memory verses	12%
Encourage individual reading at home	9%
Study in groups	5%





Messy Church 2018



thankful  
for food  
At Messy  
church

one Big happy family



# Maturity as church: What needs more work?

Understanding the concept of congregational maturity - or vulnerability

*“There is [a] sense that if your Messy Church has been going for more than [a couple of years] then you should be thinking about discipleship.”*

Working for maturity?

- Light-touch strategic planning
- Taking responsibility for leadership succession
- Small but subtle ways you communicate you are a congregation
- Pastoral care of families

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# Maturity as church: What needs more work?

## Looking after Messy Church leaders

*“People still expect you to clean, do the readings on Sunday, intercessions, etc... [when I haven’t even] had the time to be able to go and visit all the Messy families.”*

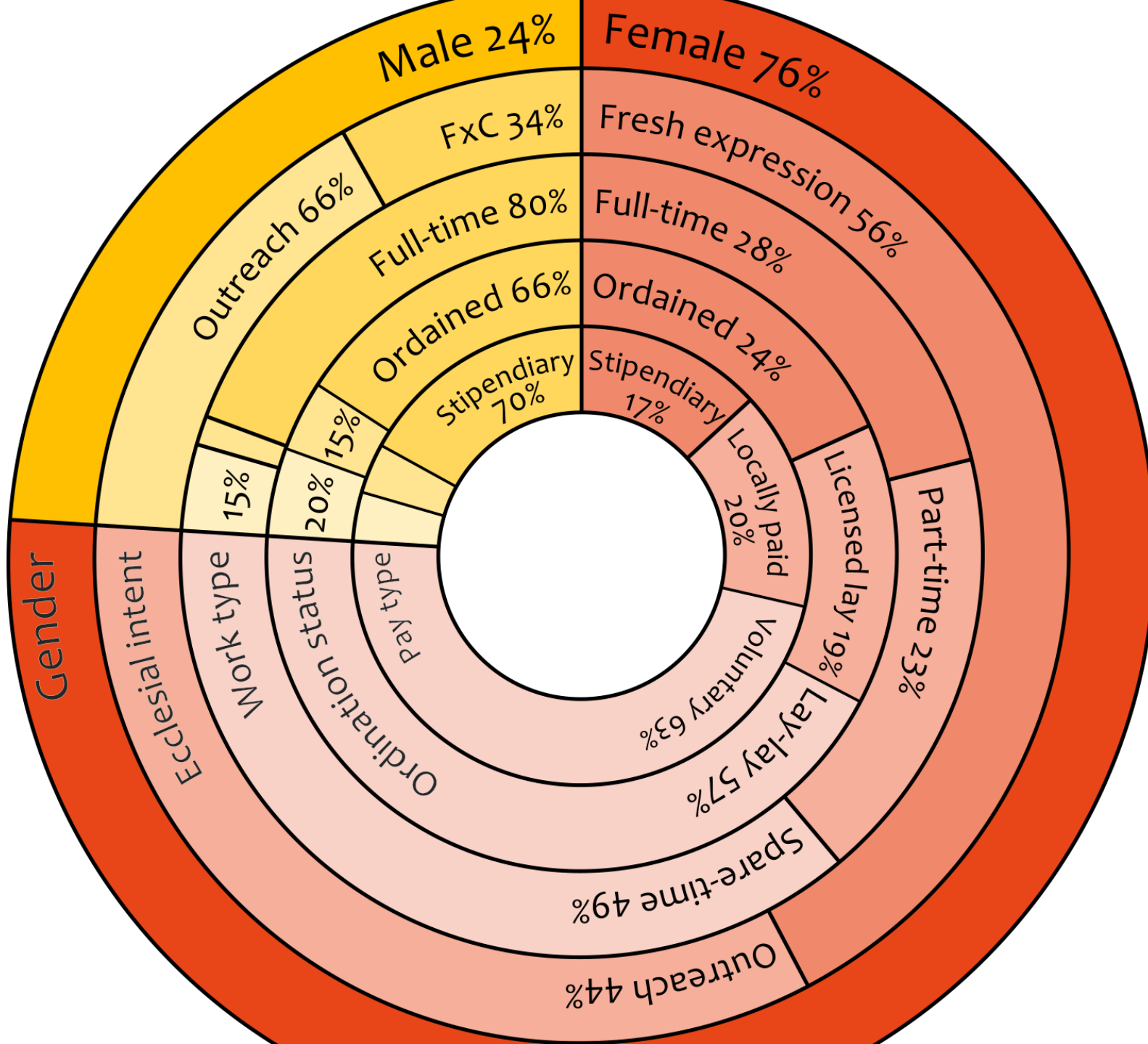
*“...whatever situation we’re in with the people [who have] come through the door you’re trusting God for guiding you to provide what they need, and then trusting him to actually carry that work on.”*

On a scale of 1-10, how natural to your team members is the sharing of their faith?										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
All MES	1%	2%	8%	8%	22%	14%	16%	21%	3%	6%

*“So I shall stay by the door  
and wait for those who seek it.”*

‘So I stand at the door’ by Revd Samuel Shoemaker Jr

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Our suite of  
detailed reports  
are online as  
pdfs:

churcharmy.org/  
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## PLAYFULLY SERIOUS

Messy Church research - a deeper study of the effects of Messy Church



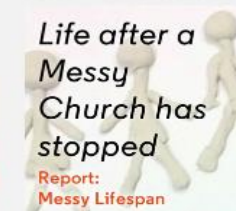
### Findings booklet

Click [here](#) or on front cover (below) to download PDF



### Portfolio of research papers

Papers and reports can be downloaded by clicking on the pictures below



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