

# Holy Communion in Messy Church

Some help for Anglicans

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## Holy Communion and Messy Church: some principles and guidelines

### Why is this an issue?

As Messy Church grows and develops, one of the pressing issues is, ‘Can we have Holy Communion?’

For many, having Holy Communion is one of the ways that a Messy Church congregation can be recognised as a church in its own right – a true fresh expression of church, rather than an outreach activity done by an existing church (where the existing church is assumed to be the ‘norm’ for church).

This is not an issue unique to Messy Church – many other fresh expressions of church are wrestling with the same dilemmas. What is particular to Messy Church is that the well-developed support network behind and between Messy Church congregations means that there is a sense of a whole ‘family’ of churches facing a similar issue in a similar way at a similar time.

### What are the particular issues for Anglicans?

Questions about Holy Communion in Messy Church congregations are particularly focused for Anglicans, because of the Church of England’s way of understanding the Church. Because the C of E is not congregationalist but episcopal in its structure, every congregation is structurally linked and accountable to the wider Church.

This has particular implications for *worship*, because the C of E’s identity has, from its foundation, been closely tied to its worship. The C of E’s original forms of worship (the *Book of Common Prayer*) are not just its default liturgy, but also

a foundational doctrinal document, alongside the Bible, the Creeds and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

In a nutshell, this means that the C of E’s worship rules assume that some decisions about worship can be made locally, but some cannot – some are made at the national level, where local needs and perspectives are put alongside wider considerations. This is why forms of service have to be agreed by General Synod and are not simply a local choice.

This does not mean that only things in the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Common Worship* can be used in Church of England worship, but it does mean that other things can only be used if the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Common Worship* and the Canons (rules) of the C of E allow them to be. This is not as restrictive as it is sometimes assumed to be, but neither is it a free-for-all.



## Some key principles for Messy Church Holy Communion in the Church of England

Holy Communion in an Anglican Messy Church context will need to have integrity both with the principles of Messy Church and *Common Worship*.

### Some key Messy Church principles

- Messy Church worship is multisensory, being particularly strong on using craft, action and symbol.
- Messy Church worship uses words in ways that are as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. This means recognising that congregations will include children and adults for whom reading is new or difficult, people who are most at home in ‘non-book’ cultures and people who have dyslexia or other learning difficulties. Many people in these congregations also may not be familiar with the ‘style’ (or content) of more traditional worship texts.
- Messy Church worship is already ‘sacramental’ in the non-technical sense that it has at the heart of it the practice of eating together in the context of sharing about and learning about Jesus.
- Messy Church worship is intended to be multigenerational.
- Messy Church worship places a high value on active participation by all who are present, and on the participants having a sense of agency in and ‘ownership’ of the worship and its creation.
- Messy Church worship tends to be fairly informal, so that the whole event can embrace craft activities, prayers, Bible stories and singing without an abrupt shift in style.

### Some key *Common Worship* principles

- *Common Worship* services are based on the assumption that the shape of the service is the starting point – that worship is a journey, and the elements of the service need to come in the best order to help the journey to happen.
- Most *Common Worship* services can be seen as following a fourfold pattern (shared increasingly with other denominations and traditions): **Gathering** (in which we move from being a group of individuals to being a corporate

body); **Word** (engaging with the Bible); **Response** (which in a Holy Communion service is the ‘Liturgy of the Sacrament’ or the ‘Table’ part of the service); **Sending** (in which we are sent out strengthened by God through what we have received).

- *Common Worship* seeks to preserve the ‘family likeness’ of C of E worship in two ways: by providing ‘full’ forms of service with permission to make variations and choices according to context; by providing outline structures for services, with material from which to choose to ‘clothe’ those structures.
- *Common Worship* services are designed to be usable across the spectrum of C of E theological positions. This is what the rules around Holy Communion services in the C of E are seeking to protect. This means making sure that services say neither too much nor too little about what is happening in Holy Communion and how that is understood.

### Bringing the principles together with integrity

Given the points noted above, there are some key principles to guide the creation of Messy Church services of Holy Communion:

- Treat the whole Messy Church event as the service, rather than trying to add a full *Common Worship* Holy Communion service to the ordinary Messy Church activities.
- Let the Messy Church activities ‘do some of the jobs’ that a *Common Worship* service of Holy Communion needs to do. This means that things *Common Worship* requires (e.g. confessing our sins or declaring our faith) need to be done in ‘Messianic Church ways’ – that is, with creativity, using the senses, involving the participants in creating or presenting things.
- Where *Common Worship* requires words, or particular words, look at ways to make them as accessible as possible in the Messy Church context. In some cases, that might mean doing some explanation; in others, making changes of ‘no substantial importance’ (as allowed by Canon B5.1); in others, crafting some of the words together or letting them emerge from the context (e.g. prefaces for a Eucharistic Prayer).
- Look for ways to integrate the ‘eucharistic’ eating with the eating that is part of Messy Church, or at least to show that there are connections.



## Where to start when planning a Messy Church Holy Communion service

The easiest *Common Worship* starting point will be to use an outline structure and ‘build on the skeleton’, rather than starting with a fully worked-out service and figuring out what to omit. This means starting with ‘A Service of the Word with a Celebration of Holy Communion’. This builds on the deliberately flexible Service of the Word framework by including Holy Communion within it.

### Where to find A Service of the Word with a Celebration of Holy Communion

You can find the outline and guidance about A Service of the Word (and the specific outline for the version including Holy Communion) in the *Common Worship* main volume on pp. 21–27 (or in *New Patterns for Worship*, pp. 9–14).

### Which are the most sensitive areas?

Because of the breadth of theological positions and worship traditions within the C of E, elements which touch on contested areas of doctrine for Anglicans tend to be the most important to take care over. In a Holy Communion service, these include:

- **Confessions and absolution** – because this touches on beliefs about the priest’s role in assuring people of God’s forgiveness.
- **Credal** material – the so-called ‘catholic creeds’ (e.g. the Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed) are traditional statements of faith which were fought over long and hard in the early church to make sure they held together key doctrines for Christians about who Jesus is and the nature of God.
- **Eucharistic Prayers** – This is the most important part of the service in which we give thanks to God using the words Jesus himself said, so the greatest care is needed. This is why the wording of Eucharistic Prayers is given particular attention during the process of authorization in General Synod.

### Some of the key elements

Here are some of the key elements of the service which are required by A Service of the Word with Holy Communion. (This is not the full list of elements, but the ones that are likely to need thinking through in a Messy Church context.)

#### A ‘collect’ prayer

- This is a prayer which ‘collects’ together the prayers of everyone. In a service of Holy Communion, it normally comes early, as part of the ‘gathering’ part of the journey. It can be a great way to make space and time for people to bring to God the things that are on their minds that they have brought with them to worship. In traditional services, this is often done by leaving a short silence before the prayer is said, but there might be other ways to do that ‘gathering’ in Messy Church contexts.
- There are *Book of Common Prayer* and authorized *Common Worship* collects for Sundays and major feasts of the Church year. A Service of the Word with Holy Communion suggests that the collect in the service must be one of these, but the general introduction to A Service of the Word allows for something thematic instead, which suggests that the key thing is to make sure that this part of the ‘journey’ is covered. This could be done by using a locally composed prayer in a collect form. That could be a leader extemporising or bringing together ideas from the gathered group. It could be a simple prayer that acknowledges the variety of contexts from which people have come to worship.
- The key is that the collect form is a simple structure of prayer that begins with something about God or the Christian story, on the basis of which we ask God for something. It makes a good pattern for prayers in any context, so is a useful form for people to learn. (You can find examples of churches using collects differently according to their context, and guidance about how to construct simple collect prayers, in *New Patterns for Worship*, pp. 175–76).



## Confession

- This is a key part of preparation for receiving Communion.
- There are authorized forms of confession in *Common Worship* and the *Book of Common Prayer*, but *Common Worship* allows for a simpler approach using a 'Kyrie' form. This means a form of confession where the leader says 'Lord, have mercy' (or 'Christ, have mercy') and everyone repeats it. The threefold 'Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy' responses have short 'penitential sentences' between them. These could be made up by the leader or prepared by everyone present. They could be simple or complex.
- The leader will need to use one of the authorized forms of absolution (in an 'us' form if a lay person leads it; in a 'you' form or an 'us' form if a priest leads it). There are lots of authorized absolutions – some long and complex; some short and simple. They are all gathered together in *New Patterns for Worship*, section B, pp. 73–97.

## Creeds and credal material

- *Common Worship* provides the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed in both 'standard' and responsorial forms. It also supplements them with authorized Affirmations of Faith, including the simpler question-and-answer form that is an alternative at baptism and a number that are drawn directly from the Bible. There is also a metrical version of the creed (i.e. written in a hymn form), which can be sung to several hymn tunes.
- You can find all of the creeds and Affirmations of Faith in the *Common Worship* main volume on pp. 138–48, or in *New Patterns for Worship*, section E, pp. 158–66.
- Creeds are one of the elements that don't always fit naturally into the style and format of Messy Church. One of the issues is their length (though some of the Affirmations of Faith are short); another is the need to be able to read them. Perhaps one approach might be to use them with the leader saying each line and everyone repeating it.

## But do these rules apply to Messy Church?

The question of credal material brings us to another challenge for Messy Church, which is working out where it fits into the structure of rules and which ones apply. *Common Worship* is based on the idea of a principal service on a Sunday, with other services alongside it. In general, if it's the principal service on Sunday the rules are tightest and if it's another service or on another day they are more flexible (e.g. you only need to include a creed at all if the service is on a Sunday).

The problem for Messy Church is that if it is to be seen as church in its own right, then the Messy Church service is its principal service for that week or month, even if it isn't on a Sunday. This is part of the dilemma faced by Messy Church groups trying to work out where they fit in the network of 'church' in that place.

There is no simple answer to this. What it highlights is that the closer Messy Church comes to being treated as 'proper' church, the more it will need to be accountable to the rest of the Church for how it deals with questions such as, 'How does our regular worship express and shape orthodox Christian belief?'

## Eucharistic Prayer

As noted above, Eucharistic Prayers are the central part of the service, so take particular care to make sure you know what you are doing, and if in doubt proceed with caution.

Make sure you are clear about all the options.

- There are eight Eucharistic Prayers (A to H) in Common Worship Order One, which vary in length and structure and which are written in a variety of styles, so you can choose one that best suits your Messy Church gathering.
- Prayers D, E and H are the shortest. Prayer D was written with children in mind, and has a strong narrative style and a consistent congregational response. Prayer H is the shortest, but it includes congregational parts that are different each time and have no consistent 'cue', making it necessary for the congregation to be able to see and read the full text.



- In Prayers A, B and E there is scope for replacing the preface (the whole section between the opening dialogue and the Sanctus) with something locally written, extempore or responsorial.
- See *New Patterns for Worship*, section G, pp. 220–22 and 234–57, for examples of responsive preface material and guidance about how to produce your own.
- There are also two new Additional Eucharistic Prayers (Prayer 1 and Prayer 2, for use ‘when large numbers of children are present’), published in a separate booklet as *Common Worship: Additional eucharistic prayers* and available online via the Church of England website.
- See also the suggested question-and-answer ‘preambles’, which could be used before any of the Eucharistic Prayers, in *New Patterns for Worship*, p. 42.

## Other factors

There are other factors, besides the words of the service, which are controlled by the wider Church rather than local decision:

- **Who leads the service?** For Anglicans, the ‘president’ of a service of Holy Communion needs to be someone who is ordained as a priest or bishop. The ‘president’ is someone who ‘oversees’ the whole event and who leads key parts of it – including the Eucharistic Prayer (the prayer over the bread and wine). However, some other parts of the service can be delegated to others. (For more on this see the *Common Worship* main volume, pp. 158–59 or Mark Earey, *Finding Your Way around Common Worship*, pp. 120–22.) From a Messy Church point of view, it will also be important that the priest has a relationship with the Messy Church congregation, so that the liturgical role they will be taking in the service has integrity with their pastoral role among the Messy Church community.
- **What does the priest wear?** Though the rules around robes worn by those leading services have recently been relaxed by General Synod, the key principle behind them is that it should be clear that the person leading a Holy Communion service connects us to the wider church. In many parts of the church, this is done through wearing particular ‘vestments’ that draw on

ancient traditions. In other churches, clergy ‘dress down’ more, but it is still important that congregations are able to know that the person presiding over the Holy Communion service is trained and authorized to do so – perhaps signalled by the priest’s clerical collar.

What happens in particular Messy Church congregations will often depend on the practice of the ‘parent’ congregation that brought it to birth. If the priest wears vestments, there may be ways of helping them to be ‘owned’ by the Messy Church congregation rather than imposed from outside. This might mean using craft activities to create or decorate the priest’s stole (the scarf-like piece of clothing) or chasuble (the poncho-like piece of clothing).

- **What sort of ‘stuff’ is used?** The rubrics (instructions) in the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Common Worship* and the Canons of the Church of England include requirements about some aspects of the bread and wine used, the cups and plates used, the holy table and how it is covered, etc. There is already wide variety within the C of E about how this looks in practice, but for Messy Church congregations it means thinking about this deliberately rather than letting it happen by accident. It means getting the balance right between making Communion feel connected with the other eating and drinking aspects of Messy Church and making it feel special, so that it is clear that, though it may not be less than the other eating and drinking, it is also much more.

## Where else to look for help

*Common Worship: Services and prayers for the Church of England* (CHP, 2000) – this is the *Common Worship* ‘main volume’. See especially the section on ‘A Service of the Word’ (pp. 21–27) and ‘Holy Communion Order One’ (pp. 166–205, and the notes on pp. 330–34).

*New Patterns for Worship* (CHP, 2002) – especially the training notes for each resource section and the section on planning worship on pp. 9–53.

Mark Earey, *Finding Your Way around Common Worship: A simple guide* (CHP, 2011).

Tim Lomax, *Creating Missional Worship: Fusing context and tradition* (CHP, 2015) – full of creative examples and committed to the importance of tradition being applied to context.

Peter Moger, *Crafting Common Worship: A practical, creative guide to what’s possible* (CHP, 2009).

Philip North, ‘Messy Church and the sacraments’ in Ian Paul (ed.), *Being Messy, Being Church* (BRF, 2017), pp. 79–91.

Lucy Moore, ‘Taste and see: stories of how, when and why Messy Churches choose to celebrate Holy Communion or choose not to’, in Phil Potter and Ian Mobsby (eds), *Doorways to the Sacred: Developing sacramentality in fresh expressions of church* (Canterbury Press, 2017), pp. 101–10.

Ian Tarrant, *Worship and Freedom in the Church of England*, Grove Worship Series 210 (Grove Books, 2012).





## A suggestion for a Messy Communion liturgy (based on A Service of the Word with Holy Communion) with notes

### What is this service?

This is a simple guide to a Church of England liturgy for Holy Communion in a Messy Church setting, using the flexibility built in to *Common Worship*. It is based primarily on A Service of the Word with a Celebration of Holy Communion. To see the full outline, look in the *Common Worship* main volume, p. 25, or *New Patterns for Worship* p. 12. There is also guidance about planning Holy Communion in *New Patterns for Worship* on pp. 21–3.

It is not always easy to be entirely clear about what *Common Worship* requires or allows, because it often depends on questions such as whether the service takes place on a Sunday and whether it is the principal service – but these questions do not always ‘work’ for Messy Church situations. We’ve done our best below to ‘go with the grain’ of what *Common Worship* is trying to achieve.

Where authorized words (or other words from *Common Worship*) are given, they may be just one of several alternatives available [online](#), but we are trying to make the layout below as easy to follow as possible, so we haven’t included all the possible options. Wording is taken from *New Patterns for Worship* and *Common Worship* (used by permission of the Archbishops’ Council).

### Making the connection

The service that follows is based on the assumption that the Messy Church session and Holy Communion should be as integrated as possible, rather than Communion being ‘added on’ the end of a Messy Church gathering. There are two schools of thought – one that emphasises the connection between the sacrament of Holy Communion and the rest of the activities; the other that suggests that the celebration part of Messy Church should have more of a sense of ‘mystery’ (in a good way) and be more distinct from the other activities. Make sure you are clear in your own minds about which approach you will take, and then follow it through. This will affect, for instance, where the Holy Communion part takes place, what table is used for Communion, etc.

### More than words

Though the words of the service matter (and we’ve given suggestions about when and how to use words flexibly so that they fit your context), the success of the service in engaging people is often as much to do with how you use symbol and action, and the confidence with which the service is led.

### Being clear about who can receive Holy Communion

Bearing in mind that many of those present will be unbaptised, not-yet believers or under 16, make clear early in the session what is appropriate in your parish as regards who may take Communion and what alternative you are offering, such as a blessing.

Section	Words from <i>Common Worship</i>	Alternative or supplementary words/actions	Notes
<b>Gathering</b>			
Greeting	<p><i>The president greets the people</i> The Lord be with you <b>and also with you.</b></p> <p><i>Words of welcome or introduction may be said.</i></p>	<p>Welcome!</p> <p><i>Gather people with words that suit your congregation. That could be something completely informal, or it could be some leader-response words like this:</i> Jesus welcomes everyone to God’s table. Are you ready to meet God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? <b>We’re ready!</b></p> <p><i>Whatever you use, it’s a good idea to keep it the same each time you include Holy Communion in Messy Church, so that people can get to know it by heart and will not need to read the words.</i></p>	<p>You don’t need to use authorized words. Here the thing that matters is not so much <i>what</i> is said as <i>who</i> says it and <i>when</i> it is said. Where at all possible, this greeting should be at the beginning of the whole Messy Church session (not just the Communion part) and should involve the presiding priest. This could mean the priest using a brief liturgical greeting before or after more informal welcomes, or it might mean the priest sharing in the informal greetings.</p> <p>The involvement of the presiding priest is important both pastorally and liturgically. Pastorally, it helps people to know the person who will be gathering them later at the Lord’s table, especially if the priest is also actively involved on the activity time. Liturgically, it shows that the whole activity is being held together – that each part matters. The presiding priest is ‘overseeing’ the whole thing, connecting <i>this</i> gathering with the wider church – but that doesn’t mean they have to lead everything!</p>
Collect prayer	<p><i>You could use the collect prayer given for today in Common Worship. (Don’t forget that as well as the collects in the Common Worship main volume, there is a set of Additional Collects which are shorter and</i></p>	<p><i>You could use a ‘Messy’ collect such as:</i> Loving God, you bring order out of chaos in the world and in our lives. Meet with us in Christ today, change us and send us out to fill your world with love and</p>	<p>This is the point at which to give any necessary explanations about the activities and what will happen in the rest of the Messy Church session.</p>

	<p><i>less traditional – they are published in booklet form or you can find them on the Church of England website.)</i></p>	<p>light and laughter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.</p> <p><i>Alternatively, you could create an appropriate collect prayer for your context and this particular service. Remind everyone of one aspect of what God is like, from the story you've been exploring today. Give thanks for this, and ask for appropriate help, based on who God is.</i></p>	<p>Then use the collect as a prayer that 'collects' us all together before the different activities begin. You could introduce it with some informal words like this: 'As we get ready for fun and learning from each other, let's keep quiet and each say a prayer in our own hearts for everyone here and all that we will do.' Keep a short pause and then say the collect you've decided to use – or (if appropriate, and the words are available to everyone) invite everyone to say it together.</p>
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**Liturgy of the Word**

This is the section in which to share and explore your Bible story through storytelling and activities. These might include:

- A story told to everyone, or an activity, based on a reading from one of the **Gospels**
- An activity related to **confession** and assurance of forgiveness
- An activity related to **praying** for others
- An activity related to what Christians **believe** about God
- An activity related to giving **thanks** to God (this could involve creating a stole for the priest to wear later, or a cloth or 'frontal' for the table for communion, or something else that could be brought to the table).

The ideas given below are just suggestions – there are lots of alternatives, and you'll probably want to do different things each time.

Bible reading/s		<p><i>Tell, act or share the Bible story in your own words and have the Bible version available on screen or on handouts.</i></p> <p><i>You might have a Gospel-based activity (instead or as well) such as turning the reading into a cartoon strip, a play-figure video filmed on a phone or printing it out and inviting people to decorate the border like a modern illuminated manuscript.</i></p>	<p>You need a Gospel reading, so make sure the Bible story is drawn from one of the Gospels.</p>
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Prayers of Penitence		<i>An activity during the activity time, such as chalking what we are sorry for on to a pavement and washing it off.</i>	If you do this as an optional activity, bring something symbolic from it to the table for Communion later in the service.
Intercessions		<i>An activity such as <a href="#">floating flower prayers</a>.</i>	You need to have intercessions – prayers that are for others, not just ourselves – but there is no fixed form.
Creed		<i>An activity such as writing each phrase of the Creed on a triangle of paper bunting and inviting everybody to draw on one of the triangles something that brings that phrase to life for them.</i>	You need an authorized Creed or Affirmation of Faith if the service is the Principal Service on a Sunday. Though this may not apply to most Messy Church contexts, the service will be the principal service for <i>this</i> group, so it's good to consider including something.
[Thanksgiving]			Thanksgiving is a key part of the Eucharistic Prayer, but you may want to include it among the other activities, so that something from it can be brought to the table for Communion, perhaps as part of the Eucharistic Prayer itself (see p. 15, Eucharistic Prayer – Suggestion 1).
<b>Liturgy of the Sacrament</b>			
The Peace	<i>The president may introduce the Peace with a suitable sentence, and then says: The peace of the Lord be always with you <b>and also with you.</b>  Let us offer one another a sign of peace.</i>	<i>This could be done with 'pass around doves' as described in the book <a href="#">Mussy Prayer</a> (BRF, 2015): Give everyone a small piece of card printed with a dove. Invite them to go round and give someone else their dove as they say the words of the Peace. They listen to the response and perhaps receive a dove in return if that person still has one.</i>	You don't need to have the Peace, but it's a good way to get people moving and engaging with each other, especially if you want them to gather closer to the table for Communion. There are lots of ways to do this, from traditional handshakes, to high-fives, to more creative and symbolic ideas, such as the dove idea.
Preparation of the Table		<i>You could include a song here to draw people back together. Invite others to help prepare</i>	This is the point at which to bring together things that have been covered by the

		<p><i>the table, and if you take a collection during the song, get them to bring it forward to the table.</i></p>	<p>activities, especially if not everyone will have done every activity. This ensures that everyone engages with the key elements of scripture, intercession, penitence and belief.</p> <p>Make sure everyone moves to a place where they can see, but are still with their family. Think carefully about the table for Holy Communion. It could be the holy table in the church building, but it might be more appropriate to use another table which can be nearer the people or placed among the tables used for the activities. It might be appropriate to use the table or tables on which the Messy Church meal will be served later.</p>
<p><i>Bringing our need for forgiveness</i></p>	<p><i>With suitable penitential sentences, the Kyrie eleison may be used:</i></p> <p>Lord, have mercy.  <b>Lord, have mercy.</b></p> <p>Christ, have mercy.  <b>Christ, have mercy.</b></p> <p>Lord, have mercy.  <b>Lord, have mercy.</b></p> <p><i>The president says:</i>  May the God of love  bring <i>us</i> back to himself,  forgive <i>us our</i> sins,  and assure <i>us</i> of his eternal love in Jesus  Christ our Lord.  <b>Amen.</b></p>	<p><i>Here's an example of how to use the Kyrie form:</i></p> <p>To be ready inside as well as outside, let's turn our back on the things that stop us coming close to God.  Let's all face the back of the room  <i>[or whatever works in your context].</i></p> <p>Lord Jesus, for the wrong things we've done,  we're sorry.  Lord, have mercy.  <b>Lord, have mercy.</b></p> <p>Lord Jesus, for the wrong things we've said,  we're sorry.  Christ, have mercy.  <b>Christ, have mercy.</b></p>	<p>You need to have an authorized form of confession and forgiveness if the service is the principal service on a Sunday (though you will probably want to include it whenever the service is). If this has been covered by an <i>optional</i> activity, this is the point to symbolically bring it to the table – this might mean inviting someone to bring a symbol of the activity to place on or near the table being used for Holy Communion.</p> <p>Explain informally what you are doing, and then use short simple sentences (based on the confession activity or the Bible story) between the Kyrie responses.</p> <p><i>Common Worship</i> provides lots of other authorized forms of confession. Most of these are prayers for the congregation to say together, which rely on them being able to</p>

		<p>Lord Jesus, for the wrong things we've thought, we're sorry.          Lord, have mercy.  <b>Lord, have mercy.</b></p> <p>Let's turn to face the cross again.</p> <p><i>The president says:</i>          May the God of love          bring <i>us</i> back to himself,          forgive <i>us our</i> sins,          and assure <i>us</i> of his eternal love in Jesus          Christ our Lord.  <b>Amen.</b></p> <p>For forgiving us, Lord Jesus:  <b>Thank you.</b></p> <p>For giving us a fresh start, Lord Jesus:  <b>Thank you.</b></p> <p>For helping us next time things are hard, Lord          Jesus:  <b>Thank you.</b></p>	<p>read them. The Kyrie option provides a way to make the confession simple and contextually appropriate, whilst using simple repeated responses for everyone to join in with. <i>Common Worship</i> also provides lots of other absolutions – the words said by the priest to assure us of God's forgiveness. The easiest place to find them all is in <i>New Patterns for Worship</i>, section B.</p>
<i>Bringing the Gospel reading</i>			<p>If the Gospel reading was done as an <i>optional</i> activity rather than a story for everyone, get someone to read it (or part of it) from an appropriate Bible version.</p>
<i>Bringing our intercessions</i>			<p>Get someone to bring something that represents the prayer activity and place it on or near the table for Communion.</p>

<i>Bringing our belief in God</i>			Get someone to bring something that represents the belief activity and place it on or near the table for Communion.
<i>Bringing our Thanksgiving</i>			If you've included a Thanksgiving activity, something from it could be brought forward to the table for Communion. However, if you are using Suggestion 1 for the Eucharistic Prayer (see below), you might want to save it to be brought forward during the Eucharistic Prayer itself.
<i>Bringing the bread and wine for Holy Communion</i>			<p>Lastly, get some people to bring the bread and wine for Holy Communion to the table.</p> <p><i>You might say something like this:</i>          'We have brought to this table of thanksgiving all the things we've done today. Now we bring the most important things – the bread and wine that remind us of the last meal Jesus had with his friends, the meals he shared with them after he rose from the dead, and the meal he promises to all of us in his eternal kingdom.'</p>

## Eucharistic Prayer

You need to use an authorized Eucharistic Prayer from *Common Worship*, and the priest needs to lead that prayer. This is to make sure that this prayer of thanksgiving over the bread and wine connects us to the wider church over both space and time. The requirement that it is led by an ordained priest is the Church of England's way of ensuring this link is always made. However, there are lots of ways of making sure it also feels like the people's prayer (which is also vital). Below, we've given three suggestions for the Eucharistic Prayer, but there are other ways of doing it too.

### Suggestion 1

<p><i>Eucharistic Prayer E from Common Worship with an appropriate Extended Preface.</i></p>	<p>The Lord be with you <b>and also with you</b></p> <p>Lift up your hearts. <b>We lift them to the Lord.</b></p> <p>Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. <b>It is right to give thanks and praise.</b></p>		
		<p><i>The priest could then use words like these:</i></p> <p>It is always right to thank you and praise you, loving God, for all you give us, in the world you created, in sending Jesus to live among us and die for us, and in sending the Holy Spirit to help us.</p> <p>Today, we want to give you thanks for each other and this time together, and for the things we shared in our thanksgiving activity...</p> <p><i>[Something is brought forward, or if it is a stole the priest is wearing, or a cloth for the table, the priest might lift up the ends of the stole or point to the cloth].</i></p> <p>We bring all our thanks together with the angels and all your people gathered round your throne in heaven as we <i>say/sing</i>...</p>	<p>The extended preface is the section of the Eucharistic Prayer between the opening dialogue ('The Lord be with you... It is right to give thanks and praise') and the Sanctus ('Holy, holy, holy...'). It's the section of the prayer which focuses on praise and thanksgiving for all that God has done – both general and specific.</p> <p>Replace the extended preface from the prayer in <i>Common Worship</i> with something else – this could be something that the priest creates that reflects the Messy Church context and the content on this occasion, or it could use the things created during the Thanksgiving activity.</p>



		<p><i>Or, if there is nothing to bring forward from a Thanksgiving activity, use this:</i></p> <p><b>Loving God, thank you for making us and all the world.</b></p> <p><b>Loving God, thank you for sending Jesus to live among us and show us your love.</b></p> <p><b>Loving God, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to help us know Jesus more and more.</b></p> <p><b>We thank you for these and all the good things you do for us, and we join the song that everyone in heaven sings...</b></p> <hr/> <p><i>Alternatively, invite individuals to shout out words or short sentences of thanks to God (for example:</i></p> <p>‘Thank you, God, for each other.’</p> <p>‘Thank you, God, for sending Jesus.’</p> <p>‘Thank you, God, for the fun we’ve had.’</p> <p>‘Thank you, God, for loving us.’</p> <p><i>The priest then says:</i></p> <p>‘For these and all your good gifts we give you thanks with all your people, saying/singing...’</p>	<p>The Eucharistic Prayer used here is Prayer E, but this approach also works with Eucharistic Prayers A and B.</p> <p>If you have included a Thanksgiving activity in the activity time, make sure some people are ready to bring something representing it forward to the table at the key moment.</p>
	<p><b>Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. [Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.]</b></p>	<p><i>Consider replacing the Sanctus (this ‘Holy, holy, holy...’ part of the prayer) with a simple praise song.</i></p>	

	<p>We praise and bless you, loving Father, through Jesus Christ, our Lord; and as we obey his command, send your Holy Spirit, that broken bread and wine outpoured may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.</p> <p>On the night before he died he had supper with his friends and, taking bread, he praised you. He broke the bread, gave it to them and said: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.</p> <p>When supper was ended he took the cup of wine. Again he praised you, gave it to them and said: Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.</p> <p>So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did, in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.</p> <p>Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation, we proclaim his death and resurrection until he comes in glory.</p> <p>[Great is the mystery of faith:]  <b>Christ has died:</b>  <b>Christ is risen:</b>  <b>Christ will come again.</b></p> <p>Lord of all life, help us to work together for that day when your kingdom comes</p>		<p>The Eucharistic Prayer concludes with the authorized text from <i>Common Worship</i>. (In this case it is Eucharistic Prayer E, but it could be Prayer A or B.)</p>
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	<p>and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.</p> <p>Look with favour on your people, gather us in your loving arms and bring us with <i>[N and]</i> all the saints to feast at your table in heaven.</p> <p>Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father, for ever and ever.</p> <p><b>Amen.</b></p>		
<p><b>Suggestion 2</b></p>			
<p><i>Eucharistic Prayer Two from the Additional Eucharistic Prayers</i></p>	<p>The Lord be with you <b>and also with you</b></p> <p>Lift up your hearts. <b>We lift them to the Lord.</b></p> <p>Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. <b>It is right to give thanks and praise.</b></p> <p><i>[Question: Why is it right to give thanks and praise? Answer: Listen, and we will hear.]</i></p> <p>Lord of all life, you created the universe, where all living things reflect your glory. You give us this great and beautiful earth, to discover and to cherish.</p> <p>You give us sun and moon and star-lit sky, everything that gives us light, light for our eyes, our hearts, our minds.</p>	<p>The Lord be with you <b>and also with you</b></p> <p>Lift up your hearts. <b>We lift them to the Lord.</b></p> <p>Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. <b>It is right to give thanks and praise.</b></p> <p><i>[Question – <b>Group A:</b> Why is it right to give thanks and praise? Answer – <b>Group B:</b> Listen, and we will hear.]</i></p> <p>Lord of all life, you created the universe, where all living things reflect your glory. You give us this great and beautiful earth, to discover and to cherish.</p> <p><b>Group C say with the priest:</b></p>	<p>The <i>Common Worship</i> Additional Eucharistic Prayers were specifically designed for occasions when significant numbers of children are present.</p> <p>Eucharistic Prayer Two (reproduced here) has optional questions and answers interspersed in the prayer. It is important that the questions and answers are said by someone other than the priest. The question could be asked by one voice (or one group), and the response by another group.</p> <p>If you want to involve more people, different voices can say different words with the priest. In the Alternative Words column, there is a suggestion of how the Eucharistic Prayer might be shared with two other groups of voices, who join the priest in saying parts of the prayer. Though this approach allows more voices to join in with the prayer, it relies on</p>

	<p>You made us all, each wonderfully different, to join with the angels and sing your praise:</p>	<p>You give us sun and moon and star-lit sky, everything that gives us light, light for our eyes, our hearts, our minds.</p> <p><b>Group D</b> say with the priest: You made us all, each wonderfully different, to join with the angels and sing your praise:</p>	<p>everyone being able to read easily and the words being available. It also runs the risk that everyone is so distracted by getting their part right that they lose the sense of praying the prayer. This suggestion will therefore depend on the context and make-up of your Messy Church congregation.</p> <p>The other Additional Eucharistic Prayer (Prayer One) includes a repeated response (Holy, <i>Holy</i>, <b>Holy</b>) which can be used with three groups, each taking one of the 'holies', or as a triple response with rising volume – starting with a whisper and ending with a shout (or the other way round).</p>
	<p><b>Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. [Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.]</b></p>	<p><i>Consider replacing the Sanctus (this 'Holy, holy, holy...' part of the prayer) with a simple praise song.</i></p>	
	<p>We thank you, loving Father, because, when we turned away, you sent Jesus, your Son. He gave his life for us on the cross and shows us the way to live.</p> <p>Send your Holy Spirit that these gifts of bread and wine may be for us Christ's body and his blood.</p>	<p><b>Group C</b> say with the priest: We thank you, loving Father, because, when we turned away, you sent Jesus, your Son. He gave his life for us on the cross and shows us the way to live.</p> <p>Send your Holy Spirit that these gifts of bread and wine may be for us Christ's body and his blood.</p>	

	<p>[<i>Question:</i> Why do we share this bread and wine?  <i>Answer:</i> Listen, and we will hear.]</p> <p>On the night before he died, when darkness had fallen, Jesus took bread. He gave thanks, broke it, and shared it with his disciples, saying:  'This is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me.'  After they had eaten, he took the cup of wine, gave thanks, and shared it with his disciples, saying:  'This is my blood, poured out for you and for many,  for the forgiveness of sins.'  So Father, with this bread and this cup we celebrate his love, his death, his risen life.  As you feed us with these gifts,  send your Holy Spirit,  and change us more and more  to be like Jesus our Saviour.</p> <p>[<i>Question:</i> How do we follow Jesus Christ?  <i>Answer:</i> Listen, and we will hear.]</p> <p>Help us, Father, to love one another,  as we look forward to that day  when suffering is ended,  and all creation is gathered in your loving arms.</p>	<p>[<i>Question – Group A:</i> Why do we share this bread and wine?  <i>Answer – Group B:</i> Listen, and we will hear.]</p> <p>On the night before he died, when darkness had fallen, Jesus took bread. He gave thanks, broke it, and shared it with his disciples, saying:  'This is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me.'  After they had eaten, he took the cup of wine, gave thanks, and shared it with his disciples, saying:  'This is my blood, poured out for you and for many,  for the forgiveness of sins.'  So Father, with this bread and this cup we celebrate his love, his death, his risen life.  As you feed us with these gifts,  send your Holy Spirit,  and change us more and more  to be like Jesus our Saviour.</p> <p>[<i>Question – Group A:</i> How do we follow Jesus Christ?  <i>Answer – Group B:</i> Listen, and we will hear.]</p> <p><b>Group D</b> say with the priest:  Help us, Father, to love one another, as we look forward to that day when suffering is ended,  and all creation is gathered in your loving arms.</p>	
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	And now with all your saints we give you glory, through Jesus Christ, in the strength of the Spirit, today and for ever. <b>Amen.</b>	<b>And now with all your saints we give you glory, through Jesus Christ, in the strength of the Spirit, today and for ever. Amen.</b>	
<b>Suggestion 3</b>			
<i>Eucharistic Prayer D from Common Worship, with some simple sung response</i>	<p>The Lord be with you <b>and also with you</b></p> <p>Lift up your hearts. <b>We lift them to the Lord.</b></p> <p>Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. <b>It is right to give thanks and praise.</b></p> <p>Almighty God, good Father to us all, your face is turned towards your world. In love you gave us Jesus your Son to rescue us from sin and death. Your Word goes out to call us home to the city where angels sing your praise. We join with them in heaven's song:</p>		
	<b>Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. [Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.]</b>	<i>Consider replacing the Sanctus (this 'Holy, holy, holy...' part of the prayer) with a simple praise song.</i>	

	<p>Father of all, we give you thanks for every gift that comes from heaven. To the darkness Jesus came as your light. With signs of faith and words of hope he touched untouchables with love and washed the guilty clean.</p> <p>This is his story.  <b>This is our song:  Hosanna in the highest.</b></p> <p>The crowds came out to see your Son, yet at the end they turned on him. On the night he was betrayed he came to table with his friends to celebrate the freedom of your people.</p> <p>This is his story.  <b>This is our song:  Hosanna in the highest.</b></p> <p>Jesus blessed you, Father, for the food; he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:  This is my body, given for you all.  Jesus then gave thanks for the wine; he took the cup, gave it and said:  This is my blood, shed for you all for the forgiveness of sins.  Do this in remembrance of me.</p>		<p>The repeated cue line and response,  This is his/our story.  <b>This is our song:  Hosanna in the highest.</b>  means that it is possible to join in without having to follow the words.</p> <p>If you have musicians on your team, you might be able to turn this into a simple sung response, which will make it even more memorable.</p>
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	<p>This is our story. <b>This is our song: Hosanna in the highest.</b></p> <p>Therefore, Father, with this bread and this cup we celebrate the cross on which he died to set us free. Defying death he rose again and is alive with you to plead for us and all the world.</p> <p>This is our story. <b>This is our song: Hosanna in the highest.</b></p> <p>Send your Spirit on us now that by these gifts we may feed on Christ with opened eyes and hearts on fire. May we and all who share this food offer ourselves to live for you and be welcomed at your feast in heaven where all creation worships you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:</p> <p><b>Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. Amen.</b></p>		
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## Liturgy of the Sacrament (continued)

<p>The Lord's Prayer</p>	<p>As our Saviour taught us, so we pray  <b>Our Father in heaven,          hallowed be your name,          your kingdom come,          your will be done,          on earth as in heaven.          Give us today our daily bread.          Forgive us our sins          as we forgive those who sin          against us.          Lead us not into temptation          but deliver us from evil.          For the kingdom, the power,          and the glory are yours          now and for ever. Amen.</b></p>	<p><i>You could do this with actions as shown here on <a href="#">YouTube</a>.</i></p>	<p>You need to have the Lord's Prayer, though it could come earlier (for instance, you could use it to sum up the intercessions from the prayer activity).</p>
<p>Breaking of the bread</p>	<p>We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.  <b>Though we are many, we are one body,          because we all share in one bread.</b></p>	<p>We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.          We are many families, but this makes us one family.</p>	<p>You need to use authorized words if the service is on a Sunday.</p>
<p>Giving of Communion</p>	<p>Draw near with faith.          Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which he gave for you, and his blood which he shed for you.          Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you, and feed on</p>	<p>Let us share this special meal together.          Let's remember Jesus died for us and rose again and is with us now.          Let's draw close to God and to each other around God's table.</p>	<p>The Service of the Word with Holy Communion does not require authorized words for this section.           Remember to think carefully about how you will distribute the bread and wine, who will do this, and what words will be said. The Canons (rules) of the Church of England require communion to be distributed by people who have been prepared and trained for this and authorized to do so.</p>

	him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.		There is a selection of authorized words for use at the distribution of Communion in the <i>Common Worship</i> main volume, p. 295. Think about provision for those who need non-alcoholic wine or gluten-free bread.
Prayer after Communion	<b>Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Through him we offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.</b>	For bringing us together in love <b>Thank you!</b> For feeding us with your very self <b>Thank you!</b> For the power of your Spirit <b>Thank you!</b> For sending us out in your love to change the world <b>Thank you!</b>  <i>Here's another possibility;</i> For the bread and the wine <b>Thank you, Jesus.</b> For the love around this table <b>Thank you, Jesus.</b> For sending us out into the world filled with your Spirit <b>Thank you, Jesus.</b>	You don't need to use authorized words for this.
<b>The Dismissal (Sending Out)</b>			
A blessing	<i>The president may use a seasonal blessing, or another suitable blessing, or</i> The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our	<i>The Messy Grace with actions as described in the book <a href="#">Messy Church</a> (BRF, 2011):</i>  <b>And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy</b>	You don't need to use authorized words for this.

	Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. <b>Amen.</b>	<b>Spirit, be with us all now and for evermore. Amen.</b>	
The dismissal	<i>A minister says</i> Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. <b>In the name of Christ. Amen.</b>	Are you ready to go out into the world to share God's love with everyone? <b>We're ready!</b>	You don't need to use authorized words for this.



# 3

## Suggestions for Bible passages that would work well with a Messy Communion

- The last supper (Matthew 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–23)
- The feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14)
- The wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11)
- The supper at Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35)
- ‘I am the bread of life’ and ‘I am the true vine’ (John 6; John 15)
- The parts of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
- The barbeque on the beach (John 21:1–14)
- The hospitality of Abraham (Genesis 18:1–15)
- The Passover (Exodus 12:1–30)
- The manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16; see John 6)
- The woman with the costly ointment (Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50)
- The great banquet (Luke 14:15–24)
- The prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32)
- The healing of Jairus’ daughter (Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43)
- The birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 2:1–20)
- The crumbs that fall from the table (Mark 7:24–30)

During the church ‘seasons’ (All Saints/Advent to Pentecost/Trinity) particular themes come to the fore at various times, and certain scriptural stories and passages are commonly used in churches that follow the lectionary (and even, at various points, by those that don’t). Such a sequence might include:

**Kingdom season/Advent:** the banquet parables; the hospitality of Abraham; ‘I am’

**Christmas/Epiphany:** the birth of Jesus; the Word made flesh; the wedding at Cana

**Lent:** the manna in the wilderness; the prodigal son

**Holy Week:** the last supper; the Passover; the woman with the costly ointment;

**Easter:** the supper at Emmaus; the barbeque on the beach;

**Ascension/Pentecost:** the parts of the body of Christ

**Ordinary time:** the healing of Jairus’ daughter; the feeding of the 5,000 (harvest); the crumbs that fall from the table



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