**Messy Church – November 2021**

**Advent:**

The activities are mostly in four groups, one for each Sunday in Advent.

**Week 1 – The second coming of Jesus:** Matthew 25: verses1 -13

1. **Paper plate lamp (in the celebration)**

**Week 2 – The prophets:**

1. **Jeremiah at the pottery – clay or play doh pot**

Jeremiah chapter 18, verses 1 - 6

1. **Ezekiel and the dry bones – (in the celebration)**

Ezekiel chapter 37, verses 1 - 14

**Week 3 – John the Baptist:** Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 - 15

1. **3D sand picture**

**Week 4 – Mary the mother of Jesus:** Luke chapter 1, verses 26 - 38

1. **Paper plate angel**
2. **Angel fairy cakes (to be finished in the celebration**

**For all weeks**

1. **Advent ring**

**Stories and Activities**

**Week 1 – the 2nd coming of Jesus:** Matthew 25: verses 1 - 13

This is a story that Jesus told to try to explain to his friends what it might be like when Jesus comes back – and that when this would happen it would be quite unexpected. The story talks about wedding customs at the time of Jesus, and the story starts in the early evening, as it is getting dark.

Jesus said that there were ten teenage girls who were waiting for the bridegroom to come to his wedding. Five of the girls were sensible and brought extra oil for their lamps in case the bridegroom was late, and five girls didn’t bring spare oil. Jesus called these girls foolish. The bridegroom was late, and the girls had fallen asleep. At midnight, they were woken up and told to go out and meet him (that was what they were supposed to do). The girls all made sure that their lamps were lit, and had enough oil in. The sensible girls filled their lamps from the jars of extra oil they had brought, but the others had no spare oil, and wanted to get some from the sensible girls. The sensible girls said they didn’t have enough to share, and that the foolish girls would have to go to a shop and buy some. While they were gone, the bridegroom arrived. The sensible girls went with him into the wedding feast, and the door was closed. Later, the foolish girls came back, with their now filled lamps. They knocked on the door and asked to come in, but the bridegroom said he didn’t know who they were (because they hadn’t been there to meet him), so he refused to let them in to the feast. Jesus told his friends that they should be ready all the time for him to come, because no-one would know in advance when it would happen.

**Talk about:** being ready for the unexpected, how might we be prepared for anything to happen?

**1 Paper plate lamp**

**You will need:** half a paper plate per child (or a semi-circle of card), red and yellow tissue paper, colouring pencils or felt tip pens, scissors, glue or sticky tape

Cut a hole at one side of the semi-circle (as shown in the picture) to make a handle. Write “I am ready” on the front, and decorate the lamp if you want. Cut flame shapes from the red and yellow tissue paper, and fold it, to help it to stand upright. Glue or sticky tape the flame shapes to the other end of the lamp from the handle, so they stick up over the rim.

**Week 2 – the prophets**

Prophets are people who give God’s message to his people. They may give messages for right now, or for some time in the future, whatever God wants at the time. We are going to look at short stories from two prophets who were talking about what God’s people were like at the time, and what God intended to do to help them become what he wanted, either now, or in the future. Jeremiah was a prophet in Judea before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, and Ezekiel was a prophet in Mesopotamia, when the Jews were living there in exile.

Jeremiah, chapter 18, verses 1 to 6

**Jeremiah** was sent by God to watch a potter working. Jeremiah saw that when the potter made something from clay, and it didn’t look the way he wanted, or he thought it wasn’t good enough, he wouldn’t bake it, but put all the clay from it back together again, and start from the beginning, to make what he wanted. Only when the clay was the right shape would he bake it to make it stay that way and be useful. When Jeremiah had watched this, God said that this is what he did to his people – he worked on them until they were the people he wanted. God was the potter, and the people were the clay.

**Talk about:** being the sort of people God wants. Do we need to change to become those people? God told Jeremiah he would help – do we let him?

**2 Clay or play doh pots**

**You will need:** clay or play doh, something (paper plate, tin foil) to work on so you don’t make a mess on the table,

If you are using clay, you may want some water handy so that your hot hands don’t dry the clay too soon.

Use your modelling stuff to make a pot. The earliest pots ever made were just made with hands, so this is a real thing to try. If you have air-drying clay, when it is finished you can just leave it to dry, if you want to keep it.

Ezekiel, chapter 37, verses 1 - 14

God showed **Ezekiel** a valley with bones scattered everywhere on the ground. There were lots of bones, and they were very dry. God asked Ezekiel if the bones could come back to life, and Ezekiel said that only God knew that. God told Ezekiel to speak to the bones and tell them that he, God would make them live again: he would join the bones back together with sinews and muscles, with skin covering them, and then he would give them breath again. Ezekiel spoke to the bones as if they were alive, and as he spoke, the bones joined together and became bodies, as God had said, but they were not alive.

God then told Ezekiel to speak to the wind, to tell it to breathe into the bodies and bring them back to life. Again, Ezekiel did as he was told, and the bodies came to life and stood up, enough people to form an army.

God told Ezekiel that his people of Israel were behaving like dry bones, saying that they had no hope and no future, because they were living in a country not their own. God said that in the future he would bring his people back to their own country, which would be like bringing them back to life, as he had done with the bones.

**Talk about:** being the sort of people God wants. Do we need to change to become those people? God told Ezekiel he would help – do we let him?

**3 Dry bones**

**You will need:** marzipan and a plate to work on, a little icing sugar to make sure your hands don’t get too sticky

Shape the marzipan into bones – long bones for legs and arms, shorter, curved bones for ribs, or very short chunky bones for the spine. You can find pictures of specific bones on the internet, if you want.

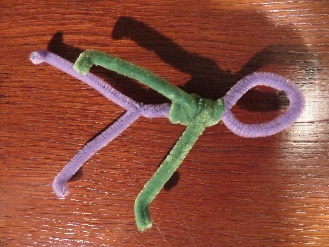
**Week 3 – John the Baptist:** Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 - 15

John was Jesus’ cousin, about six months older than he was. The Bible thinks of him as the last prophet – after Jesus was crucified, the Bible doesn’t talk about prophets, just about followers. John’s work for God was all about telling people it was time to put their lives right, because the Messiah was about to arrive. He baptised the people who came to hear him in the river Jordan, to symbolise that they were making themselves clean from their sins, and ready for God to come. One of the people he baptised was Jesus himself – although John said that he was not good enough, and Jesus should be baptising him.

**Talk about:** being really ready – not for something that might happen, but something that is going to happen very soon. Have you started your Christmas shopping for presents? Is your house tidy for visitors?

**4 3D sand picture of John at the river**

**You will need:** a piece of paper per child, paint for the river, glue, sand for the river banks (ordinary sand pit sand will be fine), two pipe-cleaners to make a model John

Paint a river across the paper, spread glue either side of the river, and sprinkle sand on the glue. Make sure that any sand that doesn’t stick is shaken off outside, or into a container! While the paint and sand dry, make a figure of John. Bend one pipe-cleaner in half, make a loop at the bend, and then twist the two halves together for about half the length of what is below the loop. Bend the second pipe-cleaner lightly in thirds. Twist the middle third of the pipe-cleaner several times around the body you have already made, so that the ends stick out to make the arms. Bend the ends of the legs to make feet.

**Week 4 – Mary the mother of Jesus:** Luke chapter 1, verses 26 – 38

Mary was a teenager, still living at home with her mum and dad. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, but they were not yet married.

One day, an angel came to Mary, and told her that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah. Mary was puzzled, and asked how she could have a child when she wasn’t married. The angel said that God could do anything, the proof being that her cousin Elizabeth was pregnant, although everyone thought she was too old now to have the children she had been unable to have when she was younger. What the angel wanted to know was, was Mary prepared to have this child? Mary agreed that she would do what God wanted.

**Talk about:** being prepared to change what you were going to do. Perhaps all of a sudden you are going to stay with someone else, or not going away on holiday, or going to a different school from the one you expected to go to. How will you deal with the changing circumstances?

**5 Paper plate angel**

**You will need:** half a paper plate per child, (or a semi-circle of card, or paper), coloured pencils or felt tip pens, scissors, stapler, paper doilies, glue, card or foam for wings, (if you use foam, you will need a special foam glue to stick them on), glitter. (if you only have white paper doilies, it might be interesting to use a semi-circle of coloured paper.

Staple the half plate/card, paper into a cone, with the underside on the outside. (Paper should work for a cone, as it is quite a strong shape.) Draw a face and hair at the top of the cone, and work out where the body starts. Cut a doily in half and trim it so that it fits round the angel’s body, then glue it in place. Draw and cut out two handprints from card or foam, spread some glue over the hands and sprinkle with glitter (make sure you shake any loose glitter off into a container or the bin). Glue the glittery hand prints to the back of the angel, for wings. (See the picture for an impression of what your angel might look like.)

You could hang your angel up as a Christmas ornament, put it on the top of your Christmas tree, or use it as a table decoration on Christmas day.

**6 Angel fairy cakes**

**You will need:** either home made or bought fairy cakes, (there is a quick recipe attached, or you can use a recipe of your own), plus chocolate buttons, some butter icing (home made or bought), and sugar sprinkles. **Tools**: for finishing the cakes – a knife, two small spoons

If you have made the cakes at home, wait for them to cool.

Cut a circle out of the top of the fairy cake and fill it with buttercream icing. Cut the circle in half and put the halves either side of the icing, for wings, put a chocolate button at one end for the angel’s head, and sugar sprinkles in the middle for the angel’s clothing.

**7 Advent ring**

Lots of churches, and some homes, use Advent Rings to help them think about preparing for Christmas. In church, we light one candle on the first Sunday in Advent – this year it will be 28th November – two candles on the second Sunday, three candles on the third, and four candles on the fourth. On Christmas day we light all five. Each Sunday candle represents one of the things we have been talking about: the Second Coming, the prophets, John the Baptist, and Mary. In some years, instead of the Second Coming, we think about the people of God – all the people who go to church anywhere.

**You will need:** a bathroom tile or a piece of very heavy card, or wood, tin foil (to cover wood or card), blue tack, night lights – four white and one red or purple, (or one white, three pink and a purple, depending on what you have or can get). If you are using a tile, you might like to paint the tile, so you will need paint, paintbrushes, pencil for marking up the tile if wanted, picture to see what it could look like.

A picture containing indoor, toilet

Description automatically generated

The white night lights go round the outside of the tile, and the red or purple one goes in the middle. (With the other colour scheme, one white in the middle, three pink and a purple in the corners.) If it helps, work out where the night lights will go, and draw round them. Decorate the rest of the tile. Use blue tack to attach the night lights, so that they can be replaced if they burn out.

**Never leave the advent ring lit if you leave the room!5**

If you are using tin foil covered card, stand the card on a heatproof surface before lighting any of the night lights!

Younger children may need a lot of help with this – make sure they wear an overall!

**Celebration**

The time we know as Advent starts 4 Sundays before Christmas. This year that’s 28th November, Sunday week. Advent means “Coming”. It is the time we think about Jesus coming into our world. There are various different ways that the Sundays are celebrated. Many churches have an Advent Ring with 4 or 5 candles, the 5th being for Christmas Day. We are going to start with week 2, because week 1 only really makes sense after you know about the rest.

We will sing Prepare the way of the Lord (Not on YouTube)

Week 2 is about the Old Testament prophets. A prophet is someone that God tells to speak to people. The Bible has a lot of stories about them, and a lot of books, some big and some small, that contain things they wrote or said. Mostly they were telling people, often the king, that they were making God sad, and needed to change. Sometimes they were telling people that things could be better. Many of the prophets said things which we know were about Jesus coming.

When Jeremiah told the story of the potter and Ezekiel wrote about the valley of dry bones, they were both saying that God could put things right. In the valley, the bones turned back from skeletons to people.

We are going to make “bones” with Marzipan. Afterwards you can eat them!

Week 3 is about John the Baptist. He was born about 6 months before Jesus. He went into the desert around the river Jordan and told people to change their ways, and he told people that the Messiah (Jesus) was coming. He baptised Jesus, and some of the people who had followed John became Jesus disciples.

Week 4 is about Mary, Jesus’ mother. We particularly think about the angel coming to her and telling her that God wanted her to have baby Jesus. It must have taken a lot of faith and courage to accept that. We’re going to think about angels by finishing our angel cakes.

This brings me back to week 1. During his time on earth, Jesus said he would come back, and in week 1 we think about this. If Jesus came back today, would we be ready for him? Jesus told the story of the wedding, where there were 10 girls waiting for the bridegroom to come. They were supposed to have oil lamps, but only 5 of them had thought to bring spare oil. When the bridegroom actually came the others weren’t ready, and by the time they got oil it was too late, and they missed the wedding.

We’re going to make “oil lamps” with card and coloured paper.

Let’s say a prayer,

Prayer

Father God, you spent a long time getting ready for the first Christmas. Help us to remember, as Christmas gets closer, what the celebration is really all about, so that we can be ready for Jesus coming.

Amen

We’ll sing Make Way, Make Way . <https://youtu.be/tK6XuYhL7JI>

Next Messy Church is 18th December. We hope to see you then, but this month we’ll say goodbye.

Enjoy our celebration on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw>

Then have tea or a treat if it isn’t tea time!

If you send me pictures of anything you do, I will share them on the Church Facebook page (if you want to send pictures that you don’t want shared, just tell me. I’ll only share the one’s you’re happy to share.)

Harlington Messy Church Team