**Messy Church – 19th November 2022**

**Advent:**

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

**For all weeks**

1. **Advent ring (in the celebration)**

**Week 1 – The second coming of Jesus:**

Matthew chapter 25: verses1 -13

1. **Paper plate lamp**

**Week 2 – The prophets:**

1. **Isaiah – God’s kingdom will be at peace:**

Isaiah chapter 11, verses 6 – 9,

**Week 3 – John the Baptist:**

Luke chapter 1, verses 5 – 23, 57 – 64,

1. **“His name is John” – wax printing**

Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 – 15

1. **John in the desert – icing sugar and jelly baby scene on an ice cream wafer – food activity**

**Week 4 – Mary the mother of Jesus:**

Luke chapter 1, verses 26 – 38,

Matthew chapter 1, verses 19 - 24

1. **Card finger puppets (in the celebration)**
2. **Angel fairy cakes – food activity**

**Stories and Activities**

**1 Advent ring (in the celebration)**

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). We are using electric night lights this year, which are all white. 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. You could use marker pens, sharpies, or specialist porcelain pens, rather than paint.

A picture containing indoor, toilet

Description automatically generated

If you have white and one colour, the white night lights go round the outside of the tile, and the other coloured 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 when they burn out.

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

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 if they are using paint!

**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?

**2 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:** Isaiah, chapter 11, verses 6 –9

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 the words of one prophet who was talking about what God’s kingdom would be like in the future.

**Isaiah** of Jerusalem, who wrote this passage, was insistent in all his prophecies that God would protect his people, if they would only follow his advice. His advice was usually not to join in the battles that were being fought by the larger nations around them, because he would protect them – and he did, when the people did what he said. Isaiah in this passage talked about what God’s kingdom would be like in the future – not even the future we have now, compared with Isaiah’s time, if you read what he wrote.

This passage is often misquoted as “the lion will lie down with the lamb”, when it actually says the wolf shall live with the lamb, and the calf and the lion shall be led by a child. In the pack are images of a sheep face, a lion face (as it would look made on a circle of card) and a wolf face, which could be adapted to fit on a circle of card.

**3 Paper plate faces**

**You will need:** paper plate or a flat circle of card, a black felt tip pen, coloured paper for the faces of the lion (brown, orange and black), the wolf (this is a comic face, really – to look more realistic, use brown and black pens or paper) and the lamb (black), cotton wool for the lamb’s face, images to work from – in the Messy Church file for this session, or sent out with this booklet.

On one side of the paper plate, or card circle, make the lion or wolf face, and on the other, make the lamb’s. It doesn’t matter which side you use for which! It also doesn’t matter if the lion or wolf face overlaps the sides of your circle – the cotton wool of the lamb’s face will hide it on that side. You could make the wolf face by printing and cutting out the image, and sticking it to your circle.

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

**Week 3 – John the Baptist:** Luke chapter 1, verses 5 – 23, 57 – 64,

John was Jesus’ cousin, about six months older than he was. The New Testament part of the Bible thinks of him as the last prophet – after Jesus was crucified, the Bible doesn’t talk about prophets, just about followers. When God promised John’s father that he would have a son, long after Zechariah had given up hoping for one, Zechariah did not believe God, so God made him unable to speak until after the child was named. He had to write down what John was to be called, because all the men present wanted to name the baby after his father, as was usually done, and wouldn’t pay any attention to his wife, Elizabeth, because she was “only a woman”.

**4 Wax printing**

**You will need:** a piece of white paper, a white wax crayon or a white candle, some thin black paint and a paint brush or sponge.

Write “His name is John!” on the paper with the crayon or candle. Paint over the writing with the paint, until you can read the writing.

**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?

**5 John in the desert:** Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 - 15

When John grew up, his 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 in the river Jordan the people who came to hear him, 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.

**You will need:** an ice cream wafer, a very little thin blue icing (or squirty blue icing, at least two jelly babies, and a paper plate to work on.

Spread the blue icing on the wafer, to represent the river, and put two jelly babies in the water, to represent John and one of the people he baptised. If you have some spare jelly babies, you could put them on the sides of the wafer, as if they were listening to John, or watching what was going on.

**Talk about:** being the sort of people God wants. Do we need to change to become those people? John’s message was the same as the earlier prophets had been. John told the people that God would help them – do we let him help us?

**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.

**Joseph**: Matthew chapter 1, verses 19 - 24

Joseph then had to be told about the baby – and he was not so certain that he believed Mary’s story. The angel had to explain to him that it was OK, and he could marry Mary.

**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?

**6 Card finger puppets (in the celebration)**

**You will need:**  three finger puppets – scanned images are supplied in the emailed pack, or on the website – of Mary, Joseph and an angel. If you only have paper to print them on, you may want to stick the figures to thin card before you cut them out. Do this early, and then they will be ready to colour in during the celebration. (Remember to cut out the round holes towards the bottom of each puppet). Colour the figures in. Put your fingers through the holes on one puppet (one for each hand) and act out the story. (You will have to change the figure of Mary for the one of Joseph in the course of the story.)

**7 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.

**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 in Advent are celebrated. Many churches have an Advent Ring with 4 or 5 candles, the 5th being for Christmas Day. We’ll make the Advent ring for week 1, but we’ll talk about it at the end, because week 1 only really makes sense after you know about the rest.

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

We’ll start by making Advent rings. We’re going to use markers and electric “tea-lamps”. You may want to use paints and real candles at home.

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.

Isaiah wrote a lot of things which we now realise were about Jesus coming. Some of them were about Christmas, and some about Easter. We’ve looked at one about peace. We sometimes call Jesus “The Prince of Peace”.

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 this while we make some finger puppets of figures in the Christmas story.

We’ll sing Colours of Day <https://youtu.be/Fo-3lf08y-Y>

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.

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 finish by singing Like a candle flame <https://youtu.be/SZSW5NwYiB0>

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

We’ll have a Zoom meeting open for those who can’t come to the church. Our end of Zoom will go on YouTube during the celebration, but we won’t put pictures from your end on. Contact me if you want the link for Zoom. Look out for the broadcast on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube Channel. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw/videos>

Next Messy Church is 17th December. We hope to see you then.