**Messy Church – 21st June 2025**

**The great party**

Our activities this month are based largely on one story, told by Jesus, the story of the great party. Some of the activities are based on our ideas of how we make a party.

The story is in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 14, verses 15 to 24. Jesus told this story when he went to a party in the house of a rich man.

Two of the activities are based on the story of Zacchaeus, a rich man, a tax collector, whom Jesus met, and whose house Jesus visited for a meal. This account is in Gospel of Luke, chapter 19, verses 1 to 12

The activities are:

1. **Getting the house ready:**
	1. Bunting – paper triangles onstring – in the Celebration
	2. Faces on balloons
2. **Getting the meal ready:** Decorated fairy cakes
3. **Getting ready for the guests:** Present boxes (could also be used in the Zacchaeus story)
4. **Trees –** collage or mosaic (Zacchaeus)
5. **The excuses – a field, a yoke of oxen, a wife**
	1. Picture of a field, made withmacaroni
	2. Stand up oxen – in theCelebration
	3. Balloon oxen
	4. Cardboard tube people – bride andgroom

**Stories and Activities**

Jesus was invited to a party with a grand meal. When he arrived, he talked to the other people who were invited, and to the man who had invited him. Among the things he said was that if someone wanted to do a really good thing, when he gave a party he should invite the sort of people who could not invite him to a similar event. He should invite the poor and blind and lame, not his relatives and friends, and then he would be welcomed into the kingdom of God. and then Jesus told this story.

Once there was a man who was giving a great party. He invited lots of people to come to the party. (In Jesus’ time, you sent out the invitations while the meal was prepared, because cooking for a lot took a long time, and then sent a servant to tell the guests that the party was ready – not like us, we send invitations, ask people to reply, and then get everything, including the food, ready for the number of people who say they will come.) When the meal was ready, the man sent his servant to tell his guests that it was time to come to the party.

The guests all made excuses to the servant, saying they could not come:

“I have bought a field, and must go and see it. Please accept my apologies.”

“I have bought five yoke (pairs) of oxen, and am on my way to try them out. Please accept my apologies.”

“I have just got married, and for that reason I cannot come.”

The servant went back and told his master all about the apologies. His master was very angry, and told his servant to go out into the town, and bring back the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. The servant did this, and still there was space at the tables. His master told him to go out into the countryside, and bring in all the people he could find, so that the house would be full of guests, because, he said, none of the people he had originally invited would get even a taste of the dinner!

1. **Getting the house ready:**

Although our ways of organising a party are different from those of Jesus’ day, some things are the same – the house would be tidied and decorated to welcome the guests. So these two activities are about getting the house ready for the party.

1. Bunting – paper triangles onstring – in the Celebration

**You will need:** a length of string, paper triangles, felt tip pens or crayons or colouring pencils, and a stapler. (You may also have to cut out your triangles, so you may need scissors)

Colour patterns on the triangles, and staple them over the string. Hang them where they will be seen by people coming into the house.

1. Faces on balloons

**You will need:** round balloons, felt tip pens, a balloon pump (or lots of breath), and some string.

Blow up the balloons, and draw happy faces on them. Hang them in bunches, where they will be seen by people coming into the house.

**Talk about:** getting ready for a party. What order do you do things in: the invitations, the cooking, the tidying, the getting dressed up

**2. Getting the meal ready:** decorated fairy cakes

When we think of a party, we tend to think in terms of sandwiches (or pizza) and cake. This is likely to be very different from what Jesus might eat at a party – which would probably be a fancy meat and vegetable dish, and fancy fruit arrangements.

**You will need: either** home made fairy or cup cakes, or bought ones, icing sugar, flavouring and/or colouring, a little water, and some hundreds and thousands, or coloured sugar strands, a bowl to mix in, and a fork to mix with. (You could use ready made icing, if you want)

Mix the colour, and the flavour in the bowl, and add icing sugar until the mixture is thick. Spoon it onto the cakes, and then sprinkle hundreds and thousands or sugar strands on the top.

**Talk about:** what you like to eat at parties – and the sort of things that other people like. Think about the changes that might happen over time in party food.

**3. Getting ready for the guests:**  Present boxes

**You will need:** we have some pre-prepared boxes – if you are doing this activity at home, you could use one of the box nets we have used recently (July 2024, where the box has a lid, or May 25, which has no lid. Either box could be covered with wrapping paper, just don’t leave it so you cannot open it.). If you are making the box from scratch, you will need scissors, glue. We will have stick on decorations, and you could use something similar if you have them. We are going to put sweets of some kind in the boxes.

Put the box together, as appropriate, and put half a dozen wrapped sweets in. Close the box, and take it to the celebration.

**Talk about:** the gifts we give – either for birthdays or Christmas, or as party bags when we have a party.

**4. Trees** – as in the Zacchaeus story – collage or mosaic

Zacchaeus was a tax collector who lived in Jericho. Because he was a tax collector, and rich, he was not liked by his fellow citizens. When he heard that Jesus was passing through the town, he decided that he wanted to see him, but because he was short, and everyone else wanted to see Jesus as well, he climbed a tree, so he could see over the heads of the crowd.

When Jesus got to the tree where Zacchaeus was, he stopped and looked up. He told Zacchaeus that he wanted to eat at his house that evening. People in the crowd complained that Jesus would eat with a man like Zacchaeus, who was a “sinner” – meaning that he was worse than the usual, rich and not nice. Zacchaeus stood in front of Jesus and said that he would give half his money to the poor, and repay 4 times as much money as he had taken from people, if he had cheated them.

Jesus commended him, and reminded the crowd that Zacchaeus was also a Jew, like themselves.

**You will need:** a piece of paper to make the tree on, some coloured paper to make the tree, pencils or crayons, glue, scissors

Draw the outline of a tree on the piece of paper – it will be the only thing on the paper, so make it big. Cut or tear the coloured paper to stick on the tree, to give it colour and texture. If you want, you could use pieces of paper from a magazine picture of a tree, so you make a tree with pictures of a tree. Or make a mosaic picture of a tree.

**Talk about:** being too small to see what is going on around you – or talk about changing your lifestyle, as Zacchaeus promised to do.

**5. The excuses – a field, a yoke of oxen, a wife**

We are now back with Jesus’ story of a party, and the guests who made excuses.

1. Picture of a field – made with macaroni and paint

**You will need:** a piece of paper, some macaroni, glue, paint

Stick the macaroni onto the piece of paper to make the field. Paint the scene so that it looks like a field that needs checking out

1. Stand up oxen – in the Celebration

Oxen are just large, heavy cows (or bulls). In 1st Century Palestine they were used instead of horses for pulling carts, and ploughing fields. When necessary, they worked in pairs (see the picture). The piece of wood on the neck of the animals, used to hitch the oxen to whatever they were pulling, is called a yoke, if it is used for two animals. So when the man said he had bought 5 yoke of oxen, he had bought 5 pairs of oxen!

**You will need:** a print out of the ox (provided), pencils or felt tip pens to colour, scissors, glue and a length of tube from a paper towel roll, or cooking foil roll.

Colour and cut out both sides of the ox. Carefully measure the length of tube needed, and cut that. Carefully glue the ox to the tube – one piece on each side, so that he stands up.

1. Balloon oxen

**You will need:** at least two modelling balloons, and a pattern to work from

Blow up the balloons and make an ox.

1. Carboard bride and groom

**You will need:** a cardboard tube (paper towel inner) for each person, fabric scraps, scissors, glue, felt tip pens.

At the top of the tube, draw the face of the character you want (man or woman). Use glue to attach the fabric to dress the person.

**Talk about:** making excuses for not doing what you said you would do. Think about how you feel if someone makes excuses to you.

**Celebration**

Sing Jesus’ love is very wonderful. <https://youtu.be/WcgplHIntJc?si=LOvFmcBSFYnT7zSM>

Do you like parties? Jesus often went out to other people for a meal, and because he was special, when people invited him they often made the meals special, like grown-up parties. So there are a number of Bible stories about parties or meals out. One of them is quite odd in a way.

It starts off with a bit of a parade. People knew Jesus was going to be going down a particular road, and those who wanted to see him went to that road to watch as he walked by. One person who wanted to watch was Zaccheus. He wasn’t a very nice man. He collected taxes for the Romans, and, because of the way that worked, he could make people pay more than they really should. He got rich doing that, but everyone hated him. He was frightened to be in a crowd, but he really wanted to see Jesus. He had another problem, he was short.

He thought of a way to deal with both problems. He decided that, if he got there early and hid up in a tree, he could see Jesus without being seen. So, that’s what he did. However, Jesus was good at noticing people. As he passed by the tree he looked into it, right at Zaccheus and told him to come down. Jesus said he was going to have a meal with Zaccheus. The crowd were stunned, but Jesus could see that Zaccheus was ready to change. So Jesus went to tea, and Zaccheus gave back the money he had stolen, and some extra, and changed his ways.

When we have a party or a parade, we can put up bunting as a decoration. We are going to make some to decorate our display window in the church.

Sing Come and dine <https://youtu.be/-Baa9YbQubU?si=zUeVe-_KExDJkt_c>

When Jesus was at another meal, the talk turned to feasting in heaven, and Jesus told this story.

A king decided to hold a feast, and sent out a lot of invitations, but when the time for the feast came, everyone made an excuse. One said “I’ve just got married and can’t come”, another said “I’ve just bought some land and must look at it”, while someone else said “I’ve just bought an ox and must try it out.”

Well, the king was furious. He sent his servants to invite other people, and when they didn’t fill all the places, he told the servants to bring in anyone from the streets and alleyways.

We’re going to make some stand up oxen.

The moral of the story is that Jesus is offering us good things, but that doesn’t mean everyone will accept them. He’s inviting us to a party. He wants us to have a good life and have fun.

Do you dance at parties?

Songs – StF 477 Teach me to dance <https://youtu.be/8PXBIEK4ueM?si=LkxJOrmMQGE58gbq>

Let’s pray.

Dear God,

Help us to come to you and have the good time you want us to have. And help us to invite others to share that good time.

Amen

Next Messy Church is 19th July 2025. See you then.

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 can share them on the Church Facebook page or in the Church Monthly (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>