

What is Messy Church, you might ask.

“Messy Church - I don't like the sound of that,” said a participant at one of the Conversations That Matter, started in January 2011, to provide opportunities for people to talk together in small groups at First United Church.

That observation and others helped us realize that we aren't communicating well enough about some of the things that are happening at our church.

What is Messy Church you might ask, writes Reverend Nancy Rowe of Georgetown United Church.

Messy Church is one of the Fresh Expressions of Worship. It is not a program but an innovative worship that is focussed on families and particularly the vast numbers of people who are third and fourth generation away from having any church experience (apart from the odd wedding). Church is just not something that comes up on the radar for many. Messy Church is Christ centred and offers an opportunity for families to explore their faith, coming together in a lively worship that does not presuppose any familiarity with churchiness, and finally interacting as a community to share a meal. Messy Church recognizes that carving out family time together within the busy schedules of work, school and activities is difficult and Sunday may be the only day that the family can be together. So Messy Church often happens on a weekday, where Mom or Dad can pick up the kids after work, meet at Messy Church and have family time together playing a game, doing a craft, exploring faith and enjoying a good meal (no one has to cook Messy Church night).

The third Saturday of the month is usually Messy Church night at First United, from 4 to 6:30. Since last spring a faithful group of volunteers from First has been meeting with our Minister of Families, Kellie McComb, to plan these monthly gatherings that started to happen regularly in October. The first few sessions saw about 20 people. The most recent gathering on Easter weekend welcomed 45 people including families from the neighbourhood around the church and some kids from 3 group homes.

We heard last fall that there is a serious decline in numbers in mainline churches and predictions are that in five years the United Church of Canada will cease to exist as we have known it. “**As we have known it**” is a key phrase. Messy Church appears to be one of the new ways that we can welcome new people into our church. On a Saturday evening at First United, one young mother who lives nearby said, “It's great that the church wants to invite the community in. We weren't sure when it was okay for us to come.”

“Embracing the Mess: Life is messy and God is to be found working at the messy edges of life.”
(Rev. Nancy Rowe)

Lucy Moore started Messy Church in the UK in 2004. The first Canadian Messy Churches were begun in 2007. Nancy Rowe started MC at St. George's in April 2007 in Georgetown, ON and Sam Rose started MC in St. John's NL in September 2007. Since that time Messy Churches have sprung up in almost every province across Canada.

Our Messy Church planners at First could use your help preparing the meal or cleaning up or with publicity. You will be welcome, whatever your age, if you would like to come and see what is happening at Messy Church.