

19th January, 2014
Traditions Challenged!

Reading: Psalm 98
Introduction to Video Clip 1

Today I am going to share with you a couple of video clips about Messy Church which is being introduced in our Church on the last Thursday of this month.

The first video clip gives us some background on Messy Church, how it started, what it's aims are and the part it now plays in the worship of God throughout not just our country but many other countries as well.

Our worship is fairly traditional in this Church although we don't worship as it has always been done. That said, we don't take many risks. We stick pretty much to what is commonly known as the hymn prayer sandwich despite the fact that the world has moved on.

Messy Church acknowledges that the world has moved on and embraces some of those changes in the way worship is offered.

What we see and hear today will challenge our thinking, will challenge our fixed ideas on what is and is not appropriate and it may even leave us feeling a little unsure of what is ahead. If it does, then that's good because in some ways we are too comfortable in our faith and in our worship and new challenges and new opportunities give us the chance to rethink what we do and why we do it.

As Christians, what is important to us? Is it that we uphold our traditions at any cost, or is that God's message reaches others who don't share our traditions? Is it important that we stay the same or is it important that we face the challenges of the present day as Peter did, as we saw last week, when he realised that the message of salvation, the gospel, was for all and not just the chosen few?

I leave those thoughts with you as we watch the first video clip. If you can't see the screen, I would ask you to move your seat so that you can. That might be the first challenge!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IR-VTHYer4>

Reading: 1 Corinthians 9: 19 – 23

Introduction to Video Clip 2

We are now going to watch a second video clip which follows one family through the various parts of Messy Church.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN7cD64Dh50>

Thoughts on Worship

Messy Church is very different from our traditional worship. There is no doubt about it but what we have to realise, I think, is that traditions, not just in Church, are like habits. They start somewhere and then they become the norm but that doesn't make them necessarily good or necessarily bad. But sometimes, as we have all discovered in our own lives at some stage, sometimes for the good of our health or our well-being, habits have to be broken.

Traditions always have a starting point. They don't start off as traditions. They start off as something new which someone decides to try for the first time, probably breaking the established tradition of the day, and before we know it, there is new tradition.

Take music in Church, many would argue that we need an organ but the early Church didn't have an organ.

In Psalm 150, the Psalmist writes:

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,

praise him with tambourine and dancing, (not in our Church – we stand still!)

praise him with the strings and pipe,

praise him with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

They used what was available in their day as the Church did when the organ was introduced but it doesn't have to be organ music. It's not written on tablets of stone even if we like organ music. It had a starting point. It has not always been.

And that is the challenge to us as regards worship, as regards Messy Church. It is Church but it is different. That doesn't make it right or wrong. It makes it an alternative which is perhaps more appropriate to those who are not familiar with our traditions. It is active learning. It is not sitting listening for hours on end.

That tradition has been broken in schools and is being broken in Churches so that others can be reached with the gospel in new and exciting and challenging ways.

Paul says in Corinthians: **I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.**

The gospel is not just for the traditionalists, for the people who do not like change. It is for all people and we have to become all things for all people for the sake of the gospel and so that, like Paul, we can share in its blessings.