

Unless you become like a child: Psychological type and Christian becoming at Messy Church

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Abstract

This study addresses a major concern in the debate surrounding Messy Church regarding its ability to nurture Christian discipleship in people who rarely attend traditional church. As a work of practical theology, empirical data and theological reflection are combined in order to generate increased understanding concerning Messy Church as a crucible for discipleship as child-like becoming.

Discipleship is conceptualised as a dual process of intersubjective relationship and experiential learning. The concept of intersubjectivity in relationship is informed by Martin Buber's seminal work *I and Thou*. Experiential learning is approached through psychological type preferences, learning styles and basic value theory which come together in Conversational Learning Theory (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002). The Messy Church values of hospitality, creativity and all age inclusion are shown to be potentially conducive to Christian becoming, provided that dialectical tensions within learning and relating are balanced.

A sample of 260 helpers and 203 adults from 41 different Messy Churches completed questions designed to assess attitudes towards Messy Church values, religious, spiritual and relational outcomes and psychological type. Age profiles suggested that helpers were predominantly over 50 and adult participants were predominantly in their 30s and 40s. Psychological type profiles were similar to previous studies of conventional church (predominantly sensing and judging). The significant predictors of outcomes among adults who are not regular attenders of conventional church were intuition, feeling and judging along with active participation and duration of attendance. Participation stood out as the main significant predictor of outcomes in regular church attenders. Among helpers, hospitality was significantly predicted by extraversion, socialisation and child-led learning, creativity was predicted by being female, young, a leader and child-led learning, and all age inclusion was predicted by being a leader.

Recommendations are made based on a wider inclusion of difference and a balance of dialectical tensions in learning.

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Preface

It may seem somewhat ironic to choose to approach the subject of Christian learning and becoming at Messy Church through a quantitative empirical study. Readers familiar with the work of Martin Buber, whose insights I endeavour to bring to bear upon Messy Church in this study, will recognise this as an *I-It* attitude to the project. The differentiation between individuals according to psychological type, the appreciation of values as motivational goals, and the dialectic tensions of the learning process, all suggest an attempt to gain understanding and knowledge through an abstract process of separation, identification and critical analysis. These are qualities which mark it out as fundamentally *I-It*. Perhaps this is inevitable in any study when there is the small matter of the *It* of a thesis to produce. However, it is my hope that the sensitive reader will recognise a willingness on my part to attend to the heartbeat, the DNA (Lings 2013), the fullness of Messy Church, which signals a desire to approach Messy Church, at least on occasion, with a genuine *I-Thou* attitude.

Approaching with an *I-Thou* attitude involves *I* being fully present to the encounter. It is in the spirit of this requirement to be fully present and aware of my own perspective that I include the following brief narrative of my own spiritual, religious and intellectual journey. I was not brought up in church so I had very little personal experience of Christian worship as a child, save that which I encountered in school assemblies. I had a sudden conversion experience, aged 23, during my time at Southampton University as a post-graduate mathematics student. The person of Jesus suddenly became very important and significant to me and in my own life. The quest to understand more of what it means to encounter Jesus and to be in relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, continues to stir my soul today, almost three decades on. During this time I have made my home in three different Christian denominations. Chronologically, I spent two years in an Assemblies of God Pentecostal Church, ten years in a charismatic Baptist Church and fifteen years in my current Church of England parish where I have served for the last six years as lay Reader. It was my lay Reader training which spawned an interest in academic theological study and which led to the undertaking of this postgraduate research project.

There are some further aspects of my life story which are also pertinent to this study. In terms of psychological type preference both the Myers Briggs Type Indicator and the Francis Psychological Type Scales have identified me as an ISFJ type. I have never been involved in running Messy Church though I am involved in leading a

monthly intergenerational worship service at my church. I have completed the three day accredited Godly Play training and I have some experience using aspects of the Godly Play method, both in church and in a large number of primary schools across Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield. I mention this because Godly Play contrasts with Messy Church in several ways which will become apparent through this study. My work in primary schools came about through a part time job which I held for ten years, working for a Christian children's work charity. The post primarily involved using puppetry and storytelling in collective worship and religious education lessons.

Although I consider myself to be creative, I recognise the preferences of my psychological functioning in my creativity, in that I often lean towards a felt sense of duty to produce a creative work that is functional, of good quality (in the eyes of others) and not wasteful of my time nor my resources. However, I am also aware that whenever I set aside these restrictions and creatively play, I somehow experience more of myself, I am more fully present to the task, than when I am constrained to work within the boundaries of external expectations, imagined or otherwise. When I set out to explore Messy Church, I was curious to discover the extent to which it might provide an environment which enabled members of a community to encounter Jesus. Theological reflection has led me to consider that encountering Jesus is mysteriously bound up in being fully present, not just to self, but most importantly, to one another.

Part 1
What is Messy Church?

Introduction to Part 1

By way of an introduction to Messy Church I would like to begin with a story. Although the focus of this thesis is Christian learning and becoming in *adult* participants at Messy Church, this story is mostly about a child. The reason for this is that children often act as role models of Christian becoming for adults because they beautifully demonstrate the *process* of Christian becoming.

This story concerns a six-year old boy called Robbie (not his real name) and his struggle to make sense of a Bible story that he heard at Messy Church. Not long after beginning my research I attended a Messy Church session where the theme for the day was “Joseph the dreamer”. At this particular Messy Church, the normal pattern was slightly different to that described in Lucy Moore’s books in that the Bible story upon which the session was based, was told to the participants *before* the craft activity time. The storyteller used a pseudo-Godly Play approach in which she laid out props upon a felt underlay to illustrate the Hebrew Bible story of Joseph who was loved by his father Jacob, but had a turbulent relation with his eleven brothers. Robbie heard about Joseph’s dreams of future greatness and the gift from his father of a coat of many colours which fuelled his brothers’ jealousy and led to a plot for them to kill him. The storyteller described how the plot was changed at the last minute and instead Joseph was stripped of his coat, thrown into a pit and then sold into slavery. The story went on to relate how Joseph’s own dreams were fulfilled when he interpreted the Pharaoh’s dreams and as a reward was put in charge of food distribution in Egypt which led to his father and brothers bowing down before him and asking for his help.

One of the craft activities that day was to decorate a cardboard Joseph-figure with different coloured strips of paper to represent his famous multicoloured coat. But Robbie did not want to follow the activity instructions. Instead Robbie made an “angry Joseph” (his words) with an all black coat. Refusing all attempts by the adult activity supervisor to persuade him to use the brightly coloured paper strips, he chose instead a black felt tip pen and drew an angry facial expression. When prompted to say why he had done this, Robbie explained that this was Joseph in the pit “when God didn’t like him”. No-one picked up on this statement so I went and asked Robbie if he thought God didn’t like it when people get angry. He paused. “No” he said, reluctantly. “God doesn’t like it when we do bad things”. He then skipped across the floor taking his Joseph figure with him to the next activity.

This encounter is rich with Robbie’s spirituality. Robbie focused on Joseph’s anger, but actually the story does not explicitly refer to Joseph being angry. The attribution of anger to Joseph must therefore have come from within Robbie himself. I believe

that Robbie was wrestling with some meaningful understanding of what it is to be angry at the unjust and even hateful actions of others. This is all the more poignant because, as I discovered somewhat later, Robbie's home life is overshadowed by domestic violence. I like to think that Robbie found some closure in his wrestling with this issue, though I have no evidence for this, except that as he skipped across the room he looked almost joyful. The adult who was supervising this activity did not seem to recognise any value in Robbie choosing to use black to colour Joseph's coat (which of course he was not wearing at the point he was thrown into the pit). She initially trivialised Robbie's work, saying "Joseph would look much better with all these bright colours on his coat. Don't you want to use these?", but then she acquiesced and simply turned her attention to the other children around the table.

This story illustrates the outworking of a learning process in the child, which is at worst ignored and at the very least unappreciated by the supervising adult, turning upside-down the idea that the adult was somehow teaching the child. Instead it was an opportunity for the adult to learn from the child, albeit an opportunity which was sadly missed. In providing an environment motivated by distinctive values of all-age inclusion, hospitality and creativity, Messy Church has the potential to facilitate the kind of Christian becoming which Jesus may have alluded to in his instruction to his followers that they must "change and become like little children". This thesis represents an attempt to anticipate what a Christian becoming might look like if shaped by Messy Church values. Furthermore, empirical evidence has been gathered and analysed to determine whether Messy Church fulfils its potential in this regard.

Since the first century, followers have gathered together to learn about Jesus and to support each other in the outworking of the Christian faith. Messy Church is an expression of this phenomenon appropriate to the twenty first century. Distinctly different to conventional church, Messy Church poses a challenge to traditional churches to reflect upon the structure and values that shape what Messy Church is and what it does. In 2012, at the start of this study, there were two major questions surrounding fresh expressions of church that were being debated at the time, particularly within the Church of England and the Methodist Church. First, can fresh expressions actually be considered to be church in their own right? And second, do they make disciples? This thesis speaks to the second of these questions.

In consideration of what it actually means to "make disciples", attention has been given to Jesus' words to his disciples in Matthew 18:3, "Truly I tell you, unless you

change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”.¹ Whatever it means to be a disciple, it seems in these words to have something to do with becoming like a child. Emphasis is often placed on the product or outcome of change such that disciples more closely resemble children after they have changed. But the process of changing and becoming demonstrated by children could also be emphasised, which suggests that following this instruction requires adopting the same process of *becoming* that children utilise as they grow and learn. It is primarily the process involved in becoming that has been explored here.

Educationally speaking, the learning process is conceptualised in this thesis as the construction of knowledge by the individual (and mediated socially) rather than the behaviourist notion of information retention and behaviour modification.

Constructivist understandings of learning place greater attention on the learner as active in the construction of their own knowledge, rather than on behavioural approaches which tend to emphasise a passive reception, retention and implementation of information and behavioural practice by the learner. Traditional understandings of Christian discipleship invariably emphasise the role of religious disciplines and practices, alongside appropriate orthodox instruction provided by the teacher. This suggests a predominantly behaviourist approach, although theological justification for the required disciplines and practices would perhaps be considered more pertinent than any inherent educational justification. Messy Church, however, seems to be following in the wake of a movement towards constructivist understandings of learning observed in the educational sector, typified, for example, by an appreciation of individual learning styles. Attention to individual differences in learning forms a major focus of this thesis. Theological warrant for attention to difference comes from the Eden narrative in the book of Genesis, which depicts a movement from “very good” differences in created order, to a sense of shame in regard to nakedness (which makes difference abundantly clear) and the subsequent attempt to clothe, and hence cover-up, those differences.

Having located the onus for learning back with the learner, the word ‘discipleship’ began to seem inadequate for the purpose of this thesis. Alongside other terms in common use, such as formation and catechesis, discipleship seemed to perpetuate the idea of someone (e.g. a teacher or perhaps God) doing something to someone else (the learner), indirectly implying that the learner is largely passive. The phrase

¹ The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission, unless otherwise indicated. All rights reserved.

“Christian becoming” has therefore been chosen in an attempt to restore linguistic balance to the concept and avoid the inherent directional bias (from teacher to learner) of the more familiar terms. Christian becoming maintains the notion of personal change within the context of Christian relationships (and most evidently in the relationship between teacher and learner) whilst allowing for greater equality in the relationship (such that both parties become together). This brings me to the final, and most important aspect of the challenge that Messy Church affords traditional church - its particular emphasis on the development of personal relationships in a community of faith.

There are undoubtedly a wide variety of reasons behind the increased level of attention paid to the development of personal relationships at Messy Church. The reasons identified here are fourfold: theological, contextual, spiritual and educational. Theological imperative for the importance of relationship is located in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The Christian God is perpetual relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It makes sense then that a community which seeks to represent such a God on earth would pay attention to relationships. Contextually, the increasingly postmodern influence in twenty-first century Western Christianity means that relational belonging is repeatedly propounded as a significant motivator for those outside of church to consider joining, and having joined, to then remain. Consequently, belonging is now frequently expected to precede believing and behaving. Spiritual concern for the importance of relationship is found in the definition of spirituality as an acute “relational consciousness” (Hay with Nye, 2006) implying that spiritual nurture (and hence, indirectly, religious nurture) implicitly requires attention to relational concerns. Finally, thanks to Lev Vygotsky, education and learning have come to be understood as primarily shaped through the shared social context. In relationship with a more skilled other, I am invited and enabled to see my experience through the eyes of another and hence my scope of vision is enlarged. These theological, contextual, spiritual, and educational imperatives to invest in relationships present a challenge to the Christian community to prioritise the relational dynamic in its expression of mission and ministry. Messy Church appears, at face value, to be attempting to address this concern.

Messy Church, with its focus on all-age provision of hospitality and creativity has the potential to be a crucible for Christian becoming through relational learning. Informal discussion over a shared meal provides rich opportunity for relational development and conversational learning. Similarly, the centrality of the creative arts at Messy Church provides a rich non-verbal mechanism for self-expression and engagement in learning. Creativity is particularly helpful to children who have yet to fully develop their linguistic skills, but it can also be helpful to adults in their

exploration of personal and corporate spiritual and religious experience, concepts for which they may struggle to find adequate words. In the context of relational learning, Christianity can be thought of as a language system (Berryman 2009) which provides the images, metaphors and actions to facilitate conversation regarding existential mystery and personal and social identity. In other words, it offers a story and a vocabulary within which people can begin to address questions such as “Who are we?” and “Why are we here?” In placing the Christian story in a setting that is designed to facilitate conversation and creativity, Messy Church presents an opportunity to participants to learn the Christian language (so much more than words) alongside more fluent speakers of that language. Christian becoming is not just the learning of a language, it is also involves a relationship with the Trinitarian God from whom the language originates. Becoming fundamentally depends on relationship. Situating Christian becoming firmly in the domain of all-age relationship, so that it points to “becoming like a child”, anchors becoming in relationship with children. In this sense Messy Church affords all adults, helpers and participants alike, the opportunity to wrestle with the notion of child-like becoming by investing in their relationships with the children in their midst at Messy Church. According to Jesus, when they become like children, adults are better enabled to enter the kingdom of heaven. This suggests that when Messy Church nurtures child-like becoming through relationship with children, it also somehow nurtures kingdom relationship with the heavenly Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A typical Messy Church session

The Messy Church organization is a network of family-oriented, fresh expressions of mission and church which has seen significant growth in popularity since it began in the UK in 2004.² Promoted widely by the Bible Reading Fellowship, the organization now boasts Messy congregations across the Protestant denominations³

² 300 recorded Messy Churches by April 2010 (Lings 2010:3), 1500 by January 2013 (Moore 2013:15) and 3000 by mid-September 2015 (Moore 2015)

³ Lings (2010:10) records 106 Anglican, 20 Baptist, 4 Independent, 65 Methodist, 9 Salvation Army, 11 URC and 92 unclear as of April 2010.

with a small number in the Roman Catholic community⁴ and it is expanding beyond the UK and Europe into Australia and North America.⁵

A primary aim of Messy Church is to provide an opportunity, usually once a month, for families from a local community “to enjoy being together, making things together, eating together and celebrating God together” (Moore 2006:21). The ‘messy’ adjective refers not only to the craft activities which involve paint, glue, glitter and all manner of messy materials, but also to the often messy fringe of church which includes people who might occasionally attend a Christmas service or perhaps a Harvest festival but would not regularly turn up at church on a Sunday morning (Moore 2006:14-15).

Another aim of Messy Church is to make church more accessible to children and their carers, hence it usually avoids the traditional Sunday morning time slot, choosing instead to meet mid-week after school or perhaps on a Saturday (Moore 2006:16-20). Sessions last approximately two hours but are considerably more relaxed and informal than a traditional service of half the duration. The order in which things happen at Messy Church can vary and depends on the space available, but a typical format begins with a gradual welcome over a drink and a biscuit, and perhaps a simple activity such as a selection of colouring sheets which act as a holding activity until everyone has arrived; the theme of the day is then introduced and the craft activities, which typically relate to the theme, albeit sometimes tenuously, are opened up; after the craft time, the group then move into the main sanctuary of the church for a short act of worship (no more than fifteen minutes) and then back to the hall in order to share a meal together (Moore 2006:21-34).

The theme for the day is often cursorily introduced via a brief summary and an injunction to “figure it out as you go along”. Sometimes a printed handout guides the way. Occasionally there is the telling of a Bible story before the craft activities but typically this happens later during the act of worship. The activity time usually lasts between forty-five minute and an hour and involves a selection of creative projects, puzzles and games that participants can explore in any order. The tasks can be physically active (e.g. hunting for hidden “lost” cardboard sheep around the building and returning them to their pasture - a wall mounted collage), creative (e.g. constructing a ten foot model of the giant Goliath) or simply messy (e.g. pulling

⁴ The Parish of St Anne and St Bernard Catholic Church in Liverpool held the first known Catholic Messy Church on Saturday, 15 October 2010.

⁵ Lucy Moore (2011) reported on her blog about an international forum on Messy Church involving representatives from Canada and Australia.

unidentified objects from a bucket of pigswill made from several pints of jelly). The variety is intended to provide a range of activities covering different learning styles to hold the interest of participants of different ages and genders.

Some Messy Churches provide more focused activities specifically for teenagers and adults but more generally all of the activities are available to everyone. My understanding, gained through conversations with a range of organisers, is that some have tried age-focused activities and decided it does not work for them, citing reasons such as adults being preoccupied by young children, and teenagers in large numbers being a distraction to younger children who want to join in. Others still are restricted by lack of space and resources and so prefer to focus their attention on a particular age-range (commonly primary-aged children). Larger churches can have a dozen or more activities available whereas smaller churches typically have around half this number. Occasionally the activities themselves are used to tell the story (the Easter week narrative for example) and here the leader will try to get everyone doing the same activity at the same time (e.g. making and waving palm leaves). Problems can arise with this approach, for example when a child does not want to do a particular activity or a helper is overstretched by demand.

After the craft time comes a short act of worship. This normally takes place in a separate room, usually the main church sanctuary, but when Messy Church is being held in a hall or community centre, the worship can happen in the activity room itself. Often the worship comprises a song, a short story - usually from the Bible, a modern application or moral lesson from the story and a prayer. Songs are commonly those written specifically for children's worship such as those by Vineyard (eg. *Great Big God* (Hemming and Hemming 2001)), Duggie Doug Doug (Horley 2008), or Fischy Music (Fischbacher 2002). The story is told in a variety of ways, using online video clips, puppets, drama, or it can simply be read from a children's Bible. The prayer can be formal, for example using the Lord's Prayer or informal and extemporary. The worship may end with the traditional words of the Grace from the second letter to the Corinthians, accompanied by sign-language actions (known as the Messy Grace (Moore 2006:77)).

Typically, the worship is followed by a hot meal, although not all Messy Churches provide a full meal. Some choose instead to provide a more substantial snack (e.g. toast, crumpets, fruit, etc.). Where the meal is provided, the aim appears to be two-fold. First, parents and carers themselves do not then have to go home and prepare their own meal, thereby easing some of the burden of childcare. Second, it is expected that relationships will develop through conversations that take place

around the tables. Indeed some Messy Churches provide *Table Talk*® cards with interesting questions to try to stimulate a deeper discussion. Such conversations are expected to make a significant contribution to establishing the Messy Church as a worshipping community in its own right since this is where informal mentoring and discipleship can occur. Paul Moore (2013:44-47) calls for Messy Churches to develop an “intentional socialisation programme” and has coined the term “community discipleship” to emphasise this intention.

The founding of the Messy Church movement is widely accredited to Lucy Moore (2006), who describes the origin of the first Messy Church in her book *Messy Church – Fresh ideas for building a Christ-centred community*. Moore is a children’s ministry worker with the Bible Reading Fellowship and wife of Reverend Paul Moore, who was until recently the vicar of St Wilfred’s Church near Portsmouth in the UK. In 2004, St Wilfred’s had recognized that the families in their local area were largely absent from Sunday morning services. After thinking long and hard about the best way to address this, Moore and her team came up with Messy Church. Meeting monthly, after school on a Thursday, they offered a format very similar to that outlined above – a warm welcome, some arts and craft activities and games, a short celebratory act of worship and a hot, sit-down meal (Moore 2006:10). Over ninety people attended the first event and numbers are reported to have remained steady thereafter. About half of the people who attend have no other links to regular worship. Encouraged in no small part by the publishing power of the BRF and the appearance of Messy Church on the first Fresh Expressions DVD (*Expressions: The DVD 1: Stories of church for a changing culture* 2006) the Messy Church phenomenon has since spread throughout the UK and overseas.⁷

At face value, Messy Church seems to have a successful formula and is opening its doors in villages, towns and cities across the UK in growing numbers. The phenomenon has attracted national media coverage in the UK in recent years with news reports during *Songs of Praise*⁸ and *BBC Breakfast*.⁹

⁶ The Ugly Duckling Company produce a range of *Table Talk*® games and have designed one especially for use in Messy Church.

⁷ The Messy Church web-site has an interactive map which depicts registered Churches in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA (BRF 2015).

⁸ *Songs of Praise* (*Future church* 2012) broadcast on 28th October 2012.

⁹ BBC News report (*Messy Church report* 2013) on BBC Breakfast Broadcast on 14th April 2013.

In Part 1 of this thesis attempts to identify some of the factors involved in the growth of Messy Church. Chapter 1 establishes the current social, cultural and ecclesial context within which Messy Church has come into being. In Chapter 2, the values which are reported as having shaped the development of Messy Church are explored. Particular attention is given to the values which seem to distinguish Messy Church from conventional church, namely hospitality and creativity. The final chapter of Part 1 concentrates on the value of all-age inclusion and looks at the reasons for and against separating children and adults during Christian worship.

Chapter 1

Messy Church and its context

In order to understand the Messy Church movement, it is clearly necessary to identify what Messy Church is and does. It is also helpful to consider why Messy Church has come about at this particular time and place in history. How are we to understand its growth in popularity at a time when church attendance across Europe is in decline? This may be related to the activity and function of Messy Church itself but it may also depend on the cultural and religious contexts in which it is located. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the sociology of religion in twenty-first century United Kingdom. It goes on to examine the cultural changes, particularly those which seem pertinent to children and family life that have taken place in the UK over preceding decades. Recent ecclesial developments in the Church of England, the denominational birthplace of Messy Church, are also identified in order to tease out relevant factors in this context.

Religion and secularisation

Declining attendance in Christian churches across Western Europe during the last century has been widely acknowledged (Bruce 1992; Davie 1994; McGrath 2002). The underlying sociological explanations for this trend, are contentious. Secularisation, a term variously applied to different levels of society (societal, organizational and individual) and with subtly different meanings (the freeing of political power from religious sanction, increasing reliance on rational principles, privatization of religious belief, etc.) has undoubtedly contributed to the decline. However, secularisation as a necessary consequence of modernisation has been called into question. Buoyant church attendance figures in America, once considered to be exceptional, are also now being seen in other industrializing countries such as in Latin America and Eastern Asia. Western Europe is understood by some as the exceptional case in a world of otherwise increasing religiosity (Davie 2007:46-65). Berger (1999) insists that the current trend is one of global *desecularisation*. In Western Europe, pluralism has been blamed for the weakening of religious ties, as reliance on one particular metanarrative is undermined by the presence of a variety of conflicting “truths”. Rational Choice Theorists, however, contend that range of choice in the religious market place (as in the US) contributes to increased

religiosity in the population as a whole.¹⁰ The difference in Europe is that the religious domain is not regarded as a market place, rather as a social service, where state or institutional control has restricted the development of religious choice. Attention must therefore be paid to place and historical context in ascertaining the impact of modernisation and pluralism. It should be stressed, however, that not all sociologists agree with the Rational Choice Theorists, who predominantly represent an American perspective. Bruce in particular has been strenuous in his defence of secularisation theory and predicts a continuing decline in global religiosity, insisting that the process of decline is dependent primarily on individualism and rationality and that what is happening in Europe today will happen elsewhere tomorrow (Bruce 1999; 2002). This would seem to be supported by the impression given at a recent Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2012, which had gathered to explore the theme of evangelisation. Bishop Steven Croft attended as the Anglican fraternal delegate and in his report of proceedings he writes of expecting to hear about challenges and difficulties in Europe and North America and hope and growth from Asia, Africa and South America. Instead he found “the picture was much more one of challenge in the face of a uniform, powerful, global secularising culture”.¹¹ Furthermore, an upcoming paper by David Voas and Mark Chaves (2016) shows that successive cohorts in the USA are becoming less religiously affiliated, which mirrors the British social attitude data. The decline of Christianity seems to lie in a failure to pass it on to successive generations which suggests that an environment which purposely facilitates religious engagement between generations, such as that propounded by Messy Church, is particularly relevant in this context.

Davie (1994; 2015) has contributed much to an understanding of how British people in particular are changing in the way in which they express their religiosity. This is encapsulated in Davie’s well-used phrase “believing without belonging”. Recently Davie has identified a shift from “obligation to consumption” as indicative of patterns of religion in modern Europe (Davie 2007) where, she suggests, that a “genuine religious market” is emerging. It may be that the emergence of Messy Church alongside other fresh expressions of church in the United Kingdom and

¹⁰ The work of Roger Finke has made a significant contribution to the development of RCT. The link between pluralism and RCT is explicated in *The Churching of America* (Finke and Stark 1992). The supply-led nature of a religious market place is explained in *The consequence of religious competition* (Finke 1996). *Acts of Faith* (Stark and Finke 2000) pinpoints the link between religious commitment and high levels of success, i.e. more “costly” faiths do better in the religious marketplace.

¹¹ The report is appended to a recent General Synod paper (General Synod of the Church of England 2013).

beyond is evidence of a new religious marketplace in the UK. By offering a distinctive and contrasting experience to traditional church, Messy Church may be able to connect to those believers who do not belong and offer an alternative way to experience Christian belonging.

Cultural context

Culture can be broadly understood as the values, roles and norms embraced by a particular society or group of people. It also involves the teaching and learning of these values, roles and norms and the signs, symbols and meanings that are used to transmit them. It is appropriate here to reflect on the cultural changes that have taken place in the UK during the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as these are often the same factors that are attributed to declining attendance in traditional churches.

Each year the Office for National Statistics produces a document called *Social Trends* which draws together conclusions from a variety of statistical surveys. The widely read *Mission-shaped Church* report (Church of England 2004) drew on the 2003 version of *Social Trends* (Office for National Statistics 2003) to set the context for the report and in particular to consider the implications for church attendance. Some of the main reasons the report gives for declining Sunday attendance are summarised here together with evidence from more recent *Social Trends* (Office for National Statistics 2011; 2014).

Family life

Family life in the UK became somewhat messier and less homogeneous towards the end of the twentieth century, although figures in recent years have stabilised. The number of single person households in the UK almost doubled between 1971 and 1998 (increasing from 17% in 1971 to 29% in 1998) but has remained stable around this figure since (in 2011 it was 31%). Over the same period, 1971 to 1998 there was a sharp increase in the number of single-parent families (from 8% to 25%), and since 1998 this figure has again remained relatively stable (in 2011 it was 22%). One implication of these changes is that children are often visiting absent parents at the weekends, making Sunday church attendance problematic (Church of England 2004:3).

The Children's Society (2012) reports that 9% of children in the UK are unhappy at any given time. Family harmony at home, however, is a more significant predictor of child happiness than any particular family structure, although a change in family

structure means children are twice as likely to have low well-being.¹² Research into spiritual well-being (Fisher 2008) has focused on expectations and experience of four relational dynamics (with self, others, the environment and the transcendent). The Children's Society data suggests that relationships with others, particularly with close family, are especially significant for children.

The ONS reports that the percentage of mothers who work full time has risen from 23% in 1996 to 30% in 2014 whereas the number working part-time has remain fairly stable (38% in 1996 and 37% in 2014). Sundays have become regarded as "family time" which can be problematic for families with one Christian parent and one non-Christian parent. In addition, there has been a gradual rise in mobility, meaning family generations may be less likely to live in the same place. Most families today have access to a car,¹³ and visits to relatives at weekends may involve longer journeys resulting in less time being available for Sunday worship.

Relationship networks

Technological advances throughout the twentieth century have transformed Western society. Information technology has dramatically changed the way people communicate with each other. Over four fifths of households (84%) in the UK had internet access in 2014 and the main reason for using the internet by these households was to send and receive emails, although the number declined from 90% in 2010 to 75% in 2014 (Office for National Statistics 2011; 2014). Texts have overtaken phone calls as the primary method of long-distance communication and research by Vodafone suggests that Snapchat may be fast replacing texts as the most popular messaging service (Nelson Jr 25 May 2015). Social networks such as Facebook and Twitter were not around ten years ago but today they mean that users have many more relationships with people they have never met face-to-face and which occur entirely online. Geography no longer forms the primary basis for community (an assumption which is fundamental to the parish model) since community is increasingly dependent upon networks of relationships. The *Mission-shaped church* report (Church of England 2004:7) suggests that one consequence of this is that people are generally less inclined to make lasting commitments, a trend

¹² *The Good Childhood Report* (Children's Society 2012:16) defines subjective well-being as "people's satisfaction or happiness with their lives as a whole and with particular aspects of their lives."

¹³ In 1971 there were just under 12 million vehicles on the road. By 2011 that figure had risen to 34 million (RAC 2011).

which, the report suggests, “is a corrosive force that the Church must resist because it undermines all forms of community”. Fresh expressions of church attempt to address this concern by nurturing community involvement.

Messy Church as a response to changes in the cultural context

Recent social and cultural changes may have contributed to demand for something like Messy Church. Provision of quality family time, through a meal around a table, could be seen to be a reaction against the frantic, fast-paced lives experienced by many families today. In cooking and serving the meal, Messy Church makes it easy for families to gain from the benefits of family mealtime, without the hassle of preparing and organising the food themselves, and at little or no cost to parents. By choosing to meet mid-week after school, Messy Church may be offering a practical alternative to families for whom Sunday worship is increasingly difficult. Messy Church also appears to offer the opportunity to belong to a close knit, caring community, countering the social isolation caused by long working hours and families living some distance from grandparents and other family members. This may be particularly relevant for single-parents where the social isolation is heightened by greater responsibility. Furthermore, religion which makes few demands but which is genuinely “good news” for the people it serves could perhaps satisfy a need for a spiritual dimension without the requirements of more formal institutional, or even theological, commitments. The current generation of parents (i.e. those under forty) belong to what has been termed “millennials” or “generation Y” (Strauss and Howe 2000). In the UK, the vast majority are adults who have had little or no contact with church at any point in their lives. It may be that Messy Church appeals to this age group by providing them with an easy entry point into spiritual and religious exploration. Strauss and Howe (2000:370) suggest that this generation will become more civic-minded which may indicate that if they are attracted to Messy Church they may become increasingly committed and involved. However, this prediction has been criticised by Jean Twenge (2006) who has identified a narcissistic tendency in this cohort which she has labelled *Generation Me*.

Ecclesial context

Messy Church has developed at a time of change and uncertainty within the Church of England. The notion that a significant proportion of the UK population “believe but do not belong” (Davie 1994) has no doubt contributed to one of the stated aims

of Messy Church that it would “help people of all ages to feel that they belong in church and to each other” (Moore 2006:21). When lack of belonging leads to church-leaving, the resources available for Christian learning, particularly in terms of social learning, are diminished but not entirely eliminated. A fresh expression of church such as Messy Church, may offer an alternative. The broad notion of belonging through relationships is explored in the next section. This is followed by a summary of the growth of the Fresh Expressions movement in the following section. Finally, whether or not Messy Church can be considered to be a fresh expression of church is discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Relational belonging

Belonging to and participating in a Christian community appear to be fundamental to the development of relationships which contribute to Christian becoming. However, Hay (1990) has shown that many people in the UK accept the main beliefs of the Christian tradition and engage in behaviours such as prayer but without belonging to any Christian church. Sociologist Grace Davie (1994) has explored this cultural phenomenon of “believing without belonging” in post-war UK society where belonging is understood mainly in terms of church attendance. In an effort to explain this phenomenon, Davie (2007) has argued that although institutional belonging is in decline, the desire to belong in other ways often still remains and can be understood as a form of “vicarious religion” (the appreciation for the presence of the church, chapel, temple, etc in the local vicinity “just in case”). Bishop David Walker (2006) insists that belonging can validly be determined by self-affiliation and that church attendance is just one way of expressing affiliation. People-belonging, which involves people conceptualising their belonging in terms of relationships within the church group, is one of four categories of belonging identified by Walker in his studies of Church of England parishes.¹⁴ People-

¹⁴ Walker (2006; 2010; 2012) has identified and explored four different ways of belonging across two large statistical surveys of Church of England parishes. He refers to these as activity-belonging, event-belonging, people-belonging and place-belonging. Activity-belongers express their belonging through activities such as regular Sunday attendance and sitting on Church committees. Event-belongers are more likely to express their belonging through support for one off events such as the big Christian festivals and summer fetes. People-belongers express their belonging through their relationships. Place-belongers have their awareness of God heightened by particular places and as a consequence are willing to express an affiliation with such a place even though church attendance, support for events and relationship with people may be unimportant for these people. In the context of Christian learning, it seems likely that this last category is the hardest to engage with given the relative unimportance of personal contact and commitment for this group.

belongers are likely to be particularly attracted to Messy Church because of the possibility it affords them to develop relationships over interactive activities and a shared meal.

Writing in a US context, Diane Butler Bass (2013) suggests a re-ordering of the terms “believing, belonging and behaving” to illustrate what she sees is a shift from Christian *religion* to Christian *spirituality*. For Bass, *religion* starts with belief followed by conforming behaviour which results in being accepted within the Christian community (hence belonging comes last). The new Christian spirituality of the twenty-first century, however, starts with belonging, i.e. identifying with a faith based community. This is followed by adapting behaviour to fit the new community and finally an incorporation of beliefs. Although there is little evidence of a two-way learning in this conceptualisation, the importance of helping people belong (expressed through experience, connection, and service) is seen to be pre-eminent when introducing new people to Christianity spirituality.

Jackson (2009) echoes this emphasis on the relational and affective dimensions of belonging in his qualitative study of the discourse of belonging in the UK Baptist Church. The three components which are identified as contributing to the discourse are the covenantal discourse of the professional theologians, the denominational discourse of church membership documents and the relational discourse of church members. Even the word “member” is discovered to be used in two different ways to describe those who belong to the church. Those who are Members, can vote at and attend church meetings and contribute to the running of the church, whilst members have not formally joined the church yet they can feel a deep sense of belonging and would often describe themselves as members. The discourse of ordinary Christians in Jackson’s study illustrates a shift from formal, institutionally defined membership structures to looser, highly relational and subjective qualities. The disconnect between those in national leadership (professional theologians and authors of Baptist Church membership materials) and the ordinary church attender is made blatantly clear in Jackson’s thesis although local pastors are shown to be aware and sympathetic to the ordinary discourse.

A further aspect of the affective component of belonging is evidenced in research by Francis and Richter (2007) who identified “not belonging or fitting in” as high on their list of reasons for church leaving. People can participate as regular attenders and perhaps even hold office, they can be baptised (and confirmed) members of the community, and yet they can *feel* like they do not belong. One reason for this

discontent, identified by Francis and Robbins (2012), relates to personality profiles that are under-represented in church congregations which generally tend to be over-represented among church-leavers. This suggests that “not belonging” may be linked to more fundamental issues than a mismatch of beliefs and may instead be linked to matters of personality and identity.¹⁵

Sociologist Linda Woodhead (2013) has shown that there is an increasing disparity between the practice and attitudes of regular churchgoers and those governed by official church doctrine. Those who choose not to behave according to norms dictated by official church doctrine are likely to experience *cognitive dissonance*,¹⁶ due to their beliefs being somewhat at odds with their commitment to a community which apparently holds different beliefs. The options are to ignore the dissonance (and live with the associated discomfort), or to try to resolve it. Resolution can be achieved in three ways: either by trying to change official church doctrine (difficult but not impossible); by changing their own attitudes and behaviour (this can happen as a result of a change in identity and self-understanding); or by leaving the church (Heywood 1989:71). Francis and Richter (2007) also identified “incompatible lifestyles” as a reason that people give for leaving the church.

It seems clear then that, particularly for postmodern generations, the affective dimension of belonging to a church is somewhat dependent on relationships between people at the church. This suggests that a felt sense of belonging can be taken in some sense to be an indication of the quality of relationships that have been established with the people there.

¹⁵ Wenger (1998:149) has shown that identity is defined socially and is developed in social contexts where negotiation of meaning is facilitated and encouraged. Furthermore, negotiation of meaning within three “modes of belonging” (Wenger 1998:173-187), namely engagement, imagination and alignment, are concluded to be fundamental to *any* learning community. I would suggest that they particularly resonate with Christian communities that are predicated upon mission (a mode of belonging requiring engagement), story (a mode of belonging requiring imagination), and worship (a mode of belonging requiring, to a certain extent, alignment). Wenger does not apply her model to a faith community but negotiation of meaning in terms of story, mission and worship are crucial to developing an identity as a church member and therefore, I suggest, are essential to a sense of belonging to the church. It is the dependence upon negotiation which renders these modes of belonging fundamentally relational.

¹⁶ Cognitive dissonance is a term coined by Leon Festinger (1957) to try to explain the affective factors involved in judgement and decision making in cognitive terms. Dissonance is said to exist between cognitions when the converse of one follows from the other (note this is not the same as logical contradiction).

Fresh expressions of Church

The same year that Messy Church began, a working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council, chaired by the then Bishop of Maidstone, Graham Cray, published *Mission-Shaped Church* (Church of England 2004), a report on "church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context". This document, ostensibly a review of the church planting initiatives inspired by the earlier report *Breaking New Ground* (Church of England 1994), listed key recommendations under four broad headings: Diocesan strategy; Ecumenical; Leadership and Training; and Resources. The main diocesan strategy solution proffered by the report suggested that each diocese should encourage and develop fresh expressions of church which, by listening closely to the needs of the target group, would be able to proclaim the gospel more clearly into their cultural context. The other three key recommendations all involved the implementation of practical necessities geared towards accomplishing the development of fresh expressions of church. In addition, the Fresh Expressions Organisation was subsequently established in 2004 by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York together with the Methodist Council, with the aim of overseeing and supporting the development of fresh expressions of church. In 2015 it had a total of ten formal partners and nine associate partners.¹⁷

The *Mission-shaped Church* report enabled mission-minded groups within the Church of England to focus on particular cultural sub-groups who had previously had little or no experience of church, with the aim of "proclaiming the gospel afresh to each generation".¹⁸ It challenged the view that secularisation was inevitable and ascribed significant responsibility for declining attendance at Sunday morning services to the Church of England itself for failing to respond appropriately to the

¹⁷ Formal partners are listed on the fresh expressions website (Potter 2015) as: Anglican Church Planting Initiatives, the Awaken movement, The Church of England, The Church of Scotland, CMS, CWM Europe, The Methodist Church of Great Britain, The Salvation Army, The United Reformed Church and YWAM. Associate partners are: 24/7 Prayer, The Baptist Pioneer Collective, The Centre for Pioneer Learning, Church Army, the Congregational Federation, Ground Level Network, HOPE together, Messy Church, and ReSource.

¹⁸ The traditional Declaration of Assent which Anglican clergy, readers and licensed lay workers make on taking up a new appointment speaks of the faith which "the church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation" (Church of England 2016).

changing culture¹⁹ and attending to the different types of people who make up contemporary society.²⁰

An ecclesial landscape whereby fresh expressions of church co-exist alongside parish structures, described by the then Archbishop Rowan Williams as a “mixed economy of church” (*Mission-shaped Church* (Church of England 2004:vii)) has presented the Church of England with “a significant ecclesiological challenge” (Nelstrop and Percy 2008:xiv). Recognizing the need for clarity concerning language, and seeking to avoid the pitfall that any new alternative worship service or community project might describe itself as a fresh expression, the Fresh Expressions team published the following definition (Croft 2008:10):

A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

- It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples;
- It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.

Moynagh (2012:xiv-xv) has teased from this definition four principles which help to tighten the language concerning fresh expressions of church even further. Such new communities are communities which are missional, contextual, formational, and ecclesial. Missional, in the sense that they are instigated by Christians mainly among people who are not church-attenders; contextual, in that they seek to understand and inhabit the culture of the people they are reaching; formational, in that discipleship is an explicit aim; and ecclesial, in that they intend to become church for the people in their community.

Mission is widely accepted as something that God does and the church, ideally, co-operates with (this is known as the *Missio Dei* (Bosch 1991:389)). The Five Marks

¹⁹ The main missionary strategy of the Church of England has for years focused on “returners”, young people who grow up in church, leave in their teenagers but then return in later life. As the number of young people who grow up in church has declined from 55% in 1900 to 4% in 2000, this strategy is now held to be “seriously flawed” (Church of England 2004:40-41).

²⁰ *Mission-shaped Church* (Church of England 2004:36-37) refers to an empirical study of those who have left the church by Richter & Francis (1998). The study caught a snapshot from October 1996 of attitudes towards church in British society: Non-churched(40%), Closed de-churched (20%), Open de-churched (20%), regular attenders (10%) and fringe (10%). The strategy of the Church of England has typically focused on the fringe and open de-churched (those who are open to returning) however, these groups are shrinking and the Non-churched group is growing.

of Mission identified by the Anglican Consultative Council (1984) are regarded as the benchmark definition of mission across the Anglican communion.²¹ *Mission-shaped Church* (Church of England 2004:81-82) supplements these indicators with five more values of a missional community. It should: be focused on God the Trinity in worship; be incarnational – relating to local culture; be transformational – in regard to the community it serves; makes disciples – calls people to faith in Jesus and nurtures that discipleship; be relational – characterised by welcome and hospitality. The missional dimension of these traits is rarely contested. However, a significant thread of the fresh expressions debate has surrounded the argument for contextual church, i.e. *church* as an expression of a particular cultural context.²² Proponents insist that a fresh expression of church in one area of the UK aimed at one particular group of people (say surfers in Cornwall) will look very different to a fresh expression of church in another area aimed at different people (city professionals in urban Manchester for example). But focusing on a specific cultural group for the purpose of pioneering a new form of church has come under intense criticism. Martyn Percy is a well-documented opponent to the Church Growth Movement, an initiative strongly influenced by conservative American evangelicals, which adheres closely to this principle. Percy's opposition, which predates the publication of *Mission-shaped Church*, highlights the manipulative rhetoric used by certain church growth proponents (Percy 1992:177-178). It must be stressed though that this approach is in contrast with that of the fresh expressions movement which emphasises the need to listen and to serve rather than to preach and persuade.

Segregation based upon the contentious Homogenous Unit Principle (McGavran 1955) is another aspect of the Church Growth Movement that has received widespread criticism (Hull 2008; Percy 2008). Working in India as a missionary Donald McGavran recognised that conversion to Christianity for Hindus often meant the wholesale loss of their family and cultural context. His Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) challenged the need for this loss of culture and raised questions concerning how people might find faith within their existing culture. In a different context, however, this can perhaps become a recipe for congregations to remain

²¹ The Marks of Mission are: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; To teach, baptise and nurture new believers; To respond to human need by loving service; To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation; and to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

²² Chapter 4 of *Mission-Shaped Church* contains numerous examples of contextual fresh expressions. A theological critique of the FE approach can be found in Milbank (2008). Michael Moynagh (2012) offers a thorough theological basis for contextual church in *A Church for every Context*.

within their cultural comfort zones. For critics, basing a church around this idea is a violation of the unifying principle that church is for anyone regardless of age, race, creed, or culture.²³ There are also echoes of a much older argument originating with the Reformation, which contrasts the idea of voluntary adoption of faith by individuals with the sacramentally mediated faith of the Church. It is not my intention to discuss these issues here since they are well documented,²⁴ merely to observe that this underlying and ongoing ecclesial debate is nothing new.

There has been an assumption by some that the evangelism and church growth agenda behind the Fresh Expressions initiative is driven by the evangelical wing of the church, though whether this is in fact the case remains unclear. What is clear, however, is the recent priority given to church growth by the General Synod of the Church of England through its three quinquennial goals (General Synod of the Church of England 2011:2):

- Contributing as the national Church to the common good;
- Facilitating the growth of the Church;
- Re-imagining the Church's ministry.

Although “contributing to the common good”, seems an essential and perhaps, particularly in times of economic austerity, somewhat easier task for the Church of England, there is no doubting the sense of urgency and sincerity regarding the task of stemming declining attendance and generating numerical as well as spiritual growth. This is underlined further in another recent Synod report entitled *Making New Disciples* (General Synod of the Church of England 2012:3) which stresses that “the priority of growth is an authentic core component for all the traditions within the Church”. There is a stated intention that this should be achieved *both* through existing church communities and fresh expressions of church.

Returning to the issue of contextual homogeneous groups, *Mission-shaped Church* anticipates the criticisms of the HUP, which stress unity and reconciliation in the Church, and attempts to counter the criticisms through three *principles*: the diversity of creation, the incarnation of Jesus in at specific culture and insight from the theology of the Good News for the Oppressed which shows that cultural heterogeneity is difficult to achieve since those with economic and educational

²³ John Milbank (2008:124), arguing from a Catholic perspective against the adoption of capitalist management principles in ecclesial contexts, describes fresh expressions of church as an “evangelical-liberal collusion” which is “clearly a conspiracy against the parish” .

²⁴ Avery Dulles (1987) seminal classic *Models of the Church* offers a summary of all the issues involved.

power tend to dominate (Church of England 2004:108-109). Critics, however, are robust in their insistence that the principle is nothing more than a kind of “spiritual apartheid” (Hull 2006) which “legitimises ageism, sexism, racism, classism and economic divisiveness” (Percy 2008:38). Moynagh (2012:169-170) helpfully classifies the three views of congregational homogeneity found in the literature: a missional goal (such as that advocated by McGavran via the HUP), a missional first-step (advocated by (Newbigin 1977), and a missional no-go (Davison and Milbank 2010). He goes on to suggest a fourth - “a focused and connected church”, a compromise view which enables a focus on a specific culture but which remains strongly connected to the wider church. He points out that such a church fits comfortably in the network society of today.

Whilst there is undoubtedly a gospel imperative for unity and reconciliation in the Church, the insistence on heterogeneity in congregations, often underpinned by an idealistic notion of the parish system, is somewhat naïve and often in denial of the current situation regarding Christianity in the UK. The Office of National Statistics (2011) demographic, drawn from the 2011 census, reveals that Christians in the UK are predominantly white, middle-aged or older and disproportionately female.²⁵ Whilst statistics regarding the demographic of regular Church of England attenders may be harder to come by, it is not beyond reason to expect that such figures might reflect the national data. A concerted effort to reach those outside of this demographic would therefore seem the very opposite of ageist or sexist.

Theological concerns over the separation of form and content have been thoroughly discussed by Davison and Milbank (2010) in *For the Parish*. In an often scathing critique of *Mission-shaped Church*, they challenge the perceived view that the parish church is in decline and offer an alternative view which depicts a thriving ministry in the Church of England and questions the need for new forms of church.

Goodhew, Roberts and Volland (2012:42-43) helpfully compare and contrast the two documents concluding that both have strengths and weaknesses. *Mission-shaped Church* is praised for raising the issue of the huge missionary task facing the church and the courage to promote innovation. It is criticised for weak theology and confusing language (a criticism which could equally be made against early Messy Church literature, largely due to the fact that such writing was very much geared towards practical rather than theological matters. More recent publications have begun to address this, e.g. Lings (2013)). *For the Parish* is praised for its

²⁵ The ONS report on the 2011 census reported that 93% of Christians were white, that Christians had the oldest age profile of all religious groups with 22% over the age of 65 and there were more female Christians than male in every age bracket.

considerable theological insight and criticised for its naivety concerning the extent of secularisation and its idealised image of parish life. One concern which occupies centre stage in *For the Parish*, and which Moynagh (2012:152) agrees is widely shared, is the fear that if the form of the church is “moulded like plasticine” into different shapes, it will lose the capacity to form disciples of Jesus. The practices which have been honed through the centuries will be lost and replaced by insubstantial alternatives that are attractive to a consumer culture but without power to transform lives. In short, the accepted wisdom in *For the Parish* insists that form cannot be separated from the content if genuine discipleship is sought. Moynagh (2012:161-166) uses Bevans’ (2002) six models of contextualization to show that different forms *can* be valid in different circumstances and illustrates this by showing how each was used by Jesus. Bevans’ six models are:

- Translation – translates the gospel into the context
- Anthropological – the context reveals God
- Praxis – action/reflection/action...
- Conversation – dialogue with other churches and the tradition
- Counter-cultural – evaluate, critique and transform culture
- Subjective – develop an authentic faith.

Following Moynagh, contextualization is essential if the church is to connect with and therefore serve people in mission. But contextualization has boundaries. These are determined by the four interlocking relationships that make up the church, UP - towards God in worship, IN – towards the local church community, OF – towards the wider historical and global church, OUT – towards the world. This fourfold relational definition of church, proposed in the original *Mission-shaped Church* document and derived from the four marks of the Church enshrined in the Nicene creed (one, holy, catholic and apostolic)²⁶ has been widely accepted by proponents of fresh expressions of church (Church of England 2004:99; Croft 2008:190; Moynagh 2012:108) and is central to their understanding of what constitutes church. If a fresh expression of church ignores or neglects one of these relationships, it is understood to be detrimental to the new church community. The OF relationship is expected to ensure that the fresh expression maintains a dialogue with the wider Church regarding its practices and traditions.

²⁶ *One* corresponds to IN and is a reflection within the local church of the relational dynamic within the Trinity, *holy* corresponds to UP and relation with the Trinitarian God, *catholic* to OF and the relation with the world-wide, historical church and *apostolic* to OUT and the relation with the rest of the world.

A variety of questions concerning fresh expression of church have been addressed by two edited compilations of essays, *Mission-shaped Questions* (Croft 2008) and *Evaluating Fresh Expressions* (Nelstrop and Percy 2008). The “mixed economy” relationship between inherited church and fresh expressions of church is also explored in these documents. Further perspectives in specific contexts have also been raised through other *Mission-shaped* documents.²⁷

In terms of defining what exactly constitutes a “church”, the publication of a joint report of an Anglican-Methodist Working Party (2012) entitled *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church* stresses the necessary and sufficient conditions (which include baptism and appropriately authorised Eucharist) for a particular Christian community to be recognised as church by the Church of England and the Methodist Church.²⁸ Given that the Fresh Expressions initiative now has a significant number of ecumenical mission partners, including the Salvation Army (who practice neither water baptism nor Eucharist) this poses further questions regarding what happens in practice when ecumenical partners disagree on doctrine. Again, this is not a new issue since ecumenism has been widely debated and the issues have been well documented, particularly in reports from the World Council of Churches.²⁹

However, the report does appear to have mollified the concerns of some critics of *Mission-shaped Church*. At a recent Bishop’s day for clergy and Readers hosted by the Bishop of Wakefield, Alison Milbank expressed her appreciation of the report and stated that the adoption of its recommendations together with the rebranding of fresh expressions as “mission initiatives” rather than churches, would be very welcome.³⁰ The report could, however, also be seen as confirming the fears of some proponents of emerging church³¹, who insist on the need for fresh expressions to be

²⁷ *Mission-shaped Youth* (Sudworth, Cray and Russell 2007), *Mission-shaped and Rural* (Gaze 2006), *Mission-shaped Children* (Withers 2006), *Mission-shaped Parish* (Bayes and Sledge 2006) and *Mission-shaped Spirituality* (Hope 2006).

²⁸ The Anglican-Methodist Working Party (2012:180-181) identifies eight ecclesial elements by which a Christian community can be considered as a church including appropriately authorised Baptism and Eucharist.

²⁹ Details of publications from the World Council of Churches (2015) can be found on their web-site.

³⁰ Alison Milbank, Andrew Davison, Ian Mobsby and Sue Hope participated in a debate entitled “Fresh expressions and our response” at Wakefield Cathedral on 15th May 2013.

³¹ Emerging church refers to the global response to postmodernism and contextually developed ecclesiologies. Fresh expressions of church form part of the global emerging church debate, but this term is particularly to the UK, originating within the Church of England but now ecumenically adopted.

released from the grip of institutional authoritarianism (e.g. Rollins (2008:71-74)). Indeed, Rollins (2008) has criticised *Mission-shaped Church* as an attempt by the institutional church to tame the dissenters and rob them of the power to change anything. On a final note, Nelstrop (2008:196) has gathered considerable evidence to suggest that those involved with fresh expressions of church are aware of their ecclesial fragility and have no wish to be completely cut off from the established church.

Messy Church as a fresh expression of church

There has been some discussion concerning whether Messy Church can be considered a fresh expression of church in its own right. To recapitulate, a fresh expression of church is defined as (Croft 2008:10)

... a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church.

- It will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples;
- It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.

In accounting for the needs of busy families today, Messy Church certainly takes steps to address the changing culture. It does this, at least theoretically, by avoiding Sunday morning, providing quality family time, and usually by providing a meal so that parents do not need to cook after they return home. Furthermore, Messy Church is specifically aimed at those “people who are not yet members of any church”.

The second part of the definition refers to “listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples”. Lucy Moore and her team made it a priority to listen to their local community when pioneering the first Messy Church. But it is not obvious whether subsequent Messy Churches have been so inclined. For all intents and purposes, Messy Church looks very much like a franchise. If you walk into a Messy Church in rural Yorkshire or in city centre London, what you discover is actually very similar, i.e. parents or carers and their children doing creative activities, sharing a short act of worship and perhaps eating a meal together. Lucy Moore (2006:10) insists that churches should not just copy the Messy Church format but should adapt it to suit their local situation, but most appear to have simply taken the existing structure and implemented it locally. Whether this is because the parent churches have significant numbers of members skilled in arts and crafts (perhaps reflecting an elderly female demographic) is difficult to say at this point. It could simply be that some are merely choosing to unreflectively adopt the latest trend.

In providing creative activities, usually free of charge or at nominal cost, Messy Church is clearly offering a service to families. The people who run Messy Church are often hard working and give of their time and money willingly to invest in their local community.

Messy Church is inherently missional since it clearly demonstrates at least three of the ACC's Marks of Mission. First, the aim is to attract families who are not currently involved into a church community. Second, Messy Church seeks to care for and support families through loving service, this is most evident in the warm hospitality and the provision of a meal. Third, there is a desire to teach, nurture and baptise new believers, although teaching is understood to be best achieved through informal socialisation rather than traditional formal teaching methods. *Incarnational* mission, however, demands that attention be paid to the local culture. There is no doubt that Messy Church represents a response to UK culture nationally, however the influence of local culture on individual Messy Churches has yet to be identified.

Discipleship at Messy Church has been an explicit focus of attention for national leaders within the Messy Church organization in recent years. Lucy Moore has been running Messy Discipleship Days aimed at supporting those running Messy Churches in determining what next for their messy community.³² Her husband, Paul Moore (2013) in *Making Disciples in Messy Church* describes the discipleship cycle as one of "blessing, belonging, believing, behaving". Blessing is understood to be the starting point for people in the discipleship process, delivered through the warm welcome and hospitality that is a stated value of Messy Church. There is some anecdotal evidence and small scale empirical research to suggest that Messy Church does influence the Christian formation of those who attend, as well as challenging helpers and organisers to deeper maturity in providing them an opportunity for Christian service (Paulsen 2012; 2013). The research undertaken for this thesis attempts to collect a larger body of data and provide a more thorough analysis of the factors surrounding the Christian becoming of Messy Church participants.

The final part of the fresh expressions definition concerns the viability of the fresh expression to become "a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church" (Croft 2008:10). The question of ecclesiology has been the most contentious issue in the debate over fresh expressions of church. Ironically, Messy Church seems to have avoided much of the associated criticism.

³² One such event was held in Leicester in December 2012 and focused on: How can we develop and strengthen Messy Church?; How are disciples growing in Messy Church?; And how can we make the most of the opportunities Messy Church presents for growing disciples?

This could be largely to do with the connectedness of Messy Churches to those churches which oversee and often fund Messy Church locally. It may be, despite an insistence by national leaders that Messy Churches should be considered to be church in their own right, that in practice Messy Churches are more often regarded as an associated congregation within an established church. Nelstrop (2008:196) has suggested that those involved with fresh expressions of church often have no wish to be independent from the established church. This would seem to be precisely the case for many Messy Churches. Steve Hollinghurst (2013:34) has questioned whether some Messy Churches (though not all) might be better considered as fresh expressions of mission, rather than fresh expressions of church, particularly where emphasis is placed upon drawing people through Messy Church into existing congregations.

An extreme view, which ignores the inclusion of adults in Messy Church, might suggest that the lack of criticism regarding ecclesiology is related to the lack of attention paid to children's work generally, as evidenced by poor funding and untrained volunteers in many churches. In addition, many churched adults are familiar with the idea that children are catered for separately within church. It is possible that many regard Messy Church and its separateness as just another aspect of this. This raises a question concerning whether Messy Church is actually considered to be genuinely for all ages by those outside of the movement. If adults were understood to be significantly attracted to and committed to Messy Church, perhaps the level of concern regarding its legitimate ecclesiology would be more pronounced.

The "enduring marks of the church" which are emphasised in the fresh expressions definition does not explicitly identify any particular marks, but there is an assertion by the joint Anglican-Methodist report into fresh expressions (Anglican-Methodist Working Party 2012) that the dominical sacraments should be firmly established within any fresh expression, including Messy Church, before it could be considered to be church. This may pose a problem for Messy Church particularly for those which are ecumenically run, since agreement on the form and content of sacramental aspects of worship is often frustratingly elusive.

Chapter 2

Messy Church values

Messy Church claims to do church differently in order to engage with people who are outside of usual church circles (Moore 2006:10). It does this through a unique *structure* and set of *values*. If some people are attracted to Messy Church but not to traditional church, one might then ask whether this is precisely because Messy Church incarnates different values to traditional church. Or is it, perhaps more straightforwardly, largely due to the different structure of Messy Church?

Messy Church is described in the literature as having five key values: All-age inclusion; Hospitality; Creativity; Christ-centredness; and Celebration (or worship) (Lings 2013:157-158; Moore 2006:35-39). The first three values could be said, perhaps contentiously, to be the ones which most clearly distinguish Messy Church from traditional Church while the latter two are more obviously shared by the wider Christian community. For this reason I have not found it necessary to include an exploration of the values of being Christ-centred and of participating in celebratory worship in this account. Attention in this chapter is restricted to the values of creativity and hospitality. All-age inclusion is addressed in the following chapter.

Creativity

Creativity is perhaps the value which most noticeably sets Messy Church apart from other churches. As George Lings (2013:161) writes “What a change this is from much of church!” It would be somewhat surprising if a church declared that it was not particularly centred on Christ, for people of all ages, welcoming to newcomers and a place of worshipful celebration. But it would appear far less contentious to say “we value the routines of tradition” which might be the same as saying “we are not very creative”. Quite the opposite in fact. Creativity could be construed as something quite dangerous to established religious order. Rollo May (1975:27, 31) suggests that in the second commandment (“You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth”, Exodus 20:4) there is something more than a protection against idolatry. She goes as far as to describe creativity as a possible act of rebellion and a “battle with the gods”. So why has Messy Church adopted such a value?

One possible reason behind the adoption of creativity as a value is that creativity has become much more widely championed across the UK education sector in recent

decades. The national Messy Church leadership team (Lucy Moore, Jane Leadbetter and Martyn Payne) are all trained teachers and would undoubtedly have been aware of the Labour government's plans to promote creativity in the UK education sector, despite those plans being dropped by the subsequent coalition government (Blair and Francis 2011, pp.26-32; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2005). The plans to promote creativity were informed by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) report entitled *All our futures* which set out the argument for improving the presence of creativity in education. Its definition of creativity as "imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value" (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:29) was highly influential across primary and secondary educational practice during the period that Messy Church was being developed.³³ One of the main reasons given in this report for promoting creativity in schools was to help tackle the widespread problem of low morale, motivation and self-esteem in pupils. Subsequent reports have focused on how creativity improves the quality of pupils lives (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2005:9; Roberts 2006:12) and promotes economic growth through the creative industry sector (Roberts 2006:11). While Lucy Moore (unsurprisingly) makes no mention of economic growth in her books, the issue of *motivating* children and families to explore the Christian faith is alluded to. Moore (2012:22) writes "although people of my generation may be saying 'Church? Outdated, outclassed, irrelevant, boring' the next generation may be saying 'Church? Fun, food, friendly, warm, welcoming, inspiring, motivating'". The quality of the lives of the families involved is also important to Moore (2006:39) who writes "as we create and play together ... we are renewed and repaired." There is an understanding here that creativity is linked to personal and spiritual well-being. While the UK government has been challenged with a "moral imperative ...giving children and young people creative experience ... to develop personal identity" (Roberts 2006:12), it seems that Messy Church and Lucy Moore are challenging the wider church to do the same.

The NACCCE definition focuses on four dimensions of creativity: imagination, purpose, originality and value. If this fourfold structure is used to assess the

³³ The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2005) followed up the NACCCE report with a report of its own entitled *Creativity: Find it, Promote it* which confirmed and strengthened the NACCCE definition and emphasised the four key factors of creativity (that it be imaginative, purposeful, original and valuable). This in turn was followed by a report by Peter Roberts (2006) for the Department for Education and Skills and the Department for Culture Media and Sport which set out proposals designed to further embed creativity within UK schools.

creativity depicted in the Messy Church literature it is possible to anticipate some strengths and weaknesses and some possible difficulties.

Imagination

Lucy Moore herself demonstrates a playful imagination in her writing. For example, she crafts a frequently asked questions section around a set of humorous letters penned to a fictional group of Churches in Clodpool-in-the Marsh (Moore 2012:13,20,30). Other Messy Church organisers are similarly creative as evidenced by the frequent sharing of imaginative ideas on social media sites such as Facebook and Pinterest.³⁴ An example of this is the combining and reframing of Christian themes within cultural images, such as the use of the popular Disney movie *Frozen*© to explore love and forgiveness as the means of becoming *Unfrozen* (Beale 2015; Leadbetter 2015). Imagination is frequently invested in the generation of craft activities which reflect the chosen theme, such as painting with snow, sculpting with sparkly play dough and a sock puppet Olaf (for the *Frozen*© session). While participants inevitably experience the fruits of the organisers' creativity and are able to enjoy and partake in these activities, it is less obvious whether, and how frequently, Messy Church participants themselves are able to shape the outcomes by engaging in their own imaginative activity. The NACCCE report (1999:102) makes a distinction between "teaching creatively" and "teaching for creativity" and suggest that the primary concern in education should be with the latter in order to develop young people's own creative thinking. Whilst Messy Church clearly demonstrates the former, it is not obvious that it also demonstrates the latter.

Purpose

Lucy Moore gives theological and psychological justification for the purpose of engaging in creativity at Messy Church. Theologically, she states that being creative gives people the opportunity to reflect the image of a creator God, and be restored in the process, "We are made in the image of God and God is the great Creator...Something in our spirituality is restored as our creativity chimes with his"

³⁴ The Bible Reading Fellowship hosts a Facebook page (BRF 2015) and a Pinterest page (BRF 2015) but these sit alongside many individual church pages which regularly post images and stories of imaginative endeavour at their Messy Church sessions.

(2006:39).³⁵ Psychologically, as indicated above, Moore suggests that creativity affords opportunity for people to be motivated, enlivened and even healed (2006:22,39). This desire for movement towards wholeness is not unlike the NACCCE's concern with the way in which creativity and culture enable young people to tackle low morale, motivation and self-esteem, goals which are swallowed up in the "complex task of constructing a sense of personal identity" (1999:55). According to Abraham Maslow (1973), if basic needs of physiology, safety and belonging are met then intrinsic motivation to learn is related to "self-esteem" and "self-actualization" (a need to achieve one's full potential). The broader purpose of creative expression is then related to human flourishing and well-being. However, the specific purpose of creativity at a particular Messy Church session, may be more narrowly defined and may differ from session to session. For example the *Unfrozen* theme (Leadbetter 2015) has the purpose of exploring the values of love and forgiveness in order to understand and practice them better. It is possible that the creative opportunities at Messy Church could lead to individuals focusing on a different aspect of the theme or Bible story than that which is chosen as the specified theme. This was illustrated in the story of young Robbie (see the introduction to Part 1) who focused on anger in the story of the patriarch Joseph, when the specified theme was "Joseph the dreamer". These opportunities for individuals to discover meaning for themselves in the stories and activities at Messy Church afford significant potential for the achievement of the wider purpose of nurturing spiritual well-being, though this may come at the cost of failing to successfully engage some individuals in the specific purpose of the session. If helpers fail to recognise the benefits for individuals that result from individual meaning-making, noticing only the lack of understanding and attention to the expected outcomes, helpers may become discouraged.

There is also the possibility that participants will focus solely on the more immediate practical objectives of the craft activities and either miss the spiritual and educational purpose or simply choose to ignore it altogether. This is more likely to happen when the purpose of the craft activities is communicated poorly so that the theme is unclear, or when a helper prioritises completion of a specific activity over supporting individual exploration (as with the helper in Robbie's story).

³⁵ Moore refers to God as male here but use of this quote should not be taken as endorsement of this view. Gender neutral terms for God have been used throughout this thesis.

Originality

Originality in creativity is about generating something new. Rollo May (1975:39) identifies “bringing something new into being” as the distinguishing factor between authentic creativity and its pseudo forms. At face value, Messy Church seems replete with novelty since participants often go home with the products of their craft activity, some of which they may never have attempted before. Indeed, replication and imitation are important aspects of learning the skills which underpin artistic endeavour. But producing a replica cannot be considered creative in the same way that an original work of art is creative. Imitation is in fact pseudo-creativity. The fact that people produce crafts at Messy Church is not necessarily a sign that Messy Church promotes original creativity. If participants are expected to simply copy pre-existing examples of the crafts available, that may act to discourage originality. It is only when participants are allowed to play, innovate, experiment and come up with something new, that the activities can be said to be authentically creative.

Crucially, this also extends to participants’ spiritual experience at Messy Church. If the purpose of creativity is that it assists in the construction of a personal identity, then it follows that spiritual creativity would assist in the construction of a spiritual identity. Similarly, if Christianity, and indeed any religion, is an expression of the spiritual life, then it follows that freedom to be creative (and therefore original) in the process of exploring Christianity would assist in the construction of a personal Christian identity. The originality does not need to be historically original (such occurrences are rare), but it should at least be new to the individual and may even be new to the peer group. The freedom to pursue spiritual curiosity in the way is fundamental to the development of a personal spiritual identity.

Value

Of course not all original thought and expression will be evaluated as being Christian. However, the evaluation of it as Christian is expected to involve the individual in negotiation and interaction with the wider Christian community. This is much harder than it sounds. Centuries of protestant disagreements have resulted in thousands of Christian denominations being formed because of an inability to include new perspectives.³⁶ If a negative evaluation is simply imposed upon the individual by the community or by a leader of the community, the relationship with the individual will undoubtedly suffer as a result of his or her being caught in a

³⁶ 33,820 different Christian denominations are reported in the *World Christian Encyclopaedia* (Barrett, Kurian and Johnson 2001).

double bind between conforming to expectations and pursuing individual creativity. Fear of negative judgement is perhaps one of the reasons that adults choose to keep their spirituality private. Children are often more open and naive and have not been culturally conditioned to hide such things (Hay with Nye 2006:33-34). This makes them particularly vulnerable to being caught between pleasing adults and pursuing their own creative process. There has been some debate between Godly Play and Messy Church practitioners regarding the differences between the two approaches (Moore and Payne 2014; Moore 2013; Payne 2014). Indeed some Messy Churches have endeavoured to incorporate certain aspects of Godly Play in their Messy events, specifically the storytelling and use of wondering questions, however concerns regarding the vulnerability of children remain. In his Godly Play method of children's religious education, Jerome Berryman (1991) has recognised this vulnerability and recommends restricting the number of adults in the Godly Play classroom so that children are shielded from having to choose between resolving their own inner quest for meaning and meeting perceived adult expectations regarding learning. Trained Godly Play practitioners are cautioned against making evaluative judgements and instead are encouraged to make open descriptive statements which encourage interaction. Messy Church, however, does not seem to have anticipated the possibility that creativity may lead to such tension, which is feasible within both children and adults. Evaluative tension requires sensitive awareness on the part of those in positions of authority if negotiation of value is to be handled constructively. Robbie's story provides an example of how the creative determination of a child in the face of adult pressure to conform eventually led to a simple expression of joy on the part of the child. For another child, the outcome could have been quite different.

As well as a broad evaluation of whether creativity can be deemed to be Christian or indeed whether it contributes to motivation, well-being and identity formation, there is the more specific determination of whether it addresses the theme of the session. The NACCCE (1999:33) interpretation is that value is a judgement of some property of the creative work related to the stated purpose. In education there are curriculum requirements to attend to which determine specific aims and objectives. However, Messy Church does not have to satisfy the constraints of an OFSTED assessment. Creative activity which ignores the specific session purpose but which nevertheless contributes to individual well-being and spiritual identity formation is likely to be valued, not least by the participants themselves. It is perhaps attention to this wider purpose which allows Messy Church to provide activities that seem to be more about the fun involved and less about cognitive understanding. Genuine laughter and

free play can be understood as external indicators of inner well-being.³⁷ However, some helpers may have difficulty with this, believing that unless the session's religious purpose is achieved, little of value has been gained.

The difficulty here concerns who decides what is valuable and what is not? As Robbie's story illustrates, what has value for a child may be different to what has value for an adult. Similarly, what is valued by a participant may be regarded as less so by an organiser. If helpers do not perceive any value in the creative activity they could become discouraged and disillusioned. If adults and children do not perceive any value, perhaps because helpers are overly directive, they may lose motivation and simply stop coming. It is vital that children and adults are able to be creative in ways that are valuable to them personally, but it is equally important that helpers are able to recognise this value and understand it, and perhaps even engage in a sensitive negotiation with participants over different perspectives, where necessary. This is the stuff of relationships. Dialectical tensions between individuals and groups, and between those who have power and those who do not, are explored in more detail later on in this thesis with the help of Conversational Learning Theory (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002). Such factors directly affect relationships and communication, and, in the sense that creativity is evaluated in a social context, such factors also have a direct affect upon creativity.

Hospitality

Hospitality at Messy Church is facilitated primarily through a shared meal. Moore (2006:39) explains that this is simply because "eating together gives more opportunity for building friendships". Moore's (2006:39) initial theological justification for an emphasis on hospitality was that she saw in the provision of a meal "something of God's open-handed generosity". This explanation is tied to her sense of the "sacred" involved in the sharing of a meal together which acts as a "sign of the kingdom". In a later book, Moore (2008:50-57) points to the Hebrew Bible story of Abraham and Sarah, and the welcome they extended to three strangers in Genesis 18:1-15, for further insight into her understanding of hospitality. As illustrated in this Biblical passage, it was a culturally expected practice in those days to "treat a stranger as an honoured guest" (Moore 2008:51). Her explanation of why

³⁷ Jerome Berryman (2015) recently traced laughter in the Bible, the early Church and the Middle Ages through to laughter in a modern Godly Play lesson in his talk at the 8th Annual UK Godly Play Conference entitled "The quality of laughter in Godly Play".

this remains important for Messy Church is summed up in four concepts teased out from this Biblical story: oasis, siesta, laughter, and the meal.

First, an oasis represents a place where strangers can find “refuge from a hostile world, feel welcomed and respected, find their feet in their own time and go away feeling refreshed and resourced to cope with the struggles of the onward journey”. Advancing technology and post-modern scepticism are just two of the reasons Moore gives to explain why people may find the world hostile and unstable. Faced with this, Messy Church seeks to offer a stable place of safety and stability. The needs are less physical but more mental, emotional and relational than for Abraham and Sarah’s guests.

Second, the notion of a siesta or a pause in the day to rest, is utilised in order to shed a more contentious light on the nature of Messy Church. In this concept, Moore shifts the focus away from the guests and onto the established church. Abraham was just about to have a siesta when the strangers arrived. He was also waiting for God to fulfil God’s promise of ancestors for Abraham and Sarah. Moore compares the interruption of the strangers into Abraham’s day with the interruption of Messy Church into the life of the existing Church. She goes on to suggest that it can seem as if today’s Church has been waiting for God to fulfil a promise regarding its future, and that Messy Church acts as an unexpected messenger in this regard. The question is whether the Church will consider the opportunity as one of “privilege and joy” as Abraham does, or whether they will begrudge the hard work involved. This raises questions concerning the attitude of helpers and organisers toward what happens at Messy Church since any tension of this kind is likely to affect its implementation and the resulting experience for those who participate.

Next, Moore points to the laughter in the story, which arises from the promise of a child. Shifting attention back to the guests, Moore contrasts the “delight in ordinary, everyday things”, with the “painful waiting” of Sarah and suggests that Messy Church can be attentive to the pain in the lives of those who come and at the same time encourage people to rediscover pleasure in the ordinary. This sharing of both joy and pain with the ‘stranger’ again suggests a desire for a depth of relationship and sincere interaction concerning things that matter to participants.

Finally in regard to the meal, Moore points to the sacramental nature of a shared meal, that in getting to know each other we also get “to meet and know him [God] in some mysterious way that many of us don’t fully understand”. Recognising Jesus in the stranger is something which Jesus himself endorsed. In Matthew’s gospel, those

who have fed the hungry and clothed the naked are affirmed as if they had fed and clothed Jesus himself.³⁸

Service and affect

In thinking about the adoption of hospitality as a Messy Church value, it is helpful to briefly consider hospitality from the perspective of the hospitality industry before then moving on to a theological understanding of hospitality in the Christian tradition and how this might be similar or different to the hospitality offered at Messy Church.

In a recent edition of *The Cornell School of hotel administration on hospitality*, Pezzotti (2011:14) contrasts the heavily qualitative ethos of hospitality with the quantitative practicality of service. After listing a great number of definitions concerning hospitality and service, Pezzotti (2011:14) teases out common words in these definitions. For hospitality these words include *warmth, friendly, listening, respect, understanding, sensitivity, and genuine*. For service they include *measured, efficacious, delivery, products, and standards*. Therefore, hospitality in this context concerns feelings and emotions which are matters of the heart, whereas service involves that which can be measured in practice, i.e. matters of the head. Good hospitality leads to positive affect whereas good service leads to the accomplishment of a goal (such as the serving of a timely and delicious meal). This may or may not engender an affective response, but such a response is not the main purpose of good service. Of course the two are interconnected and a hotel guest's total experience will depend on both being present. The fact that hospitality concerns attention to the affective aspects involved in the provision of a service is echoed in Lucy Moore's description of the place of hospitality at Messy Church. The oasis and the meal in the story of Abraham and Sarah seem to point to a service being offered, that of care for the needs of the stranger. Laughter and the siesta seem to point to the affective dimensions of the story: the shared joy over good news, and the tension experienced by the host due to an interruption of the familiar routine by the stranger. Attention to hospitality at Messy Church seems to be in accord with that of the hospitality industry in that it concerns paying attention to how people feel alongside the provision of a service.

³⁸ See Matthew 25:31-46.

Inclusion of the stranger

Christine Pohl (1999), in her seminal work *Making Room: Recovering hospitality in the Christian tradition* writes that “In the past ... welcoming strangers into a home and offering them food, shelter and protection were the key components in the practice of hospitality.” She contrasts this with much hospitality today which typically involves friends and family rather than strangers or indeed an “industry” of hotels and restaurants where hospitality comes with a price-tag attached. Messy Church though, seems to want to contribute to a recovery of making room for the stranger by providing a warm welcome and a nourishing meal to those outside of the established Christian community. However, it is not a perceived lack of food and shelter among outsiders that motivate Messy Church, rather it is a perceived diminution in the quality and experience of community which has resulted in a proliferation of “strangers” who live among us. A significant aim then is not to feed or shelter the stranger (though a meal is often provided), but rather to get to know them, and to be known by them, in order to facilitate community.

In order to get to know strangers, attention must be paid to them. Their voice must be heard. Hospitality has a role to play in giving recognition to those members of society whose voice is often ignored. Pohl (1999:61) writes “Recognition involves respecting the dignity and equal worth of every person and valuing their contributions, or at least their potential contributions, to the larger community.” Messy Church undoubtedly recognises the importance of children within the Christian worshipping context and its distinctive structure reflects an attempt to provide an environment which is both accessible to and valuing of children. But in addition, there also seems to be a desire to recognise the contribution that new adults can make to the Messy Church community. All-age inclusivity at Messy Church is expected to be as much about attending to adults as it is about attending to children and this is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Contemporary life has seen an increase in single person homes and the shrinking of the extended family such that people can often feel like they are strangers in their locality. Even when there is some sense of belonging to a group such as a church, there is often a desire for deeper connection such that “we long for bonds that give life and meaning” (Pohl 1999:7). In the face of this, hospitality can offer a place of welcome and friendship which involves “attentive listening and a mutual sharing of lives and life stories” (Pohl 1999:13). For theology lecturer Cathy Ross (2015:176) hospitality means paying attention to the stranger and in particular to the gifts that the stranger brings. There is often a mutuality achieved in relationships underpinned by hospitality which belies the apparent difference between host and guest. In promoting hospitality as a core value, it seems that this is the kind of an environment

that Lucy Moore is seeking to create. But there is a danger that this mutuality is not recognised or understood by everyone involved in running Messy Church. Attention to the more practical tasks such as craft activities and food preparation may lead to a lack of attention being paid to the somewhat harder work of really getting to know people. Pohl (1999:13) goes on to suggest that “In joining physical, spiritual and social nourishment, hospitality is a life-giving practice.” This raises a question concerning whether Messy Church helpers recognise what they do as a “life-giving practice”? And do participants recognise themselves to be nourished? Understanding Messy Church in this way may help organisers to balance the requirements of the physical (e.g. food), spiritual (e.g. worship and thanksgiving) and social (relationships).

As well as getting to know the stranger, for a friendship to grow there is also a need to be known by the stranger, and for this to happen one must be willing to be seen, really seen. Henri Nouwen ((1976:68-69) cited in Ross (2015:177)) defines hospitality as “being articulately present to the guest, offering yourself as a point of orientation or a frame of reference”. This requires an openness, even a vulnerability since there is the risk of rejection of the host by the guest. Strangeness may be reduced when the host both offers herself to and receives a guest who is open to knowing and being known. This openness on both sides can create a space for friendship to develop. But reciprocity may or may not occur. The guest is under no obligation to give or receive in the same way and it may be that the guest takes advantage and abuses the hospitality on offer. The provision of hospitality by a church community can afford some protection to organisers by the sharing of the risk involved. Nevertheless, Pohl (1999:158) writes “Meals shared together in church provide opportunity to sustain relationships and to build new ones. They establish a space that is personal without being private; an excellent setting in which to begin friendships with strangers.”

In exploring the place of the meal at Messy Church, Lucy Moore has suggested that there may be a sacramental dimension to the experience such that God is mysteriously encountered there. It has already been noted that there is theological weight to this notion that Jesus may be recognised in the stranger.³⁹ Pohl (1999:68) writes

If when we open the door we are oriented toward seeing Jesus in the guest, then we welcome that person with some sense that God is already at work in his or her life. This can fundamentally change our perspective and our sense

³⁹ In Matthew 25: 35-45, Jesus suggests that whenever the hungry were fed, thirsty given something to drink, strangers were welcomed, the sick cared for and prisoners visited, that it were as if these things were done for Jesus himself.

of the dimensions of the relationship. We are more sensitive to what the guest is bringing to us, to what God might be saying or doing through her or him.

There is a challenge here to Messy Church helpers to be open to encountering Jesus in the guests who they welcome at Messy Church, both in the children and the adults alike.

In summary then, in valuing hospitality, Messy Church is following a long established Christian tradition of providing for the needs of the stranger. In this case the needs are primarily relational, the need to belong to a loving community, rather than physical, but the shared meal still has a role to play in meeting this need.

Pastoral care

Hospitality is a practice that is concerned with care for and response to the needs of persons. Although Messy Church may have prioritised relationship to the stranger who is in need of community, pastoral care for broader needs is inherent in the Christian tradition and as such is something that Messy Church cannot ignore. It may be that pastoral care happens at Messy Church in a much more informal manner than in traditional Church, residing less in the hands of those in authority and more in the hands of all participants as a consequence of their deepening relationships with each other. However, it is then more likely that there will be those in need of care who are not identified as such simply because they have not yet developed the depth of relationship necessary for the need to be recognised. There is also a practical issue related to the fact that helpers tasked with certain functional jobs at Messy Church may find it difficult to spare the necessary time required to build strong relationships with participants. Pohl (1999:180-181) addresses this issue, “When hosts understand hospitality as offering themselves rather than performing a task, the relationship is much richer”. When hospitality is understood in terms of strangers getting to know each other, rather than achieving a goal (such as completing a craft or preparing a meal) pastoral care is also more likely to be achieved. The question remains, however, as to whether helpers are aware of participants’ needs and also whether they feel confident to respond to those needs when they see them.

A threshold practice

Another aspect of hospitality identified by Pohl and especially relevant to Messy Church is that “Hospitality is a personal but institutionally rooted practice” (Pohl 1999:57). There is a need for a space where the strangeness of the stranger can be

overcome and introductions be made such that, on both sides of the relationship, the strangers become less strange. This is particularly important for institutions like the Church since “Few institutions provide the needed threshold or city gate for an initial encounter with strangers that could make them slightly more familiar” (Pohl 1999:57). It seems possible that Messy Church could make a significant contribution in this regard although the idea that Messy Church be regarded as a “gateway” to traditional Church has been contested by Moore (2006:35) who insists that a Messy Church is a valid worshipping congregation in its own right.

It could be that Moore senses the danger inherent in merely using Messy Church as a means to church growth. When that happens Messy Church is reduced to the marketing of a product based on attractive atmosphere and right image. Pohl (1999:144-145) rightly cautions against the misuse of hospitality in this way:

To view hospitality as a means to an end, to use it instrumentally, is antithetical to seeing it as a way of life, as a tangible expression of love. There is probably no better context for sharing the gospel than in a setting of warm welcome, and people will come in increasing numbers to a church that takes hospitality seriously. But when we use occasional hospitality as a tool, we distort it, and the people we “welcome” know quickly that they are being used.

Paul Moore is perhaps in danger of making this mistake when he writes of Messy Church adding a fourth element of *blessing*, to the threefold “belonging, believing, behaving” process (2013:17-18). Blessing is understood to open up a way into the church for new families. It seems that blessing here refers to the hospitality demonstrated by organisers at Messy Church, particularly through the provision of a meal. Blessing in the Christian tradition usually takes the form of a spoken benediction such as “Peace be with you”. The idea that a blessing can take the form of material and emotional provision seems to be a confusion with hospitality, perhaps under the influence of a consumerist culture. If hospitality and friendship are disingenuously offered as a way of boosting consumption, rather like a free gift in a magazine, then participants are likely to discern this and it is unlikely that relationships will flourish.

In summary then, Messy Church has identified hospitality as one of its five fundamental values. The hospitality industry recognises the qualitative and affective nature of hospitality as opposed to the quantitative practical nature of service. In the Christian tradition, hospitality relates to provision of food, shelter and protection for the stranger. Messy Church hospitality, however, is concerned less with provision of resources to meet a perceived need, and more with overcoming the strangeness of the stranger, through sharing creative expression and interactive discussion and through the celebration of ordinary life, in order to establish and consolidate

relationship and community. If there is a perceived need, it concerns an emotional and mental poverty as a result of the stresses of contemporary society rather than a physical need such as hunger and shelter. Questions arise concerning the extent to which helpers and organisers recognise and share the value of hospitality. Does attention to service in the provision of craft activities and the practicalities of a cooked meal get in the way of the development of relationships and pastoral care? Do helpers perceive Messy Church as a means to increasing attendance at Sunday worship, or as a life giving practice in its own right?

Conclusion

Two of the five Messy Church values have been analysed in this chapter in order to try to assess the contribution that they may make to the Christian becoming of the participants. Creativity has been shown to be increasingly influential in both primary and secondary schools across the UK in recent decades and is understood to motivate learning and increase personal well-being. Theological import for creativity comes from the idea that humans are formed in the image of a Creator God and in being creative they reflect that image. Hospitality helps to overcome the strangeness of the stranger and contributes to the development of community and relationships. Encountering Jesus in the stranger, particularly when the stranger is a child, is highly pertinent to Messy Church theology.

The extent to which Messy Church helpers embrace these values and implement a Messy Church which reflects these ideals forms a considerable focus of the Great Big Messy Survey which is presented in Part 3 of this thesis.

Chapter 3

Who is Messy Church for? Exploring all age inclusion

A core feature of the Messy Church experience is that adults and children create, worship and eat together. At no part are they separated into “age appropriate” activities. Whilst this thesis is primarily concerned with researching *adult* involvement at Messy Church, it is helpful to look back over recent centuries to see how attitudes towards the separation of children and adults during Christian worship have changed over time. The prevailing wisdom that children benefit by worshipping alongside adults by being socialised into the worshipping community is complemented by the idea that adults too may benefit from worshipping alongside children. It is insightful, in this regard, to consider the concept of children’s spirituality as something that is innate but which may become hidden or damaged as children develop into adults. As adults engage in relationship in a worship context with spiritually vibrant children, it is possible that they may be coaxed into remembering and even rekindling something that they once had, but which they may have lost. The curious quest for meaning so apparent in children’s becoming provides a challenge to adults who have become accustomed to being relatively passive in church situations. The final section of this chapter takes a look specifically at how all-age inclusion is understood by Lucy Moore and the contribution that Messy Church makes to the debate on this topic.

Age separation in the Church of England

Since the late eighteenth century the traditional experience of children in church has usually involved being separated from their parents for all or part of the church service and going out to a different room or church hall for Sunday School (Astley 2002, pp.36-41). Originally concerned with social justice and the education of the poorest children, by 1830 and the advent of day schools, Sunday schools had shifted their emphasis to more religious goals such as Bible reading, the nurture of Christian beliefs and the practice of Christian worship (Astley 2002:38). By the latter half of the twentieth century, the method and content deployed in Sunday School was largely shaped by a developmental model of children’s religious education, with an emphasis on cognitive learning, which required that children be separated into a range of age groups and taught material considered relevant to their stage of development. Jean Piaget’s (1932) *The moral judgement of the child* was the first of several models that set out to understand stages of development across the human life span in several fields of interest, including religious understanding (Goldman

1965), moral development (Kohlberg 1981) and faith development (Fowler 1981; 2000).

Cognitive developmental models of learning, however, have increasingly been challenged in recent years as being deficient in the way they define and test for growth. John Taylor (1987:80) condemns what he regards as an obsession with developmental theory because of the way in which it has “obscured any vision of the unpredictable spirit of creation”. Craig Dykstra (1981) has insisted that moral development is much more than making hypothetical choices. Crucially, it involves an inherently relational dynamic which he terms “visional ethics”. Here the emphasis is on character and virtue rather than justice and reason. The adjective ‘visional’ is chosen to emphasise the importance of the viewpoint of the person concerned, which of course may depend upon the relationships involved. Hauerwas (1981) is another writer who advocates this point of view.

In 1976, a Consultative Group on Ministry among Children of the British Council of Churches published *The Child in the Church*. This report which focused on Christian nurture, maintained such nurture was a process of continuous growth but set the context for such growth relationally “within the church family” (British Council of Churches 1976:19). The implications of the report were that children should be respected as persons in their own right and their contribution should be properly acknowledged and appreciated (Francis 2002:43).

The relational aspect of Christian nurture is again evident in the report of the General Synod Boards of Education and Mission (1988) entitled *Children in the Way* which explored the pilgrim model of the Church with children as fellow travellers alongside adults in a shared faith journey. Children and adults worshipping side by side in the same congregation became the expectation and regular all-age worship services, which were also advocated by this report, were a visible expression of this desire in many parishes. This was followed by a further report entitled *All God’s Children?* (Church of England General Synod Board of Education and Board of Mission 1991) which positively acknowledged the shift towards affirming the place and contribution of children in regular worshipping communities, but also challenged churches to consider their ministry to children who were not regular attendees on Sunday morning. The report questioned, amongst other things, whether Sunday was the best day on which to reach un-churched children.

A further development in the Church of England’s ministry to children concerned the question of whether children could be admitted to communion before confirmation. The Knaresborough Report (General Synod Board of Education 1985) examined the implications of having children regularly alongside adults in the

morning congregation and questioned the impression of unacceptability which resulted from their exclusion from participating in communion at the altar rail. More than ten years later, in 1996, a General Synod debate led to guidelines the following year for the admission of children to communion separate from and prior to confirmation (General Synod of the Church of England 1997).

More recently, mission and outreach to children and young people formed the basis for a report entitled *Going For Growth* (General Synod of the Church of England, The Archbishop's Council and The National Society 2010). The report outlined a theological perspective for mission aimed at children and young people and discussed how the *Five Marks of Mission* (Anglican Consultative Council 1984) might be understood in this context. It recommended three actions for the Church of England to be implemented nationally and locally: 1) to work towards “enabling every child and young person to have a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ”; 2) to recognise and enable children to be “agents of transformation”; 3) to “provide professional support and development” for those working with children and young people in the Church.⁴⁰

Jeff Astley (2002:39) lists a helpful summary of the arguments for and against the separation of children from adults in worship. His arguments for separation (and the hidden assumptions that I anticipate to lie behind these arguments) include the following:

- Children are at a different developmental stage to adults which means they lack understanding of adult worship. (Hidden assumption: adults themselves fully understand “adult” worship.)
- Adults are disturbed when children cannot keep quiet. (Hidden assumption: quietness aids worship for all adults. This is likely to indicate a preference of some not a general rule.)
- Teaching and worship suitable for all ages is more difficult to prepare and conduct. (Hidden assumption: it should be easy to prepare.)
- Children often do not want to be in ‘the big church’ setting. (Hidden assumption: children do not want to worship with adults. I suspect that given a different environment, one more supportive of a curious exploration of worship, children would be more than happy to worship alongside adults.)

⁴⁰ The Church of England (2015) has also set up a website to promote these three action points.

- Children are used to interactive learning at school whereas “adult services encourage a more passive and structured response”. (Hidden assumption: adults benefit most from a passive structure and would not benefit from an interactive environment. Again this is likely to reflect the preference of some adults for a particular kind of environment, that of quiet reflection over one of active experimentation.)

The hidden assumptions that I have suggested may lie behind these arguments for separation indicate that personal preference may be an underlying historical factor. Preference for quiet reflection over active interaction and experimentation is captured by psychological type theory and its assessment of different orientations of psychological energy, inwards (for people who prefer introversion) and outwards (for people who prefer extraversion). That Messy Church may attract individuals with different psychological type preferences to those who are attracted to other types of church is one aspect of the empirical study undertaken later on in this thesis.

Astley (2002:39-40) summarises the arguments in support of integration as follows:

- Excluding children from the main service splits the Church and raises doubts about the Christian identity of children as full members of the body of Christ.
- Excluding children raises doubts concerning the full significance of infant baptism.
- Children learn best what it is to be an adult worshipper by seeing and hearing adults worship.
- Adults have much to learn from children, especially that discipleship is not about status, power or prestige.
- A separate Sunday school may inadvertently suggest that Christian education is only for children.

Hence, in seeking to provide a worship environment that integrates children and adults together, Messy Church can be understood to have evolved, at least in part, as a consequence of this wider debate on the place of children in the church and the possible benefits for both children and adults in an interactive and integrated worship environment. Driving all of these changes is a discernible conviction that children are more likely to flourish when they are included and respected in their own right. However, there is another factor that has been far less widely debated, namely that some adults may also be more likely to flourish in an all-age environment. Psycho-educational reasons for this stem from psychological type preferences which underpin different learning styles. Theologically this conviction is reinforced by Jesus’ challenge to “become like little children” (Matthew 18:3). It seems reasonable that if adults are to become like little children that this may happen most readily when children are present as models. After all, how can adults be

expected to become like children unless they have opportunity to pay attention to what children are like and in particular how they do their becoming? One feature of childhood which may have become distorted or even lost in adulthood is that of children's spirituality and this is the focus of attention in the following section.

Children as spiritual role models for adults

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that spirituality is an innate aspect of human nature. In 1969 Alister Hardy, an Oxford professor, invited all who felt their lives had been affected in some way by some power beyond themselves to submit an account of it. He did this by placing an advertisement in a national newspaper. Fifteen per cent of the four thousand accounts he received related to childhood. Inspired by Hardy's work, David Hay (1990) continued to investigate empirical evidence of religious experience in human nature and, uncovering further evidence of childhood experiences, he went on to use a grounded theory approach in work with Rebecca Nye to develop an understanding of the spirituality of children (Hay with Nye 2006). Although spirituality can be a difficult term to define, Rebecca Nye coined the term 'relational consciousness' to emphasise the fundamentally relational dynamic of children's spirituality (Hay with Nye 2006:108-109). Nye understands this relational consciousness to have four dimensions: child-God consciousness, child-people consciousness, child-world consciousness, and child-self consciousness, and suggests that relational consciousness is what allows humans to find meaning and purpose in life (Hay with Nye 2006:115-120). But there is a problem. David Hay describes a "social destruction of spirituality" (Hay with Nye 2006:33-43), and blames secularising influences coupled with a stubborn defence of religious belief primarily along the lines of "argument from design" which is commonly perceived to have been discredited by Darwin. Nye (2009:41,85) also insists that relational consciousness can be damaged, discarded, or hidden and advises parents and teachers on how to nurture spirituality in children through sensitive attention to environmental and relational factors. Nye focuses on nurturing spirituality in children in order to reverse the dearth of spirituality among tomorrow's adults. But what of today's adults who have experienced damage to their spirituality? Writing from a theological perspective, Taylor (1987:81-82) suggests that the spiritual potential of childhood may not be irreversibly lost to adults, but may remain as a seed hidden in the ground, obscured from view, until it is stirred into life. He points to religion and to the creative arts as rich resources for the nurturing of a creative imagination equipped with the language to respond to the divine creative energy of the Spirit (Taylor 1987:84). This view of the need for a suitable language with which to express spirituality is echoed in the work of Jerome

Berryman, whose Godly Play method of religious education provides an interesting contrast to Messy Church. Berryman understands Christian religious education as being charged with the task of equipping children with the Christian language system so that they are better able to wrestle with issues of existential meaning (2013:ix). When spirituality is understood as relational consciousness and religion is understood as a language, the importance of connection to, and communication with others, in matters of faith are brought to the fore. When spirituality is understood to be something that can be vibrant and alive in childhood but which can become hidden and obscured in adulthood, relationship to and communication with children in the midst of an adult faith environment takes on a radical new perspective. Children may need help from adults to develop a language to express their spiritual experience, but they may also have a role to play in rekindling spirituality and creative imagination within those adults around them whose innate capacity for such things may have become impaired, and to remind adults of the mysterious ideas, emotions, experiences and relationships that a religious language is meant to express. When adults perceive children to be adults-in-the-making, there can be an assumed responsibility to help them to grow up. Yet by placing a little child among them, Jesus invites his disciples not to be teachers but to be learners, to undergo a process of change in order to recover something that, by their own growing up, they appear to have neglected or even lost.

The purpose of all-age inclusion at Messy Church

The decision to develop Messy Church as an all-age expression of church can be seen to be a result of the broader trajectory within the Church of England to reverse some of the negative consequences which have resulted from the separation of children and adults into age appropriate groups. Messy Church takes seriously the concerns raised by the reports *Children in the Way* (Church of England General Synod Board of Education 1988) and *All God's Children?* (Church of England General Synod Board of Education and Board of Mission 1991). When working well, children and adults at Messy Church explore faith together through biblically themed creative activities. Together they take part in a corporate act of worship which often involves active participation using some or all of the products of the craft time. Sitting around a table with other families, they learn to reflect upon and consider their experiences together through informal chat over a meal. There is a genuine sense that this represents the pilgrim model envisaged by *Children in the Way* and the pioneering of a creative and participative Christian community. Through meeting mid-week or on Saturday, Messy Church has taken on board the

suggestion in *All God's Children?* that Sunday morning may not be the most suitable time for families to attend worship.

Perhaps a more contentious reason for the development of all-age inclusion at Messy Church relates to the difficulty in meeting the expectations of lifelong churchgoers alongside newcomers and children (Moore 2006:16-19). Those who attend church services often have expectations that church will happen in a particular way. Those who rarely attend, in common with small children, have little understanding of those expectations. Furthermore there are, some insist, apparent differences between the needs of those who attend conventional church and those who do not. Moore (2006:16-17) locates these needs in level of religious content and language (in the need to sing a complex hymn or to say the Collect), but it is questionable whether these are actual needs or whether they are more likely to reflect preference, expectation and ecclesiastical norms. Moore (2006:17) elaborates by suggesting that a child-friendly sermon may not be what a committed disciple would need every week, and similarly, someone “putting their toe in the church pond” is understood to require different content to someone who is “ploughing up and down in it like an Olympic swimmer”.

This developmental view is echoed in the writing of Australian vicar and Messy Church organiser Tim Waghorn (2013:204), who understands his weekly Messy Church (which follows immediately after a more traditional Anglican Sunday service) to present a message which is a “distillate of the morning message, purified and directed in such a way that children and adults alike have access to its meaning and relevancy.” Yet at the risk of overextending the metaphor, for swimmers to become better swimmers, whether they are experts or beginners, they both basically need to spend more time in the water. What both require is time to practice and experiment, perhaps accompanied by encouragement from and interaction with people who have a little more (or just different) experience. The assumption that people need specific levels of content depending on their level of experience and maturity betrays a developmental emphasis on learning rooted in instruction, behaviourism and information processing. The problem is conceived as one of lack of the ‘right’ information at an appropriate level, coupled with a lack of cognitive ability on behalf of the individual to understand and therefore correctly process and act on the information. Hence engaging a group of people who have amassed different amounts of information presents a practical problem around selection of appropriate information delivery and explanation. Waghorn (and, to some extent, Lucy Moore) seems to suggest that children and adults who have little church experience can be catered for by Messy Church because they have a similar need for the same (basic) level of information, which can be ably delivered by the Messy

Church leader, and which more experienced churchgoers simply have no need of. But there also appears in much of Lucy Moore's more recent writing, a somewhat different view of learning, one which celebrates diversity, that is open to unexpected insight from the least likely sources, which stresses the importance of relationships, where each person can teach the other, and which is shaped by outsiders as much as by traditions (Moore 2010:18-22,58,71,100,112-113). In actual fact this alternative view of learning betrays the real reason behind the evolution of Messy Church separately from conventional church, that traditional churches "provide a changelessness, reliability and constancy ...[and] the people in these services have learnt that church is a safe space" (Moore 2010:112). The preference for changeless consistency within conventional church has necessitated the development of a different way of being church which accommodates people who neither understand nor share that preference. The instructional approach to learning as information processing adopted in many traditional church contexts demands little by way of learning and change from experienced churchgoers since in this understanding they are the very holders and guardians of orthodoxy simply by being passive recipients of an authorised wisdom. In endorsing separation because of different 'needs', Moore thus avoids confronting established congregations on their preference for constancy which diminishes the opportunity for creative learning that underpins so much of her vision for Messy Church.

The grouping together of people around a perceived need for the same level of content fails to take adequate account of the process of learning and the social context in which the learning takes place.⁴¹ This becomes more evident when learning is viewed not from an instructional but from a constructivist perspective. Constructivist views of learning, which can be traced back to early twentieth century German theorists George Simmel and Max Weber (Waters 1994:7), recognise the significant role that each individual learner has in the acquisition (or more correctly construction) of their knowledge.⁴² *Social* constructionism highlights the development of jointly constructed knowledge, and the essential role of language as the main medium for the communication of shared understandings (Waters 1994:7).

⁴¹ Although UK state run schools routinely separate pupils according to their age, this can be viewed as a practical solution to the problem of delivering large amounts of specific information to large numbers of pupils. By contrast, Montessori education, which is based on a constructivist approach to learning, regards mixed age groups as an essential component of its child-centred ethos (Association Montessori International 2015).

⁴² This learning process will be examined in more detail later on in the thesis through David Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory and its subsequent development into Conversational Learning (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002).

Lucy Moore's view of learning as it appears in the Messy Church literature, appears to be sympathetic to learning as a process of construction. In this view the complex theological language that a traditional liturgical service often involves is problematic for a newcomer, or a small child, not because of the intellectual level of the content but because of the huge quantity of unfamiliar material which is difficult to process in its entirety. Too much unfamiliar language can overwhelm the individual leading to anxiety or to disconnect and boredom.⁴³ (Note also the opposite, that over familiarity can also result in boredom, or secure complaisance, which present few opportunities for learning.) More importantly, the service is largely inaccessible because of the lack of opportunity, tools and support required to do the work necessary to make sense of it. A significant barrier to learning occurs when there is little opportunity to express and explore something of the inner tension or confusion evoked by the religious experience, either during or after the service, through sensitive conversation, or alternatively through creative expression. Note that this can equally be a problem for more experienced churchgoers as well as for participants and helpers at Messy Church.

Each individual's experience of church is different precisely because each individual brings with them a different history and a potentially different point of departure. For example, in Robbie's story, recounted in the introduction, six year old Robbie's own personal experience of domestic violence undoubtedly influenced the way in which he wrestled with the violence inflicted upon Joseph by his brothers in the Genesis account.⁴⁴ Understandably lacking the appropriate linguistic skills to express his inner struggle with this issue, Robbie expressed something of his quest for meaning concerning anger and injustice in relation to God, by colouring Joseph's coat completely black and giving him an angry facial expression. For Robbie, his seemingly joyful skipping across the floor upon completion of his artwork, perhaps revealed a resolution to his inner work of making meaning. Such opportunities for transformation of experience into knowledge are the very fabric of vibrant Christianity. They can stem from encountering new information in the Christian story, but they can also arise when revisiting more familiar information. The recursive three year cycle of lectionary readings in Anglican worship reflects this insight. A familiar story can be seen in a new light precisely because each individual may have changed as a result of their own personal life experiences since his or her previous encounter with the story.

⁴³ The work of Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1975) on flow and optimal experience between anxiety and boredom is relevant here.

⁴⁴ Genesis 37.

So the encounter between individuals and their Messy Church experience can generate tensions within and between participants and helpers and the desire for resolution of these tensions provides the necessary impetus for learning and relating. Therefore, what is needed in order to nurture learning, is an environment which supports each person as they attempt to carry out the unique and creative work involved in exploring their own individual and relational tensions. Experienced and inexperienced churchgoers may indeed encounter Messy Church, or even conventional church, differently, but what both require is the opportunity (and perhaps intrinsic motivation) to do the necessary work of wrestling with their experience in order to make meaningful sense of it alongside their previous life experiences. Silent reflection, creative expression and respectful conversation are just some of the ways in which this wrestling can unfold. Conventional church services tend to support the first of these, whereas Messy Church seems to endeavour to support the latter two. If there are no questions or tensions generated by the experience, one might justifiably ask whether any learning has in fact taken place. One consequence of a constructivist approach is that there may be several different and sometimes unexpected learning outcomes, rather than one universal adoption of an orthodox (and perhaps personally meaningless) interpretation of the theme. This illustrates the individual/relational tensions inherent in learning which require the appreciation and negotiation of different perspectives in a spirit of humility.

Stemming from these different ways to understand Christian becoming at Messy Church, questions arise concerning the intention of the people who plan and organise Messy Church events. Do those who run Messy Church intend to deliver a basic level of Christian content for those who come, with the intention that all participants, both children and adults, will remember and act on the information they receive in broadly the same way (an instructional approach)? Or is there an understanding that the learning process can be undergone differently for different participants as a result of their individual quest for meaning that drives the resolution of tensions which can arise from each person's Messy Church experience (a constructivist approach)? And if so does this mean that the Messy Church values help to generate a learning environment, an eco-system for Christian becoming, which is radically different to conventional church because it is supportive of the way in which individuals-in-relationship construct and share their learning?

Another, not unrelated, reason for the intention to include all ages at Messy Church concerns the uncertainty surrounding the place of children in some conventional congregations. There may be an unspoken expectation that children are welcome "as long as they're quiet and well-behaved and do what we do" (Moore 2006:19).

Jerome Berryman (2009) has identified four different attitudes to children throughout church history which encapsulate some of the issues involved: ambivalence to children (high and/or low views), ambiguity (surrounding the word ‘child’), indifference to children, and children as mediators of grace. First, people who have a particularly low view of children would not normally be expected to be involved in the implementation of Messy Church. But what of those with particularly high views of children? It may be that in this case the all-aged aspect of Messy Church is what suffers. If attention is paid exclusively to the children at Messy Church, both in its planning and implementation, then the adults would undoubtedly be neglected and their contribution undervalued or even unnoticed. Second, the ambiguous nature of the word child can also provide impetus for helpful reflection on Messy Church. How are we to understand the Biblical description of people as “children of God”, or the command to “become like little children”? At the very least, attending to children at Messy Church is likely to provide opportunity for a deeper understanding of these terms. However, these opportunities may be missed if adequate time for reflection and/or discussion is not taken. Third, again it is unlikely that people who are indifferent to children would be involved in the running of Messy Church, unless that is, their concern is less with the children and more, perhaps, with boosting numbers on Sunday morning. Indifference to children may make it easier to perceive them as “fish on a line” (Withers 2006:64) or empty buckets to be filled with information. Lastly, understanding children as channels of grace, is the attitude recommended by Berryman. In the context of learning, “the raw energy of God’s overflowing grace pushes and pulls the movement in the [learning] circle ... to find a more adequate answer or pattern for reality” (Berryman 2009:232). Children, says Berryman, are especially suited to be a channel of God’s grace because of the intensity of the creative process working in them (Berryman 2009:227). Frequently, they can model the creative learning process and as such they can be the means by which adults have their eyes opened and are moved on in their own creativity and learning. This insight raises questions concerning how open Messy Church helpers and adult participants are to learning from the children at Messy Church. I suggest that this is far less likely to happen when adults have an instructional rather than a constructivist view of learning.

Conclusion

In specifying that it is for all ages, Messy Church is following a trajectory of the Church of England over recent decades which has seen greater attention paid to the place of the child in the midst. The benefits to children of their inclusion in all-age worship settings have been well debated, but far less attention has been paid to the

way in which all-age learning contexts may benefit the adults involved. The notion that spirituality is an innate quality of humans which may become gradually lost, distorted or hidden through growth to adulthood lends an interesting perspective to this possibility. Learning as a socially constructed process heavily reliant on language and communication and therefore on the relationships between the participants and helpers offers another interesting perspective on the suitability of the Messy Church environment to the nurture of adult Christian becoming.

The extent to which Messy Church helpers embrace the values set out in chapters 2 and 3, and successfully implement a Messy Church which reflects these ideals, forms a considerable focus of the Great Big Messy Survey which is presented in Part 3 of this thesis. Furthermore the impact that the Messy Church environment has on participants' learning, or more accurately on their *becoming*, is also examined through empirical study. But first, a theological and conceptual examination of what it means to learn and grow as a Christian is undertaken in Part 2 and the phrase *Christian becoming* is offered as a more appropriate way to reflect a constructivist perspective on the individual and social aspects of the process of Christian transformation.

Part 2
Conceptual and theological frameworks

Introduction to Part 2

The underlying theoretical proposition driving this research project is that different types of learning and relating are easier for different sorts of people. Similarly, different learning spaces may facilitate some modes of learning and relating and discourage others. Messy Church attempts to attract a group of people that are not attracted to conventional church. Messy Church also provides a very different kind of learning space to conventional church, one which purports to prioritise creative learning and relational hospitality. In this part of this thesis I will set out the conceptual frameworks which map some specific differences between people and congregations in order to test the hypothesis that Messy Church nurtures different kinds of people, through a different kind of Christian becoming process, leading to some different, but not incompatible, learning outcomes (more spiritual and relational rather than traditional and religious). Chapter 4 introduces psychological type theory which offers a model of psychological functioning that identifies individual differences in the ways that people process information and experience. The four dimensions which make up psychological type conceptualise differences in: the way people direct psychological energy (oriented through introversion or extraversion); the way people take in information (perceiving through their senses or intuition); the way people make decisions (judging through their feeling or thinking); and the way in which people prefer to operate in the dealing with external experiences (through a perceiving or judging attitude). Differences in psychological type contribute to preferred learning styles which are understood to influence the learning and becoming process.

In Chapter 5, Schwartz's universal value theory provides a model of basic human values which is used to demonstrate that a traditional religious environment has tended to encourage passive conformity rather than active creativity in religious learning. When the ultimate goal of Christian becoming is understood to be loving relationships, the Schwartz model illustrates how creativity and conformity can both complement the motivation to love (benevolence and universalism in Schwartz's model), though they are more likely to act in conflict with each other. Learning environments shaped by these different values will be experienced differently by different people depending upon the extent to which those people share the basic values that shape the learning experience. This is the case even when the different environments aspire to the same ultimate learning outcome (such as loving relationships). In a learning environment shaped by traditional conformity values, people who do not share those values may not be able to recognise the way in which those values can act as stepping stones to the ultimate goal of loving relationships.

Similarly in an environment shaped by self-directed creativity, people who do not share this value may equally not easily recognise it as a stepping stone towards loving relationships. However, when encountered at the same time in the same learning situation, as appears to be the case at Messy Church, creativity and conformity can act in conflict with each other and produce tension, both within and between individuals, which requires sensitive negotiation if a healthy learning environment conducive to loving relationships is to be maintained. Furthermore, the process of resolving the tension generated by conflicting values is anticipated to be precisely the process necessary to facilitate the generation of loving relationships between participants.

Conversational Learning theory is introduced in Chapter 6 as an example of how this resolution of dialectical tension might work in practice. Psychological type and basic values come together in Conversational Learning theory which grew out of David Kolb's seminal work on Experiential Learning Theory. Adding to the two dialectical dimensions within ELT, Baker, Jensen and Kolb incorporated three further dimensions of dialectical tension, similar to those apparent in Schwartz's value theory, in their development of Conversational Learning. Conversational Learning is utilised here to assess the strengths and weaknesses of Messy Church in its provision of an environment conducive to Christian becoming.

A theological perspective on Christian becoming is explored in Chapter 7. Traditional terms for Christian becoming are identified and explored and a case is made for the preferred use of the term "Christian becoming". The interdependency of learning about and relating to God as dual dynamics of Christian becoming is also discussed.

The concluding chapter in Part 2, Chapter 8, reflects on how Christian becoming appears to be understood by Lucy Moore and other contributors to the Messy Church literature. Questions raised in preceding chapters are further developed in light of this insight.

Chapter 4 Individual Differences

Psychological type theory

Psychological type theory affords one lens through which to view the ways in which individuals (and groups of individuals) differ. Originally pioneered by Carl Jung (1923) through clinical observation and empirical testing, psychological type theory was subsequently modified by Katharine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs-Myers (Myers et al. 1998). Psychological type theory as generally conceived today, consists of an individual expressing a dichotomous preference between polar opposites across four domains: *orientation* (extraversion and introversion); *perceiving function* (sensing and intuition); *judging function* (thinking and feeling) and *attitude* toward the external world (perceiving and judging) (Briggs-Myers and Myers 1995; Myers et al. 1998). Various tools have been developed to measure the type dimensions, such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers and McCaulley 1985), the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey and Bates 1984) and The Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis 2005), however, these are all thought to measure the same basic psychological processes.

It is in the conceptualisation of polar opposites within psychological dynamics, which results in individuals being placed within distinct *type* categories, that psychological type theory differs from other *trait* based models of personality such as the five factor model (Costa and McCrae 1985), the three dimensional model (Eysenck and Eysenck 1991) and the sixteen factor model (Cattell, Cattell and Cattell 1993) which locate individuals at points along a continuum. A further difference between type and trait theories lies in the moral value afforded to certain traits compared to the ethically neutral type preferences. Neither option in dichotomous type preference is considered to more or less valuable or attractive than its opposite, for example extraversion is not considered to be better than introversion, they are merely different and have different strengths and weaknesses. By contrast, the trait approach understands extraversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness to be desirable qualities and a high score on these measures is considered better than a low score. The fifth factor, neuroticism, is considered to be an undesirable trait and therefore low scores on this trait measure are preferable. The somewhat simpler approach of type theory is preferred here due to the fact that type theory has become established in congregational studies in recent years (Craig et al. 2003; Francis et al. 2004; Francis, Craig and Hall 2008; Village, Francis and Craig

2009; Francis 2010; Francis, Robbins and Craig 2011; Village, Baker and Howat 2012; Francis, Clymo and Robbins 2014; Village 2015).

The *orientations* of psychological type are concerned with psychological energy. A preference for introversion (I) focuses attention and psychological energy on the inner world of ideas. A preference for extraversion (E) focuses attention on the outer world of people and things. Introverts draw energy from inner reflection whereas extraverts draw energy from social interaction (Jung 1923:416,471; Myers et al. 1998:22,25-26).

The *perceiving function* is concerned with the way in which people take in information. People who prefer sensing (S) are practical people who are good at taking in information through their five senses. People who prefer intuition (N) are imaginative and prefer to take in information through abstract ideas, patterns and meanings (Myers et al. 1998:24).

The *judging function* is concerned with how people make decisions and form judgements and opinions. People who prefer thinking (T) prioritise facts and logic in decision making. People who prefer feeling (F) prioritise relationships and interpersonal values in decision making (Myers et al. 1998:24-25).

Finally, *attitude towards the outer world* is a development of Jung's theory by Katherine Briggs and Isabel Briggs-Myers (Myers et al. 1998:26-27) which distinguishes between people who prefer to use their perceiving function (sensing or intuition) in the outer world (P) and people who prefer to use their judging function (feeling or thinking) in the outer world (J). People who prefer to adopt a judging attitude towards the outer world demonstrate a planned and orderly approach which promptly arrives at closure. People who prefer a perceiving attitude demonstrate a spontaneous and flexible approach which keeps possibilities open.

Psychological type theory also includes the notion of type dynamics wherein different combinations of psychological type preferences lead to different sorts of personalities. The four dimensions of type are generally accepted, however they have been interpreted in different ways. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator combines each of the dichotomous preferences leading to the determination of sixteen different psychological types which can be understood to portray distinct behavioural characteristics (Myers et al. 1998:31). By contrast Keirsey and Bates have focussed on the ancient notion of psychological temperaments (four specific pairs of type preferences which are based on a different understanding of how the preferences interact), which they understand to have a "much wider range of convenience" in terms of anticipating and explaining behaviour than Jung's idea of functions (Keirsey and Bates 1984:27).

The sixteen types are denoted by the combination of letters which identify their psychological preferences. They are:

ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ

As well as the independent identification of each of the type preferences, Jung's theory enables the strongest or *dominant* function to be identified. The second of the two preferred functions is then known as the *auxiliary* function. Extraverts utilise their dominant function in their preferred orientation, i.e. in the external world and introverts utilise their dominant function in their preferred orientation, i.e. in the inner world. Conversely, extraverts utilise their weaker auxiliary function in their least preferred orientation - the inner world. Introverts utilise their weaker auxiliary function in their least preferred orientation - the outer world. Hence extraverts with a judging attitude towards the outer world will have a dominant judging function (either feeling or thinking) and an auxiliary perceiving function (either sensing or intuition). Extraverts with a perceiving attitude towards the outer world will have a dominant perceiving function (either sensing or intuition) and an auxiliary judging function (either feeling or thinking). Introverts with a judging attitude towards the outer world will have a dominant perceiving function (either sensing or intuition) and an auxiliary judging function (either feeling or thinking). Introverts with a perceiving attitude towards the outer world will have a dominant judging function (either feeling or thinking) and an auxiliary perceiving function (either sensing or intuition). The dominant function produces certain characteristics in people (Francis, Clymo and Robbins 2014:256): dominant sensing people are practical; dominant intuitive people are imaginative; dominant feeling people are humane; and dominant thinking people are logical.

So, for example, ENTP is an extravert with intuition as the dominant function, and thinking as the introverted auxiliary function (Myers et al. 1998:31). As such, ENTPs are quick, ingenious, alert and outspoken (Briggs-Myers, Kirby and Myers 1998). In theory, ENTPs will utilise their intuition in their daily lives more than their other functions. They will also trust and develop intuition more than their other functions. Thinking acts in support of intuitive goals but is not allowed to overrule any matters that are important to the intuitive function. Extraverts with dominant

intuition are attracted to new possibilities and may over commit themselves as a result. They often underestimate the practical aspects of an activity such as how much time it will take. Under pressure to fulfil its commitments ENTPs will call upon their auxiliary thinking function to help them prioritise and weigh the consequences of dropping certain tasks. Logical reasoning will matter more than the likely impact upon others. Type theory suggests that sensing and feeling are slow to develop for ENTPs. Development of these under-utilised functions is most likely to happen in the service of a project chosen by the intuitive function. Motivation to achieve a strongly desire objective provides incentive to attend to the necessary practical details (S) and to work sensitively with other people (F).

By contrast, ISFJ is an introvert with sensing as the dominant function and feeling as the extraverted auxiliary function and as a result ISFJs are quiet, friendly, responsible and conscientious (Briggs-Myers, Kirby and Myers 1998). In theory, ISFJs will utilise their inner sensing in their daily lives more than their other functions. They will also trust and develop sensing more than their other functions. Feeling acts in support of sensing goals but is not allowed to overrule any matters that are important to the sensing function. Introverts with dominant sensing have a rich inner storehouse of information concerning things that are meaningful and important to them including small details such as tone of voice and facial expression. When their sensing alerts them to the possibility of upcoming problems (which may have little or no objective reality), they can become overly preoccupied with having not just a plan B but also plans C, D and E to account for every eventuality. Under pressure to maintain order in their inner planning, ISFJs will call upon their auxiliary feeling function to help them prioritise and weigh the consequences of ignoring certain possibilities. The likely impact of any consequences on other people will matter more than any logical outcome. Type theory suggests that intuiting and thinking are slower to develop for ISFJs. Development of these under-utilised and unattractive functions is most likely to happen in the service of a project chosen by the sensing function. Motivation to achieve a strongly desired objective provides incentive to attend to the bigger picture (N) and to work logically and objectively (T).

Keirsey and Bates (1984) have approached the subject of individual differences in human personality from the alternative perspective of temperaments. Temperaments are determined operationally by combining pairs of psychological type preferences, however, conceptually Keirsey and Bates (1984:31) prefer to think of type preferences emerging from temperaments rather than the other way round. The four temperament pairs are SP, SJ, NT and NF.

Keirsey and Bates (1984:30-39) describe SP temperaments (which combine a sensing function with a perceiving attitude) as having a strong desire for freedom and a dislike of being constrained or bound such that they live fully in the present. This is expressed in a compulsion to action purely for the enjoyment of doing rather than the accomplishment of a goal, which can mean that they exhibit a determination and endurance beyond that of other temperaments. They are often perceived as fun, exciting, optimistic and cheerful people. The SP temperament is regularly found in creative artists who have developed their skills through uninterrupted concentration on an activity for long periods.

The SJ temperament (which combines sensing with a judging attitude), by contrast, has a deep need for the boundaries and safety of belonging (Keirsey and Bates 1984:39-47). This is expressed through obligation and duty and action is predominantly focused on an end-goal. Whereas SPs are inclined to equality and fraternity, SJs are inclined towards hierarchy and responsibility. They are often perceived as pessimistic, dependable and steady. Dedicated to established social norms, SJs are often found in institutions (such as churches) committed to the stewardship and transmission of societal values to the next generation.

The NT temperament (which combines intuition with thinking) has a strong desire for power and control particularly over the self (Keirsey and Bates 1984:47-57). This is expressed in a compulsion for competence and ability and a ruthless self-criticism. Whereas the SP must act but gives no thought to improvement, the NT must improve but has no interest in action per se. NTs can come across as arrogant perfectionists who can become tense and compulsive under stress. Their communications tend to be abrupt, brief and logical with a deep reluctance to state the obvious. NTs are often found in scientific and construction environments with responsibility for improving the environment.

Finally, the NF temperament (which combines intuition with feeling) has a strong desire for self-actualisation, to become who he or she “really is” (Keirsey and Bates 1984:57-66). This is expressed through a sense of integrity which precludes any facade or playing of roles. NFs experience life as a drama and a quest for meaning. NFs are often perceived as enthusiastic, emotional and sensitive to others and will remain committed to relationships as long as they feel appreciated. NFs are attracted to the written creative arts where language can be used to explore meaning. They are also attracted to people-centred roles which enable them to help others to fulfil their potential.

Instruments for measuring psychological type

Psychological type has been operationalised to enable its inclusion in empirical research through a number of self-report assessments tests. The most commonly utilised in empirical theological studies are the Myers-Brigs Type Indicator (Myers and McCaulley 1985), the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey and Bates 1984) and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis 2005).

The face validity of these instruments has been widely accepted, however, the main criticism of psychological type theory concerns the construct validity of the dichotomous nature of type preferences and the associated use of forced choice instruments to measure type preference. Studies such as Loomis and Singer (1989) and Girelli and Stake (1993) have utilised Likert versions of the Myers-Briggs instrument to demonstrate positive correlation between sensing and intuition and between thinking and feeling. Other studies, such as Murray (1996) largely refute criticisms of the bipolarity assumption, pointing to possible acquiescence bias in their studies, and the loss of tension between the two dichotomous poles when alternatives are removed, tension which is designed to maximise discrimination between poles in the original MBTI (Myers and McCaulley 1985). The relatively small sample sizes used in all of these studies adds further weight to the suggestion that a definitive answer has yet to be reached. However, broadly speaking, type scales have been shown to work well across a wide range of congregational studies (Craig et al. 2003; Francis 2013; Francis et al. 2004; Francis et al. 2007; Francis and Robbins 2012; Francis, Robbins and Craig 2011; Village, Baker and Howat 2012).

The Myers-Brigs Type Indicator was designed to use in individual consultation with participants who are encouraged to confirm their typology by reading thorough descriptions of their assigned type. This is impractical for larger studies where individual consultation would be somewhat cumbersome. For this reason, the shorter Francis Psychological Type Scales which were developed specifically for research purposes are used here.

Psychological type differences and learning styles

The idea that not everyone learns in the same way is captured in the popular notion of ‘learning styles’. An understanding of the benefits to learning of differences between participants led Lucy Moore to draw upon the notion of learning styles in pioneering the early Messy Church. She lists the different learning styles as: visual, audio (listening), kinaesthetic (active), sense-based, discussion-based, and reading-based (Moore 2010:142,174-180). She also encourages organisers to: engage with the whole person through sight, sound, touch, smell/taste, cognition, emotion, and

imagination; include a variety of volume levels (loud, quiet and silent); and consider “stages of faith” (those who have not yet made a commitment, those who “feel they belong”, those who are “questioning and searching” and those who have a “mature faith”) (Moore 2010:142-143).

Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory (1984), which followed from work on Kolb’s Learning Styles Inventory (1976), will be considered in more detail in Chapter 6. Here it is sufficient to simply identify the ways in which the four psychological type preferences are understood by Kolb to influence the learning process. First, in regard to orientation, Kolb (1984:51-57) stresses the significance of introversion and extraversion in the development of a preferred mode of transforming experience into knowledge. Transforming experience via reflective observation is an act of introversion, whereas transforming experience via active experimentation is an act of extraversion. In other words the learning process differs for individuals depending upon their tendency to rely upon reflection or action which is largely determined by their psychological orientation. Second, in regard to perceiving preference, Kolb (1984:43-50) highlights the significance of sensing and intuiting in the development of a preferred mode of perception of experience (which Kolb calls prehension). Perception of experience via apprehension utilises concrete sensory experience, whereas perception of experience through comprehension, utilises the more intuitive process of abstract conceptualisation. In other words the learning process differs for individuals depending on their tendency to rely upon apprehension or comprehension which is largely determined by their perceiving preference. Third, in relation to judging preferences and how they can influence learning styles, Kolb (1984:82-83) associates feeling with a divergent learning style which prefers to rely upon a combination of apprehension and reflection, and thinking is associated with a convergent learning style which tends to rely upon a combination of comprehension and action. Finally, in regard to attitude towards the outer world, Kolb (1984:83) cites Margerison and Lewis (1979:13) who associate judging with comprehension of abstracts concepts and perceiving with apprehension of concrete experience.

There exists a vast amount of literature in the domain of learning styles theory across a diverse number of disciplines. Cassidy (2004) has compiled an overview of a large number of theories, models and measures and highlights the disparate terminology and conceptual frameworks surrounding the subject. The UK based Learning and Skills Research Centre has published a critical review of learning styles and pedagogy in post-16 learning in which they stress the positive benefits to learning of self-awareness concerning learning styles, whilst cautioning against merely focusing on adjusting teaching techniques as a means of accommodating learning styles insight (Coffield et al. 2004:132-133). Their report also identifies the

lack of a common conceptual framework and technical vocabulary as a serious hindrance to comparability of approaches stating that “after more than 30 years of research, no consensus has been reached about the most effective instrument for measuring learning styles and no agreement about the most effective pedagogical interventions” (Coffield et al. 2004:137).

One way to avoid having to choose between the proliferation of learning style models is to approach the subject of individual differences through the broader conceptual framework of psychological type. Some learning style theories (Honey and Mumford 1986; Kolb 1984) explicitly draw upon psychological type theory in the development of their learning style models. Other learning styles have been linked to psychological type post-development. This was shown, for example in a study by Fourqurean, Meisgeier and Swank (1990) who investigated links between psychological type and two learning style inventories: The Dunn and Dunn (1978) Learning Style Inventory and the Renzulli-Smith (1978) Learning Style Inventory. concluding that there were two bi-polar learning preferences evident from the study (between introversion and extraversion and between judging and perceiving).

Recognising the importance of individual differences in church experience, John Drane (2013:123) has called for research into the personality types of those attending and running Messy Church:

Although there has been plenty of research on the personality types most represented by existing church leaders and members,¹ there is not – as far as I know – any comparable research specifically concerned with the personality types of those involved in Messy Church (or indeed any other fresh expressions of Church). It is however, reasonable to wonder if there is a significant difference in terms of both the learning styles and personality types, and if this might explain both the attraction of Messy Church and the reasons why those who come to faith in this environment are unlikely subsequently to transfer to a more traditional gathering.

This thesis can be understood as a response to this suggestion.

Church profiling and psychological type

Understanding how and why some people respond to religious events in different ways to other people can be approached through profiling, which categorises people

¹ For more information on this see for example Astley and Francis (1992) and Francis (2005).

according to their differences and then uses these categories to predict their behavioural response. Sociological profiling often categorises people according to gender, age, economic status, educational achievement, ethnicity, etc. In congregational studies, psychological type theory has been increasingly used to provide an additional conceptual framework to assess congregational behaviour. Studies in the UK which have utilised this approach include Craig et al (2003), Francis et al (2004; 2007; 2011), Francis and Robbins (2012), Village, Baker and Howat (2012) and Francis (2013). Female churchgoers in the UK have repeatedly been shown to prefer sensing, feeling and judging, though there has been some discrepancy regarding orientation. Earlier small scale studies indicated a preference for introversion (Francis et al. 2004; 2007) in contrast to a more recent larger scale study which found a balance between introversion and extraversion (Francis, Robbins and Craig 2011). Male churchgoers in the UK have been shown to prefer introversion, thinking and judging, with some discrepancy over their preference for sensing over intuition which is apparent in some studies (Francis, Robbins and Craig 2011; Francis et al. 2004) but not in others (Francis et al. 2007). Although the majority of male churchgoers prefer thinking, the proportion that prefer feeling has been shown to be significantly higher than in the general population (Francis, Robbins and Craig 2011). Among men and women, the SJ combination has repeatedly been shown to be significantly over-represented among UK Anglican churchgoers compared with the UK population (Francis et al. 2007; Francis, Robbins and Craig 2011). In the largest and most recent study, Francis, Robbins and Craig (2011) indicated that 73% of women demonstrated an SJ preference compared with 54% of the population, and among men, 71% demonstrated an SJ preference compared with 44% of the population. Combining data from men and women across a number of surveys (giving a total sample size of 5016), Francis, Clymo and Robbins (2014) confirmed the predominant type profile of churchgoers is ISFJ, with introversion (54%), sensing (80%), feeling (58%) and judging (86%).

There is much in the Anglican expression of church that would appeal to ISFJ types. The limited interaction between congregational members during a typical Anglican service would appeal to introverts due to their preference for inner reflection over outer interaction. The use of a common liturgical structure such as that afforded by Common Worship (Church of England 2000) or the Book of Common Prayer (Church of England 1662) would appeal to sensing types who appreciate repetition and directions (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993:21). Feeling types are likely to be attracted to a community that values interpersonal care and aligns itself with a loving God. The preference for judging indicates an appreciation of structure, discipline and organisation and as such the regular rhythm of Anglican liturgical worship would be expected to appeal to these types.

Fresh expressions of church have been pioneered with the aim of attracting people from different social contexts to those who attend conventional church (Church of England 2004). Theoretically, fresh expressions might also offer a different kind of “psychological space” which may be more comfortable for those types, such as ENTP, that theory and empirical evidence suggest may find conventional church difficult. Studies which specifically address the psychological type profile of UK fresh expressions of church are Francis, Clymo and Robbins (2014) and Village (2015).

Francis, Clymo and Robbins (2014) compared psychological type differences between conventional UK Anglican church congregations and a small sample (74 women and 49 men) of those at fresh expressions of church. The report recognised that some sectors of the general population (extraverts, intuitives, thinking types and perceiving types) are under-represented among conventional church-goers and set out to determine whether fresh expressions of church were better at reaching these groups of people. First, there was a clear indication that fresh expressions of church were attracting a higher proportion of intuitive types, both men and women, than conventional church. Second, there was some evidence (among women but not among men) to show that a higher proportion of extraverts were attracted to fresh expressions of church. Third, there was some evidence (among men but not among women) to show that a higher proportion of perceiving types were attracted to fresh expressions of church. And fourth, there was no evidence to suggest that thinking types were more likely than feeling types to be attracted to fresh expressions of church rather than conventional church. Though the sample size was small and there was no attempt to differentiate between different types of fresh expression of church, this study provides some indication that a larger more comprehensive study of fresh expressions of church would prove insightful.

Andrew Village (2015) has built upon the insights of this pilot study through an analysis of the psychological type preferences of 4485 *Church Times* readers in order to compare those who only attended conventional church with those who also indicated an attendance at a fresh expression of church. Using the Francis Psychological Type Scale (Francis 2005) to assess the type preferences of the individuals, Village confirmed much of the earlier findings. Fresh expressions participants of both sexes showed a stronger preference for intuition and for extraversion compared with those who did not attend a fresh expression of church. Among men but not women, participants showed a stronger preference for perceiving over judging compared with non-participants. The strength of this survey over the Francis, Clymo and Robbins study lies in the much larger sample size, however, there is again no attempt to differentiate between types of fresh expression

attended and this study has an additional drawback in that *Church Times* readers are unlikely to include people who are not attenders of conventional church. Both surveys found that fresh expressions, as with conventional church, continue to attract feeling types over thinking types, a trend which is unlikely to be different in Messy Church.²

The Great Big Messy Survey presented in Part 3 of this thesis, expands the body of available data on fresh expressions of church by focusing attention on one particular example of a fresh expression, namely Messy Church. The survey set out to develop a psycho-social profile of Messy Church participants in order to investigate the expectation that Messy Church would attract somewhat different people to those who are attracted to conventional church. This study goes further and considers what learning styles theory in a Messy Church context might gain from a broader consideration of psychological type. Furthermore, theoretical and empirical understandings of Messy Church are brought to bear on the notion of Christian becoming in order to reflect upon the kinds of becoming that may be expected and facilitated in this very different church environment.

Creativity and psychological type

It is worth exploring the Messy Church value of creativity from the perspective of psychological type preference (Briggs-Myers and Myers 1995; Jung 1923). The four key features of creativity according to the NACCCE (1999:29) definition, are that it is *imaginative, purposeful, original* and of *value*.

First, creativity is *imaginative*. The NACCCE report stresses that this is not the same as fantasising or imaging, although it may involve both of these. Imaginative activity is understood to be a form of “mental play” in which the possibilities of a situation are expanded, considered from different perspectives and where alternatives are envisaged. “Creative insights often come when existing ideas are combined or reinterpreted in unexpected ways or when they are applied in areas with which they are not normally associated” (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:31). Regarding the broader link between creativity and spirituality, Taylor (1987:82) writes “Imagination is the faculty by which our innate potential for spirituality can be brought to flower”. In terms of psychological type preferences, the imaginative aspect of creativity may be most

² The Bible Reading Fellowship (2015) have pioneered a sister initiative to Messy Church called *Who Let The Dads Out?* which is designed to attract more men along with their children. It may be that this initiative will also be more attractive to thinking types.

readily appreciated by those whose preferred perceiving function is intuition (N). These are imaginative people who tend to focus on what might be rather than what is.

Second, creativity is *purposeful*. Imaginative activity is fashioned and refashioned in pursuit of an identified objective (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:31). Unexpected insights and breakthroughs may occur along the way but they occur while in pursuit of a predetermined goal or challenge. Of course, new goals and objectives may arise as the dynamic process unfolds. But the original sense of purpose and achievement remains. In terms of psychological type preferences, this aspect of creativity may be most readily appreciated by those whose preferred perceiving function is sensing (S). These are practical people who like to focus on existing knowledge, experience and practice. This means that creativity is not necessarily the sole prerogative of intuitive types whose more imaginative creative work might appear as mere flights of fancy to sensing types. The creativity of sensing types is likely to be grounded in practical functionality in that it is expected to act so as to consolidate and improve upon what already exists without making drastic or radical changes.

Third, creativity is *original*. The NACCCE (1999:32) report highlights three types of originality:

- *Individual* – original in relation to the individual’s previous work.
- *Relative* – original in relation to the work of their peer group.
- *Historic* – original in relation to anyone’s previous work in a particular field, i.e. uniquely original.

Originality often falls within the first two of these categories and rarely in the latter, but even so they are considered to be of considerable importance for the learning of the individual. In terms of psychological type preferences, this aspect of creativity may be most readily appreciated by those whose attitude towards the outer world is perceiving (P), although the product of the originality is likely to be influenced by perceiving preference. Intuitives (N) are more likely to aim for novelty in abstract design or meaning whereas sensors (S) are more likely to aim for novelty in concrete production or detail. The temperament approach of Keirsey and Bates (1984:35-36,61) suggests that SP temperaments are attracted to the concrete activity of creative and performing arts, whereas the NF temperament is attracted to the abstract beauty of creative writing.

Fourth and last, creativity has *value*. “The outcome of imaginative activity can only be called creative if it has some value to the task at hand.” (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:33). The report suggests that

the judgement of value is linked to the initial purpose of the creative activity. It may be that value is attributed if the outcome is effective, useful, enjoyable, satisfying, valid, fair, peaceful, etc. In terms of psychological type preferences, the determination of worth in creativity may be most readily appreciated by those whose attitude towards the outer world is to judging (J), although the kind of value attributed is likely to be affected by the judging preference. Feeling types (F) may more readily identify value in harmonious relational outcomes whereas thinking types (T) may more readily identify value in relation to logical and analytical outcomes.

Psychological type and Messy Church

There are certain aspects of the Messy Church format and values which suggest that Messy Church may be more attractive to people with certain psychological type preferences. In respect of orientation, Francis (2004:59-60) states that extraverts prefer to learn by “talking it through with others” and by “trial and error” and that they clarify ideas by communicating them with others “face-to-face”. By contrast introverts “work best alone”, “like quiet for concentration” and “tend to think things through before acting”. Since Messy Church provides an active and engaging environment which encourages conversation and interaction it is expected that extraverts would find this more appealing than introverts.

There is much at Messy Church which would commend it to both sensing and intuitive types. The craft activities on offer present an array of sensory stimulation through colour, texture, aroma and taste which surpass the typical auditory dominance of a conventional church service suggesting that Messy Church would be attractive to those with a preference to take in experience through the senses. The link between each craft activity and perhaps even tiny details of a theme or Bible story being explored, gives sensing types a much appreciated opportunity to give prolonged attention to specific details. In addition, however, the scope for creative exploration and imaginative play at Messy Church suggests the possibility that intuitive types may also be comfortable at Messy Church. Given the freedom to make abstract and meaningful connections which can be expressed both verbally (through informal discussion) and non-verbally (through creative expression), it is feasible that the Messy Church environment could offer an attractive environment to intuitive types. Intuitives may find the attention to detail somewhat boring and irrelevant to their preference for a big picture view, but as long as there is scope for them to take an activity in a direction which is personally meaningful, and to ignore those activities which hold no interest, Messy Church may still provide an environment that facilitates learning in intuitives.

In respect of the judging function, attention to hospitality which endeavours to make people feel welcome and at ease suggests that feeling types may be particularly attracted to Messy Church. There is nothing of note in the Messy Church format or values which suggests that it would be particularly attractive to thinking types.

In respect of the attitude towards the outer world, the regular structure and format of Messy Church will be somewhat attractive to judging types who are comfortable with knowing what to expect. However, the flexibility with which participants can engage with the craft activities may make this form of church more attractive to perceiving types than conventional church. The slow start to the event, which gathers people together gradually over refreshments, may also appeal to perceiving types who find rigidly imposed timekeeping more difficult than judging types who more readily appreciate the order and stability that good timekeeping brings.

If we consider pairs of preferences, Myers et al. (1998) state that sensing and judging when preferred together often relate to a desire for security and stability while intuition and perceiving together relate more to a desire for creativity. Similarly, Filbeck and Smith (1996) found some preferences in learning environments based on cognitive style pairing for SJ and NP. Sensing-Judging students prefer the lecture-based classes associated with a traditional classroom. Intuitive-perceiving types prefer no particular structure and the possibility for open exploration and spontaneity. Messy Church, through valuing creativity, would appear to lend itself to open-ended engagement and clearly it avoids the traditional sermon approach. This suggests that NP types might be expected to prefer Messy Church to Church of England services which have been shown to attract SJ types through the structure, pattern and discipline of liturgical worship (Francis et al. 2004:115,118).

In terms of the temperament approach of Keirse and Bates (1984), the SJ temperament may be attracted to the association that Messy Church has with traditional church but would probably feel more uncertain about the association with messiness. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that some people dislike the name 'Messy Church' because of its association with disorder and untidiness. It would be unsurprising to discover that these people have an SJ temperament. By contrast, the SP temperament may be attracted to the flexible and creative aspects of Messy Church but would be uncomfortable with the idea that they might be confined to formal religious expectations and to stick to a specific timetable. For example, SPs would become frustrated if, having begun a creative work, they were unable to complete it because of a timetabled expectation that they should move into an act of worship. NT temperaments are not expected to be particularly attracted to Messy Church, however, NF temperaments may be attracted to the combination of the

spiritual and meaningful aspects of faith exploration alongside the human relationality and interaction that Messy Church offers.

It is also interesting to consider whether psychological type preferences may act as predictors concerning learning outcomes that are demonstrated by participants and expected by helpers. Traditional religious outcomes may be more evident in those with an SJ temperament due to the high regard that this temperament has for established convention. Spiritual and relational outcomes may be more closely associated with those with an extravert orientation (E) and/or a feeling preference (F), particularly those with an NF temperament.

Similarly, psychological type may also play a part in the predisposition of helpers to the kind of learning process they expect from Messy Church. Socialisation and conformity to certain traditional outcomes are more likely to be associated with SJ since this temperament is the usual custodian of the status quo. Child-led, creative learning is likely to be appreciated more by helpers with a perceiving attitude (P) since they are anticipated to be more playful and experimental.

Conclusion

In summary and in light of the above, the following hypotheses are suggested concerning psychological types which may be attracted to Messy Church:

1. The all-age format of activities and a meal promotes social interaction which attracts those with a preference for extraversion (E).
2. The value of creativity provides opportunity for exploratory and imaginative play which attracts those with a preference for intuition (N).
3. The Messy Church value of hospitality facilitates interpersonal values and relational belonging which attracts those with a preference for feeling (F).
4. The Messy Church value of creativity together with a variety of possible activities provides opportunity for spontaneity and flexibility which attracts those with a preference for perceiving (P).

If Messy Church is successful in attracting different people to those who attend conventional church, then given the different values that are intended to shape the Messy Church experience, it is expected that the over-representation of SJ temperaments, and ISFJ psychological types within UK Church of England Churches, may not be similarly reflected within Messy Church.

Chapter 5 Values

Lucy Moore and the Bible Reading Fellowship have sought to promote Messy Church through the emphasis of five foundational values (all-age, hospitality, creativity, Christ-centred, celebration) (Bible Reading Fellowship 2016; Moore 2006:35-39). The values held by the helpers and organisers of Messy Church undoubtedly influence the way in which Messy Church is understood and implemented and therefore these values directly affect the way in which it is experienced by participants. If the values of organisers at a local level are somewhat different to those at the national level, one might expect that the local expression would be somewhat different in terms of the experience on offer and therefore in the Christian becoming it engenders. It is helpful, therefore, to give theoretical consideration to how values work in terms of their role in influencing individual attitudes and behaviour. The seminal work of sociologist Shalom Schwartz is helpful in this regard.

Schwartz's basic universal values

Schwartz (1994:21) defines values as “desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity”. Values are motivational goals. Furthermore, Schwartz (1994:21) suggests that there are three fundamental requirements for human functioning (an individual's biological needs, a need for social interaction; and the well-being of groups) which help to explain how people can hold many different values all of the time, but prioritise them according to different social contexts.

Ten distinct values have been derived from these universal requirements and they are: universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation and self-direction. Schwartz (1994: 24) insists that these ten values “form a continuum of related motivations ... that give rise to a circular structure” (Figure 5.1).³ Competing values are on opposite sides of the circle whereas compatible values are adjacent. Since conformity and tradition share the

³ Diagram reprinted from *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Volume 25, Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries, Schwartz, Shalom H., pp. 1- 65., Copyright (1992), with permission from Elsevier.

same motivational goal (subordination of self in favour of socially imposed expectations), they are located together (Schwartz 1992).

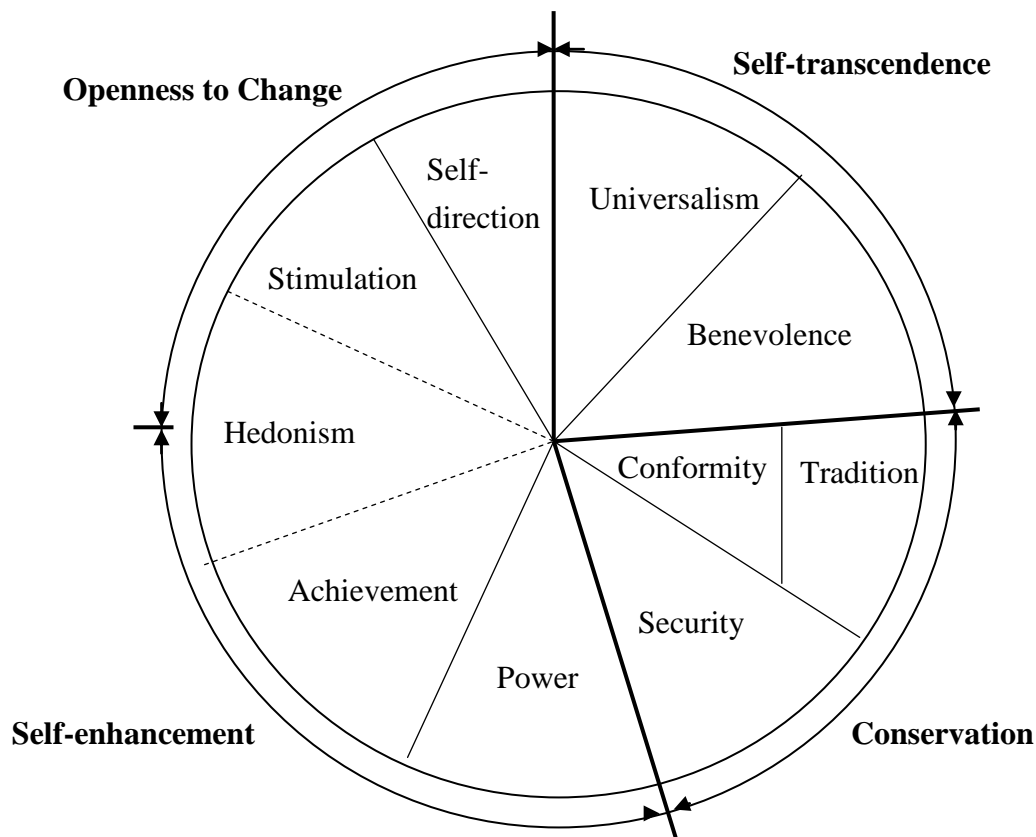


Figure 5.1 Schwartz basic universal values

Studies have repeatedly shown that monotheistic religiosity correlates positively with conservative values of tradition and conformity and to a lesser extent security, and also favours limited self-transcendence (benevolence but not universalism) (Saroglou, Delpierre and Dernelle 2004; Schwartz and Huisman 1995).

Furthermore, religiosity has been shown to correlate negatively with hedonism and other values that promote openness to change (stimulation and self-direction), and to a lesser extent values that promote self-enhancement (achievement and power).

Messy Church seems to be trying to find a balance between the opposing values of tradition and conformity (to Christian religious norms) on the one hand and hedonism (pleasure/fun) and stimulation (activity) on the other. Traditional values are maintained through Christ-centred celebration (worship) and through the insistence that Messy Church is church in its own right. The hedonism or fun aspect of Messy Church is not often explicitly stated as a value, although this is alluded to

in a significant amount of literature concerning Messy Church⁴ and it is prominent on the front page of the Messy Church website (Bible Reading Fellowship 2015). Stimulation comes through the strongly interactive format of craft activity and informal conversation. Schwartz has shown that strong adherence to one value often acts in a way that suppresses the opposite value, which suggests that Messy Church may find it difficult to hold these opposing values concurrently. It is possible, though, that Messy Church reduces this tension by prioritising those values that lie *between* these two extremes on the Schwartz diagram, i.e. self-direction (through creativity), universalism (through the particular focus of all ages) and benevolence (through hospitality).

Hospitality is linked to benevolence in its generous provision of food, drink and warm welcome to those who come. Furthermore, organisers often devote considerable time and money to Messy Church with the stated aim of giving generously to others.

Creativity is linked to self-direction through the craft activities that are on offer, although this would not necessarily be the case if activities were overly prescribed. Closed activities with narrowly defined outcomes are not conducive to creativity nor are they open to self-direction. However, in an ideal situation there is plenty of scope for Messy Church to facilitate an abundance of self-directed creativity.

The Christ-centred nature of Messy Church is meant to ensure that it functions as a Christian church which suggests that this value is one of tradition in the Schwartz model. By contrast though, the invitation to encounter Christ through personal discovery sits well with an emphasis on a creative exploration of Christianity. Offering Bible stories as a resource for stimulating curiosity and faith exploration, retains the emphasis on self-direction as the motivational value. However, teaching Bible stories with a specific orthodox interpretation places the emphasis firmly on conformity to traditional norms. If the craft activities are understood as merely underlining certain facts or information contained within a Bible story with the intention to draw those facts together during the celebration and explain the right way to understand them, then the “creativity” on offer (if it can still be called that) is clearly other-directed rather than self-directed.

Celebration as a Messy Church value is the least well-defined of the values in the Messy Church literature. A simple reading of it suggests that Messy Church pioneers have chosen a word more accessible to a secular society than ‘worship’. Indeed in Moore’s first Messy Church book, the word *celebration* is absent and

⁴ See for example the back covers of Moore (2006; 2008).

instead “aiming to be a worshipping community” is the aspiration described (Moore 2006:35). In her second Messy Church book, Moore (2008:23) defines *celebrating* as “the simple act of worship”. Finally, in book three, Moore (2012:13) summarises the *celebration* as comprising of “story, song and prayer”. However, in choosing to speak of celebration rather than worship Messy Church has perhaps shifted the emphasis, albeit unintentionally, from God as the object of worship, to the event itself as something joyful and pleasurable. In the light of Schwartz’s model of values it is possible to recognise in this a framing of a traditional value (worship) in terms of hedonistic language (celebration).

Whilst the all-age value does not imply all-encompassing universalism, it might suggest a step in this direction. Messy Church makes no claim to provide for *all* people, across different genders, different races, different religions etc. It simply declares its intention to take people of all *ages* seriously in its provision of a nurturing faith environment. Whilst they may be a long way off universal provision (men for example are greatly outnumbered by women) the intention to address the exclusion of children from much of traditional church worship is an indication of a desire to be a more inclusive church. In opening up the worship arena in this way it is possible that Messy Church may pave the way for the incorporation of other, more uncomfortable types of difference in Christian learning environments.

So, theoretically at least, it appears that Messy Church is aiming to find a balance between tradition/conformity and hedonism values on the Schwartz model. By prioritising stimulation and self-directed choice through creative expression, alongside all-age provision and benevolent generosity, Messy Churches could cultivate an expression of church which nurtures a process of Christian becoming motivated by very different values to those of traditional church.

When approached through Schwartz’s universal values, it is possible to anticipate three different types of Christian becoming which are expressed in different ways in reflection of three very different motivational goals:

1. Traditional religious becoming values conservation (tradition, conformity and to a lesser extent security) which is expressed through religiosity and the shared morality of the group.
2. Spiritual and relational becoming values self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence) expressed through relational care for all people, known and unknown, and for the earth.
3. Playful child becoming values openness to change (hedonism, stimulation and self-direction) which is expressed through creative play and joyful activity.

I have not suggested a type of Christian becoming driven by self-enhancement values, since these values are not typically associated with traditional church nor are they reflected within Messy Church.

In summary, while conventional Christian religion strongly correlates with conformity and tradition, Messy Church raises questions concerning the place of creativity and individual freedom in Christian becoming. The Messy Church values of Christ-centredness and worshipful celebration, which are broadly shared across the Christian denominations, might be expected to facilitate traditional religious becoming. However, the additional values of hospitality and all-aged inclusiveness might be expected to motivate spiritual relational becoming. Valuing genuine creativity at Messy Church might reasonably be expected to nurture playful child becoming.

Creativity and conformity at Messy Church

If genuine creativity is encouraged over the pseudo-creativity of reproduction or imitation, Messy Church offers an opportunity for individual response and perhaps critique that is seldom anticipated or accommodated in a Christian worship context. If creativity is enabled to come into conversation with traditional religion through the Messy Church participants who are more familiar with conventional Christianity, there is potential here for Messy Church to provide a unique transformational space for all concerned. However, there is little indication in the literature that Messy Church organisers are even aware that this tension may exist, nor of any provision to ensure that sensitive negotiation is conducted.

It is possible to find emphases on both creativity and conformity in the Messy Church literature. Lucy Moore (2006:40-45) briefly touches on the subject of discipleship in her first book, *Messy Church: Fresh ideas for building a Christ-centred community*. In the course of a theological reflection on the gospel account of Jesus' feeding of five thousand plus people, she contrasts the people at Messy Church with those on the hillside in the gospel story. There may not be much evidence of commitment to Jesus or to each other but they were willing to hear more about Jesus. The tough side of being a disciple, says Moore, comes later on when the listeners start to ask "leading questions". In the gospel story, deeper personal questions were "hammered out in a smaller group in an established faith context" (the synagogue). For questioners at Messy Church, Moore anticipates "the established church" taking on the responsibility of giving them a place to uncover answers, with the caveat that this may indeed involve rethinking the nature of

established church and a movement from passive consumption to engaged interaction. This movement from consumption to interaction highlights again the importance of relationship to learning. And yet Moore seems here to redirect responsibility for managing the necessary learning conversations away from Messy Church and onto traditional church.

In her second book, *Messy Church 2*, however, Moore (2008) shifts her expectation and suggests other ways to encourage discipleship within and through Messy Church itself. Indeed, she is much more explicit regarding discipleship as a goal of Messy Church. Indications of the kinds of change and transformation that are anticipated are “being like play dough in the skilled sculptor’s hands and recognize his gentle creativity” (passive conformation?), “a sense of contentedness and satisfaction from being fed on food that lasts and yet who are hungry for more” (passive consumption?), “people who want other people to taste and see ...because it’s so good” (evangelists?), “people who are in it for the long haul, even when the going gets tough” (perseverance and commitment?), “people with a growing and active compassion for others” (pastoral care?); “people whose love bubbles out of a Messy Church and into the rest of their lives” (effervescent enthusiasm?); and finally “people who can change the world”. Moore leaves this last statement unqualified but the implication, from the poetic imagery used in the previous statements, is that the Messy Church experience produces people who submit to God, are sated as a result, want to share their experience and who actively and enthusiastically care for others. The imagery used is a meld of Messy Church experience and Biblical metaphor⁵ and quaintly depicts conformation to a Christian ideal of becoming a better person through submission and sacrifice. The playful creativity found in her first Messy Church book has receded, and in its place is the more familiar goal of conforming to a traditional understanding of what it means to be a disciple. The tension surrounding the validity of fresh expressions of church within the Church of England at the time of writing⁶ no doubt influenced Moore to direct her attention toward a defence of the orthodoxy of Messy Church. This may be important but it should not preclude the radical critique of inherited church

⁵ The image of God as potter and the people as clay can be found in the book of Isaiah 64:8. The metaphor of spiritual food that satisfies is apparent in several places in the Bible, for example Isaiah 55:1-2, Matthew 4:4, John 6:27, 35, 7:37). “Taste and see” that the Lord is good comes from Psalm 34:8. Roman 5:3-4 encourages perseverance in times of trial. And love and compassion are recurring messages in the New Testament some examples of which are found in Luke 6:28, John 13:34-35, 15:12, 1 John 4:7.

⁶ For a vehement critique of fresh expressions see Davison and Milbank (2010).

afforded by Messy Church, particularly in the area of creative becoming. A return to passive consumption in learning and worship would be regrettable.

Moore (2008:16) goes on to suggest four markers that may be evident as people mature in their faith (Moore 2008:16):

- 1) How people react to Jesus (they start to talk about Jesus themselves, they engage more deeply with the worship/story/prayer, they offer to be more involved and they puzzle over and are curious to study the Bible);
- 2) How people react to other people (a deeper concern for others, a growing concern for local and global issues, growing respect for others, concern for personal relationships, a willingness to build up not break down, an increased understanding and trust in God's healing power);
- 3) How people are changing in their creativity (more willingness to have a go at the different activities on offer, more readiness to risk or play);
- 4) How people are changing in their attitude to the created world (seeing more beauty, concern for the fragility of the planet).

Whilst creativity is listed here, it seems that what is actually being commended is courage and confidence to engage with what is on offer, this is quite different to a creativity that produces something new and valuable in its own right and which has the power to change the community as a result. George Lings (2010:8) mourns the lack of "making" in most churches which he sees as "a denial of us being in the image of God" and a result of a damaging passivity which has become the norm in church communities. He also distinguishes between "craft activities" and "creativity" (Lings 2013:158) insisting that in Messy Church the "making" that happens is not a matter of "predetermined response" but of "taking initiatives" (2013:161; Lings 2010:8). He draws on his experience at one particular Messy Church in Liverpool's L19 district. But it may be that creative initiatives are being discouraged and ignored elsewhere, in which case their ability to impact upon and change the community is severely diminished. Martyn Payne, Messy Church team member at the BRF, cautions against inadvertently encouraging passivity at Messy Church:

Those who come to Messy Church are (sometimes) seen as "the audience" and "the consumers" of what the team offer and unwittingly this creates a passive Messy congregation, disabling those who come. I saw it today at the activity tables where the very beautifully presented crafts were all prescribed and so well prepared that children and adults had little to do. (Moore et al. 2014)

This statement seems to indicate an awareness of the importance of genuine creativity at a senior level within Messy Church. Indeed there is a recognisable desire among national Messy Church leaders to facilitate originality in learning which leads to “that thing that you have learned that we weren’t teaching” (Moore and Payne 2014). It is this kind of awareness that is evident in Lucy Moore’s first book but which seems less obvious in the second. I have mentioned that this may be due to her attending to the need to place Messy Church firmly within the Anglican orthodoxy but another possible reason for the dichotomy is perhaps due to the influence of a somewhat different emphasis in the writing of Lucy’s husband, Revd Paul Moore. This tendency, apparent in Lucy Moore’s writing, to swing between a conservative emphasis on discipleship and a more playful and experimental approach to Christian becoming, could be due to mixed emotions arising from dissonant desires. On the one hand, there may be an understandable desire to be in theological agreement with her husband and her home congregation at St Wilfrid’s (an evangelical Anglican Church). And yet at the same time Lucy Moore appears to be trying to articulate an alternative, intuitive, perhaps even unconscious desire for a Christian becoming that is much more relational, more creative and indeed more fun than traditional discipleship.

Paul Moore is far more explicit about his expectation that traditional discipleship should be a goal of Messy Church. He refers to the Hebrew Bible story of Abraham and Sarah for a definition of how a person becomes a disciple “by making an initial response of faith and trust to God’s call and promise”, and for what discipleship means, “learning to trust him (God) through the ups and downs of life”. Covenanted commitment, obedience and faith are repeatedly stated as hallmarks of God’s holy people as reflected in the Hebrew Bible narrative. Paul Moore (2013:55) then turns to the New Testament where ‘disciple’ is understood to denote “a lifelong attachment to someone as your master and teacher”. Jesus is the master and “laying down your life, taking up your cross, is now something done for others in imitation of Jesus” (Moore 2013:65). There is a strong emphasis in Paul Moore’s writing on conformity to Christianity in its inherited form, echoed in the themes elicited, i.e. “obedience” and “laying down your life”, coupled with a notable absence of the more creative and playful aspects of learning evident in some of Lucy Moore’s writing. His critique of traditional church is largely directed at its implementation of an almost exclusively formal discipleship process which he contrasts with discipleship as a community-based, informal socialisation process. The goal of discipleship emphasised here though, remains that of conformity to traditional ideas of Jesus.

Lucy Moore (2012:30) returns to a more creative depiction of what it means to be a Christian in her third book, *Messy Church 3*, where she presents a satirical critique of a fictional curate who despairs because “nobody has become a Christian” and “nobody wanted to go on an Alpha course”. In a spoof letter she writes as a response

We may have made that once-for-all commitment to follow Christ – when we deliberately opted into the process of becoming more like him – and your congregation members may not have “become Christians” in this sense. However, they may well, by God’s grace and your faithfulness, be in the process of “becoming Christians”, which in a way we all are. (Moore 2012:31)⁷

This shift in focus, away from becoming as an event and towards becoming as an ongoing process undergone by everyone, is compatible with the concept of Christian becoming developed in the following chapter, and it is an indication of Lucy Moore’s desire that Messy Church would provide a mutual nurturing environment for the Christian becoming process. This raises questions concerning helper expectations regarding learning outcomes at Messy Church. How widespread is the desire for conversion and discipleship as conformity? To what extent do helpers share Lucy Moore’s understanding that Christian becoming is very much a process that all share in and are undergoing together, helpers and participants alike? The Messy Church values of hospitality and creativity suggest the possibility of an environment which could be supportive of mutually affirming relationships. However, the temptation to impose conformity to traditional norms may prove an obstacle in this regard. The extent to which helpers themselves demonstrate a willingness to learn from both children and adult participants at Messy Church may serve to indicate the nature of the environment provided. This openness to being led by the child will be returned to later on in this chapter.

One writer who has recognised the tension between Messy Church values and conventional Christianity is Australian writer and children’s minister Beth Barnett. In speaking and writing about her experience of running Messy Church Barnett engages theologically with the principles involved. Barnett (2013:193-199) has identified three qualities which she believes to be important in developing maturity at Messy Church, both for those who come along as visitors and for those who help to organise it. They are *readiness*, *thoughtfulness* and *openness to risk*. The interesting thing about these qualities is that they have a significant role to play in the resolution of the tension between creativity and conformity values. By readiness Barnett points to not only being practically prepared, but being alert and ready for

⁷ The emphasis on “becoming” here is Moore’s, but it clearly resonates with the emphasis which I place on the *process* of Christian becoming throughout this thesis.

change. Readiness points to a willingness and a humility in learning. She also insightfully suggests that this readiness applies at all levels including denominations, academies and colleges who will need to anticipate that theology students may come along with “an alternative biblical methodology, different expectations of agency in their own formation and a vision of the gospel that doesn’t necessitate many of the accoutrements that are large features in our current traditions” (Barnett 2013:194). By thoughtfulness Barnett refers to Christian theological reflection, particularly upon the nature of learning. She is especially critical of the view that the weekly church service somehow “delivers” the substance of maturity, whether by its teaching or administering of the sacraments, urging consideration of how faith persists and is expressed in other patterns such as practices of simplicity (in diet or dress) and celebration (lighting candles or impromptu song or dance). But it is in aspiring to the virtue of courage and “openness to risk” that Barnett is the most challenging, stating that Messy Churches will need to cut the umbilical cord to the mother congregation, “in order to become a place in which faith that is ready, thoughtful and open to risk can flourish and be tested” (Barnett 2013:199). Whilst agreeing with the imperative for the qualities described, I disagree with the conclusion envisaged. On the contrary, it is necessary for courageously reflective pioneers such as Beth Barnett to be encouraged to remain as conversational partners within the traditional institutions in order for both partners in the conversation to benefit from each other’s wisdom and insight. In the same way that those who run Messy Church will have to attend to and affirm the learning process in participants, the denominational churches will need to attend to and affirm the learning process in its Messy Churches. I expect this to be most effectively achieved if Messy Church is in close relationship with the institutional churches at both a local and a national level. I also believe this to be the best for Messy Church since they also require a balance between hierarchy and solidarity which involves acknowledging the need for the direction and boundaries afforded by the traditional church. Lucy Moore demonstrates that this dialogue with inherited church is important to her in her writing on the use of liturgy and sacraments at Messy Church:

Communion is one of those services that links us firmly to the rest of church ... If Messy Church is part of that wider church, it needs to be a two-way process. We shouldn’t expect Messy Church people to conform to churchy language on ceremonial occasions without expecting inherited church people to experience something of Messy Church language or liturgy. (Moore 2012:23-24)

It is this mutuality in learning that is such a challenge to discipleship models which insist on traditional conformity and which find it most difficult to accommodate original creativity. John Drane (2013:121) writes

For the last few centuries, our models of Christian education and mission have been based on the philosophical foundations of the Enlightenment, using processes of teaching and learning that have their origins in the systematised world of the Industrial Revolution. They have tended to (indeed were designed to) produce a standardised (McDonaldised) product, so that all disciples would look the same.

When Messy Church avoids a blanket insistence on traditional conformity and instead pays attention to original creativity in learning within loving and mutual relationships, these concerns are fundamentally addressed. It is in anticipation of a community of people who do their becoming together, organisers and participants, adults and children, learning and relating together and sharing in the playful and imaginative resolution of tension between conformity and creativity, that the potential for a radically new way of being church comes into focus, albeit one that is only presently in its infancy.

Conclusions

Schwartz basic universal values have been used as a framework to approach the Messy Church values in order to clarify the ways in which these values are different to the values that are theoretically and empirically associated with traditional monotheistic religion. Three different kinds of Christian becoming can be anticipated depending upon which values have the highest priority: Traditional religious becoming values conservation; Spiritual and relational becoming values self-transcendence; and playful child becoming values openness to change. Possible tensions between opposing values such as self-directed creativity and traditional conformity have been identified and the Messy Church literature analysed in order to illustrate the somewhat mixed picture that is presented.

Chapter 6

The process of learning and relating

In this chapter, the process by which humans learn is approached through the fields of education and philosophy. Educationally, the assumption is that human learning is constructed by the learner-in-relationship, and David Kolb's experiential and conversational learning theories form the basis for understanding the process of how the self-in-relationship learns (Kolb 1984; Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002). Individual differences in psychological type preferences are recognised as fundamental to the outworking of the learning process in Kolb's theory. Philosophically, the nature of human relationships is reflected upon in light of Martin Buber's seminal work *I and Thou*, originally written and published in German 1923 and translated into English in 1937, which posits that humans can approach life with two distinctly different attitudes, *I-It* and *I-Thou* (Buber 2013). *I-It* denotes the attitude of subject to object, whereas *I-Thou* denotes the relationship of subject to subject. Subject-object experience is the foundation for understanding and learning since *I-It* classifies, differentiates, organises and subdues. Subject-subject (i.e. intersubjective) relation is the foundation for interpersonal meaning and identity. Insights from Buber's subsequent work on the philosophy of education are also invoked to illustrate how relating impacts upon learning.

Educational approach to learning

Learning here is understood, as in the tradition of John Dewey (1902), to be the result of experience.⁸ Adult learning of this kind has been represented by a variety of cyclical or spiral models ranging from Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle to the Pastoral Cycle (Ballard and Pritchard 1996). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory has evolved into a more relational learning model called Conversational Learning. The constructivist learner-centred approach to learning demonstrated by Kolb contrasts with a didactic, teacher-centred or subject-centred approach to learning which focuses on transmission of information alongside an expectation of behavioural change in the learner brought about by successfully remembering and

⁸ Writing in the early years of the twentieth century, John Dewey criticised the then dominant subject-centred approach to teaching which kept students passive and inactive in the classroom. He suggested that the teacher should be more of a guide and facilitator in the education of the child.

implementing the information.⁹ The focus of attention in constructivist models is within the learner compared to the focus of attention of behaviourist models being outside the learner. It is the emphasis on the *process* of learning as opposed to behavioural outcomes that distinguishes the constructivist model from traditional educational approaches.

Experiential Learning Theory

In a seminal work on experiential learning in 1984, David Kolb built on earlier work by Dewey, Lewin, Piaget and others to propose a cyclical model of learning which combines experience, perception, cognition and behaviour. In Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) ideas are not fixed but are formed and reformed through experience. Knowledge is continuously derived from, and tested out in, the experiences of the learner.

Kolb (1984:39-59) understands this learning to occur in the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of learning. The first is the conflict between concrete experience and abstract concepts. The second is the conflict between reflective observation and active experimentation. The dialectic nature of these conflicts means that it is not possible to adopt both modes at the same time, hence a choice or preference is forced upon the learner in each conflict.

The abstract/concrete dialectic is one of *prehension* or perception, representing two different processes of perception or grasping hold of experience in the world. Kolb calls the process of grasping experience through the felt senses *apprehension*, and the process of grasping experience through reliance on concepts and symbols *comprehension*. Apprehension is to do with feeling and sensing the world around. It is the raw sensations of life and as such is completely subjective and cannot be shared. It is particular to the individual. Comprehension is more to do with holding onto raw experience by use of objective symbols or concepts, such as language. Since language is a shared social construct, comprehensions can be shared with others.

The active/reflective dialectic, on the other hand, is a process of *transformation*, representing two ways of how we deal with our grasp of the world, either through internal reflection, which Kolb calls *intention*, or through active experimentation, which he calls *extension*. Kolb draws on the Jungian concepts of introversion and extraversion to help illustrate what he has in mind here, stressing the

⁹ James Michael Lee (1973:188-194) describes what he calls a “proclamation theory” of religious instruction which exemplifies a teacher-centred approach to learning.

epistemological dynamic between the two independent attitudes, both present in everyone (but with one usually having preference over the other), over the behavioural traits which are often depicted along a single linear scale.¹⁰

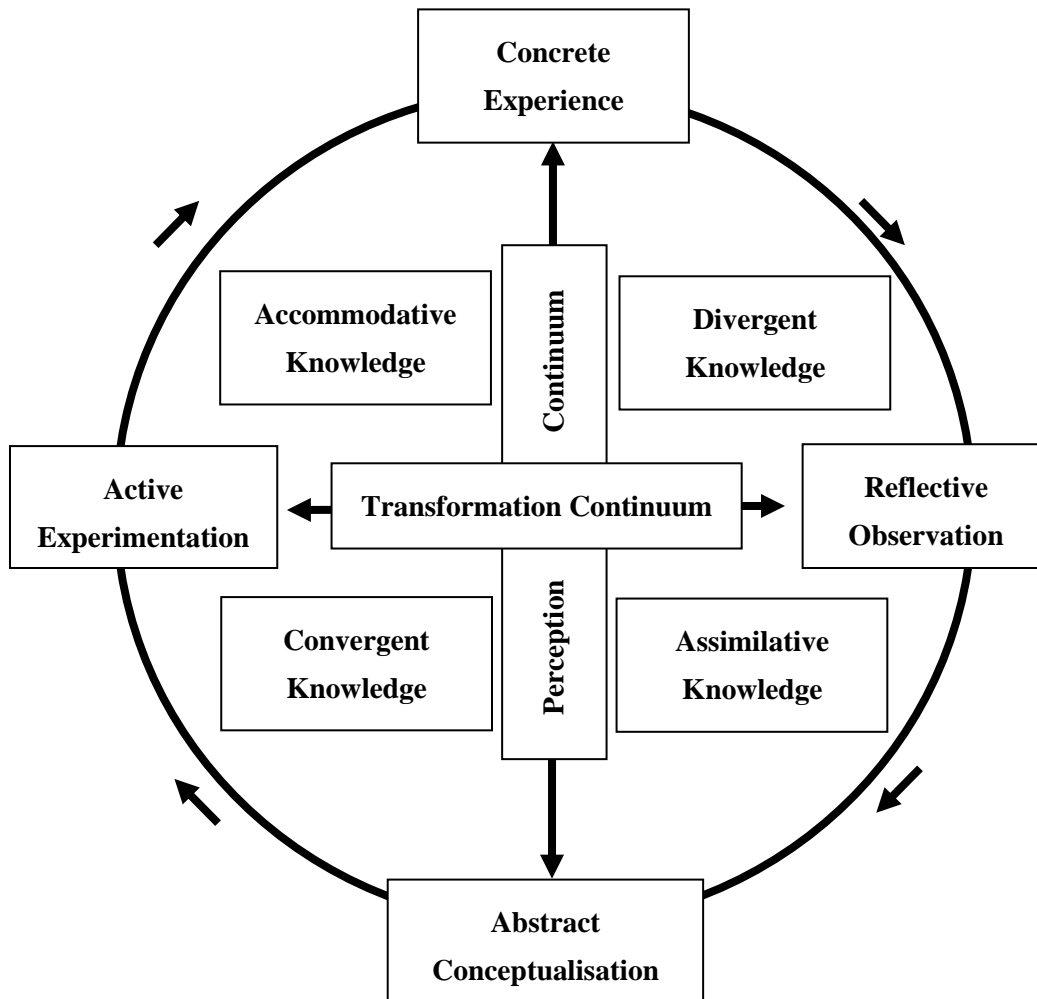


Figure 6.1 Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

The two modes of perception and the two modes of transformation yield four possible types of knowledge construction.

Learning is the process of constructing knowledge through the perception and transformation of experience. Since there are two ways of perceiving and two ways

¹⁰ See for example Eaves and Eysenck (1975).

of transforming, there are four types of knowledge that can result from the learning cycle (see Figure 6.1).¹¹

Apprehension followed by intention leads to *divergent* knowledge. Comprehension followed by intention leads to *assimilative* knowledge. Comprehension followed by extension leads to *convergent* learning and apprehension followed by extension leads to *accommodative* learning. Kolb suggests that the education system's requirement for specialisation encourages the learner to develop one of these types of knowledge by and large at the expense of the others, hence people can be observed to develop a preference for one of four distinct learning styles, namely diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating.

Bloom's taxonomy for the cognitive domain lists, in increasing complexity, six general levels of knowing and using information which are: knowing or receiving (i.e. remembering information), comprehension (being able to translate information into your own words), application (being able to use information in a new situation), analysis (breaking information into constituent parts including underlying assumptions), synthesis (constructing something new), and evaluation (placing a value judgement on the information) (Bloom et al. 1956). The first two of these are comparable to Kolb's apprehension and comprehension, i.e. they are modes of perception. The latter four are all modes of transformation of experience. The implication in Kolb's model is that an individual capable of higher order learning will draw on more than one style of learning in order to develop capability at the more complex levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

In response to criticism of ELT highlighting its disconnect with the social context of learning, Kolb went on to explore the affective and relational dimensions of learning through the development of *Conversational Learning* with Ann Baker and Patricia Jensen (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002). In *Conversational Learning*, Baker, Jensen and Kolb have outlined a structure for creating a learning space that pays attention to dialectical tensions in relational aspects of learning.

¹¹ Kolb, David A.; *Experiential learning: Experience as a source of learning & development*; © 1984. Printed and electronically reproduced with the permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Conversational Learning

Kolb's ELT brings together two dialectical processes: the *grasping* (perceiving) process of apprehension with comprehension and the *wrestling* (transformation or praxis) process of reflection and action. The dialectical nature of these processes means that the learner is forced to choose one pole over the other as learning situations arise. Within Conversational Learning, three additional dialectical processes are introduced (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002). First is the discursive/epistemological and recursive/ontological dialectic. Second is the individuality versus relationality dialectic. And finally there is the status and solidarity dialectic which describes the "ranking and linking" dynamics of social conversation.

Discourse is an epistemological, linear process of "framing" and "naming". Framing involves the implicit, tacit assumptions which lay behind an experience (an apprehensional process) whilst naming involves verbalising and describing experience (a comprehensional process). Recourse, however, is a "continuing spiral of return to being" (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002:17). It involves a regular, repetitive "return with a difference". Recourse happens, for example, when a person recounts a story several times, perhaps even to the same person. Each time, a story is told of the same event, but the storyteller nuances different elements as she learns from the telling, and the listener is attentive to different elements as he begins to understand anew. A balance between discourse and recourse involves a *spiral* between the two. This is reminiscent of Heidegger's "hermeneutic circle of understanding" (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002:18). Teacher- or subject-centred approaches to learning are often discursive in that there is an assumption of a linear transfer of information and understanding from the teacher to the student.

Constructivist understandings of learning allow for a spiral between recursive and discursive since both the perception and the transformation of experience can proceed differently depending upon the modes chosen by the learner (apprehension or comprehension and reflection or action). Learning is ongoing and is expected to be deepened by several cycles through the experiential learning process, particularly when the learner is able to utilise all four dimensions of the process.

Conversational Learning seeks to balance the individual need to process experience by taking the "outside-in" with the relational need for connection through expressing the "inside-out". It is difficult to do both of these things at the same time which is the essence of the individuality/relationality dialectic. This fourth dialectic expresses something of the tension between self-directed autonomy and the desire to belong through conformation to tradition or cultural norm. A balance between the two involves achieving *intersubjectivity*. There is a resonance here with the Schwartz

model of basic values and the opposition between conservative values (conformity, tradition and security) and openness to change values (hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction).

The final dialectic concerns hierarchy and community. This is the status and solidarity dialectic. Baker, Jensen and Kolb (2002:25) refer to this as “ranking” and “linking”. This dialectic shapes the way that relationships function in the social arena. If this tension is held in balance, a receptive space emerges where conversational learning can happen. The authors explain:

Some measure of both ranking and status and intimate linking and solidarity are usually necessary to sustain conversation. Without status ... conversation can lose direction. Without solidarity ... conversation can lose connection and relevance. (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002:26)

Achieving a balance in this dialectic is described as *hospitality*.¹² There is a resonance here with the Schwartz model of basic values and the tension between self-enhancement values (power, achievement) and self-transcendence values (benevolence, universalism).

The implication of the dialectical nature of these elements is that balance is necessary for constructive learning. “When one pole of any of the dialectics dominates, learning within conversations is impeded and can cease to exist” (Baker, Jensen and Kolb 2002:30). Again, it is the *process* of learning here which is important.

Christian becoming therefore can be understood to be nurtured within a conversational learning space which is bounded by the dialectical poles of perceiving (through concrete senses and abstract concepts) and transforming experience (through inner reflection and outer experimentation), spiral between discourse and recourse, hospitality (a balance between status and solidarity) and intersubjectivity (a balance between individuality and relationality).

Philosophical approach to relating

The influence of interpersonal relationships on human learning has been the focus of much attention in recent decades, not least because of the seminal work of Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky (1978) located learning not just within the individual but first and foremost on a social and cultural level. He is most notably associated with the

¹² Note that the word *hospitality* here specifically denotes achieving balance between status and solidarity which is different but not unrelated to the Messy Church value of *hospitality* which I have described as overcoming the strangeness of the stranger.

term “zone of proximal development” which is the gap between where a pupil currently is developmentally and where they could be if assisted by the “scaffolding” of a more skilled other. Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory has been criticised for focusing too much on the individual and not enough on the social and cultural influences on learning. However, through the development of Conversational Learning Kolb has begun to address this criticism. In the revised edition of his classic text, Kolb (2015:291) recognises Vygotsky’s contribution and acknowledges that “the psychological and social dimensions of learning spaces have the most influence on learning”. He goes on to clarify the centrality of the resolution of dialectical tension in learning and identifies a kind of personal-social angst, described here as a quest for integrity:

If there is a touch of aggressive selfishness in our search for integrity, it can perhaps be understood as a response to the sometimes overwhelming pressures on us to conform, submit and comply, to be the object rather than the subject of our life history. (Kolb 2015:312)

This notion of being treated as object rather than subject can be understood to come about as a result of imbalance in the hospitality and intersubjectivity dialectics whereby the direction imposed by status results in objectification instead of intersubjective relationship. The concept of intersubjectivity is expressed most eloquently in Martin Buber’s (2013) *I and Thou*. From Buber’s perspective, Kolb’s pressure to be “object rather than subject” can be understood as the received consequence of being treated as *It* rather than *Thou*.

Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*

For Martin Buber there are two attitudes to living and experiencing life, two primary words which he terms *I-It* and *I-Thou*. *It* can be replaced by the words *He* or *She* without changing the meaning of the primary word. In other words *It* refers to the nature of relating rather than the impersonal pronoun, hence *It* could refer to a person, a *He* or a *She*. *I-It* denotes the relationship of subject to object, whereas *I-Thou* denotes subject to subject. Subject-object experience is the foundation for understanding and learning. “I consider a tree. I can look on it ... I can perceive it ... I can classify it ... I can subdue it ... in all this the tree remains my object” (Buber 2013:6). Subject-subject (i.e. intersubjective) relation is the foundation for interpersonal meaning and identity, “I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*. All real living is meeting” (Buber 2013:9). This resonates with Rebecca Nye’s definition of spirituality as “relational consciousness” which involves a deeper level of perception expressed in the context of relating (Hay with

Nye 2006:113). Indeed for Buber (2013:28) “Spirit is not in the *I* but between *I* and *Thou*.” Spirit dwells between subjects who are engaged in intersubjective relation.

Vygotsky is concerned first and foremost with the learning and development that can happen in the context of a suitably attentive relationship. Vygotskian scaffolding affords the learner the opportunity to view the learning experience from the perspective of the scaffolder. Both teacher and learner need to see things through the eyes of the other. The learner must attend to the scaffolding provided by the teacher in order to develop her understanding. The teacher must be aware of the learner’s current level of understanding and perspective in order to provide the necessary scaffolding. In a similar way, Buber writes of “inclusion” as the process, within *I-Thou* relating, of experiencing “the other side” of the relationship without relinquishing one’s own side (Friedman 2002:xiii). There is an inclusion of both worlds. This encounter inevitably leads to an increase in the *It* of knowledge by “merely unravelling the tangled incident” (2013:29), but this new knowledge is of secondary importance to the relation which it flows out of. The emphases of the two writers, Vygotsky and Buber, are different but their writing points to the common fundamental principle of intersubjectivity necessary for relational encounter and human learning. The main difference is in the priority afforded to learning or relating. For Vygotsky, learning is the goal and society and culture (and the relationships therein) are the context. Good learning is that which advances development. It is therefore possible for a teacher in the Vygotskian mode to treat her pupils as objects to be moulded and for no relation in the Buberian sense to exist between them. For Buber (2013:11), however, teaching arises as a responsibility which flows from the love of an *I* for a *Thou*. Good learning in this sense is that which maintains and flows out of relationship. The responsibility for teaching lies alongside other responsibilities such as helping, healing, raising up and saving. It is a responsibility to vulnerable openness of *I* to *Thou*. *I* offer to *Thou* my knowledge and wisdom as gifts. *Thou* may receive the gift or not. If received, the gift may be acted upon as *Thou* wishes. If *I* insist that my gift be received and acted upon in a certain manner then *I* no longer act in love but in power, and *I* address not *Thou* but *It*.

For Kolb (1984:38) “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”, something that happens as a result of the resolution of certain dialectical tensions. For Buber the process of relating and experiencing is also a matter of tension between the two attitudes of *I-It* and *I-Thou*. However, this tension always leads to the same outcome:

But this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every *Thou* in our world must become an *It*. It does not matter how exclusively present the *Thou* was in the direct relation. As soon as the relation has been worked out or has been

permeated with a means, the *Thou* becomes an object among objects – perhaps the chief, but still one of them, fixed in its size and its limits. (Buber 2013:12)

It is my understanding that Kolb’s experiential learning cycle is a depiction of the process whereby any encounter (*I-It* or *I-Thou*) is transformed into the *It* of knowledge. When this happens, *It* may again become *Thou* by “entering the relational event”, i.e. by re-approaching with an attitude of *I-Thou*. Hence a kind of oscillation between the two attitudes occurs, between *I-It* and *I-Thou*, between learning and relating. In *Conversational Learning*, Baker, Jensen and Kolb (2002) have outlined a structure and space where learning occurs readily and deeply because of attention to relational and affective aspects as well as to cognition. Ann Baker’s doctorate provides a glimpse into the development of Conversational Learning. In it she writes of a similarity between the concept of the “whole being” involved in Buber’s *I-Thou* relationship and the inner and outer work on transforming experience which requires valuing of both apprehension and comprehension as well as the “expression of that valuing through conversation” (Baker 1995:32). Likewise, Buber (2013:46) understands *I-Thou* relation to be maintained through “dialogue”. But it seems that learning may be confined to an entirely *I-It* experience without any “real” conversation or dialogue, only monologue or “objective speech” which “snatches only at a fringe of real life” (2013:13). If this is the case then there is no oscillation because there is no relating. There remains only *I-It* learning experience.

In *I-It* experience, attention between teacher and learner is not wholly on the *present* encounter (because there is an ongoing attempt to analyse the present in regard to past experience) and does not involve the *whole* person (only those aspects which are relevant and useful to the learning task). Buber describes *It* as being only one “thing” among many “things” that have been experienced. The difference between this and *I-Thou* encounter is that *Thou* is

... not a thing among things, and does not consist of things. Thus human being is not *He* or *She*, bounded from every other *He* or *She*. ... But with no neighbour, and whole in himself, he[*she*] is *Thou* and fills the heavens. This does not mean that nothing exists except himself [*herself*]. But all else lives in *his* [*her*] light. (Buber 2013:7)

The concept that all else lives in the light of the person to whom one is relating is appropriate to the notion of becoming as a combination of learning and relating. The

ambiguous metaphor of light for living resonates with Biblical imagery.¹³ First, light is associated with learning, as in the commonly used phrase “to shed light on the matter” and lack of light implies lack of understanding or knowledge as in “If you walk in the darkness you do not know where you are going” (John 12:35b). In this sense more light leads to greater understanding and living in the light would mean better knowledge. But light is also associated with closeness in relation, a notion often captured by song lyrics such as “you light up my life” (Brooks 1977). In the New Testament, the author of 1 John writes “if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another” (1 John 1:7). Light here implies relationship, hence living in this light means living in the fullness of the relationship. Taken together, Christian becoming as living in the light, is a two-fold movement between learning and relating, between *I-It* and *I-Thou*.

***I-Thou* relating and Christian becoming**

Christian becoming involves not only human relations, fundamentally it involves relation with God as revealed in the person of Jesus. Buber (2013:5) writes that there are three spheres in the world of relation: our life with nature, with men and women, and with God. These spheres are connected in that the first two are caught up in the third. Each relation of *I* to *Thou* is a “process of becoming” through which we are aware of “a breath from the eternal *Thou*; in each *Thou* we address the eternal *Thou*” (Buber 2013:5). In this sense every relation which can be said to be *I-Thou* in attitude, is also caught up in the eternal *I-Thou* relation. Matthew’s gospel (25:31-46) seems to point to something of this in its account of the words of Jesus concerning the final judgement, “just as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me”. There is an imperative here to approach human relating in a way that is conscious of the human-divine relating which it reflects and is subsumed by.

Buber’s two-fold understanding of human attitudes towards life is immensely helpful to developing an understanding of the importance of relating to Christian becoming. The kind of Christian becoming which focuses on learning outcomes such as the believing and behaving associated with conventional Christian religion, risks habitualising a perpetual *I-It* attitude to God and to others. Approaching others with an *I-Thou* attitude can restore balance between relating (*I-Thou*) and learning

¹³ John’s gospel is particularly redolent with this image: John writes of Jesus - “in him was life and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4); Jesus says “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5); And “I have come into the world as light so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” (John 12:46).

(*I-It*) due to the fact that “every *Thou* in our world must become an *It*” (Buber 2013:12).

Both *I-It* and *I-Thou* are available to each human, but some people are more strongly associated with one or the other. Buber calls the *I* of *I-It* the individual and the *I* of *I-Thou* the person and so “No man [woman] is pure person and no man [woman] is pure individuality” (Buber 2013:45). It follows then that humanness and human becoming are a combination of personhood and individuality. Buber writes “without *It* man [woman] cannot live. But he [she] who lives with *It* alone is not a man [woman]” (Buber 2013:24). Knowledge and learning which contribute to individuality are important. But relation of persons is paramount. Individuality is founded on difference and distinction. Personhood is founded on relationship and inclusion. This is the individuality/relationality dialectic in conversational learning. Note that personhood is not founded on sameness. Personhood and individuality are not polar opposites, although individuality is understood here to be a form of “detachment” whereas personhood is a form of “natural solidarity of connexion” (Buber 2013:44).

With *I-It* experience, the individual, through the fourfold church experience, understands herself to be a particular kind of person (e.g. baptised, sinner, Roman Catholic, Christian, etc.) as distinct from those who are different (not baptised, saint, Protestant, not Christian, etc.). Whilst this may constitute some shallow sense of identity, it fails to deliver the fullness of being that constitutes human being. As Buber (2013:45) writes “Individuality in differentiating itself from others is rendered remote from true being.” By contrast, in *I-Thou* relations, the person understands herself to have being through relationship. It is not that the person in any way gives up her being different (an individual) – “only that this being is not his [her] observation point, but simply there, the necessary and significant conception of being” (Buber 2013:45). It is only in relation to a *Thou* that the person acquires true being. In experiencing *It* and appropriating the things and events of *It*, a human “acquires no substance, but remains a functional point, experiencing and using, no more” (2013:45). This is echoed in the work of Rebecca Adams (2000:293-295) whose model of positive loving mimesis suggests that lack of being can be repaired by a common desire for the subjectivity of the other, an interrelation of subject to subject which is “alive with its own irreducible being”. Indeed, Adams claims that “this paradigm makes possible ... the will to intersubjective creative love of Self and Other”.

Fundamental to *I-Thou* relation is the presence of both *I* and *Thou*. There is no giving up of self in order to encounter the other. This is an “inclusion” of the other within the relation to the whole self. This raises a question concerning the need for a

fourth sphere in Buber's conceptualisation of relation which is missing from (or rather hidden within) Buber's account. Alongside *I-Thou* relation to nature, to other humans and to spiritual beings, there may also be a sphere of relating to self, i.e. the person to the individual. And in the same way that relation to nature and to other humans are caught up in relation to the eternal Thou, it follows that relation to self is caught up in all three, since relation by very definition involves the whole person. Inclusion, therefore, involves self-awareness as well as awareness of the other. Indeed it may well be that self-awareness is a deciding factor in whether the primary word *I-Thou* or *I-It* is spoken. Aware of the possibility of approaching the other with an attitude of experiencing and using, one is able to resist the temptation, or at least delay the inevitable, and approach with an attitude of relation. Unaware of this possibility, and blinded by the responsibility of a task to perform, it is likely that relation is forgotten and only *I-It* encounter remains.

Psychological type theory lends insight to this two-fold attitude of relating and using through its conceptualisation of psychological functioning through perceiving (openness) and judging (closure).

***I-Thou* relating and psychological type**

One particular shared aspect of learning and relating, of *I-It* and *I-Thou* is that they are both influenced by psychological function and therefore approaching these processes through the lens of Carl Jung's (1923) psychological type theory is pertinent to understanding something of these processes and their mutual interaction and outworking.

Paying attention is the initial and somewhat crucial step in both relating and learning. Giving something or someone attention (looking, listening, touching, etc.) leads to perception (seeing, hearing, feeling, etc). Attention is the doorway to perception if you will. This does not just apply to the physical senses. Defining attention broadly as "those operations that select and maintain conscious events", Baars (1997:364) suggests that this definition can be applied "in all sensory modalities, to memory operations, mind's eye, even to language and to thought." Attentional mechanisms act so as to select certain events over others in all of these domains of consciousness. Furthermore consciousness and attention mutually interact so that attention influences consciousness and vice versa. However "the detailed process of selection and maintenance of conscious focus is largely unconscious" (Baars 1997:365-366).

From the perspective of psychological type theory it is the judging function (thinking or feeling) which controls the flow of information perceived in order to

prevent the individual from being overwhelmed by experience. Thinking sets a higher priority on conceptual information and feeling prioritises evaluative information, scanning not just external sensory information but internal memory and conceptual schemas to locate an appropriate response.

Attention and desire have been shown to have a fundamentally mimetic nature (Girard 1976). When a subject notices that an object has the attention of another (a model), the subject experiences a motivation, a desire, to attend to the same object. French historian, philosopher and literary critic René Girard recognised that the (often unconsciously mediated) mimetic desire for the acquisition of an object leads to rivalry which in turn can escalate into violence. Rebecca Adams (2000) has suggested a revision of the Girardian model in order to account for a more positive or loving mimesis. Adams suggests that if the model's attention is given to the subject (rather than an object) in such a way as to affirm the subjectivity of the subject and invite intersubjective relationship (rather than rivalrous competition for acquisition of the object) the subject then (again unconsciously) imitates the desire for her own subjectivity. In Adams's model this mimetic desire can also escalate, but this time into reciprocal creative loving mimesis between subjects. In Buber's conception, this attitude of open intersubjectivity represents an invitation to *I-Thou* relation. Both authors point to this affirmation of the subjectivity of the other as an imitation of Christ (Adams 2000:302; Buber 2013:66-67). Within *I-Thou* relation there is no need for each person to give up their individual perspectives (their own subjectivity) since the inclusion of the other happens without a relinquishing of oneself, indeed it depends upon the involvement of the whole self. The eventual and unavoidable return to an *I-It* encounter signals a switch in attitude towards the other as one of object rather than subject. It is not that *I-Thou* is somehow superior to *I-It*, more that *I-Thou* is appropriate to relationship and *I-It* to learning. *I-Thou* is appropriate in the development of close relationships since it is conducive to intimate and personal knowledge (knowledge *of* another), whereas *I-It* is appropriate when a clinical objective attitude is required since it is conducive to functional utilitarian knowledge (knowledge *about* another).

Psychological type theory offers an explanation for how the psyche functions within an individual to bring about different emphases in both *I-It* and *I-Thou* attitudes. Orientation determines the primary locus of psychic energy, externally for extraverts, or internally for introverts. This locus of energy is the same for both *I-Thou* and *I-It*, however the purpose of the experience is different. *I-Thou* approaches *Thou* as subject as partner in intersubjective relation, while *I-It* approaches *It* as object to act upon, to use or experience, with no expectation of mutual relation. For extraverts "it is the objective rather than the subjective value which plays the greater

role as the determining factor of his consciousness” (Jung 1923:417). For introverts, however, it is the subjective view which demands the most attention in consciousness. Extraverts can be blind to the subjective influence, assuming that all of the external object, is in what they can see. Repression of the subjective factor in this way is a denial of the subject (Jung 1923:417). Introverts, by contrast, can be blind to the object apart from how it subjectively appears to them, assuming that appearance is all that there is. For both extraverts and introverts, *I-It* encounter focuses energy on using and experiencing the *It*. For the extravert energy is spent externally and for introverts it is spent internally. *I-Thou* focuses energy on mutual relation. None of the perceptions and judgements of *I-It* experience need be lost, instead they are caught up in the fullness of the relation of *I* to *Thou*. Both introverts and extraverts find it difficult to give their whole attention to another, preferring to focus on the partial view that their psychological preferences are drawn to. To bring their whole attention to the other person, extraverts would need to increase subjective awareness of the *I* in *I-Thou* attitude, to affirm their own subjectivity. Whereas introverts would need to increase objective awareness of *Thou* through the realisation that *Thou* is more than what is apparent to them. However, it is not necessary to actually achieve full awareness of the whole other person, it may even be impossible to achieve this. It is necessary only that extravert and introvert approach *I-Thou* relation by recognising the encounter as one of subject to subject hence affirming the subjectivity of each other and remaining open to more of each subject. Attention to, and awareness of, self is therefore just as important as attention to and awareness of the other in *I-Thou* relating.

Of the three distinctive Messy Church values which have been explored in this thesis, it is creativity which most strongly suggests it as a place where *I-Thou* relation could be nurtured. All-age inclusion implies that both adults and children are engaged, but there is nothing in this value per se which ensures that participants are approached as *Thou* not *It*. Only when participants are approached as *Thou* would there be an expectation of mutuality and subject-subject interaction whereby helpers would listen, pay attention and receive from both child and adult participants. Hospitality, understood as overcoming the strangeness of the stranger, suggests the possibility of mutual interaction between host and guest, but if the host understands his or her role to be one of utility, of provision of a service to the guests, without due attention to building relationships, then hospitality may equally foster an *I-It* attitude wherein the host expects nothing from the guest other than their reception of the hospitality that is offered. Valuing creativity as “imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value” (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999:29) suggests that Messy Church makes provision for the original contribution of

participants to be evaluated and included. The sensitive negotiation of value and the collective determination of appropriateness to Christian practice, in regard to Messy Church creativity, will be crucial to the ongoing becoming of Messy Church itself. Approaching both creative individuals and the product of their creative expression with an *I-Thou* attitude is seen to be vitally important to the Christian becoming of all involved. If creativity is viewed solely as the functional reproduction of a craft project in order to emphasise and aid remembrance of a Bible story or theme, this would point to a predominant *I-It* attitude among organisers, which would no doubt be imitated by participants.

Being Christ-centred is also one of the five stated values of Messy Church. An *I-It* attitude towards Jesus Christ occurs when there is a utilitarian focus on Jesus as an object to be considered, understood and used. It can also happen that Jesus (or God) is perceived as having an *I-It* attitude towards people, and hence people understand themselves as objects who are acted upon (saved, healed, taught, sanctified, set free, etc.) rather than as subjects who participate in mutual relationship with Jesus.¹⁴ If Messy Church helpers demonstrate an *I-It* attitude towards Jesus, at best this results in participants gaining new information about Jesus, in other words participants develop their own *I-It* experience of Jesus as religious object. At worst, it can lead to rivalry over control of the narrative and the development of competing understandings of the story. If helpers demonstrate an understanding of themselves as objects acted upon by Jesus, Girardian mimetic theory suggests this will perpetuate objectification of adults by each other. *I-It* attitude can act as a stumbling block to people in their own *I-Thou* encounter with each other and with Jesus.

The simplest way for helpers to demonstrate and invite an *I-Thou* attitude towards Jesus, is to model an *I-Thou* attitude towards the Christian story and towards the participants themselves. In Godly Play (Berryman 1991) this is done via open-ended questions such as “I wonder what you liked about this story?” The verbal responses to the wondering questions are then followed by a time for creative work which encourages a nonverbal response. Throughout the Godly Play session, the storyteller demonstrates that she has paid attention to what is said, or created, by the child without communicating an evaluative judgement. This is often done by simply responding “Mmm” or “I wonder” or making a descriptive statement such as “That is very red work”. Paying attention to the child’s response in this way affirms the subjectivity of the child.

¹⁴ The gospel accounts repeatedly point to Jesus’ affirmation of another as subject through words such as “Your faith has saved you” (Luke 7:50, 18:42) or “Your faith has made you well” (Matthew 9:22, Mark 5:34, 10:52, Luke 8:48, 17:19).

In terms of psychological type, Godly Play emphasises perception and attention in the storyteller and minimises judgement which is left solely up to the child. The mimetic nature of human-human relations makes judgement an area of possible rivalry and conflict. Godly Play guards against this by limiting adult presence in the classroom to those adults who have been trained not to make evaluative judgements. However, for Buber, *I-Thou* relation is maintained in open dialogue. An *I-Thou* attitude offers an invitation to the *Thou* to reveal himself or herself to the *I*, which includes being free to express their own personal judgements. *I-Thou* relation involves the inclusion of the whole person, which includes their decision-making. In Conversational Learning, the intersubjectivity dialectic stresses the importance of a balance between outside-in inclusion of the other and inside-out disclosure of the self. The invitation to *I-Thou* relation is communicated through paying attention to *Thou* and signalling that attention has been paid, though not necessarily by agreement. The expression of personal cognition, affection, and decision by *I* in response to *Thou* is an indication that the *I* is willing to be vulnerably and fully present in relation. When *I-Thou* attitude is reciprocated through mutual attention and respect, it becomes possible to communicate different judgements in a way that does not lead to conflict and rivalry. Adams (2000) has shown that it is precisely when humans engage in subject-subject mimesis, which desires to maintain the subjectivity of the other, that the escalation to rivalry and violence does not occur.

The *I-Thou* attitude, depicted by Buber as attention to the whole other without any loss or disappearance of the self, can become a means whereby different psychological type preferences complement rather than conflict in relation. Jung understood the development of a particular preference in a person's orientation and in their perceiving and judging functions to be necessary and vital to a normal healthy psychological development. In later life, however, Jung envisaged the strengthening of the least developed weaker functions to be key to self-actualisation. It may be, though, that what is required in order to maintain *I-Thou* relation is not a perfectly balanced well-developed psychological functioning in each individual, but simply a firm commitment to respect and include the perspective of the different psychological type preferences in relation to the other. The inclusion of the other in this way can be understood to provide an alternative concept to self-actualisation that is inherently tied to the fulfilment of the self-in-relationship. This can be illustrated with a tongue-in-cheek paraphrase of the apostle Paul, "The sensor cannot say to the intuitive "I have no need of you". Nor again the thinker to the feeler "I have no need of you". On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" (1 Corinthians 12:21-22). In all seriousness, a desire to include creativity within Messy Church through an *I-Thou* attitude of openness and respect for difference, seems to resonate with Paul's desire for "no dissension"

between the different parts of the body (1 Corinthians 12:25). Difference leads to conflict whenever there is an attempt to eliminate difference through exclusion or imposed conformity. Buber's genius illustrates how the inclusion of difference, accompanied by no loss of self, does not lead to conflict, rather it leads to relationship. It is this kind of intersubjective openness to learning from and relating to the other that is anticipated in Christian becoming. This is also the kind of openness that is frequently modelled by the child.

Children as models of the learning and relating process

One crucial difference between children and adults is that adults often lose their willingness to learn from others. Theologically speaking, awareness of a need to learn coupled with a willingness to act on this awareness is encapsulated in the concept of *humility*. Commenting on Jesus' instruction to his disciples that they "become like little children",¹⁵ Nolland (2005:732) identifies humility as the childlike quality necessary for discipleship and he takes this to mean adopting a "chosen posture of subordination". Whilst agreeing that humility is the quality of concern here, I disagree that this necessitates choosing to be subordinate. Buber's emphasis on the inclusion of the other *without* the relinquishing of the self (the fundamental nature of *I-Thou* relating) illustrates the kind of relationship where this is possible. Children often demonstrate an *I-Thou* attitude towards adults whereby they are humble and yet autonomous. While children might reasonably be considered to be variously dependent upon adults, they are often quite independent and self-directed when it comes to learning (Tennant 1988:21). Children do not naturally choose subordination, it is rather imposed upon them from above. By contrast, humility depicts an openness to the difference of the other. Children are open to learning from adults because of an innate curiosity and readiness to learn which stems from biological development (Knowles 1978:57; Tennant 1988:21). Adults can retain this imperative to learn from others but it can become distorted by the need to perform social roles (Knowles 1984:11; Tennant 1988:21-22). However, Buber's treatise suggests that it is not necessary to be subordinate and relinquish self in order to learn from a different other. Instead, what is required is motivation to do the sometimes difficult work of paying attention to difference and to reflect and act on its implications, a process which is transformative of, rather than subordinative of, the self. Viewed from this perspective, it is unreasonable to expect everyone to construct precisely the same knowledge from the same new experience, nor to be

¹⁵ Matthew 18:3

transformed in exactly the same way. What is learnt will depend upon the learner's previous knowledge and experience and whether and how they go about the work of transforming their new experience in relation with the (different) other.

Buber points to the development of the infant child for insight into the origins of relation and experience. He conceives of *I-Thou* connection within the womb as primary, superseded by separation into *I* and *Thou*, which happens as *I* becomes increasingly aware of the disappearance and reappearance of *Thou*. This in turn is followed by a grasping of *I-It* which brings with it an exploration of the experience and use of "things".¹⁶ But it is the "undivided primal world" of the womb that bestows upon the child an innate desire for relation. This is manifest in:

the instinct to make everything into *Thou*, to give relation to the universe, the instinct which completes out of its own richness the living effective action when a mere copy or symbol of it is given in what is over against him (Buber 2013:19).

Here the desire for the child to "make everything into *Thou*" can be understood as a desire for intersubjective connection with the other (usually a parent) which implies a desire for the subjectivity of the other. When this is mirrored by the desire of the parent for the subjectivity of the child this "completes out of its own richness the living effective action". This subject-subject dynamic becomes the substance of the effective life. The key aspect of the Buberian description of the origins of *I-Thou* relation is that the "instinct" or desire for relation is initiated by the child rather than the parent:

... the effort to establish relation comes first – the hand of the child arched out so that what is over against him may nestle under it; second is the actual relation, a saying of *Thou* without words, in the state preceding the word-form; the thing, like the *I* is produced late, arising after the original experience has been split asunder and the connected partners separated. In the beginning is relation (Buber 2013:19).

Hence the infant child is a model of *I-Thou* attitude. The desire for *I-Thou* relation, which is, according to Buber, seemingly lost to some adults, may be associated with the loss of childhood spirituality observed by Hay with Nye (2006). If humans do their becoming by a dual processes of learning and relating with others, then it seems likely that adults who have lost the spiritual desire for *I-Thou* relationship may find that desire is rekindled when they engage in becoming with children who demonstrate that desire. Hyde, Adams and Woolley (2008:148) suggest two benefits

¹⁶ This separation in infancy into subject and object and the importance of a healthy transition is the focus of much of Donald Winnicott's (1985) work which has been thoroughly explored for its implications to ongoing religious meaning and expression in Rizzutto(1981) and Ulanov (2001).

for adults who engage with children: the strengthening of the relationship with the child; and the opportunity to “reclaim, or perhaps rediscover their own sense of the spiritual”. In promoting an environment for spiritual nurture wherein children and adults are encouraged to do their becoming with one another, it may be that Messy Church has, to a certain extent, recovered a dimension of Christian becoming which lies at the very core of what it means to be human – the capacity for *I-Thou* relationship.

Conclusion

Conversational Learning theory identifies five dimensions in which there exists dialectical tension between opposite modes of learning and relating: The perception dimension relates to grasping hold of experience through the concrete or the abstract; The transformation dimension relates to engaging with experience through reflection or action; The spiral dimension relates to learning through doing and being through discursive and recursive processes; The hospitality dimension relates to the receptive learning space which is shaped by status or solidarity; The intersubjectivity dimension relates to the tension between the individual self and the self-in-relationship which is shaped by the inside-out and outside-in dynamics of relationship.

Some of the values identified in the Schwartz model are identifiable in the Conversational Learning process which lends clarification to how different values might influence the learning process. Learning environments which strive to maintain a balance between the value-based dialectical tensions anticipated in Conversational Learning are expected to be the most conducive to learning.

The intersubjectivity dialectic in Conversational Learning has here been further illuminated through Martin Buber’s (2013) *I and Thou*, which stresses the inclusion of the other person without the relinquishing of the self. Attention to both outside-in and inside-out dynamics is therefore not only necessary for learning but also for relating and hence it is crucial for any kind of Christian becoming.

Children who demonstrate a willingness for *I-Thou* relation through a humble openness to learn from others and a confident display of their own autonomy may provide a model of becoming for adults which could possibly rekindle their own appetite for spirituality and *I-Thou* relation.

The previous chapter illustrated how Messy Church seems to be advancing somewhat different values to conventional church, and raised the possibility that it may encourage different kinds of becoming depending on the value priorities of each particular Messy event. The value-based dialectical tensions anticipated in

Conversational Learning can similarly be understood to reflect tensions in becoming that may arise at Messy Church. Therefore any imbalance in these dialectics is also expected to influence the nature of the learning space that Messy Church is able to create.

In the following chapter I shall explore Christian becoming from a theological perspective in order to determine traditional understandings of what it means to become as a Christian. The notion that children may provide models for adult becoming is reflected upon in light of the words of Jesus to his disciples that they should “change and become like little children” which develops the idea that Christian becoming is also in some sense child-like becoming.

Chapter 7

Christian becoming – A theological perspective

In the previous chapter the subject of Christian nurture was approached from the perspectives of educational psychology and philosophy. This entailed a discussion of how individual differences in psychological type preferences can influence the learning process. In addition the different priorities across basic human values were anticipated to influence the type of Christian becoming expected to occur. The dialectical conceptualisation of both psychological type theory and basic value theory were recognised as foundational to Conversational Learning theory which offered a model for maintaining a constructive learning environment sensitive to the dialectical tensions of becoming.

In this chapter I approach Christian becoming from a theological perspective in order to illustrate the compatibility of Christian theology to the educational and philosophical emphases identified in previous chapters. Theological imperative for attending to individual differences and relational tensions in the Christian becoming process stems from the apparent dialectical tension between two traditional understandings of Christian becoming, as an individual quest for Christlikeness and as a relational quest for union with God. Key to understanding Christian becoming at Messy Church, are the words of Jesus to his disciples that they should “change and become like little children” which seems to suggest that becoming like Christ is also in some sense becoming like a child, and that relationship with God is in some sense caught up in relationship with children.

Traditional terms for Christian becoming

In the vast amount of literature that is concerned with the nurture and education of people within the Christian Church, there is a great deal of ambiguity concerning the definition of terms. Astley (2000a:2) summarises the difficulties, which are reproduced here for completeness. Consider the term ‘Christian education’. This can mean education about Christianity (its history, its practices, texts, worship, etc.) but it can also mean a general approach to schooling which is regarded as broadly Christian, such as that encountered within a Church school. So the adjective ‘Christian’ here refers to the processes and practices of the school rather than the subject matter taught. A third use of this term regards Christian education as ‘education *into* Christianity’. It is concerned with learning among those who are or wish to be practicing and confessing Christianity and wish to learn and grow into

something more fully Christian. It is this kind of Christian education which is the focus of this chapter and to which I refer in the title as ‘Christian becoming’.

Becoming as formation

Becoming more fully Christian has been understood in a variety of ways across the different traditions of the Church. Christian ‘formation’ is sometimes used to describe this process of becoming more fully Christian, particularly when the word ‘education’ is regarded as being too closely related to what happens at school. The notion of formation, however, can sometimes be underpinned by a theological understanding of the learner as inherently flawed and in need of God’s grace in order to be transformed. Because of this, formation can be regarded quite narrowly as the work that goes into producing a certain Christian character. It is expected to happen as a result of submitting to traditional processes for such formation, e.g. liturgy, sacraments, etc., i.e. those things which make up a Christian ‘habitus’ or disciplined religious life. Davison and Milbank (2010:64) are exemplars of this approach to formation, illustrated by their critique of fresh expressions of church wherein they insist that the traditional forms of worship cannot be separated from the content, because “the form of the Church embodies her faith”. They are critical that fresh expressions take their lead from the social sciences and not from the theological tradition of the Church (Davison and Milbank 2010:81) and insist that “character is formed by repetition and routine” (Davison and Milbank 2010:100). This routine means that “The Christian life is lived as a series of practices and disciplines that we inhabit to learn the ways of heaven and to love God and our neighbour” (Davison and Milbank 2010:210). There is mystery here since the work of formation is understood to be performed by God the Father or Jesus the Son through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Davison and Milbank (2010:133) allude to this in their statement “The parish through its whole life is empowered by liturgical praxis and by the synergy between the Holy Spirit and the Christian body which catches it up into the Divine Life.” The learner is regarded as relatively cognitively passive in this formation process since what is required is submission and obedience to the spiritual disciplines which place the learner in the best position for God to do the work of transformation. In this respect there are similarities with a behaviourist, conditioning model of learning which does not necessarily require any

cognitive understanding, and operates on the basis of stimulus and response.¹⁷ For Davison and Milbank (2010:212), liturgical worship does its work “unconsciously” and thus we are “shaped and oriented by its performance”. Lings (2013:270-271) is critical of this approach to formation:

I have been unconvinced for a long time that the virtues promulgated by some devotees of Anglican ecclesiology actually deliver in practice. Being parochially based and so serving the wider community; engaging with place; gathering publicly, weekly and mainly Eucharistically; using centrally organised liturgies and lectionary-driven homilies; and engaging with synodical structures and a diocesan framework are all very well in themselves. However they do not seem to me to deliver the goods in terms of discipleship.

From the perspective of Conversational Learning, the emphasis on repetition and routine inherent in the understanding of formation upheld by Davison and Milbank suggests they lean towards a recursive ontological understanding of formation as opposed to a discursive epistemological approach. It is also clear that the hierarchical nature of reliance upon church tradition and the heavy emphasis on individuals taking the outside-in (with negligible attention to any expression of individual concerns through inside-out relating) clearly portray an imbalance in the Conversational Learning space. It may be that God is somehow expected to make up for the inadequacies in this approach (from a human learning perspective) by simply intervening in the process and over-riding any deficiencies.

Becoming as religious instruction

A sharp contrast to an approach heavily reliant on divine intervention is found in the work of Catholic educator James Michael Lee (1973:13) who prefers to talk of ‘religious instruction’ which he defines as “instruction into the Christian religion”. It is instruction that incorporates all aspects of human being – cognitive (belief, knowledge and understanding), affective (feeling and emotion) and conative (action and practice - Lee uses the term ‘lifestyle’ for this). Whilst acknowledging that God is involved in all Christian learning, Lee (1973:175) is on the whole dismissive of what he terms the “blow theory” of religious instruction, which attributes learning to the sole causal work of the Holy Spirit, thereby making redundant any input by a teacher of Christian instruction “since according to this theory the Spirit blows where he wills, pedagogical practice does not and indeed cannot make any

¹⁷ Within a behaviourist framework, repetitive practice is key to successful learning. Rote learning methods are an example of this concept which has been criticised as an inefficient way to equip learners to grasp a concept in a meaningful way (Ormrod 2004:45, 221-222).

difference in the long run (or even perhaps in the short run)”. For Lee, natural ways of learning are not overridden or subsumed by divine influence. Hence, the clearly stated motive for Lee’s (1971; 1973; 1985) books is to equip the teacher of Christian religious instruction in their task of passing on the Christian religion. This is done by equipping the teacher in the same way that one would equip any teacher, calling on the social sciences to furnish the necessary knowledge and expertise. For Lee (1978:41) relationship with God comes about as a consequence of religious living. As Newell (2006:11) writes “Lee defined religion functionally - religion is what it does to a person – and his “faith” follows logically”, not supernaturally.

Lee (1973:183-188) finds much to commend in a “dialogue theory” approach to religious instruction based upon Buber’s *I-Thou* relation: it emphasises teacher-learner interaction; it stresses the deeply interpersonal character of the teacher-learner interaction; it has a high esteem for the learner; and it is centred more on process than content. Lee’s criticisms of a dialogue theory approach are concerned with its lack of effective interconnected pedagogical practices; and its tendency to regard teaching solely as communication between persons. He concludes that it is more appropriate for counselling situations where “the content is totally the client, nothing more and nothing less” (Lee 1973:188). Writing over forty years ago, Lee had no knowledge of Berryman’s (1991) Godly Play method of religious education, an inherently dialogical approach which demonstrates a set of systematic and interconnected pedagogical practices, and which recognises the enormous value of the non-verbal, quality materials in the Godly Play classroom.¹⁸ After summarising and critiquing a range of different approaches to religious instruction, and lacking any concrete examples of dialogical theory that addressed his concerns, Lee proceeded to champion an alternative which he termed “teaching theory” (Lee 1973:196-204).

The goal of religious instruction according to teaching theory is the “purposeful and deliberative modification of learner behaviour along religious lines” (Lee 1973:196). If the learner’s behaviour changes in a way that cannot be attributed to the influence of the teacher then no teaching has taken place. It is in this insistence that the religious becoming of the learner lies predominantly in the hands of the teacher that Lee’s teaching theory of religious instruction differs from dialogical theory, and

¹⁸ In 1973, when Lee’s *The Flow of Religious Instruction*, was first published, Berryman had just returned to the United States after spending time at the Centre for Advanced Montessori Studies in Bergamo, Italy. Experimental Godly Play classrooms were developed over the following ten years and Berryman authored several papers during this time. But it was not until 1991 that his seminal work *Godly Play: A way of religious education* was first published.

from the constructivist approach to learning which I have set out in previous chapters. Of course the very term “instruction” presupposes an instructor rather than a conversational partner.

Becoming as discipleship

Discipleship is a term often preferred by evangelical Christians to describe the process of learning to be a follower of Jesus Christ. To illustrate this perspective, consider Michael Moynagh who has written extensively on fresh expressions of church and whose approach to discipleship is informed by his sensitivities to this context. Echoing the *Mission-shaped Church* report (Church of England 2004), Moynagh (2012:115) insists that a growth to Christian maturity will involve movement towards the kingdom of God across each of four relationships: relationship with God, with the wider church, with the world and within the local fellowship. These four relationships are understood to constitute a definition of the Church. Moynagh (2012:330-338) goes on to discuss four pathways to church maturity – discipleship, worship, community and sustainability. Concentrating on discipleship which is the area of interest here, discipleship is envisaged to take place over three stages – evangelism, conversion/initiation and formation. Evangelism is described as an invitation into the kingdom, though Moynagh (2012:332) perceives this as a two-way process so that “To the one who speaks about Jesus, listening can reveal how the spirit has been at work in the other person. To the one who hears about Jesus, listening can lead to a mutual expansion of understanding about the human condition.” Moynagh (2012:324) suggests a variety of forms this evangelism may take: acts of kindness, conversations about Jesus, missional worship, an experience of answered prayer, and creative expressions of spirituality. In essence they are invitations to belong to a group which values these processes in the hope that belonging will lead to initiation/conversion. Moynagh is sensitive to a recent cultural shift in emphasis from a *point* at which conversion occurs, to a *process* involving exploration of the faith with a group of similarly interested participants (the 1990s Alpha model), to a *pathway* or quest where people prefer to keep their options open rather than commit to a particular destination. This means that the journey to Christian faith (which Moynagh seems to conceive as the passing of milestones, though not necessarily in a linear way), if it occurs, will take much longer than in previous generations. But from a post-modern perspective, reflected

in what has become known as progressive Christianity,¹⁹ faith as a pathway is not something that people either have or do not have, rather it is something that changes and develops for everyone as they walk along, such that “We make the road by walking” (McLaren 2014). In this conception, it is not that there is one Christian highway where everyone walking on it is a Christian and everyone not on it is not a Christian. Rather, everyone walks their own pathway, which may intersect with others who then share part of the journey. It may be that one person’s path is more or less Christian than that of another. It may be that some parts of one person’s path are more Christian than other parts of that same person’s path. But everyone walks and makes their own path, sometimes changing direction but ultimately the value of the path is judged in the walking rather than in the destination.

Moynagh’s third stage in the discipleship process, formation, is again understood to be a process which reflects the relational dynamics of the Kingdom – “It is about learning to live the kingdom of God within the world” (Moynagh 2012:334). This has three implications for disciples. First, “it will help them to discover how to act in the manner of Jesus in their day-to-day contexts” (Moynagh 2012:345), in other words disciples will develop Christlikeness in the way that they interact with the world. Second, discipleship is a communal activity. It is not just about equipping believers for their personal walk with God, it is about shared disciplines and rhythms of life. Third, connecting with the wider church will strengthen identity and a sense of belonging to God’s family. Issues of identity and belonging are particularly apposite to a post-modern worldview, and this highly relational model, written with fresh expressions of church in mind, demonstrates an awareness of this contextual concern.

Becoming as catechesis

American Episcopal priest and academic educator John Westerhoff III (2012:141) has settled on ‘catechesis’ as his preferred broader term for becoming which he defines as the sum of “three intentional, interrelated, life-long processes...formation, education and instruction/training”. Instruction/training involves acquiring skills and knowledge needed for Christian living, such as Bible knowledge. Education is then held to be critical reflection upon the Christian faith and life in the light of such knowledge. And finally, for Westerhoff, formation relates to the way that Christian

¹⁹ The Centre for Progressive Christianity (2011) in the US lists eight key points which they understand as defining of progressive Christianity. They include “Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life”.

culture, world-view and ethos are transmitted from one generation to another. This includes a conversion element which is mysterious because “faith cannot be taught” (Westerhoff 1976:23). All three of these processes, Westerhoff suggests, are necessary but none alone are sufficient to facilitate Christian learning. Crucially, Westerhoff sets the context for Christian catechesis squarely within the Christian faith community, insisting that all aspects of socialisation, or to use his preferred term enculturation, into the community are significant in bringing about learning. It is therefore incumbent upon teachers within the community to take note of what is being learned, intentionally and unintentionally, through the socialisation process. Westerhoff asserts that “theology is the theoretical basis for Christian education” (1992:102) and yet his strategy is dependent upon a social scientific understanding of enculturation as a two-way learning process in which children are not merely passive recipients of an established adult culture, but they can also “participate in shaping, critiquing and improving it” (Bickford 2011:2).

Why ‘Christian becoming’?

Christian learning has been variously understood to happen through Christian education, formation, instruction, discipleship and/or catechesis. Each has its own emphases and distinctive elements and in fact the same word can mean different things to different people (e.g. “formation” is used across most of the above examples). However, these terms to a post-modern ear can seem suspiciously manipulative and even oppressive. The modern reliance upon reason and cognitive knowledge as a means of progress for humankind is no longer trusted to deliver what it once promised.²⁰ Even the mystery associated with Anglo-catholic formation, which might appeal to the post-rational, is regarded with suspicion due to its requirement of submission to external authority. For post-moderns, relational belonging has been identified as a crucial dimension in the creation of a context for learning where meaning can be negotiated. For these reasons I suggest that ‘Christian becoming’ is a more appropriate phrase in a postmodern context to describe the learning and change which happens through relationship with Jesus and the Christian community. It is not that becoming is dialectically opposite to discipleship or formation, rather that becoming pays greater attention to the reciprocal nature of the *relationship* involved, and the significance of individual autonomy in the *process*. Even Jesus seemed to become through relationship with

²⁰ The Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of England (1996) published a report entitled “Tomorrow is another country: education in a post-modern world” which explored this issue.

others²¹ and he consistently pointed to the autonomy of others in regard to their faith as something instrumental in their own healing and becoming, apparently refusing to let even seemingly miraculous change be seen as something that he did to them unilaterally.²² Jesus' commands to love God with heart, soul, mind and strength and to love others as oneself,²³ which form the ultimate premise for Christian community, are grounded, suggests John Drane (2013:121), in fundamentally humane qualities such as "embodiment, interaction, mutuality, playfulness and story". Christian becoming, in my understanding, is replete with such qualities. Furthermore, perhaps sensitive to the priorities of the "me" generation,²⁴ Drane (2013:121) implies that loving others as one loves oneself means "taking due care of self as an essential aspect of being able to journey alongside others". While sceptics often highlight the apparent selfishness and self-absorption of the millennial generation and contrast this with the self-sacrifice and servant-hood of Christian love, the failure of this perspective to recognise that emphasising self-sacrifice might actually perpetuate the abuse of victims by legitimising their acquiescence to an abusive power, continues to act as a challenge to this more traditional view of Christian love. From the perspective of the victim, taking care of self is an appropriate message to hear alongside the command to love God and to love others. In choosing to talk of Christian becoming rather than discipleship or formation, I hope to restore something of the responsibility for agency and care for self as those made in the image of God.²⁵

By using the word 'becoming' I do not mean to focus entirely, or even at all, on conversion, though I accept that the phrase 'becoming a Christian' can and usually does refer to a conversion experience. Instead, by using the phrase Christian becoming I hope to capture something of the essence of the saying "I have been

²¹ See for example Jesus' encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-29, Matthew 15:21-28).

²² See for example the healing of the paralytic man (Matthew 9:1-9), the healing of the haemorrhaging woman (Matthew 9: 20-22), and the encounter with Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10)

²³ These words of Jesus can be found in the gospel of Mark (12:28-31).

²⁴ Joel Stein writing in Time Magazine in May 2013 labelled millennials as the "me, me, me" generation.

²⁵ Rebecca Adams (2000:288-289) discusses the theology of "kenosis" and its association with the giving up of power, agency and being as a betrayal of victims.

saved, I am being saved and I will be saved”²⁶ so that perhaps “I have been Christian, I am becoming Christian and I will be Christian” encapsulates a holistic description of ongoing Christian becoming, implying that attention needs to be paid to the ongoing process as much as, if not more than the end point.

Another reason for using this phrase is that it contains something of an echo of Jesus’ words in Matthew 18:3 “Unless you change and *become* like little children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven”²⁷ (emphasis added). I wish to pay attention to the verb as well as the noun in this sentence giving attention to process as well as product. The aim is to balance the outcome of becoming (being more like little children) with the process of how children actually do their becoming. Use of the phrase Christian becoming helps to keep this child-inspired process of Christian learning at the fore in a way that other terms do not.

Another, not unrelated, reason to adopt this phrase is that it focuses attention upon the individuals who are doing the learning and begs the question “Who are they becoming?” - A question of identity rather than skill or knowledge. The traditional terms tend to put the focus on what is being given *to* or done *for* the learner through the process of education by an educator or teacher or indeed by the Holy Spirit. Even the term ‘learning’ which might be expected to shed more light on the experience of the ‘learner’ can sometimes focus attention first and foremost on *what* has been learned (i.e. content, syllabus). Becoming suggests issues of identity, agency and meaningful purpose and these are issues which would seem to resonate with a post-modern worldview. One negative aspect to this phrase is that it fails to capture the nature of learning as a socially constructed process. It is a feature of the English language that verbs rarely carry with them the personal pronouns associated, hence ‘our Christian becoming’ and ‘my Christian becoming’ are subsumed under Christian becoming in a way loses the plurality of the persons involved. It is the self-in-relationship who is becoming more Christian together with those in the same social and cultural group (i.e. church).

²⁶ This phrase is often used to summarise the apostle Paul’s teaching on salvation in the New Testament epistles (Witherington 2011:231). It has also been used to illustrate the process of salvation associated with the Orthodox Church which focuses on the culmination of salvation at the end of the Christian life, as opposed to the evangelical view of “being saved” which places emphasis on the beginning of the Christian life (Goggin and Strobel 2013:138).

²⁷ The Greek words used here for “change” and “become” are *strepho* and *ginomai*. *Strepho* means to “turn” or “convert”, in the tense used it means “turn into” or “be converted to”. *Ginomai* means to “come into existence” or “receive being”.

Creation-centred becoming

The theological orientation of those who implement the Messy Church model may impact the learning that happens there. This can be seen in the different expectations which arise from a creation-centred or a redemption-centred approach (Bevans 2002:16-17) which point to different reasons to explain why people fail to move on in their own learning. Lucy Moore's (2006:47) philosophy that "We are made in the image of God ... As we create and play together, we echo his playful creativity and we are renewed and repaired ourselves" is illustrative of Bevans' creation-centred approach to learning which insists that culture is generally good and can be a source of content for the learning conversation. This contrasts with a redemption-centred approach where the emphasis is on the need for a flawed people to be transformed. If Messy Church is implemented by people with a redemption-centred approach then the creativity of the participants is in danger of being ignored since it is much easier to dismiss as being inherently flawed. But if it flows from a creation-centred approach, Messy Church creativity may present exciting opportunities for shared praxis such as that depicted by Thomas Groome (1980), who puts critical reflective negotiation at the heart of his model of shared praxis. Craig Dykstra (2005:84-85), arguing from a redemption-centred approach, has criticised Groome's model for relying too heavily on a person's capacity for critical reflection, which he suggests is severely restricted by an unwillingness to change. People become stuck in their current experience due to the fact that "congregations are profoundly caught up in powerful patterns of sin and alienation" which need to be redemptively transformed by the confession, repentance, and prayer of the worshipping congregation (Dykstra 2005:85,91). By contrast, Berryman (1991:93-102; 2009:235-236) demonstrates a creation-centred approach in his Godly Play method of religious education. He acknowledges that people can and do get stuck at different points in the learning process, however, he offers psychological explanations, such as those suggested by personality traits or attachment theory, which can be overcome if appropriate psychological support is afforded. In Berryman's model, a safe and trusting environment which balances the presence of other participants with different personalities and perspectives is key to helping individuals when they become stuck. This resonates with the shared praxis in Groome's model. For Berryman (2009:148) the presence of a sensitive mentor "with a lifetime of experience with the varieties of language structures" is crucial to guide folk who become stuck in their learning. Notwithstanding Lucy Moore's apparent openness to the creation-centred approach and the prominence of hospitality as a Messy Church value, there does not seem to be adequate attention to the psychology of a safe and trusting learning environment

in the Messy Church model, which suggests that more could be done to assist folk who appear to be stuck in their learning.

Christian becoming as learning and relating

Christian becoming is here envisaged to be a dual process which oscillates between learning and relating. As I have suggested, the difficulty with traditional terms such as formation and discipleship is that they have connotations of something being done *to* someone by someone else. The relationship between teacher and disciple can all too easily appear to be one of *I-It* rather than *I-Thou*. Whereas if Christian becoming is defined in terms of both learning and *I-Thou* relating, it is revealed to be something that an individual participates in *with* others (more like dancing). And although there will be learning outcomes that a person may have been taught (eg. being able to dance the foxtrot) that is beside the point. The point is that the person dances *with* someone, they dance together. Similarly, people become together. They cannot ‘disciple’ together or ‘form’ together in the same way. The language just does not work. The language of discipleship or formation communicates an inherent hierarchy, teacher to disciple, even when the teacher is the Holy Spirit. But when someone becomes, they learn and relate with someone else just as they learn to dance while dancing with someone else. They may be taught some steps by a dance partner. They may teach their partner some steps. They may even make up some new steps together! As they dance, they may dance well or dance badly, but they dance and they learn and they relate, and all the time the music of the Spirit dances with them. A person learns to relate when in a relationship, while doing the relating. A person also learns to love when in a relationship, while loving the beloved. So also a person becomes when in a relationship, becoming along with other comers. It does not make sense to become alone in the same way that it makes no sense to love alone. Becoming is impossible to do alone precisely because relationship is impossible to do alone. (This holds true even for situations where one is in fact alone, such as when reading an author, such as Martin Buber, since one is still metaphorically speaking, dancing with Buber.)

Conceived this way, it becomes clearer then, that in order to become *like* children, such becoming must happen *with* children. Not just in the same room as children, but in relationship with children and open to learning from them. Mostly (but not exclusively) relating takes place through communication and language. As such, Christianity can be understood to be a religious language system (Berryman 2013:ix) which facilitates Christian becoming through providing language, symbols and rituals which communicate the love of God. Creative arts can be similarly understood as a form of language which perpetuates human becoming through

facilitating self expression. Both are languages of mystery. Understood this way, Messy Church can be seen ostensibly to provide the tools and environment (through Christian language content, creative materials, and opportunity for relational interaction) conducive to Christian becoming and to becoming like children. Speaking ‘Christianity’ with children and other non-speakers affords them the opportunity to listen to how the language is conventionally spoken, but it also affords fluent speakers an opportunity for fresh understanding of their language when spoken by novices who may be more inclined to focus on relating and communicating than on learning to be linguistically accurate and doctrinally sound.

Learning involves *both* process and product, whereas relating can be considered simply process since relating has no specific outcome apart from life lived in perpetual relationship. This is why a focus on Christian learning outcomes can inadvertently neglect the relational aspect of becoming. The product, or outcome, of Christian learning involves becoming more like Christ, which can be taken to mean acquiring certain Christian attributes. The process by which this happens can be understood to be effected by both human activity and by God’s activity (Astley 2000a:7), but since God’s activity cannot be measured, attention here is restricted to the human side of the process and that which can be measured and identified. The second aspect of Christian becoming, relating to God in Christ, is above all a process of encounter and communication, the outworking of which is encapsulated in the word ‘love’. Relating to Jesus in love can happen, rather mysteriously, when relating to others, such as the weak, the poor, the child, and those gathered in his name.²⁸ Note that this relational dynamic involves at least two persons. It cannot happen to an individual in isolation. Hence authentic Christian becoming can only happen through relationship with others. Learning to acquire Christian attributes can and should assist in the process of relating to God and to others, and relationship with God and others can and should assist in the acquiring of Christian attributes.²⁹ Hence Christian becoming is taken to be a dual oscillating process of learning and relating. This means that an environment conducive to Christian becoming will be an environment conducive to both learning **and** relating.

Traditionally the product or goal of Christian learning has been understood in one of two ways. The first is as a movement towards “perfection” (other terms for this include sanctification, Christlikeness, wholeness, holiness). This goal is exemplified

²⁸ See Matthew 18:5,20 and 25:31-46 for Biblical examples of this.

²⁹ James Michael Lee (1973:98-103) has collected substantial evidence to suggest that student learning is significantly enhanced when set in the context of a warm, accepting and positively affective relationship with a teacher or mentor.

in the Protestant theology of John Wesley. Wesley insisted that relationship with God (through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit) was the fundamental prerequisite to achieving moral perfection, but as McGrath (2007:352-353) notes, “Wesley’s notion of perfection was not that of sinlessness, but of an ever deepening *process* of comprehensive moral change” (emphasis added). McGrath goes on to say that although Wesley regarded holiness as a gift, others have often required it as an obligation or duty. And whereas Wesley regarded sanctification as a gradual process, others have understood it to be achieved instantaneously by a second work of grace accompanying the “baptism in the Spirit”, later associated with Pentecostalism. More recently, charismatic spirituality has been characterized as a three stage process which depicts a similar chain of events (search-encounter-transformation) culminating in a movement toward personal holiness (Cartledge 2006). In this understanding encounter with God is an early stepping stone to the later (somewhat ego-centric) goal of becoming a better person.

There is however, a second understanding of the goal of Christian becoming, as a relational process which leads to unity with God. In this understanding, striving to be a better person is regarded as an early phase in the process which leads to the ultimate goal of unity with God. Roman Catholic priest Richard Rohr is a proponent of this understanding. He writes

There is remarkable overlap and agreement among the various schemata of development, and we find psychology and spirituality beautifully coming together here. What they are all trying to say is that growth is going somewhere, and the trajectory is toward union: union with God, with the self (of mind, heart, and body), with others, and with the cosmos. All seem to agree that the lower (or beginning) levels are dualistic, while the higher (or perhaps I should say “deeper”) levels are non-dual and unitive. The early stages are egocentric; the later ones are cosmocentric. (Rohr 2009:164-165)

There are thought to be three spiritual stages in this process, described by Origen (circa 185-254) as the purgative, illuminative and unitive stages.³⁰ The purgative stage is the elimination of bad habits and the cultivation of virtues. The illuminative stage is typified by an encounter with God, a new understanding or insight or a spiritual “Eureka” moment. The final unitive stage is exemplified by self-giving and love.

One difficulty with the concepts of both Christlikeness and divine unity is that they are both conceived as linear and terminal in that they imply that there is a final destination or end goal which, once reached, would preclude any further learning or

³⁰ Thompson (2008:22)

change. Another possibility exists, however, one which considers *neither* as a final destination and *both* as being transitional, each a sign-post or landmark on the way to the other. The goal (which is actually a process) is then merely to continue on a path of transformation which is not linear (with a start and an end) but cyclical (or more accurately a spiral) as many recent learning models have reflected.³¹ This would manifest as a kind of to-and-fro between contemplative union with God and active love for the world.³² In a sense the process *is* the goal and it is a process located firmly in relationship with God, with others, with self and with the world. Achieving a balance between the quest for Christlikeness and the quest for relationship with God is not dissimilar to the kind of balance envisaged in the Conversational Learning dialectic of intersubjectivity which balances the individuality of outside-in learning typical of the quest to be like Jesus, with the relationality of inside-out learning which exemplifies the self-giving love associated with unity with God.

Christ-like learning outcomes

Having established the importance of the process of learning and relating, it remains helpful to consider some of the products or outcomes that may be reached as landmarks along the way. The suggestion that Christianity in some way shapes its followers so they become more like Jesus is encapsulated in the word “Christian” which literally means “little Christ”. Astley (2000a:5-7) acknowledges that there is often an assumption of an ontological change, a change in a person’s very being, which is taken to be determinative of Christian being and becoming. However, this needs to be distinguished from a change in a person’s function (what they do, think, say, feel and believe) as it is these aspects of being Christian which can be learned along the way. For some Christian teachers the nature of God’s involvement in this learning process is fundamental, essential and sufficient. God the Holy Spirit does the leading, guiding, teaching and transforming. For others, there is a responsibility on the part of the church and its teachers to discern the natural processes by which people learn and to facilitate such learning accordingly. Astley (2000a:16) suggests a way forward in which “God’s activity is *always* a necessary condition but human activity is *sometimes* a necessary condition” for Christian learning. Concentrating

³¹ Examples are The Learning Cycle (Green 2009), The Pastoral Cycle (Ballard and Pritchard 1996) and of course Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle.

³² This dynamic of action and contemplation is reflected in the work of Catholic priest Richard Rohr (1997).

then on what can be changed, Astley (2000a:5-6) lists eight Christian learning outcomes (or attributes) which he believes to be exhaustive:

1. Christian beliefs-that, understanding and knowledge;
2. Christian beliefs-in (faith and trust in God, Jesus, ...);
3. Christian attitudes and values (concern for others, hope, humility...);
4. Christian emotions and feelings (awe, remorse, joy...);
5. Christian experiences (objective religious experiences);
6. Christian moral actions (active love, forgiveness, trust, just and honest behaviour);
7. Christian religious actions (prayer, profession of faith, evangelism, worship...);
8. Christian/theological reflection and criticism.

Therefore, if a Christian community or fresh expression of Church is going to nurture Christian becoming, it should be able to discern evidence of some if not all of the above learning outcomes.

The words “believing, belonging and behaving” offer helpful perspectives on issues of Christian learning in a post-modern context. Believing, belonging and behaving are most commonly associated with sociological and cultural analyses of religion in post-modern, western societies. Whilst cognitive, affective and lifestyle dimensions of learning may be interrelated and even interdependent, it is the cognitive strand, i.e. the capacity for belief, understanding and knowledge which has traditionally formed the backbone of Christian education (Astley 2000b:35). The formation of children in the Church has traditionally focused on believing and behaving, represented above in 1) knowledge, 2) faith, 6) moral development and 7) religious practices. In recent years, however, postmodern concerns have demanded that greater attention be given to affective and relational aspects of Christian belonging through 3) values and 4) emotions. Furthermore, recent research into children’s spirituality has highlighted the need for more attention to be paid to 3) values, 4) emotions and 5) objective experiences.³³ The understanding of spirituality as acute relational consciousness (Hay with Nye 2006:109) reinforces the need for particular attention to be paid to those outcomes that are relational in nature and influence. The process of spiritual nurture is understood by Nye (2009:41) to be heavily dependent on relationships of respect, intimacy and trust and therefore the outcomes which assist in the formation and maintenance of strong relationships can be considered more important to spiritual nurture than those that are inherently less relational.

³³ Hay with Nye (2006) and Nye (2009) present empirical evidence of children’s learning in all of these areas. Dykstra (1981) has challenged traditional models of children’s moral development and appealed for a more strongly relational and ethical ethic.

The interdependency of learning and relating in Christian becoming

I have indicated that I take Christian becoming to be fundamentally a concern for process over product, specifically two interweaving processes, the learning process and the relating process. These processes are not distinct and are very much dependent upon each other. I take the process by which humans learn to be the same irrespective of the content of the learning, although the manner in which the process works out can be different for different people (the details of this are addressed in the following chapter). When brought to bear on Christian matters the learning process can lead to various Christian attributes as described above but these attributes are most clearly recognised as good and valuable when they are utilised in the service of relationship to God and to others. The apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian church, summed this up “If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2). The relating process in the context of Christian becoming, is fundamental to the process of loving God and loving others as oneself. This clearly involves the establishment and perpetuation of relationships. It is this relating process which most readily indicates the need for the ongoing cyclical nature of becoming. Relationship is not an outcome, it is a beginning and an continual ongoing. This is why merely concentrating on Christian attributes to be achieved is not enough for Christian becoming to be realised. The attributes are developed in the service of loving relationship with God and with others.

Conclusion

In this chapter, theological terms for Christian becoming have been identified and the phrase Christian becoming is preferred over more conventional terms in order to emphasise the process involved in both learning and relating. The goal of the becoming process has historically been broadly understood either as Christ-like perfection or as union with God. I have suggested here that it is helpful to hold both of these outcomes together by focussing attention not on the outcomes themselves but on the oscillating process of movement between these two goals. Hence the Christian becoming process is envisaged as a dual process of learning and relating, where good learning is understood to nurture relationships and good relationships are understood to be the crucible for learning.

At Messy Church, the building and maintenance of relationships through the provision of hospitality (focused on overcoming the strangeness of the stranger),

coupled with an emphasis on creativity which accommodates different learning styles, raises the possibility that the Messy Church environment may facilitate Christian becoming rather differently to conventional church. The following chapter investigates the writing of Lucy Moore and other commentators on Messy Church, regarding the kind of Christian becoming that they expect to see happening at Messy Church, to determine the extent to which the theoretical possibilities afforded by the Messy Church values are recognised or anticipated by these authors.

Chapter 8

Christian becoming at Messy Church

The concept of Christian becoming has been approached from the perspectives of educational psychology, philosophy and theology. In this Chapter, I shall attempt to bring these three approaches to bear on the available Messy Church literature in order to gain an appreciation for how senior figures within Messy Church and those who have commented upon it, anticipate that Christian becoming happens at Messy Church.

The relational emphasis within the aims and objectives of Messy Church is clearly depicted in Lucy Moore's first book. In it, Moore (2006:10,18) describes a desire to connect with people on the messy edge of traditional church by giving due consideration to their different 'needs'. What these different needs are understood to be is evident from the principles listed (Moore 2006:21):

- To provide an opportunity for people of all ages to worship together.
- To help people of all ages to feel that they belong in church and to each other.
- To help people have fun together.
- To give people a chance to express their God-given creativity.
- To invite people into an experience of Christian community.
- To introduce people to Jesus through hospitality, friendship, stories and worship.

The emphasis here is almost entirely on affective, experiential and relational outcomes. The experience of worship is one which is undergone "together". People are helped to "feel" that they belong in church and "to each other", an example of subjectively experienced belonging and de-structured relationality.³⁴ Aiming to help people have fun is clearly an indication that participants are expected to have a pleasurable experience. An invitation into Christian community may be understood as an invitation to share in the distinctive characteristics of this community, i.e. to participate in being Christian. But the impression here is softer in that it is an invitation to simply "put your toe in the church pond" (Moore 2006:18). That this is an invitation to relationship is apparent from the emphasis on hospitality and

³⁴ In his PhD thesis exploring discourses on membership and belonging in Baptist Churches, Jackson (2009:141-159) identified four ways in which the ordinary discourse of church-attenders related to belonging: Experientially-validated subjectivity; post-denominationally conceived identity; De-structured relationality and practical immediacy.

friendship, “It’s the quality of friendships more than anything else that will make men and women, children and teens want to come” (Moore 2012:26).

Lucy Moore says little about learning in Christian becoming at Messy Church until her second Messy Church book (Moore 2008). In a section on *How might we go about making disciples?* she cites a dissertation by Andrew Roberts (2008), entitled *Making Disciples in Fresh Expressions*, who identified three things that are necessary for discipleship to happen. They are: “a sacramental environment”, “intentional learning”, and “supportive relationships” (Moore 2008:17). Roberts’ threefold understanding of a formative environment is also summarised in *Fresh! An introduction to fresh expressions and pioneer ministry* (Goodhew, Roberts and Volland 2012: 123-128). These three elements give some indication of what Lucy Moore perceives to be important in the nurture of Christian becoming and because of this they are used here to shape this chapter as it seeks to identify how Christian becoming is conceived by actors and commentators in the Messy Church movement.

Theological considerations – A sacramental environment

As Lucy Moore explains what is meant by a sacramental environment, she focuses on two things, the presence (and transcendence) of God and sacraments as “signs” of the kingdom of God. Moore (2008:56) describes a sacrament as “a visible sign of an inward grace”. She writes “It’s something you can see, but it’s more than what you can see, and that “more than” is full of some aspect of God.” She suggests that perhaps the “holy” needs to be rediscovered in ordinary things like eating a meal together. Moore raises questions about whether the Messy meal can be considered to be ‘sacramental’ whilst also emphasising that it is NOT the same as the Eucharistic meal. Note, of course, the inherently relational dynamic of a shared meal. Moore seems to be echoing Martin Buber’s insight that in each relation of *I* to *Thou* we can become aware of “a breath from the eternal *Thou*; in each *Thou* we address the eternal *Thou*” (Buber 2013:5). Food is served, received and shared together. When the serving, receiving and sharing is done with an *I-Thou* attitude there is a sense that the meal not only points to a deeper mystery concerning shared life and Divine life, it embodies that reality.

McGrath (2007:419) loosely defines a sacrament as “an external rite or sign which in some way conveys grace to believers”. By the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church had formally recognised seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, marriage, ordination and extreme unction (anointing with oil for healing), and Catholic theology remains much the same today. Luther recognised only two (baptism and Eucharist), placing heavy emphasis

upon the importance of a physical sign, and this remains the position of the Church of England. Protestant theology has been criticised for often treating sacraments as mere signs rather than being more directly the means by which God confers grace (McGrath 2007:426), this is the commonly held view of most Baptist Churches who prefer to use the word “ordinance” rather than “sacrament” to describe baptism and Eucharist (Garrett 2009:540). Moore seems to be reaching for an understanding of a sacramental Messy meal which goes beyond the notion of a sign, while at the same time she demonstrates an awareness of the tension this may generate in the face of traditional understandings of the sacraments. Writing more recently, Moore (2012:23) encourages any Messy Church that is considering offering Holy Communion to “make a point of mentioning it to their Bishop, Chair of District or equivalent” indicating that tensions between inclusivity and traditional practice remain. Evidently, the absence of baptism and Eucharist from Messy Church sessions would disqualify them from being described as sacramental environments in the strictest sense of the Anglican understanding. And yet in focusing attention at Messy Church on human-human interaction and relationship over a shared meal, perhaps Lucy Moore has prompted increased awareness of the sacramental nature of serving, receiving and sharing, in a way that is less apparent in traditional understandings of sacrament.

Educational considerations – Intentional learning

The second requirement in Roberts’ (2008) analysis of discipleship in fresh expressions of church, is for intentional learning. In terms of Christian becoming as a dual process of relating and learning, I take this to be an appeal not to focus exclusively on relating but to specifically and intentionally attend to the product of learning as an acquiring of the Christ-like attributes set out above. In her first book on Messy Church, Lucy Moore (2006:35) clearly states her expectations regarding Messy Church:

We try to make it a place where people can grow in faith through a mixture of belonging and believing. The questioning and owning will probably happen elsewhere.

To try to unpack the difference between the “believing” which Moore hopes to nurture at Messy Church and the “questioning and owning” which Moore expects to happen elsewhere, it is helpful to return to Bloom’s taxonomy for the cognitive domain (Bloom et al. 1956). The six levels of knowing and using information are: receiving, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In distinguishing between believing, and questioning and owning, it seems likely that Moore sees the role of Messy Church in terms of helping an individual through the

first few stages of the cognitive domain, i.e. receiving, comprehension and maybe application. Questioning seems to be a function of analysis, whereas owning seems to involve a combination of synthesis and evaluation. Since receiving and comprehension correspond to Kolb's perception axis, it is evident that Moore expects very little transformation of experience to be done by participants at Messy Church.

The structure of the Messy Church session may in fact work against empowering individual participants as active subjects in their own Christian becoming experience. The structure described by Lucy Moore (2006:22) places the craft activities *before* the celebration. If the Bible story or session theme is not recounted until after the craft activity, the creative materials cannot be used to respond to the story or theme. This severely restricts the opportunity for participants to engage in creative exploration of a personally meaningful understanding, and it prohibits the use of craft materials for doing the work of transforming the Messy Church experience into new knowledge. Creativity may still happen, but it is less likely to be influenced by the Christian context since there has been little Christian input before the craft activity time. In the case of Robbie and his work on "angry Joseph", hearing the story of Joseph before being presented with the task of colouring Joseph's coat was fundamental to the connections that Robbie made with anger. Without the biblical narrative, Robbie would simply have been faced with a cardboard figure and some coloured strips. It is unlikely that he would have made the same decision to colour the figure black if he had not been told how Joseph was stripped of his coat and thrown into a pit. Moore (2006:64) suggests that all aspects of the session, including the craft activities, should reinforce some aspect of the theme or narrative so that they can be more easily remembered by participants. As a simple memory aid, placing the craft activities before the telling of the story seems reasonable. However, this again suggests that, at the time of writing, Moore understood learning at Messy Church to involve a passive reception of information to be remembered, rather than the active transformation of information conceptualised in Kolb's ELT.

It remains possible though, that the emphasis upon hospitality and creativity may provide a somewhat fertile ground for transformation particularly via active engagement. The Messy Church values of hospitality (through attentive conversation aimed at overcoming the strangeness of the stranger) and creativity (through imaginative, purposeful and original work of value) may provide opportunity for learning from experience through the transformation dimension in Kolb's ELT. Primarily (but not exclusively, since imagination is largely an act of inner reflection) the work of transforming experience is nurtured in the active

experimentation domain. This contrasts with a traditional church service, such as one patterned on Anglican Common Worship (Church of England 2000), where the focus is on experiencing the stories through the Eucharist and the Word. This is primarily a comprehensional process which involves grasping the abstract conceptualisations of language and symbolic representation. Any transformative element to the learning which happens during liturgical worship is likely to come through reflective observation, since there is little opportunity to actively experiment through discussion or creativity. Messy Church then, may afford opportunities for experiential learning through transformative extensional processes that are largely absent from traditional worship.

Bringing the Messy Church values alongside the Conversational Learning dialectics lends further insight. The intention to generate a genuinely all-age environment within a Christ-centred context can be recognised as an attempt to attend to the status/solidarity dialectic. The Christocentric emphasis at Messy Church provides the structure, boundaries and direction of the learning space. This is the status dimension. In an ideal environment this is balance by the solidarity of all-ages learning together, with and from each other, which represent the temporal, emotional and physical space afforded to attentive listening to each other. However, if the status afforded by the Christian story, is perceived to lie in the hands of Messy Church organisers, rather than shared between participants as each contributes their own perspective, the learning space will become imbalanced since the expectation will be that children should attend to adults, but that the reverse is not necessary. In light of this dialectic, it is clear that the provision of a genuinely all-age environment will only be successfully achieved when tensions over power related to the myth of different needs in child and adult learning are resolved. Inequality between children and adults is usually understood to mean that adults have a responsibility to assist children to grow up, and in so doing bring the inherent inequality to an end (Miller 1986). However, the situation is more complex in matters of spirituality where children may be the ones who assist the adults to become more spiritual. The need for balance between the boundaries and direction afforded by Christianity alongside the linking of lives afforded by equality and mutuality in friendship and fellowship is crucial if Messy Church is to fulfil its potential in the provision of a environment that is nurturing to Christian becoming in all ages.

Solidarity is further enabled by attention to the intersubjectivity dialectic. Intersubjectivity involves a balance between taking information and experience from outside-in, (which is how learning begins), and by bringing what is inside-out through a vulnerable openness to the other (which helps bring to conscious awareness the less apparent inner influences on learning). The Messy Church values

of hospitality and creativity theoretically contribute to a learning space which is supportive of the inside-out dynamic as well as the more common outside-in dimension of learning. In hospitality this is most evident in the vulnerabilities of the Messy Church hosts and guests. The vulnerability of the host in inviting a stranger into a sacred space clearly carries a certain amount of tension with it. (One need only imagine spilled glitter-glue on an altar cloth to anticipate the tension it may generate.) The vulnerability of the stranger in a foreign environment is equally apparent. The extent to which both guest and host are willing to admit their own vulnerabilities, and pay sensitive attention to the vulnerabilities of the other, will be an indicator of balance in this dialectic. In Conversational Learning a genuinely hospitable space is supportive of both inside-out and outside-in dynamics. However, if either host or guest is unwilling or unable to recognise and admit to the subjective dimension of their Messy Church experience, then the opportunity for deeper solidarity may be missed. From Buber's perspective this happens when *I* am not fully present to *Thou*.

Crucial to the development of a balanced learning space will be what happens when one or the other is willing and able to be fully present and acknowledge their inner affective state by bringing the inside-out. This represents an invitation to *I-Thou* relation from *I* to *Thou*. In this case, relational connection is diminished not only when there is insensitive disagreement between conversational partners, but also when an inside-out response is ignored or not valued (as in Robbie's story).³⁵ Simply noticing and affirming the inside-out contribution of the other may be all that is required to facilitate a positive learning environment. When the responsibility for learning is with the learner, the Messy Church helper does not need to have all the answers, instead, by offering positive encouragement, even in a small way, the process is enlivened. The question is not "What is the right truth or fact to say to this person?" but "How can I support this person as they seek to resolve their own inner questions?" If the person requests information then supplying the information will be part of the necessary support. But they may already have the information that they need at that moment and what they require is courage or imagination to see how the information relates to them and how they can possibly respond.

The Messy Church value of creativity can also be understood to contribute to the generation of a learning environment that is supportive of the inside-out dynamic. Creative expression is an inside-out process that can reveal something of the inner person outside the limitations of verbal language. It is in this respect that authentic

³⁵ The story of six-year old Robbie's determination to ignore the intended outcomes of a craft activity in pursuit of his own idea is recounted in the Introduction to Part 1.

creative expression can serve as an invitation to *I-Thou* relation through the openness of *I* to *Thou*. Tradition and conformity impose external expectations on the individual in an outside-in manner which can oblige the individual to set aside their own needs for the needs of the group. This obligation to subjugation may bring about a hiddenness of any different needs of the individual which can only emphasises the felt sense of separation from the group. Successfully negotiating this tension between individual differences and traditional and social norms is not only crucial to the success of Messy Church as a Christian community, it is crucial to the individual well-being of anyone who feels in any sense different. It is not enough to provide an environment where visitors encounter the Christian stories (Biblical, historical and personal faith stories), it is also necessary for those visitors to be able to respond to the stories authentically, and in turn, that helpers and organisers receive and respond authentically to the visitors' stories. It may be that some organisers are both aware of the need for this, and are more than willing to do it, but it is unclear as to how widespread this awareness is.

One, seemingly innocuous, practical aspect of Messy Church which inadvertently touches on some of these dialectical tensions is the typical monthly pattern of most Messy Church events. This issue of frequency has been addressed head on by Tim Waghorn (2013:203-205) who runs a weekly Messy Church in Melbourne, Australia. His reasons for a weekly event are that weekly Sunday worship is still the norm and that a weekly Messy Church can present a "distillate" of the message in the traditional Sunday sermon of the same week "in such a way that children and adults alike have access to its meaning and relevancy". There is a strong emphasis here on cognitive content and a teacher-centred, information transmission view of learning. Indeed for Waghorn (2013:205) "the goal ... is to provide sound teaching ... the Bible passage accompanied by teaching is the crucial element". He gives the impression, though he does not overtly say so, that the duration of the activity session is minimised to accommodate the teaching which is delivered verbally by the "church leader" who "runs the service" (2013:208). The "craft, food, games and, of course, mess ... are peripheral to the nucleus of the church in any format, style or setting" (2013:203). Conformity very clearly triumphs over creativity here. His judgement that activities and games "will not change lives" and the meal "will not transform communities" since "only Christ can do that" (2013:215), is clear indication that Waghorn subscribes to Lee's (1973:175) "blow theory" of Christian learning which attributes learning to the sole causal work of the Holy Spirit. Evidently Waghorn does not share the core Messy Church values and is simply using the Messy Church name to attract new people who are then subjected to a cognitively light version of traditional church until they are ready for the "next phase of church life" (2013:216). He stops short of suggesting that this next step

should involve making the transition to traditional church but an appeal for liturgy and a clear emphasis on the role of ordained clergy would suggest that he would not oppose such a suggestion.

Hopkin's (2013:237) places a similar emphasis on pace and frequency stating that "if all or most of discipleship is to happen within the Messy Church event, then everyone will have to move at the pace of the slowest." This concern again betrays an understanding of learning as a cognitive process of reception of information controlled by the supplier of that information. In this conception, a group of people are given some information which is required to be grasped by everyone before the next parcel of information can be delivered. Hence if delivery happens only monthly and if one person is particularly slow at understanding, everyone is affected and the process moves very slowly.

For Kolb (1984), knowledge is *constructed by the learner* as he or she perceives (through intuition, feelings, senses and language) and transforms (by reflection or action) their experience. A shared experience such as a Messy Church event therefore affords numerous opportunities for different knowledge construction via creativity and conversation. Since, in this model, it is the learner who drives the learning process, learning is not restricted to the Messy Church event and can continue beyond it if the individual so desires. This is most likely to happen when the learner is aware of and to a certain extent confident in their ability to learn (a concept known as efficacy) and if they are intrinsically motivated to learn because they perceive such learning to be valuable and therefore worth investing in. Information does not need to come exclusively through the Messy Church organisers. The UK is an information rich society. For a motivated individual, information about Christianity and what it means to be Christian is widely available. There may be a role in helping participants to find accurate and insightful sources. But what is particularly needed is support for Messy Church participants to trust their own curiosity regarding Christian faith, and encouragement to play, experiment and be spiritually creative in order to grow in confidence that such learning is worth pursuing. By paying attention to the affective dimensions of learning, particularly through providing for creative expression, and building strong relationships which are able to scaffold a balanced conversational learning environment, Messy Church has a real opportunity to transform Christian becoming. But this opportunity may be missed if learning is narrowly defined and if the learning environment inadvertently restricts learning to information reception and retention.

Without specific reference to the careful definition of the Baker, Jensen and Kolb (2002) model, Lucy Moore (2012:12) nevertheless seems to advocate indirectly for a conversational learning approach within the Messy Church teams. She introduces

“Messy team themes” which are essentially a handful of reflective questions directed at teams with the suggestion that they might gather together once a month over food and explore the questions together in order to “give energy and purpose to the team”.³⁶ She offers no answers to her questions but merely suggests the process of engagement with them as being helpful for team development. Her questions often ask the team to reflect on how they feel about certain aspects of the theme or story and in this sense they encourage inside-out awareness. Whilst this is to be welcomed, some understanding and explication of the dialectics involved in Conversational Learning may be helpful to ensure that teams understand and appreciate how self-awareness and disclosure contribute to a healthy and fertile learning space. The provision of a few questions, however pertinent they might be, is not, on its own, going to guard against an imbalance in the learning space caused by someone pulling rank and imposing their own view.

In summary then, the possibilities surrounding the nurture of Christian becoming at Messy Church involve a shift away from the cognitive emphasis in teaching brought about by the Enlightenment, towards a more holistic approach informed by a constructivist view of learning. Messy Church has potential, through its distinct values, to offer a learning space grounded in more humane qualities which resonate more clearly with post-modern sensibilities, such as “embodiment, interaction, mutuality, playfulness and story” (Drane 2013:121). It is clear that these affective and relational dimensions of the creative learning process, which are apparent in both the hierarchical/solidarity and the individual/relationality dialectics of Conversational Learning theory, are key to unlocking the potential for Christian becoming which may be facilitated at Messy Church.

Socialisation or child-led learning

In prioritising the development of relationships, and to a lesser extent, intentional learning, Messy Church affords the possibility of an environment, an eco-system if you will, that is nurturing to Christian becoming. However, the apparent tension between conformity to tradition and individual creativity raises questions concerning whether or not Messy Church helpers will consistently prioritise one or other of

³⁶ The questions are suggested by Moore at the end of each session plan and are usually related to the theme of the session. For example, a session plan designed around Paul’s missionary journeys contains the following Messy team theme questions: How do you feel about journeys? Do you feel your life is a journey with God or a dead-end? How can you help each other? How can you catch the passion that Paul had for sharing the message of Jesus with others? (Moore 2012:117)

these values. A bias toward conformity might be expected to coincide with an endorsement of socialisation as a learning process since the underlying message of socialisation is “imitate me”. This is likely to result, where becoming does occur, in traditional religious becoming. A bias towards creativity is likely to result in the helper being more open to learning from others and, more specifically, to learning from the child. This is more likely to result, where becoming does occur, in the creative play and joyful activity that I have termed playful child becoming.

Socialisation as an important vehicle for Christian nurture was popularised through the writing of John Westerhoff III (1976). Westerhoff identified socialisation as the key process for the way that Christian culture, world-view and ethos are transmitted from one generation to another. Children need to be socialised into the faith by confident and suitable adult models within a loving Christian community. There is little room for original creativity in this understanding, (although Westerhoff demonstrated an expectation that adults would also learn from children), and yet this notion of socialisation into becoming like those who are held up as models in the faith is prevalent in Messy Church literature.

Influenced by Bob Hopkins (2003)³⁷, Paul Moore (2013:36-37) identifies three types of learning: formal, non-formal and socialisation. Churches “need to use all three modes” urges Paul Moore (2013:38), but the emphasis has traditionally been upon formal learning and instruction when “what is urgently required, is more non-formal, intentional, practical learning combined with socialisation in a church community”. Drawing inspiration from the Hebrew Bible stories, Paul Moore (2013:47) seems then to merge non-formal and socialisation processes and draws the conclusion that “there is wisdom to be found here on how we can make disciples in Messy Church by developing an intentional socialisation programme.” He goes on to explain:

Key to the way that Messy Church is meant to work is the specific aim that people should not only have fun but also be encouraged to explore faith as they create things and chat about the Bible theme or story that links all of the crafts and the celebration. Those leading the crafts need training and practice in how to facilitate this sort of discussion in a gentle and unforced way. (Moore 2013:48)

There are two verbs in this paragraph that relate to the learning process “create” and “chat”. The language here frames the intention as one of encouragement to exploration and yet Paul Moore only advocates training in how to facilitate the discussion, which suggests that it is the conversation which is understood to be the

³⁷ Hopkins cited a presentation he had heard by Ted Ward in 1990 (Ward, McKinney and Dettoni 1971).

primary vehicle for learning, rather than the creativity. This has implications for children's learning since their verbal skills are still being developed and they may tend to lean toward the non-verbal expression and exploration afforded by the craft activities. However, he is right to suggest conversational training, although I would suggest that those involved on both sides of the conversation would benefit from a deeper understanding of the dialectical tensions in the Conversational Learning process.

Bob Hopkins (2013) has applied his 2003 model (originally conceived when looking at training for pioneer ministers) specifically to the Messy Church context. He concludes that Messy Church is strongest in socialisation with formal learning the weakest. The process of socialisation, at the individual level is, for Hopkins, a journey from attendee to participant to contributor to member. Richard Moreland and John Levine (1982, pp.137-192) created a model of group socialisation based upon a similar sequence of stages that occur as an individual transitions through a group in which they identify five stages of socialisation which mark this transition; investigation, socialisation, maintenance, resocialisation, and remembrance. This socialisation process pushes the individual from prospective, new, full, marginal, and ex member. The first three stages are somewhat equivalent to Hopkins first three stages. Initially an individual "attends" Messy Church as a "prospective" member. Once they begin to fully "participate" in the values of Messy Church (not just the activities that are on offer) it is reasonable to describe them as a "new member". Once they begin to "contribute" they could be regarded as a "full member". After this the models differ. Hopkins describes his final step as full member though it is difficult to see in practice how this might differ from contributor. Moreland and Levine make allowance for a divergence between the values of an individual and that of the group so their fourth step conceptualises a "marginal" stage whereby the individual and the group assess their commitment to one another leading to one of two outcomes. Either the individual is "re-socialised" back into full membership, or the individual leaves and becomes an "ex-member". The absence of this kind of dynamic in Hopkins model is indicative of an assumption that once integrated, people will remain within the church community. That this is not always the case has been illustrated by Francis and Richter (2007; 1998) in their studies on church leaving across different denominations in the UK.

Several definitions of socialisation exist. Mead (1958) has defined socialisation as the process whereby shared meaning about who will do what within the group is created. Stryker and Statham (1985) suggest socialisation is the process whereby newcomers become part of the group's pattern of activities. Both of these definitions focus on the role of the individual. By contrast, Moreland and Levine (1982)

understand socialisation as a reciprocal process whereby group members meet each other's needs and accomplish shared goals. This suggests that individuals influence the socialisation process rather than simply being shaped by it. Anderson, Riddle and Martin (1999) have similarly developed a definition based on communication whereby group members use verbal and nonverbal messages to create a new and unique group culture. It is my understanding that a fresh expression of church would be an example of such creativity. The interpersonal interaction "allows them to establish rules and roles, make decisions and solve problems and reach both individual and group goals" (Myers and Anderson 2008:29).

This reciprocity within the socialisation process seems to be largely absent from both Hopkins's (2013) and Paul Moore's (2013) analysis of the process at Messy Church. It is most evident in Lucy Moore's descriptions, particularly in her account of the early days in the initial development of Messy Church and the consultation which took place with families in the area (2006:10, 46, 67). The emphasis on an inherited view of making disciples in her second book (Moore 2008:12-19) seemed to set the tone for a return to a conservative approach of conformation to specific outcomes. However, Lucy Moore's creativity and playfulness return in *Messy Church 3* and are particularly apparent in her witty spoof letters crafted to address some "frequently asked questions" (Moore 2012:13-36). She depicts missional angst with a humour and sensitivity which betrays a return to her original determination to listen to those outside the church as well as all kinds of individuals within it. An example is in her description of the kind of people required to run a Messy Church:

You need people whose lives aren't perfect; people who aren't certain what they believe about every aspect of life and faith; people whose families are busy making as many mistakes as ours and who aren't ashamed to say it. (Moore 2012:18)

And again, in writing about the nature of hospitality at Messy Church:

What does hospitality mean – does it flow one-way or has the "guest" as much to contribute as the "host"? How are we best "fed" – through being served or through serving others? What should we be aiming for in our faith development – to become more or less child-like?

It remains, however, possible to detect something different in the writing of Paul Moore (2013). He does state that one of the strengths of Messy Church is that "all become learners together" (Moore 2013:58) but his understanding is that organisers will learn through opportunities for service, and through involvement in "gentle Bible study" at planning meetings. In emphasising these, Paul Moore remains faithful to a hierarchical, one-way model of apprenticeship and coaching in which the organisers are taught by the church leader and hence they become the fountains at which the participants drink. I am not arguing against the less informed learning

from the more informed, in fact I understand it to be fundamental to social constructivist views of learning in the Vygotskian paradigm. But it is the uni-directional nature of the model which is suspect, particularly to a post-modern culture, which as Lucy Moore (2012:21) herself points out “lack[s] trust in authority”. The idea that anything that can be known about Christian becoming has to originate in those who are the organisers of Messy Church and passed on to participants, belies a particular understanding of becoming, along the lines of that depicted in Lee’s (1973:188-194) “proclamation theory”, rather than on the gospel accounts of Jesus. It can fail to account for the contribution to group learning made by less informed individuals including any critique they may bring to the status quo. Jesus frequently held up those outside of the Israelite community as examples of faith for those within it.³⁸ In addition, the assertion by Jesus that one must “become like little children”³⁹ apparently casts children, albeit unexpectedly, as role-model and mentor. Paul Moore (2013:60) addresses this verse and suggests that it is “the child’s total lack of status and importance” together with “a healthy curiosity and an openness to new things” which are indicative of the child-like qualities advocated. But in the final summing up it is the child’s “trust and dependence upon Jesus” which is the main quality to be acquired, notwithstanding that there is nothing in the text in Matthew to indicate whether or not the child in question does “trust and depend upon Jesus”. It seems that what Paul Moore actually desires is that Messy Church participants trust and depend upon his somewhat traditional understanding of Christian discipleship. The “lack of status and importance” of children in first century Palestine is certainly true, and is central to an accurate understanding of this verse. But Paul Moore does not seem to consider the practical outworking of organisers aspiring to this attitude at Messy Church. Setting aside any status which comes with having been a longstanding Christian or even Church leader and giving preference to those who might be considered less experienced in spiritual matters, might mean attending and responding to the focus of those normally outside of traditional church circles. The “healthy curiosity and openness to new things” seems to be of concern only for those with little experience of Jesus, or perhaps with little experience of Messy Church, whereas it might equally be directed at those with little knowledge of how to share the learning space through intersubjective relating.

It is possible for learning to take place in *all* of those present at Messy Church, and the inspiration for learning may come from even the least of those present. What is required is attention to different perspectives, and a willingness to respond, evaluate,

³⁸ See for example Matthew 8:5-10 and 15:22-28.

³⁹ See Matthew 18:3.

organise and characterise (i.e. live out) one's own learning.⁴⁰ The danger seems to be that if significant authors in the debate surrounding Messy Church theology and practice are merely paying lip service to the possibility of reciprocal learning, the opportunity may be lost. John Drane (2013:125) describes Messy Church at its best as

...a gloriously interactive and open-ended exploration of life, faith and God in partnership with others that, like the relationship between the primal couple and God in the garden, is in constant danger of being systematised so as to become the exact opposite.

The question then, is whether helpers and organisers across the Messy Church network are open to learning from others, particularly children, at Messy Church. How widespread is the understanding that participants are to be socialised into a conforming to a standard idea of a disciple who is “just like us”?

Paul Moore (2013:55, 60, 64, 88) repeatedly states that Jesus is the teacher, master and model, but he also advocates that Messy Church organisers are to be models (2013:39, 59, 64). Indeed humans often learn through imitation, but caution is required. The dangers of encouraging the imitation of others through understanding oneself as a model have been thoroughly expounded by René Girard (2001), in his mimetic theory. For Girard, when a subject is encouraged to imitate a model, the subject begins to desire the status of being a model which can lead to other models becoming obstacles and rivals which in turn can lead to conflict. Warren (2013:28) notes that “we even see this dynamic played out among Jesus' disciples ... over and over again we read about the disciples' competition with one another for Jesus' approbation, and rank and position in the kingdom of God”. This presents a convincing argument for ensuring that the status/solidarity dialectic is attended to at Messy Church. Encouraging Messy Church organisers to see themselves as models for children and adult participants, reinforces a hierarchy which is at best naive in the light of mimetic theory. Humans clearly learn by imitation, but this can have both positive and negative consequences. This may have been behind Jesus' challenge to his rivalrous disciples to become like children. The imitation of Christ is a familiar notion in Christianity. However, Jesus also offered an alternative model for his disciples, that of a small child. In light of this, the desire for Messy Church helpers to be models for participants should be tempered in favour of an imitation of Christ which is somehow also depicted in the imitation of a child.

⁴⁰ These terms make up Krathwohl's taxonomy of outcomes for the affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia 1956).

In summary, there is potential for Messy Church, through its distinctive values, to nurture a different kind of Christian becoming. This would involve a shift away from the dominance of expected conformity to traditional discipleship models, towards an interactive, experiential learning approach which facilitates genuine creativity, self-awareness and mutuality in relationships. However, prominent Messy Church proponents, including, on occasion, Lucy Moore herself, seem to present a mixed picture regarding their expectations of Christian becoming at Messy Church. This raises a fundamental question concerning helper attitudes towards uni-directional socialisation as a learning process compared to a mutuality in learning exemplified by a willingness to be led by the child. It is clear from this that the affective and relational dimensions of the creative learning process at Messy Church are key to understanding the Christian becoming which may be happening there.

Relational considerations – A community to belong to

The final requirement in Roberts' (2008) analysis of discipleship at fresh expressions of church is the presence of "supportive relationships". Messy Church seems to set a high priority on interpersonal relationships, which are fundamental to the sense of community that they seek to cultivate. Lucy Moore (2008:18) sums this up by insisting that Messy Church provides a "safe space" where "cross-generational relationships can flourish". Moore's expectations regarding Messy Church involve a mixture of believing and belonging (Moore 2006:35). She explains her reasoning behind the emphasis on belonging, "for a growing number of people, there's the longing for somewhere to belong in a broken society – a longing for community" (Moore 2012:21). The conceptualisation of belonging that is depicted here is that of subjective relationality. This is an informal, loosely held notion of belonging dependent upon relational dynamics, as opposed to the formal membership structures often resting on ecclesial requirements which are found in traditional churches.⁴¹

⁴¹ For example, the Church of England affords certain rights to those living in the geographically defined Parish. But in order to vote at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, a person must be on the electoral roll for the Parish. A person is allowed to be on the electoral roll if they are baptised, aged sixteen or over and either (a) declare themselves to be a member of the Church of England (or a church in communion with the C of E) and are resident in the Parish; (b) declare themselves to be a member and are not living within the Parish, but have habitually attended public worship in the Parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment; or (c) to be a member of a Church which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and have habitually attended public worship in the Parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment (MacMorran and Briden 2010:98-99).

Paul Moore (2013:19) recounts the story of a man who initially was “not interested” in Christianity but went along to a Messy Church to help with one of the crafts. Paul Moore (2013:22-23) writes

Encouraging newcomers to take on tasks and responsibilities is an important strategy to adopt, because they then feel needed. This reinforces their sense of belonging and the feeling that they are contributing to Messy Church rather than having something done to them or for them.

What is interesting here is that the first three steps (attending, responding and valuing) of Krathwohl’s taxonomy of the affective domain of learning (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia 1956) are demonstrated *first* by the Messy Church organisers in their attitude towards the newcomer. They receive his offer of help, respond to it positively and indicate that they value his contribution. Perhaps this in turn encourages a mirrored response from the newcomer such that he receives Messy Church positively and begins to respond to it and value what he finds there. Moore goes on to say “we need to facilitate more openness through positive experiences of Christian community and building relationships and trust” (Moore 2013:33). It is clear that for Paul Moore, Messy Church particularly concentrates on the relational dimension of belonging in order to bring about a receptive attitude. What is not clear is whether the expectation that newcomers can make a valid contribution extends to the whole person including any spiritual as well as practical input.

Reverend Judy Paulsen (2012; 2013) conducted research into the effects of her own Messy Church on its participants (at the time, she was pastor at the Anglican Christ Memorial Church, Oshawa, Canada). The changes that she detected were categorised via a threefold model of belonging, believing and behaving outlined in a book on *Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* by Alan Krieger (1999). Of particular note is the approach that Paulsen took towards belonging. What is interesting is the way in which she describes her understanding of what an increased sense of belonging means and the kind of evidence she offers to corroborate it (Paulsen 2012:164-165). When referring to the sense of belonging within Messy Church itself, examples given are relational and refer to a connection (or lack of connection) with the people there, both those running Messy Church and the other families involved. Interestingly, though she does not elaborate upon this difference, Paulsen distinguishes between sense of belonging and “Christian fellowship” which is identified as a behavioural outcome rather than an element of belonging. Only 35% of families admitted to an increase in Christian fellowship since attending Messy Church. Commenting on the reasons for this low figure, she explains that a high level of food allergies prevents them from serving a meal at her Messy Church which removes a major aspect of the informal relational interaction that other Messy Churches benefit from. She also writes “The fact that parents tend to be busy

interacting with their children may preclude them from building meaningful relationships with other parents” (Paulsen 2012:167; 2013:78). Setting aside the “Christian” nature of the fellowship, it is difficult to see how “meaningful relationships” envisaged here differ from the “connection” anticipated as a factor in belonging. The depth of relationship alluded to in the word meaningful, perhaps indicates an expectation of a stronger connection for fellowship than for belonging. Nevertheless there is, in both, an anticipation of a growing relationship which is evident in disappointingly smaller numbers than expected. Paulsen cites a non-churched mother who yearned for deeper relationships at Messy Church and who appealed for more social interaction and sharing personal stories rather than “focusing on any of the lessons or teachings” (Paulsen 2012:166; 2013:77). It seems that in Paulsen’s situation the relational nature of Messy Church is not functioning as well as expected and I suspect that she is correct in identifying the lack of a meal as a contributing factor in this. It would be interesting to know whether the Messy Church concerned ever acted upon the advice of the non-church mother above and sought to provide more social interaction as a priority over teaching. Paulsen does not make it clear that this ever happened, commenting only that some restructuring may be necessary.

Paulsen herself demonstrates a leaning towards a more traditional understanding of belonging, particularly when talking about the wider context. For those who declared an increased sense of belonging to the wider parish church, supporting evidence included increased attendance at Sunday worship, involvement in the parish church children’s choir, attendance on a discipleship course, asking for information about Baptism and volunteering to help run a holiday Bible school. These are all behavioural, rather than relational, outcomes which perhaps demonstrate an increased sense of ownership but do not necessarily indicate any depth of relationship. It appears that expectations concerning what it means to “belong” may be different within the Messy Church context (where building relationships is generally taken to be crucial) than for traditional Church (where other behaviour is anticipated and therefore more readily identified). It may also be that any personal ownership and commitment demonstrated within Messy Church, such as being attentive to the needs of others through sensitive listening and offers of help to clear up afterwards, are somewhat taken for granted and easy to overlook. This raises questions concerning how belonging is understood by those who run Messy Church and by those who attend. What kind of evidence of belonging is anticipated by helpers and demonstrated by participants? For example, how widespread is the expectation that participants will eventually turn up at a conventional Sunday morning service? Do adult participants acknowledge that Messy Church has provided them with the opportunity to develop close

relationships? These questions are addressed through the empirical survey presented in the next part of this thesis.

The fact that belonging and behaviour are intertwined in the examples given by Paulsen serves to demonstrate the complex nature of the relationship between these two aspects of Christian becoming. Beth Barnett (2013:196) has challenged the “heresy” that spiritual development is related to “participation in and performance of certain ecclesial acts”. Whilst I would not go as far as declaring this a heresy, I do think that those whose view of Christianity has been shaped in a traditional church setting are culturally conditioned to pay attention to, and therefore value, certain behaviours (e.g. singing in the choir) and are more likely to overlook and therefore undervalue others, in this case the relational qualities which Messy Church aspires to and needs to thrive, such as being a good listener and respectful communicator. Accepting the complex relationship between behaving and belonging, it seems likely that a sense of belonging would increase wherever behaviour was genuinely valued and affirmed. It is unclear at present whether those running Messy Church have a strong enough appreciation for the kinds of behavioural qualities which accord with the Messy Church values of hospitality and creativity. Identifying and finding ways to affirm behaviours which complement Messy Church values will be crucial if Messy Church is to become established as church in its own right. If emphasis remains on behaviours which complement conventional church, then it would be no surprise if participants detected a perhaps unspoken desire for them to move on to conventional church.

Conclusion

The expectations of Messy Church leaders and commentators regarding Christian becoming at Messy Church have been explored from theological, educational and relational perspectives. The theological idea of a sacrament is explored by Lucy Moore who demonstrates in her writing a curiosity concerning the sense of the presence of God during the serving and sharing of a meal at Messy Church. This seems to faintly echo Martin Buber’s notion that relation to the divine *Thou* is caught up in human *I-Thou* relation.

The mode of learning most commonly anticipated to happen at Messy Church by commentators is that of socialisation. However, socialisation can be understood differently, either as uni-directional conformity or as mutual negotiation leading to the creation of a new community. Much of the writing on Messy Church seems to lean toward the first of these expectations, but occasionally, particularly in the writing of Lucy Moore herself, one is able to glimpse the second.

The learning space created by Messy Church can be understood to be bounded, at least in theory, by its values which seem to be echoed in the dialectics of Conversational Learning theory. This suggests that in an ideal Messy Church scenario the expectations of traditional Christianity are balanced by the solidarity of all-age inclusion. Establishing solidarity between helpers and participants, and between adults and children, is likely to depend upon the willingness to reveal (in an inside-out manner) the vulnerabilities surrounding authentic hospitality and genuine creativity. If learning is dominated by the outside-in expectations of uni-directional socialisation into the conventional church community, then it is unlikely that reciprocal intersubjective relations would be fostered, and quite likely that opportunities for helpers to learn from participants would be missed. However, if helpers are self-aware and attentive to participants, particularly the children in their midst, this suggest that a balance in the intersubjective dialectic is possible and relationships are more likely to lean toward being *I-Thou* in nature.

Further insight on the nature of relationships at Messy Church was gained through an exploration of the notion of belonging. Although the Messy Church literature is replete with examples of belonging as something that is subjectively experienced and relationally dependent, there appears to remain an underlying expectation that belonging would lead to behaviours which complement conventional church. Again this seems to point to an underlying expectation of conformity and one-way socialisation.

Attitudes of Messy Church helpers towards the three Messy Church values of all-age inclusion, hospitality and creativity are further explored in the Part 3 of this thesis through empirical study. Individual differences in the psycho-social profiles of helpers, together with value adherence scores, are then investigated as possible predictors of attitudes towards socialisation and child-led learning at Messy Church.

Part 3
Empirical study of Messy Church

Main aims

The main aims of the empirical study into Christian becoming at Messy Church were to develop a psycho-social profile of the adults involved in Messy Church, to assess the learning outcomes (traditional religious and relational/spiritual) acknowledged by the adult participants, to assess the attitude of the helpers and organisers towards the Messy Church values of all-age inclusion, hospitality and creativity, and also to assess helper attitudes to the kind of Christian becoming (socialisation or child-led) that they expect to see at Messy Church.

The Messy Church values of hospitality, creativity and all-age inclusion were explored in Chapters 2 and 3 in order to provide a theoretical basis for the operationalisation of these concepts so that attitudes towards these values in Messy Church organisers and helpers may be measured.

In Chapter 4, hypotheses were made concerning the kinds of psychological type preferences that Messy Church participants might be expected to admit, specifically that extraverts (E), intuitives (N), and perceivers (P) might be more apparent at Messy Church compared to conventional church. Feelers (F), who are known to be attracted to conventional church, were expected to be equally attracted to Messy Church. Messy Church was also expected to reverse the over-representation of SJ temperaments and ISFJ types observed in UK Church of England congregations. These hypotheses are addressed by the empirical study that follows.

Chapter 5 presented hypotheses concerning the kinds of Christian becoming that might be anticipated to flow from different emphases on motivational values: Traditional religious becoming (from tradition/conformity values), spiritual/relational becoming (from benevolence/universalism values) and playful child becoming (from hedonism/stimulation/self-direction values). This chapter also considered the question of the possible tension caused by conflicting expectations of conformity and creativity. This tension was revisited, in the context of Christian becoming at Messy Church, in Chapter 8 where attitudes towards socialisation and child-led learning were explored. These concepts have been operationalised in the empirical study presented in the following chapters in order to measure the extent to which these somewhat conflicting attitudes are present in the sample of churches involved.

Previous empirical work on Messy Church

Messy Church is a recent phenomenon which celebrated its tenth birthday in 2014. As such, relatively little research has been carried out regarding what Messy Church

does (or even seeks to do) and the people who are involved. The research which has been done has been carried out on a small scale and limited to particular examples of Messy Church in a particular location such as a church or diocese.

John Walker (2012) conducted postdoctoral research on increased attendance at both parish and fresh expressions of church in the Canterbury diocese. Using a mixed methods approach utilising quantitative attendance data and qualitative semi-structured interviews, Walker investigated whether fresh expressions of church were successful in halting the decline in attendance widely observed in traditional UK churches. Two examples of Messy Church were included in the interview phase which was conducted across five parishes and six fresh expressions of church. A total of 103 people were interviewed (14 leaders, 43 adult participants (23 churched, 20 unchurched) and 46 children/teenagers) with approximately half of these from the fresh expressions of church. It is not clear precisely how many adult participants from the Messy Churches took part, but given that a total of 27 adults (including six leaders) from all six fresh expressions of church were interviewed, the sample was definitely small and cannot be generalised. The Messy Churches surveyed were found to attract a higher percentage of child participants but demonstrated a reduced ability to socialise adult newcomers. Socialisation was understood as a one-way process of conformity to be achieved by “cyclical reinforcement of self-perception, integration into the community and internalisation of tradition”. The results of his research have since been published in a book entitled *Testing Fresh Expressions* (Walker 2014). His focus on a uni-directional socialisation process serves to illustrate the conventional expectation regarding Christian becoming as something the existing church does to newcomers.

Reverend Judy Paulsen (2012; 2013) conducted doctoral research (again via a mixed method of questionnaire and interviews) into the effects of her own Messy Church on its participants. The changes that she detected were categorised via a threefold model of belonging, believing and behaving outlined in a book on *Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* by Alan Krieder (1999). Seventeen families took part in the survey. Paulsen reports definite behavioural change with 100% of families admitting to an increase in Bible knowledge and conversations about God. She reports a modest increase (acknowledged by 50-60% of families) in “sense of belonging”, particularly to the Messy Church and the local parish church which runs it. And slight change in belief (approximately half of the families acknowledged some aspect of new or strengthened Christian beliefs). Again, these results cannot be generalised and are specific to this particular example of Messy Church.

Back in the UK, Lichfield diocese (Fisher et al. 2013) published results of a survey on discipleship in Messy Churches across its diocese. Forty-seven Messy Church

leaders participated in the survey of which forty-one came from the Church of England. The majority of these Messy Churches met monthly with 38% meeting on a Sunday and 38% on a Saturday. Approximately 50% of participants were classed as “outsiders” which was taken to mean no previous church attendance. These figures were broadly confirmed by the results of the survey conducted for this thesis. The weakness of the Lichfield survey is in its implementation across Messy Church leaders rather than across a wider group of helpers and adult participants. This means that questions regarding “conversions” and faith progression in participants are actually based on observation and opinion rather than being self-reported.

The Church Army’s Research Unit (2013) presented a report on the impact and growth of fresh expressions of church to the Faith in Research conference in London on 16th January 2014. Since then seven more dioceses have been surveyed (Church Army’s Research Unit 2015). Leaders of fresh expressions of church completed a survey questionnaire either independently or via telephone interview. The original report included 165 examples of Messy Church across ten dioceses in the UK, but other Messy Churches were excluded from the study on the grounds that they failed to meet some of the criteria for defining a fresh expression of church.¹ Of the Messy Churches surveyed, 84.2% met monthly with just over 50% of these meeting at the weekend. Just over a third of Messy Churches were run by evangelical churches. These results are broadly confirmed by the data presented in this thesis.

The limited research conducted prior to the present project demonstrated a need for a broader study of the actual participants at Messy Church and not just those involved in leading or organising it. The study presented here contributes to the existing body of knowledge concerning Messy Church, and of course, concerning fresh expressions of church, through an empirical survey across all of the adults involved. Adults at Messy Church are categorised here according to whether or not they help to run Messy Church, and whether or not they attend conventional church. A profile of the resulting three groups (helpers, attenders and non-attenders) was developed in order to clarify similarities and differences between the adults in each group in terms of age, gender, previous religious experience and practice and psychological type preferences. This enabled first-hand, empirical data, concerning the Messy Church experience of adults who only rarely attend conventional church, to be analysed and discussed alongside data from those who come from a more traditional church background.

¹ The Church Army Research Unit (2013:10) has ten parameters to define a fresh expression of church one of which is based on the question “is there intention to be church?” which includes a key intention that they not be seen as a bridge back to “real church”.

Chapter 9

Methods

In order to test the hypotheses formulated in Part 2, it was necessary to gather empirical data concerning the profile, experiences and perceptions of organisers and participants regarding their personal experience of Messy Church. This was done via the Great Big Messy Survey, conducted over a period from December 2013 until August 2014.

Great Big Messy Survey

A survey was deemed to be the most suitable strategy for obtaining evidence concerning Christian becoming outcomes and processes at Messy Church since it enabled information to be collected from large numbers of respondents across a wide area.

The existence of the Messy Church organisation made conducting a survey feasible due to the fact that it maintains several lines of communication with Messy Church leaders through its website, social media presence, monthly newsletter, tri-annual magazine, and network of regional co-ordinators. Access to Messy Church leaders was facilitated by the Messy Church organisation in several ways. First, information about the research project was posted on the Messy Church web-site and publicised via Lucy Moore's blog. Second, an article about the survey was printed in the second edition (January-April 2014) of the *Get Messy!* magazine published by the BRF (Aspland 2014:7). The article outlined the scope and purpose of the survey and invited interested church leaders to register for a survey pack. Third, an open invitation to take part in the survey was included in the Messy Church newsletters for December 2013 and January and February 2014. Fourth, information was circulated via the Messy Church organisation's Facebook and Twitter accounts. And finally, all of the Messy Churches regional co-ordinators listed on the web-site were contact by email and asked for their help in promoting the survey.

Leaders were able to register to take part in two ways: by filling in an online registration form or by requesting a survey pack by email or post. Those who registered online were asked to supply some basic information about their Messy Church at the same time. Others were sent a paper copy of these questions with the survey pack.

The sample of Messy Churches involved in the survey was then arrived at by convenience rather than being selected at random and this may have introduced bias

into the data. However, contact details for the whole population of Messy Churches would be impossible to obtain since they are not all registered on the organisation's database. Those that are registered are also likely to be recipients of the newsletter and thus are likely to be aware of the survey. It is possible that those churches which did volunteer to take part are those which are more confident in what they are doing at Messy Church and this may mean that the data presents a more positive picture of Messy Church than would be expected from a randomly selected sample.

Survey Pack

The survey pack distributed to participating churches contained:

- A survey Statement explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix A) to be read aloud at the start of the Messy Church Session in which the survey would be rolled out to participants.
- A set of questions for the main leader (see Appendix B).
- Questionnaires for helpers (see Appendix C).
- Different questionnaires for adults who attend Messy Church but do not help to run it (see Appendix D).
- Large prepaid envelopes for the church to return responses collectively and smaller prepaid envelopes for individual returns.

Helpers were advised to complete their questionnaires prior to the Messy Church session during which adult participants would be surveyed. The adult and helper questionnaires were also made available online for ease of access and return although only a handful of respondents utilised this option.

Survey packs were distributed between December 2013 and April 2014 and completed questionnaires were returned between March and August 2014. A variety of methods of communication was used to encourage registered churches to implement and return responses including social media, email and letter. In total, 73 churches registered to take part and 41 returned data, a response rate of 56%. Two church leaders indicated that having seen the questionnaires they no longer wished to take part. Both stated that the length and level of complexity of the questionnaires made them unsuitable for their congregations to take part.

Questionnaires

The survey was conducted via self-completed questionnaires. The main purpose of the survey was to develop a profile of adult involvement in Messy Church and to

explore the nature of the Christian becoming which happens and is expected to happen at Messy Church. Christian becoming is understood here to be dually influenced by the attitudes of Messy Church helpers and by the predisposition of the adult participants. The attitude of helpers was expected to depend upon the extent to which helpers share in the vision and values of Messy Church (as articulated in the Messy Church literature) and the psychological type preferences of the helpers. Associations with age, gender and length of involvement were also investigated. The predisposition of the adult participants was expected to depend upon previous involvement in a church, and the psychological type profile of the participants. Associations with age, gender and length of involvement were also investigated. Questionnaire development was then driven by the following research questions:

- What kinds of people are involved in Messy Church (e.g. age, gender, religious affiliation, practice and experience)? What psychological type preferences do they admit?
- Adults – What learning outcomes do adults recognise and admit?
- Helpers – Do helpers recognise and share the Messy Church values? Do they expect Christian becoming to happen at Messy Church and if so how?

A trial was conducted across five Messy Churches and involved 33 helpers and 13 adults. A modest refinement of the questions was made and the final versions are discussed in detail in what follows.²

Instruments

A combination of established and new research instruments were used in the compilation of the two main questionnaires aimed at helpers and (non-helping) adult participants. A set of questions related to the background and practical outworking of the Messy Church itself were addressed to the main leader alone via a third much smaller questionnaire. The main leader was also asked to complete the helper questionnaire. Some questions, such as those to do with demography, psychological type, length of involvement and attitude to Christianity, appeared on both helper and adult questionnaires.

² Ethical approval was sought from the Faculty of Education and Theology Ethics Committee at York St John University in September 2013. Approval was granted subject to some minor recommendations and given approval code REF ET/26/09/13/AA.

Main leader questions

In order to build a profile of the Messy Churches involved in the survey, the main leaders of the Messy Churches which registered to take part were asked to supply some general information at registration concerning their Messy Church. This information included:

- The denominations of the churches involved
- The tradition of the churches involved
- The age groups catered for
- The day, time and frequency of the Messy Church event
- Their sacramental practice.

The results are presented in the following chapter.

Shared questions

In order to develop a profile of the kinds of people involved in Messy Church, the questionnaire contained a set of questions headed 'About you'. Respondents were asked to supply their age group, gender, religious affiliation (if any) and some details about their religious and spiritual experience (how often they attend church, pray, read the Bible, whether they have had a religious conversion or any kind of religious or spiritual experience prior to or during Messy Church).

Respondents' Attitude to Christianity was measured by the short form of the established Francis Attitude to Christianity Scale (Francis 1993). This seven-item scale demonstrated strong internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha score of .92 (Table 9.1). Since these items were included on both helper and adult questionnaires, this table depicts Attitude to Christianity for all adults at Messy Church, both participants and helpers, and reveals an overwhelmingly positive endorsement.

Table 9.1 Francis Attitude to Christianity Scale

A measure of attitude towards Christianity ($N = 443$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Prayer helps me a lot	43.8	42.0	85.8	.84
God means a lot to me	56.9	28.1	85.0	.88
God helps me to lead a better life	45.2	39.2	84.4	.81
I know that Jesus helps me	53.4	28.6	82.0	.86
I know that Jesus is very close to me	41.4	31.8	73.2	.85
I think the Bible is out of date *	2.0	7.1	9.1	.59
I think traditional church is a waste of time *	1.3	2.2	3.5	.50

Note. The total number of respondents includes helpers as well as adult participants. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. * These items were reverse coded.

The Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis 2005) were used to assess participants' preferences across the four Jungian dichotomous types: judging (via thinking or feeling), perception (via sensing or intuition), orientation (introversion or extraversion) and attitude toward the outer world (perceiving or judging). Previous studies in church-related contexts have demonstrated that this instrument is reliable (Francis, Craig and Hall 2008) and this also proved to be the case here. Internal reliability, based on Cronbach's alpha for each of the pairs of traits were as follows: E/I (.79), S/N (.72), F/T (.63) and J/P (.74). As each of the paired traits has been associated differently with men and women, gender was also recorded.

Adult participant questions

In addition to the demographic information collected from both adult participants and helpers at Messy Church, the adult questionnaire focused on two things: perceived learning outcomes and factors associated with the learning process. Two different groups of learning outcomes among adult participants were investigated: religious outcomes and spiritual/relational outcomes.

Several new scales were developed to measure expected learning outcomes in light of the theoretical conceptualisation of Christian becoming in Part 2. The questionnaire included a variety of items concerning expected cognitive, affective and conative outcomes. The coalition of items into scales was then largely informed

by Buber's *I and Thou*. Items which contributed to the *It* of religious knowledge, affect and practice were gathered into the single component scale called Religious Transformation. This was complemented by the About Faith Scale which measured the extent to which Messy Church was perceived to be about faith in God. Items that were anchored in spirituality and relationality, i.e. the items that were expected to be associated with an *I-Thou* attitude, were gathered together in several further single component scales. The Spiritual Transformation Scale and the Positive Change Scale are concerned with self-awareness and the *I* being fully present to the experience. The Self-transcendence Scale and the Relational Belonging Scale concerned other-awareness and connection to others at Messy Church. Lastly, the Participation Scale was designed to measure the extent to which adults participated in Messy Church for themselves. Scale items consisted of Likert statements with five response options (strongly agree, agree, not certain, disagree, strongly disagree).

Religious Transformation, a measure of perceived change in religious affect, knowledge and practice since coming to Messy Church, was measured via a seven-item scale (Table 9.2) which returned a Cronbach's alpha reliability score of .85.

Table 9.2 Religious Transformation Scale

A measure of perceived change in religious affect, knowledge and practice since coming to Messy Church ($N = 193$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
The Christian story means more to me now	5.1	36.4	41.5	.69
I am more aware of God	5.0	34.0	39.0	.63
I am more curious about the Bible	5.6	31.5	37.1	.69
I find it easier to accept Christianity	5.6	27.7	33.3	.57
I've had some great conversations about God	4.6	27.0	31.6	.47
I pray more	4.1	27.2	31.3	.58
The Bible has come alive for me	4.1	23.9	28.0	.68

Note. On the questionnaire, all of the items in this scale were preceded by the phrase "Since coming to Messy Church...". CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation.

Table 9.3 About Faith Scale

A measure of the extent to which Messy Church is perceived to be about faith for the respondent ($N = 196$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
For me Messy Church is not about faith [*]	6.9	21.3	28.2	.50
I rarely think about God ^{*a}	2.5	10.6	13.1	.58
I'd prefer less God stuff at Messy Church [*]	1.0	4.0	5.0	.55
I am more certain Christianity is NOT for me ^{*a}	0.0	2.0	2.0	.46

Note. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation.

^{*} All items in this scale were reverse coded.

^a These items were preceded by the words "Since coming to Messy Church...".

The extent that Messy Church was viewed as being About Faith was assessed via a four-item scale (Table 9.3), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .72.

Adult respondents were also asked a series of questions related to their perception of Spiritual Transformation, Self-transcendence, Relational Belonging, and Positive Change at Messy Church. Each scale is described in turn.

The Spiritual Transformation Scale measures the extent to which adult participants agree that Messy Church provides an atmosphere which nurtures those things that are typically associated with spirituality (thankfulness, being truly alive, part of something bigger than oneself, etc.). It is measured by an eight-item scale (Table 9.4), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .88.

The Self-transcendence scale is a measure of whether respondents agree that Messy Church has influenced their awareness of and concern for the needs of other people and the earth's resources. The corrected item-total correlation scores of over 0.7 suggest that these items may be measuring very similar things. Self-transcendence was measured via a three-item scale (Table 9.5), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .88.

Table 9.4 Spiritual Transformation Scale

A measure of perceived change in spiritual affect, knowledge and practice since coming to Messy Church ($N = 190$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Helps me to celebrate life ^a	16.2	57.6	73.8	.68
I feel more thankful about the good things in life ^b	21.0	50.0	71.0	.51
Makes me feel like I matter ^a	12.1	58.3	70.4	.67
Helps me see beyond my day to day life ^a	11.1	48.2	59.3	.71
Makes me think more about big questions in life ^a	10.4	40.3	50.7	.67
Nurtures my soul ^a	6.1	43.7	49.8	.66
I feel more alive ^b	6.1	29.4	35.5	.62
Is where I reflect on the mysteries of life ^a	6.1	16.3	22.4	.64

Note. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. ^a These items were preceded by the words “Messy Church...”. ^b These items were preceded by the words “Since coming to Messy Church...”.

Table 9.5 Self-transcendence Scale

A measure of the extent to which respondents care more for others (people and planet) since coming to Messy Church ($N = 196$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
I care more about making the world a better place	19.6	50.8	70.4	.75
I care more about other people	17.6	49.7	67.3	.80
I am more aware of need to look after the earth	16.7	44.9	61.6	.74

Note. All of these items were preceded by the words “Since coming to Messy Church...”.
CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation.

The Relational Belonging Scale assesses the extent to which respondents perceive themselves to belong to Messy Church through the relationships that they have

established there. This is one indication of how successfully the Messy Church value of hospitality has been implemented. Relational Belonging was assessed via a five-item scale (Table 9.6), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .82.

Table 9.6 Relational Belonging Scale

A measure of the extent to which respondents feel they belong at Messy Church ($N = 197$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
I feel part of a community at Messy Church	39.7	50.5	90.2	.63
I look forward to Messy Church	43.8	45.3	89.1	.64
I feel a strong sense of belonging to Messy Church	35.5	47.8	83.3	.62
I have made some really good friends ^a	20.3	41.6	61.9	.61
I feel a bit out of place [*]	1.5	3.0	4.5	.46

Note. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. ^a This item was preceded by the words "Since coming to Messy Church...". ^{*} This item was reverse coded.

Table 9.7 Positive Change Scale

A measure of the extent to which respondents understand themselves to have changed for the better at Messy Church ($N = 193$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Challenges me to be a better person ^a	10.1	52.5	62.6	.46
My priorities in life are pretty much unchanged ^{*b}	10.6	40.9	51.5	.49
I haven't changed much at all ^{*b}	7.1	33.8	40.9	.60
Makes very little difference to my life ^{*a}	0.5	12.1	12.6	.50
Doesn't inspire me at all ^{*a}	0.5	5.6	6.1	.46

Note. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. ^{*} These items were reverse coded.

^a These items were preceded by the words "Messy Church...". ^b These items were preceded by the words "Since coming to Messy Church...".

Finally, the question of whether adults at Messy Church recognise themselves as having changed for the better in some unspecified way was addressed. The

unspecified nature of the change may seem rather vague but this approach was adopted in order to avoid some of the more controversial arguments which have been associated with the Christian Church in recent years (such as women in leadership or homosexuality). It is apparent that a lack of consensus within the Church makes such issues unsuitable as general indicators of Christian becoming. The presence of Positive Change was measured via a five-item scale (Table 9.7), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .74.

The scales above are dependent variables which measure learning outcomes, however there are two additional factors, independent variables, which may influence the learning process and its outcomes, namely, level of participation and duration of involvement.

The scale measure Participation determines the extent to which adult respondents join in with the activities at Messy Church and perceive it to be something for themselves as well as for their children. A high Participation score indicates that the respondent does not see Messy Church merely as providing something for children alone. It is measured by a five-item scale (Table 9.8), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .67.

Table 9.8 Participation Scale

A measure of the extent to which respondents join in with Messy Church for themselves ($N = 162$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
I like to join in with the crafts	49.5	39.1	88.6	.44
Messy Church is very important for us as a family	35.4	46.4	81.8	.51
I am happy to give money to support Messy Church	33.3	48.3	81.6	.22
Messy Church is for me as much as the children	35.4	36.3	71.7	.56
I'd prefer to leave children and collect them after *	1.8	4.8	6.6	.42

Note. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. * This item was reverse coded.

The survey questionnaire included some additional questions regarding engagement (whether the respondent participated in singing and whether they were willing to hang around and help clear up), however factor analysis determined these questions to be measuring something rather different to the Participation scale. Joining in with singing was weakly, but significantly correlated with church attendance, suggesting

that perhaps non-church attenders found this difficult because they were not familiar with it. This measure did not contribute any further insight beyond the profile of helpers, attenders and non-attenders compiled in the following results chapter.

Duration of involvement was measured by a single questionnaire item which asked adults to indicate the number of Messy Church sessions that they had attended ranging from “This is my first” (= 1), through “2-5” (= 2), “6-10” (= 3), “11-15” (= 4), “16-20” (= 5), up to “More than 20” (= 6).

The scale measures set out above yield Cronbach’s alpha above or close to .7. De Vellis (2003:44, 109) suggests that Cronbach’s alpha is usually a lower bound for reliability rather than an estimate of actual reliability and suggests an alpha score of 0.65-0.7 is minimally acceptable in most cases. In an interdisciplinary study of how personality and affective state influence the meaning of the sermon, Schaap-Jonker (2008:317) cites De Hues, Van der Leeden and Gazendam (1999:173,176-182,186) who suggest that alpha greater than .60 is acceptable and alpha greater than .80 is good.

Helper questions

In addition to the items which were shared by both adult and helper questionnaires, helper questionnaires contained a range of items specifically designed to assess helper attitudes to Messy Church values and learning processes. Messy Church is described in the literature as having five key values: all-age, hospitality, creativity, Christ-centred and celebration or worship (Lings 2013:157-158; Moore 2006:35-39). The first three values are those which distinguish Messy Church from conventional Church while the latter two are more obviously shared by the wider Christian community. Since helpers at Messy Church almost universally attend some conventional form of church as well as Messy Church, it seemed reasonable to assume that being Christ-centred and celebrating worship were values that were shared by most, if not all, Messy Church helpers. Indeed, questions to test this assumption were included in the trial version of the questionnaire and subsequently removed due to the overwhelming endorsement of the respondents and the desire to reduce the length of the questionnaire. Hence the three Messy Church values under investigation here are: all-age inclusion, hospitality, and creativity.

Table 9.9 All-age Scale

A measure of the extent to which helpers consider Messy Church to be for all ages ($N = 235$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Is for adults as much as for children	21.3	54.9	76.2	.49
Is aimed mainly at children under 10 *	14.5	46.3	60.8	.49
Is mainly for children *	17.1	39.4	56.5	.49
Is boring for teenagers *	7.3	19.5	26.8	.38
Is a place where parents mostly watch *	2.0	12.7	14.7	.36

Note. All of these items were preceded by the phrase “Our Messy Church ...”.

CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. * These items were reverse coded.

The extent to which helpers share these values is explored via a scale measure for each value, All-age (representing a positive attitude towards Messy Church being genuinely for all ages), Hospitality (a measure of attitude towards welcome, friendliness and care) and Spiritual Creativity (a measure of attitude towards allowing participants to be innovative in their exploration of spirituality). In addition, helper expectations and attitudes towards the Christian becoming process are measured via two different scales: Socialisation (with the associated message “imitate us”) and Child-led Learning (with the associated message of “imitate the children”). These five scales have been developed through the course of this research project. The Socialisation and Child-led Learning scales loosely reflect an *I-It* attitude to becoming and an *I-Thou* attitude to becoming, respectively. Factor analysis has shown three of the helper scales (All-age, Hospitality and Socialisation) to be single component scales. Spiritual Creativity is a dual component scale incorporating complementary items regarding self-directed and non-other-directed creativity in spirituality. This duality is inherently connected to the duality in *I-Thou* relation. Child-led Learning is a broad brush scale containing three components: paying attention to the child; having a high regard for the child; and a willingness to follow the child. These multi-component scales would benefit from further research to enable clarification and separation of the components.

Attitude to inclusivity of all ages was measured by a five-item scale called All-age (Table 9.9), which returned a Cronbach’s alpha score of .68. The all-age value was somewhat ambiguously held by helpers with three-quarters of helpers indicating that they felt it was just as much for adults, but only one quarter disagreeing that it was

aimed mainly at children under ten years old. Analysis of variance between ordinary helpers and main leaders returned $F(1,233) = 12.77; p < .001$, indicating a significant difference in attitude between these two groups with main leaders more likely to strongly endorse this value.

Helper attitude toward hospitality at Messy Church was assessed via a seven-item scale called Hospitality (Table 9.10), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .69. The face validity of some of these items may not be immediately apparent. The items which refer to finding out what parents need, and to helping parents relate better to their children, are included because part of the role of the host is to attend to the needs of the guests, including the relationships between the guests.

Table 9.10 Hospitality Scale

A measure of the extent to which helpers consider Messy Church to be a friendly, welcoming and caring place ($N = 237$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Excels at making people feel at home ^a	33.7	58.4	92.1	.41
Helpers go out of their way to build friendships ^b	35.2	54.7	89.9	.36
Is where people get to know each other well ^a	32.4	52.6	85.0	.42
Provokes stimulating conversations ^a	9.6	60.8	70.4	.32
Is about helping parents relate better to children ^a	4.0	38.2	42.2	.36
Finds out what parents need and provides it ^a	3.2	26.3	29.5	.42
Develops deep intimate relationships ^a	3.2	24.0	27.2	.55

Note. CITC = Corrected item total correlation. ^a These items are preceded by the phrase "Our Messy Church ...". ^b This item is preceded by the phrase "In my view, Messy Church is BEST when...".

Some elements of Hospitality were strongly endorsed, however those items which addressed pastoral care and a deeper intimacy were endorsed by the minority of helpers suggesting that the hospitality on offer may sometimes be somewhat superficial and restricted to a warm welcome and some conversational interaction. Analysis of variance between ordinary helpers and main leaders returned no significant difference in attitude between these two groups

Creativity is understood to have four components: imagination, originality, purpose and value. In order to narrow the focus of the study and to minimise the length of the questionnaire, attention here is restricted to originality as the single component of

interest. In addition, attention is further restricted to originality in spiritual matters. Therefore attitudes toward creative originality in spiritual expression were measured via a nine-item scale called Spiritual Creativity (Table 9.11), which returned a Cronbach's alpha score of .72.

Table 9.11 Spiritual Creativity Scale

A measure of the extent to which helpers are happy for participants to be innovative in their spirituality ($N = 226$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Children respond in unexpected ways ^a	32.1	56.7	88.8	.34
Allow children to worship God their own way ^b	21.1	65.7	86.8	.34
Allows people to be themselves ^c	20.2	65.9	86.1	.37
Teach right questions rather than right answers ^b	12.9	59.0	71.9	.39
Let folk be Christian without going Sun services ^b	18.3	49.8	68.1	.42
Children get lost in a world of their own ^a	17.7	41.9	59.6	.38
Trust children to make meaning themselves ^b	11.4	45.5	56.9	.54
Draw something out rather than put something in ^b	10.3	45.6	55.9	.41
Give people resources rather than tell them truths ^b	5.2	29.1	34.3	.42

Note. CITC = Corrected item total correlation. Sun = Sunday.

^a These items are preceded by the phrase "In my view, Messy Church is BEST when...".

^b These items are preceded by the phrase "In my view, Messy Church should ...".

^c These items are preceded by the phrase "Our Messy Church ...".

Eight out of nine of the Spiritual Creativity items were endorsed by the majority of helpers suggesting an overall commitment to this value. However, analysis of variance between ordinary helpers and main leaders returned $F(1,224) = 10.12$; $p < .01$, indicating a significant difference in attitude between these two groups with main leaders more likely to strongly endorse this value.

Helper expectations regarding two distinct learning processes, Socialisation or "imitate us" and Child-led learning or "imitate the child", were investigated. These processes are not necessarily mutually exclusive (for example if helpers demonstrate

that they are willing to be led by the child then the invitation to “imitate us” may equally be an invitation to “imitate the child”) but tensions may arise if and when the processes appear to offer conflicting choices.

Table 9.12 Socialisation Scale

A measure of the extent to which helpers understand themselves to be role models and teachers of the faith ($N = 239$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Build relationships to share faith with others ^a	39.8	56.7	96.5	.52
Children leave knowing something new about God ^b	42.1	53.5	95.6	.51
Activities have a strong link with the message ^b	45.5	49.8	95.3	.45
Helpers show by example how we should be ^b	26.3	56.9	83.2	.39
Children show they have understood theme ^b	17.1	65.1	82.2	.39
Sees Christians as role models for adults ^c	22.7	53.7	76.4	.39
Teach people how to become Christians ^a	12.7	51.6	64.3	.43
Challenge adults to become more like Jesus ^a	13.1	50.2	63.3	.41

Note. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. ^a These items are preceded by the phrase “In my view, Messy Church should ...”. ^b These items are preceded by the phrase “In my view, Messy Church is BEST when...”. ^c These items are preceded by the phrase “Our Messy Church ...”.

Socialisation is defined by Stryker and Statham (1985) as the process whereby newcomers become part of a group’s established pattern of activities. The emphasis is on conformation as the means of incorporation. This definition of socialisation is reflected in the unconscious invitation to “imitate us” or “become like us” and it is this definition that underpins the socialisation learning process investigated here. Socialisation (Table 9.12), is an eight-item scale which returned a reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) score of .73. Socialisation as a process was strongly endorsed by helpers at Messy Church, with all of the scale items being endorsed by over sixty percent of helpers.

Table 9.13 Child-led Learning Scale

A measure of the extent to which helpers are attentive and open to learning from the child ($N = 230$).

Item	% Agree strongly	% Agree	Total %	CITC
Listen closely when children say unexpected things ^a	27.7	62.1	89.8	.27
Expect children to question what they are told ^a	7.5	64.8	72.3	.32
Adults become more like children ^b	10.4	47.8	58.2	.35
Expect God to speak through the children ^a	9.2	44.2	53.4	.34
Children explore issues that matter to them ^b	5.2	43.0	48.2	.28
The real lessons are taught by the children ^b	8.5	36.3	44.8	.42
Knows kids are more sensitive to God than adults ^c	5.9	37.4	43.3	.39
Wants to follow where children lead ^c	3.3	29.0	32.3	.39
Values awe-struck naivety over conventional wisdom ^c	5.6	23.0	28.6	.39

Note. CITC = Corrected Item Total Correlation. ^a These items are preceded by the phrase “In my view, Messy Church should ...”. ^b These items are preceded by the phrase “In my view, Messy Church is BEST when...”. ^c These items are preceded by the phrase “Our Messy Church ...”.

Child-led learning, by contrast, is understood to reflect a more egalitarian socialisation process, such as that described by Moreland and Levine (1982), who understand socialisation to be a reciprocal process whereby group members meet each other’s needs and accomplish shared goals. Within this understanding there is scope for individuals to influence the socialisation process rather than simply being shaped by it. If all participants are able to influence the Christian becoming that happens at Messy Church in an intersubjective learning dynamic, this suggests that children too are able to contribute to this process. One indication that helpers may be open to this child-led contribution would be if they demonstrated a positive attitude towards attending to the child. A further indication may be, for example, an expectation to encounter God in the child. Child-led Learning (Table 9.13) is a nine-item scale which returned a Cronbach’s alpha score of .68. This process reflects the unconscious invitation to “imitate the child” or “become like the child”. Child-led Learning was less strongly endorsed than socialisation with five out of the nine items endorsed by less than half of the helpers.

In summary then, helper scales overall demonstrate moderate reliability with Cronbach's alpha varying between .68 and .73. In terms of all-age provision, responses to scale items demonstrate some ambiguity indicating both that Messy Church is as much for adults as for children but also that it is aimed mainly at children. Several items from the Hospitality scale are strongly endorsed and suggest that helpers perceive Messy Church to be a welcoming place where friendships are built, though lack of endorsement for other items suggest that these friendships do not become very deep and that pastoral care is not a priority. Spiritual Creativity is reasonably well-endorsed, with eight out of nine items being endorsed by the majority of helpers. Finally, the survey shows that there is a strong endorsement for Socialisation as a learning process (all items endorsed by over 60% of helpers), but Child-led learning is less-strongly endorsed (five out of nine items are endorsed by less than 50% of helpers).

Statistical analysis methods

Although a small number of respondents completed an online version of the questionnaire, the remainder of the data were manually entered into the database. Some open responses were converted into categories (e.g. the start times of the Messy Church events were grouped into two-hour time-slots). Other items were re-coded or reverse coded where necessary in preparation for analysis.

Statistical analysis of the data was carried out using Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The social profile of adult involvement in Messy Church was developed using clustered bar charts in order to compare frequencies of responses from the three groups of adults across shared (nominal or discrete) variables. Chi square tests were carried out to investigate the significance of the differences between the groups in regard to these shared variables. Psychological type profiles were presented using the established convention of type tables (Francis, Clymo and Robbins 2014:259). Chi square tests were carried out to investigate the differences in type preferences between the groups of adults involved in Messy Church, and also the differences between Messy Church congregations and those of the Church of England and the UK population.

Summary tables of means, standard deviations, and maximum and minimum values were used to present the learning outcomes (traditional religious and relational/spiritual) of adult participants, the attitudes of the helpers and organisers towards all-age inclusion, hospitality and creativity, and to the kind of Christian becoming (socialisation or child-led) that helpers expect to see at Messy Church. Analysis of variance was employed to test for significant difference of continuous

variables between conventional church attending and non-attending participants. Finally, Pearson correlation tables were used to inform multiple regression analyses which were carried out to investigate significant predictors of participant learning outcomes and helper attitudes.

Dependent and independent variables

In summary, the main dependent and independent variables determined by the empirical survey are as follows:

Shared variables:

Independent:

- Gender
- Age
- Psychological type preferences (orientation, perceiving function, judging function, attitude)

Dependent:

- Attitude to Christianity

Adult variables:

Independent:

- Duration of involvement
- Participation

Dependent:

- Religious Transformation
- About Faith
- Spiritual Transformation
- Relational Belonging
- Positive Change

Helper variables:

Independent:

- Socialisation
- Child-led Learning

Dependent:

- All-age
- Hospitality
- Spiritual Creativity

Chapter 10

Results

Church Profile

The main leaders of the Messy Churches which registered to take part in the survey were asked to supply some general information concerning their Messy Church.

Of the 72 churches which supplied this information, 49% were run by Anglicans, 15% Methodist, 10% Baptist, 7% Presbyterian, 10% were jointly run by more than one denomination, and the remaining 10% were from Messy Churches run by other denominations (Independent, Pentecostal, etc).³

Messy Church organisers were asked to choose from a list of traditions any which they felt would apply to their church. The two most commonly selected were Evangelical (37%) and Middle-of-the-road (56%). Low Church contributed 11%, High Church 4%, Charismatic 6%, Conservative 3%, and Anglo-Catholics 2%.

One way of determining whether a particular Messy Church caters for all ages is to ask the organiser simply to tick which of the following age groups are catered for at their Messy Church: pre-school, ages 5-8, ages 9-12, teens, and adults. By assigning a score of zero when a group is not ticked and one when it is ticked a total score can be arrived at which reflects the number of age groups that are intentionally catered for at the Messy Church. A total of five would indicate that all of the age groups were catered for. The percentages of Messy Churches who responded affirmatively to each age group were: preschool (83%); children aged 5-8 (96%); children aged 8-12 (86%); teenagers (39%) and adults (92%). Only 38% of Messy Churches indicated that they catered for all five of these age groups, a figure undoubtedly influenced by the large number of churches who find it difficult to engage teenagers in this context. However, only a further 35% said that they catered for four of the age-groups so even accepting the difficulty of teenage engagement, there remains just under a third of Messy Churches who set out to engage only three age-groups or fewer.

Leaders were asked to indicate whether their Messy Church served food and if so whether this usually involved a cooked meal or a snack. The majority (68%) of

³ The fact that these numbers do not add up to 100% is merely due to rounding error.

Messy Churches indicated that they served a cooked meal, 18% said they served a light snack and 13% indicated that they did not serve food at all.⁴

Despite Lucy Moore's expectation that Sunday is no longer the most suitable day of the week for families to attend church, Sunday was the most commonly chosen day for Messy Church, with 34% meeting on this day. Saturday was the second most common choice of day (24%) with the remaining churches taking place through the week. Thursday was the most common midweek choice (13%). The most popular start time was late afternoon (73% started between 3-5pm). The second most common start time was in the morning (14% started between 9-11am). All but one of the morning Messy Churches met at the weekend. The exception was a Messy Church which met every half term, midweek, during school holidays. The remaining Messy Churches either started late morning (7% began between 11am-1pm) or early evening (6% began between 5-7pm).

The majority of Messy Churches met monthly (63%). A small number met more frequently, either fortnightly (3%) or weekly (1%). 11% met bimonthly and a further 11% met less than six times per year. The remainder met monthly except for one or two months in the year (e.g. not during summer months). These figures indicate that approximately one-third of Messy Churches would not meet the Church Army Research Unit (2013:10) criteria for determining fresh expressions of church, being excluded due to meeting too infrequently.

Regarding sacramental practice, 29% of leaders reported that they had children baptised through Messy Church and 9% said that adults had been baptised. When asked whether they had ever served Holy Communion, 15% indicated that they had served Holy Communion at their Messy Church.

People Profile

The 463 adults, across 41 Messy Churches, who completed Messy Church survey questionnaires can be split into three distinct groups of people: 'helpers' who organise and help to run Messy Church; 'attenders' who are frequent attenders of a traditional church (monthly or more); and 'non-attenders' who attend traditional church infrequently or not at all. A profile of these three groups of adults has been

⁴ Due to an unfortunate omission of this question from the survey questionnaires, leaders were contacted by email and asked to report on this question separately. An attempt was made to reduce missing answers by searching internet advertisements for information concerning the serving of food at Messy Churches. In total this question was addressed in 59 cases with 13 marked as missing.

compiled and is presented in what follows. In some aspects, such as religious behaviour, helpers and attenders are similar to each other and dissimilar to non-attenders. In other aspects such as age, it is the attender and non-attender groups which are similar and the helper group which is different. Attenders are therefore anticipated to have a pivotal role to play in bridging the differences between helpers and non-attenders. A small number of the helpers surveyed (3.6%) indicated that they attended conventional church less than once per month. For the purposes of this investigation these adults are considered to be helpers rather than non-attenders.

The total sample size appears adequate, however analysing the data over the three sub-groups in effect means that each group has a relatively small sample size. As such, caution should be exercised against treating each group as a representative sample and results should be taken as indicative rather than definitive.

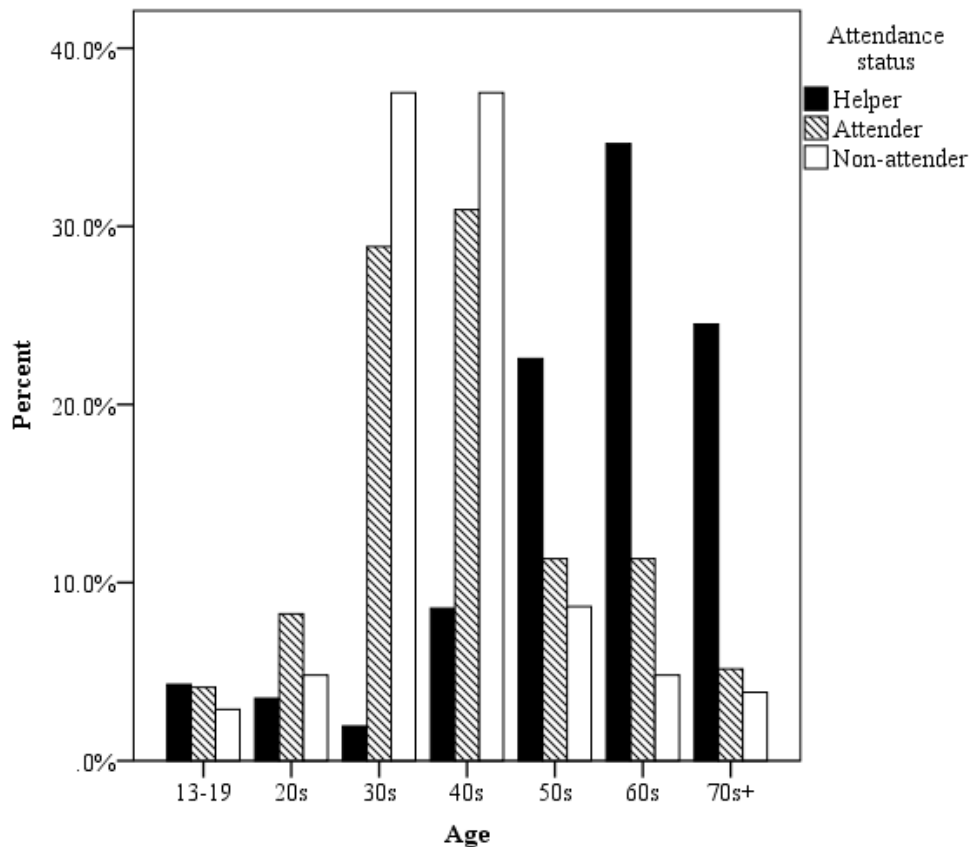


Figure 10.1 Clustered bar chart showing age profile of adults at Messy Church Helpers ($n = 257$), attenders ($n = 97$) and non-attenders ($n = 104$). Attenders and non-attenders are predominantly in their 30s and 40s, while helpers are predominantly 50+.

The age profile of each group is shown in Figure 10.1. Note that attenders and non-attenders were predominantly in their thirties and forties whereas helpers are predominantly over fifty. In other words the adults who come along to Messy Church, usually bringing children with them, are largely parents, or carers of the same generation as parents, rather than grandparents. However, those who run Messy Church are largely of the grandparents' generation. There are only minimal differences in the gender representation in each of these groups and women outnumber men by approximately four to one.

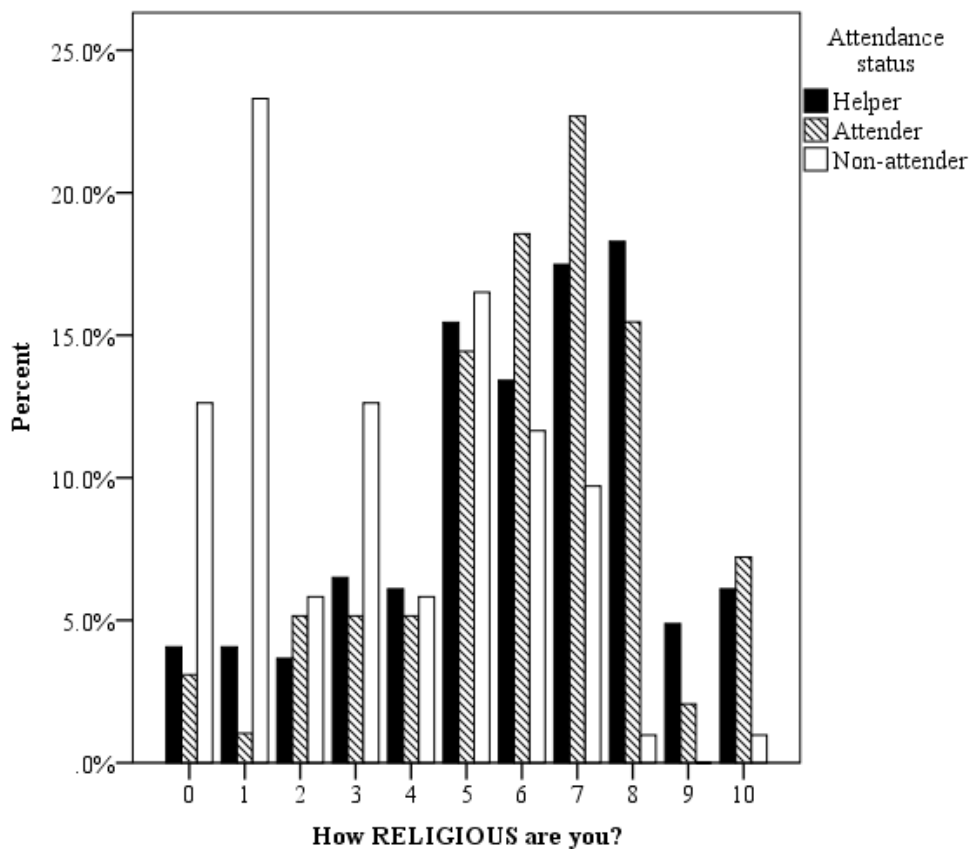


Figure 10.2 Clustered bar chart showing percentage responses to the question “How religious are you on a scale of 0 to 10?”

Helpers ($n = 246$), attenders ($n = 97$) and non-attenders ($n = 103$). Non-attenders are much more likely to score themselves 5 or lower, whereas attenders and helpers predominantly score themselves 5+.

Respondents were asked to assess how religious they were on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 represents “not at all religious” and 10 represents “extremely religious”. The resulting profile is shown in Figure 10.2. It is clear from Figure 10.2 that helpers and attenders are fairly similar in their assessment of their own personal

religiosity. Non-attenders, however, have a quite different profile with the majority scoring themselves much lower, although there may be a hint of bi-modality in the non-attending group with a minority (around 40%) scoring themselves at 5 or over, and therefore resembling helpers and attenders, and the remainder scoring themselves quite low and are therefore different from the other adults at Messy Church.

When asked the question “How spiritual are you?” a similar pattern emerges with helpers and attender returning comparable scores while the majority of non-attenders rated themselves much lower (Figure 10.3).

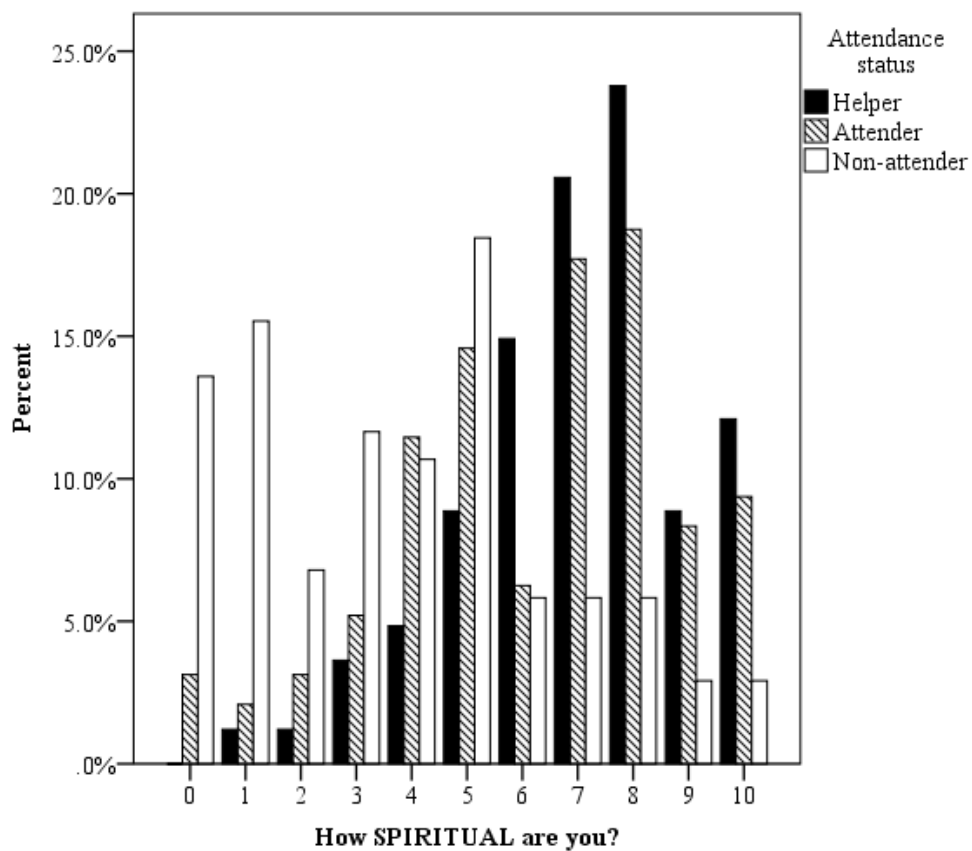


Figure 10.3 Clustered bar chart showing percentage responses to the question “How spiritual are you on a scale of 0 to 10?”

Helpers ($n = 248$), attenders ($n = 96$) and non-attenders ($n = 103$). Non-attenders predominantly score themselves below 5, whereas attenders and helpers score themselves 5+.

The hint of bi-modality among non-attenders is again apparent, with approximately 40% of non-attenders scoring themselves at 5 or more. This goes some way to indicate that the majority of adult non-attenders attracted to Messy Church consider

themselves to be neither religious nor spiritual. Hence this group of adults is *not* the group often referred to in the literature as “spiritual but not religious”.⁵ However, there may be a minority of non-attending adults who consider themselves to be both religious and spiritual.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the frequency of their personal bible reading and prayer habits. The results shown in Figure 10.4 and 10.5 add further support to the idea that helpers and attenders share similar religious tendencies which are much less likely to be shared by non-attenders.

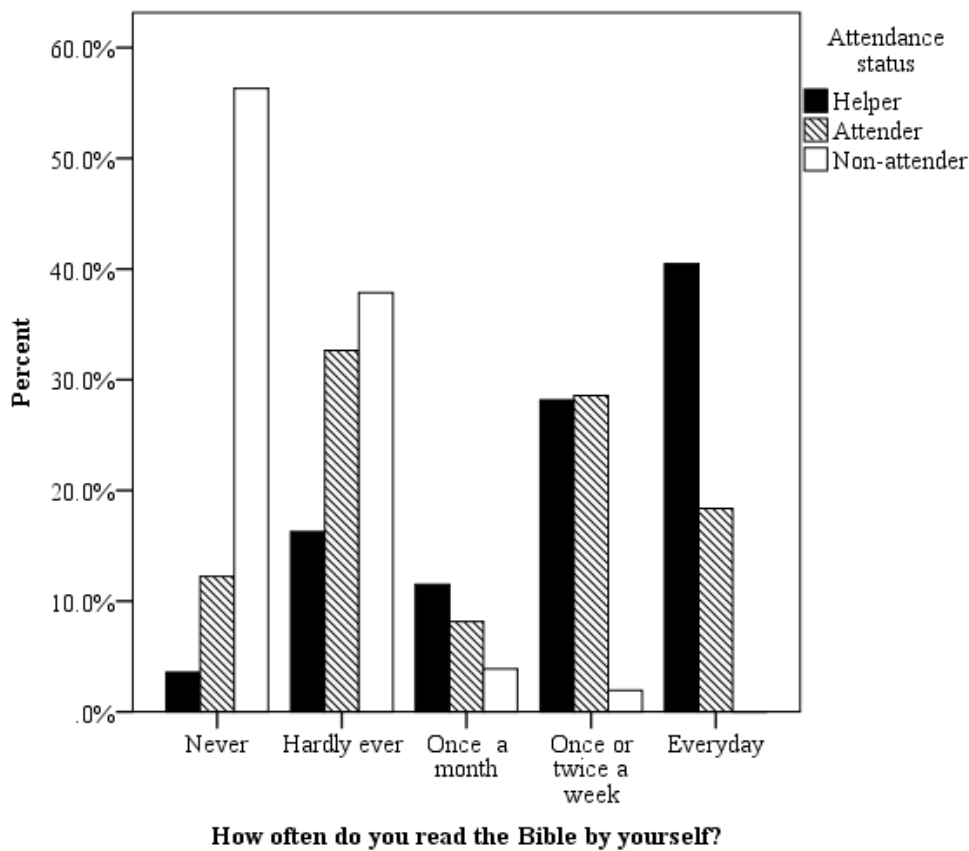


Figure 10.4 Clustered bar chart showing percentage responses to the question “How often do you read the Bible by yourself?”

Helpers ($n = 252$), attenders ($n = 98$) and non-attenders ($n = 103$). Non-attenders predominantly choose “Never” or “Hardly ever”, whereas attenders and helpers seem to fall into two groups, one which reads frequently (at least once or twice a week) and another group who hardly ever read the Bible.

⁵ Sven Erlandson (2000) has been credited with first using the term “spiritual but not religious”.

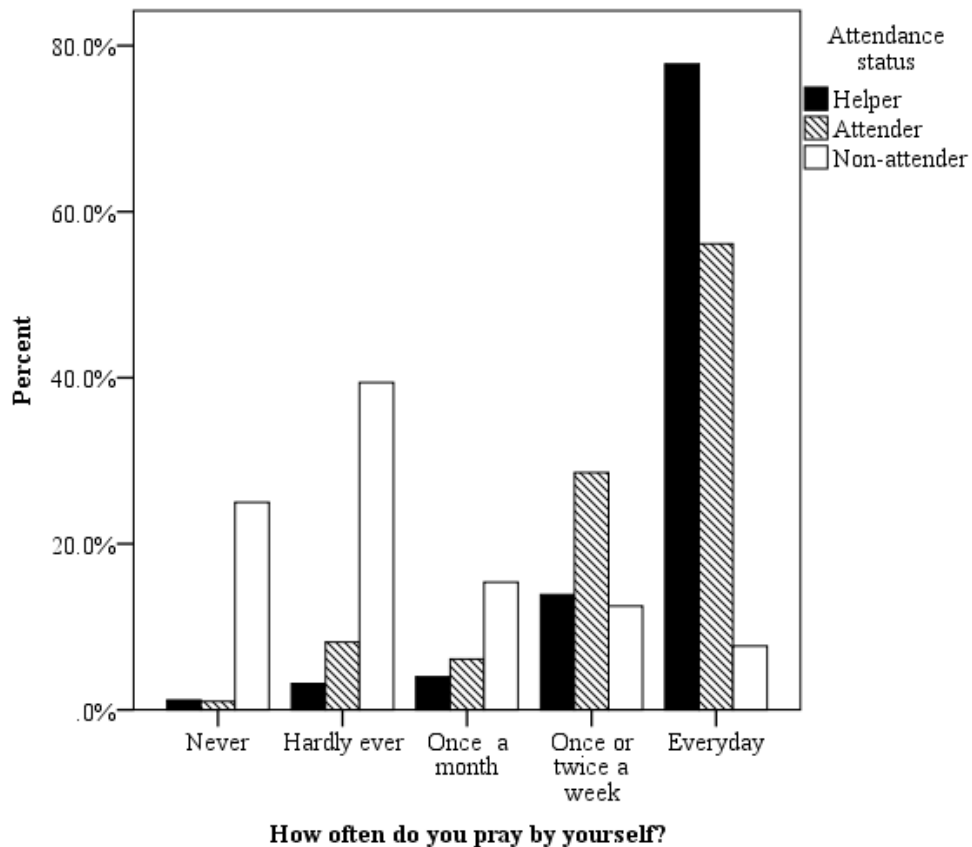


Figure 10.5 Clustered bar chart showing percentage responses to the question “How often do you pray by yourself?”

Helpers ($n = 252$), attenders ($n = 98$) and non-attenders ($n = 104$). Non-attenders predominantly respond “Never” or “Hardly ever”, whereas attenders and helpers predominantly pray frequently (at least once or twice a week).

All respondents were asked whether they had had a religious or spiritual experience either previously (Figure 10.6) or at Messy Church (Figure 10.7). There was a significant difference between the three groups of adults in their admission to religious or spiritual experience ($\chi^2 = 80.29$, $df = 4$, $p < .01$, $N = 451$).

Significantly more helpers than expected responded with “Yes definitely” and significantly more non-attenders than expected responded with “No”. Attenders responded in ways generally expected from a random standard distribution of data.

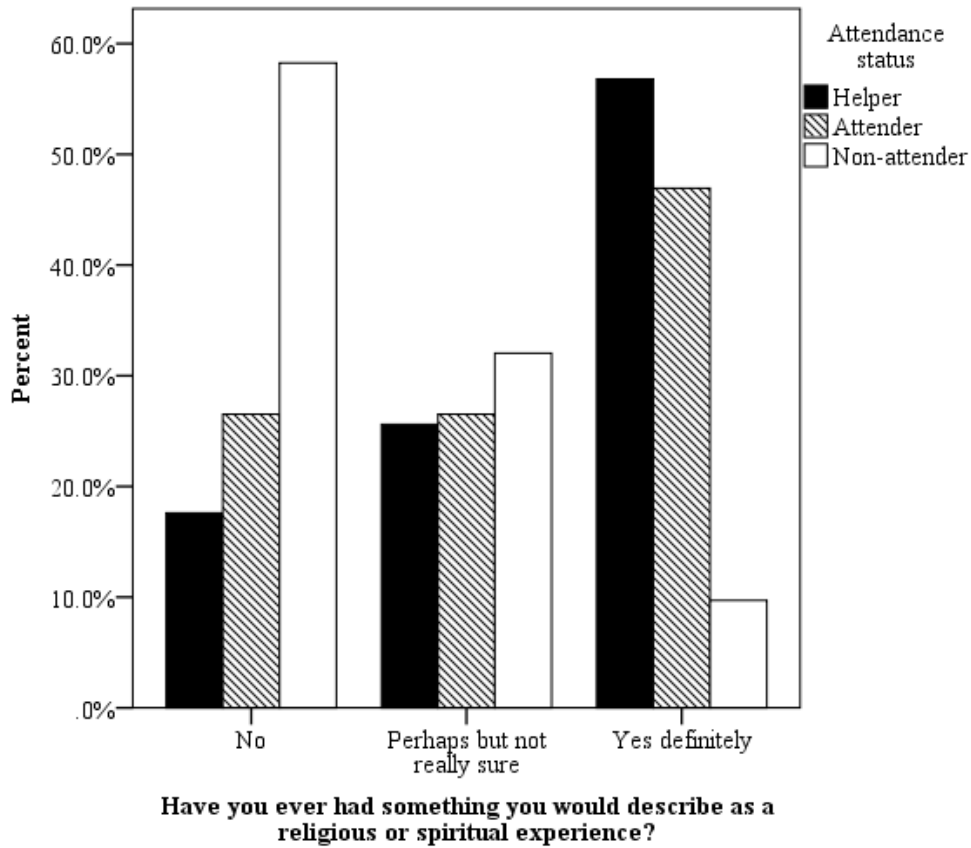


Figure 10.6 Clustered bar chart showing percentage responses to the question “Have you ever had something you would describe as a religious or spiritual experience?”

Helpers ($n = 250$), attenders ($n = 98$) and non-attenders ($n = 103$). Non-attenders predominantly respond with “No”, whereas attenders and helpers predominantly respond with “Yes definitely”.

When respondents were asked about the occurrence of any religious or spiritual experience at Messy Church, again there was a significant difference between the groups in terms of their responses ($\chi^2 = 13.862$, $df = 4$, $p < .01$, $N = 449$) with helpers and attenders being similar in their responses and non-attenders much more likely to respond “No”.

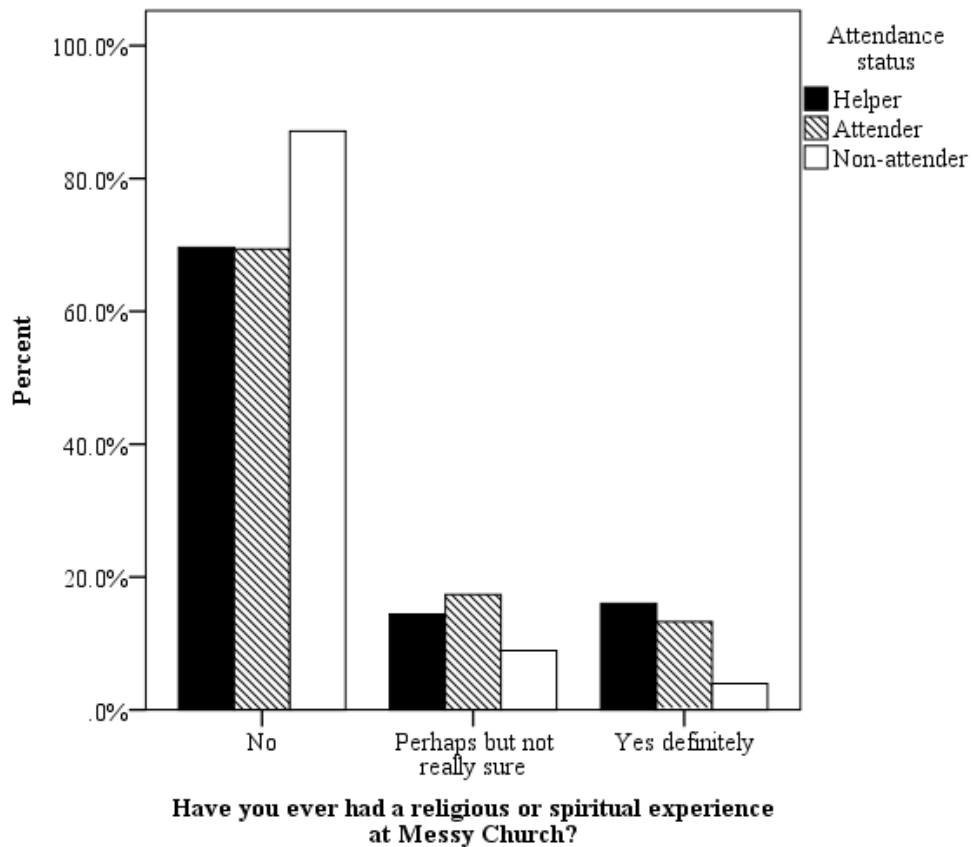


Figure 10.7 Clustered bar chart showing percentage responses to the question “Have you ever had a religious or spiritual experience at Messy Church?”

Helpers ($n = 250$), attenders ($n = 98$) and non-attenders ($n = 101$). All three groups predominantly respond with “No”.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they had ever experienced a religious conversion (Figure 10.8). Unsurprisingly, there is again a significant difference between the three groups of people at Messy Church and their admission of a religious conversion experience ($\chi^2 = 74.83$, $df = 4$, $p < .01$, $N = 439$), with helpers and attenders being similarly much more likely to admit to such an experience.

The evidence presented in this section clearly shows that it is reasonable to consider the adult involvement at Messy Church being comprised of three distinct groups: ‘helpers’ who organise and run Messy Church; ‘attenders’ who are not helpers but who frequently attend traditional church; and ‘non-attenders’ who are not helpers and who seldom if ever attend traditional church. Helpers are seen to be the most strongly religious with frequent prayer and Bible reading habits and proclivity to religious or spiritual experience. Attenders are similar to helpers in how they perceive their personal religiosity and spirituality but not quite as fervent in their personal prayer and Bible reading practices and slightly less confident in their

willingness to admit to having had a religious or spiritual experience. Non-attenders score considerably lower on religiosity and spirituality and this is confirmed by their non-existent or infrequent participation in both Bible reading and personal prayer and their denial of, or uncertainty regarding, religious or spiritual experiences.

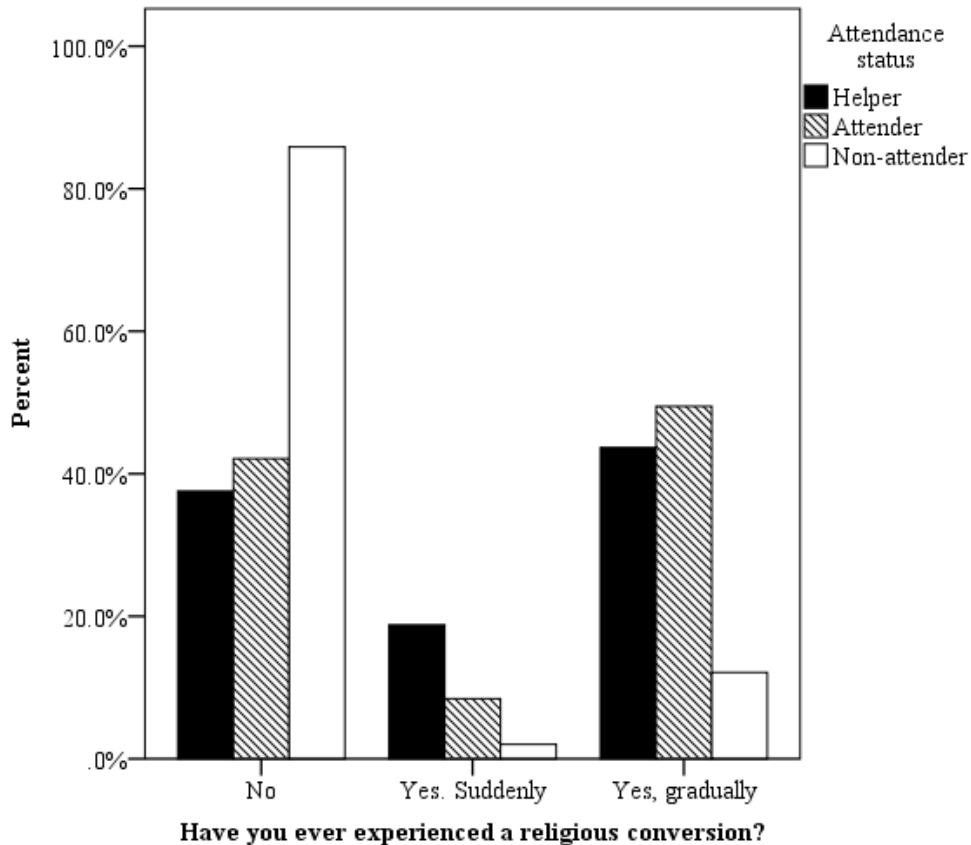


Figure 10.8 Clustered bar chart showing percentage responses to the question “Have you ever experienced a religious conversion?”

Helpers ($n = 245$), attenders ($n = 95$) and non-attenders ($n = 99$). Non-attenders predominantly respond with “No”, whereas attenders and helpers predominantly fall into two groups, responding either “No” or “Yes, gradually”.

Bible reading habits and religious conversions indicate bimodal groups of helpers and church attenders. Respondents who admit to frequent Bible reading are significantly more likely to attend a Messy Church which the main leader describes as Evangelical ($\chi^2 = 27.12$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$). Similarly, respondents who admit to having experienced a religious conversion, whether suddenly or gradually, are significantly more likely to attend a Messy Church which the main leader describes as Evangelical ($\chi^2 = 35.80$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). Approximately one third (33.9%) of all

respondents (36.5% of helpers, 38.8% of attenders and 22.3% of non-attenders) attend a Messy Church which the main leader describes as Evangelical.

Psychological Type Preferences

A complete summary of psychological type preferences of the men and women across each of the three groups of adults involved in Messy Church (helpers, church attenders and non-attenders) is given in Appendix E (Tables E1-E6). The four pairs of preferences determined in this survey are orientation (introversion or extraversion), perception (via sensing or intuition), judging (via thinking or feeling), and attitude toward the outer world (perceiving or judging). Table 10.1 shows how the preferences of adults involved in Messy Church compare to adults in Church of England congregations and across the UK population.

Table 10.1 Psychological type preferences of Messy Church adults compared to Church of England congregations and the UK population

	Messay Church Adults			C of E ^a	UK Pop. ^b
	%			%	%
	Helper	Attender	Non-attender		
Men	<i>n</i> = 46	<i>n</i> = 20	<i>n</i> = 14	<i>n</i> = 116	<i>n</i> = 748
I	52	70	64	66	53
S	62	60	86	68	63
F	62	50	21	48	35
J	89	75	100	70	55
Women	<i>n</i> = 186	<i>n</i> = 73	<i>n</i> = 81	<i>n</i> = 211	<i>n</i> = 865
I	49	47	42	55	57
S	81	78	76	74	79
F	73	67	65	73	70
J	91	90	87	67	62

^a Church of England (Francis et al. 2004). ^b UK Population (Kendall 1998)

The most common psychological types at Messy Church are

- Women: ESFJ (25.6%), ISFJ (25.3%), ESTJ (12.4%), ISTJ (12.1%)
- Men: ISTJ (25%), ISFJ (17.5%), ESFJ (12.5%), ESTJ (8.8%)

in C of E congregations (Francis et al. 2004)

- Women: ISFJ (21%), ESFJ (18%), ISTJ (11.4%), ENFP (8.5%)
- Men: ISTJ (27%), ESFJ (12.9%), ISFJ (11.2%), INFP (6.9%)

and in the UK population (Kendall 1998)

- Women: ESFJ (18.5%), ISFJ (17.7%), ESFP (11.0%), ESTJ (9.5%)
- Men: ISTJ (19.7%), ESTJ (11.6%), ISTP (10.8%), ESTP (8.2%).

The possibility raised in Chapter 4, that Messy Church may counteract the over-representation of ISFJ types within UK Church of England congregations can now be addressed. Combining men and women together, both ISFJ and ESFJ were equally the most common types at Messy Church. Although this suggests some movement towards extraversion, Messy Church appears to be making little further contribution towards redressing the over-representation of ISFJ types encountered in UK Anglican congregations. Furthermore, it will be shown below that the move towards extraversion is not significant.

The hypotheses suggested in Chapter 4, concerning psychological types which may be attracted to Messy Church, can now be addressed. The first hypothesis stated that “The Messy Church all-age format of activities and a meal promotes social interaction which attracts those with a preference for extraversion (E)”. This is confirmed for women, but not for men. The majority of women in all three groups of adults expressed a preference for extraversion, whereas the majority of men in all three groups expressed a preference for introversion, however, these numbers are not significantly different to previous studies on Church of England congregations and the UK population.

The second hypothesis stated that “The Messy Church value of creativity provides opportunity for exploratory and imaginative play which attracts those with a preference for intuition (N)”. This is not supported by the data. In actual fact the perceiving preferences of men and women at Messy Church were not significantly different to either Church of England congregations or the UK population where the majority of both groups prefer sensing.

The third hypothesis stated “The Messy Church value of hospitality facilitates interpersonal values and relational belonging which attracts those with a preference

for feeling (F)”. This was confirmed among women but not among men. Male non-attenders are significantly more likely to prefer thinking compared to helpers who prefer feeling ($\chi^2 = 6.70, df = 2, p < .05$). Judging preference among men (but not women) reveals a significant difference between Messy Church helpers, who are more likely to prefer feeling, and the UK population, who prefer thinking ($\chi^2 = 15.26, df = 3, p < .01$) but there is no significant difference between men at Messy Church and in C of E congregations.

The fourth hypothesis stated “The Messy Church value of creativity together with a variety of possible activities provides opportunity for spontaneity and flexibility which attracts those with a preference for perceiving (P)”. This was not supported by the data. All three groups of participants in Messy Church are significantly more likely to prefer judging over perceiving than either the Church of England congregation (men⁶: $\chi^2 = 9.96, df = 3, p < .05$; women: $\chi^2 = 44.94, df = 3, p < .001$) or the UK population (men: $\chi^2 = 30.95, df = 3, p < .001$; women: $\chi^2 = 92.06, df = 3, p < .001$).

Attitude towards the outer world reflects the way in which individuals prefer to engage with opportunities and experiences. A judging preference indicates a desire for order and planning whereas a perceiving preference indicates a desire for spontaneity and flexibility. The implication here is that the mess in Messy Church is actually ordered mess which is expected, planned for and managed by those who run it and by those who come along. This will almost certainly lead to provision of prescribed activities with clearly defined outcomes. Any attempt at spontaneous play by participants would be relatively uncomfortable for helpers who have a clear judging preference, particularly if the originally intended outcomes were not met, and even if a valuable and meaningful, yet unanticipated, outcome is achieved instead. Helpers with a judging preference may find it difficult to recognise unanticipated outcomes and even when they are recognised, they may be undervalued simply because they were not part of the original plan. Participants who prefer to use their judging preference in their attitude towards the outer world may miss opportunities for creative learning simply because they will most readily focus on meeting stated expectations and completing planned tasks.

⁶ One cell has expected count less than 5 (equal to 3.14) which increases the likelihood of a Type I error (that a significant difference is reported when in fact there is not one). This is due to the small sample size for men and the fact that there are no male non-attenders with a perceiving preference.

Temperaments

Keirsey and Bates describe four temperaments which comprise pairs of psychological type preferences: SJ, SP, NF, and NT. The representation of these temperaments across the three groups of adults at Messy Church is depicted in Figure 10.9. The predominant temperament, SJ, makes up a considerable proportion of each of the groups with 74% of helpers, 73% of attenders and 71% of non-attenders demonstrating this temperament and the slightly lower proportion for non-attenders is not significant. People with an SJ temperament are steady and reliable guardians of tradition (Keirsey and Bates 1984; Muskett and Village 2015).

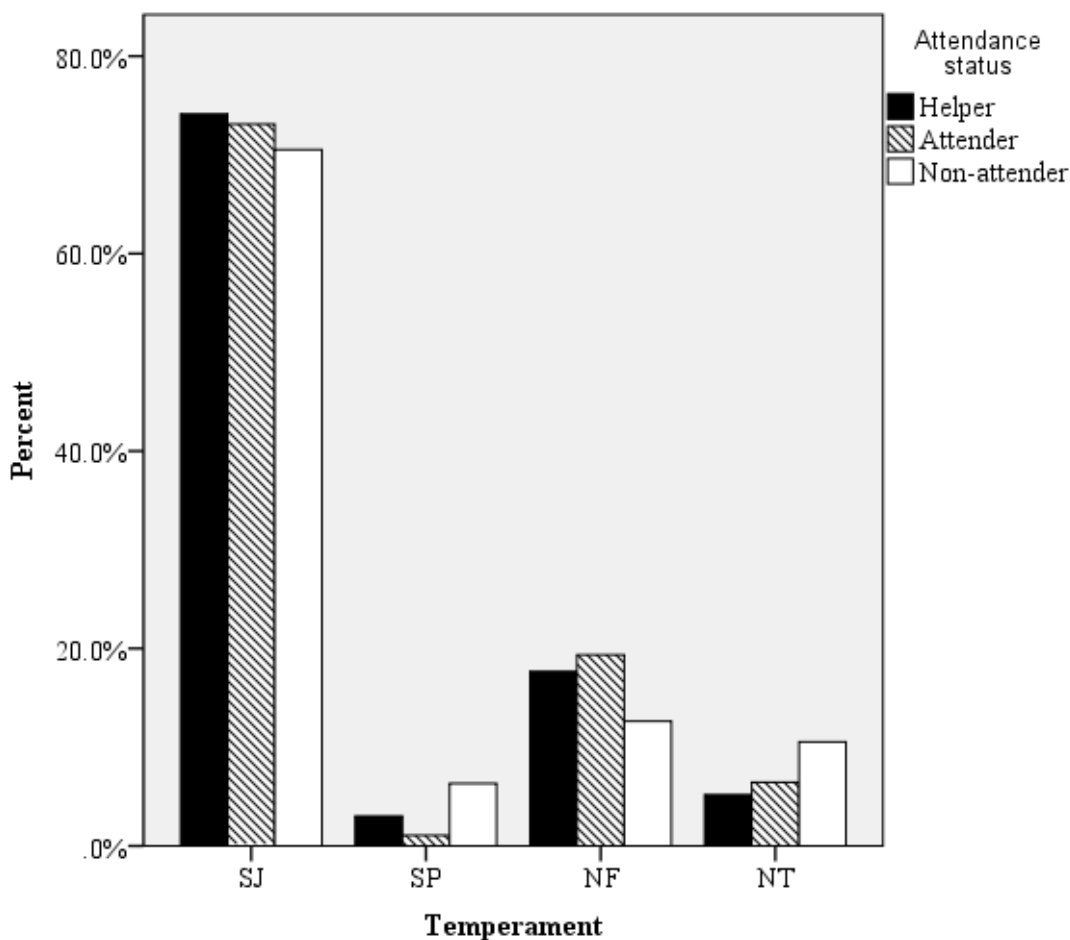


Figure 10.9 Clustered bar chart showing percentage of adults at Messy Church with each of the four temperaments

Helpers ($n = 232$), attenders ($n = 93$) and non-attenders ($n = 95$).

The second most commonly occurring temperament at Messy Church is NF with 18% of helpers, 19% of attenders and 13% of non-attenders admitting this temperament. People with an NF temperament strive for a sense of meaningful

connection in life often expressing their quest for meaning through creative writing. The active playful temperament, SP, is woefully underrepresented at Messy Church with only 3% of helpers, 1% of attenders and 6% of non-attenders in this category. Creative artists are often found to have an SP temperament (Keirse and Bates 1984:35-36).

The predominance of people with an SJ temperament at Messy Church suggests that that Messy Church is not as distinctly different from conventional church as might be expected from a church which professes to value creativity. The dearth of people with an SP temperament is testimony to the fact that Messy Church needs to become much more radically playful in its expression to attract this temperament.

The larger, but still comparatively small group of people with an NF temperament suggests that this group is more easily attracted to something in Messy Church than the creative artists of the SP temperament. While the Messy Church environment is dominated so completely by those with an SJ temperament, it may be somewhat difficult for a balance between creativity and conformity to be achieved.

Dominant functions

Table 10.2 Dominant psychological functions of helpers, church attenders and non-attenders at Messy Church

	% Helpers	% Attenders	% Non-attenders
Men	<i>n</i> = 46	<i>n</i> = 20	<i>n</i> = 14
Dominant thinking	15	5	21
Dominant feeling	24	20	14
Dominant sensing	39	50	57
Dominant intuition	22	25	7
Women	<i>n</i> = 186	<i>n</i> = 73	<i>n</i> = 81
Dominant thinking	16	16	17
Dominant feeling	38	33	28
Dominant sensing	38	40	43
Dominant intuition	9	11	11

Table 10.2 summarises dominant functions of adults at Messy Church. Among men and women the dominant function across all three groups of adults at Messy Church is sensing. Among women helpers feeling is equally dominant. There is no significant difference between the groups.

Adult learning outcomes

Adults at Messy Church overwhelmingly indicated that it was their desire to participate in Messy Church alongside their children. This can be illustrated by responses to the single item “I’d prefer to leave the children and collect them afterwards” where a large majority of adults either strongly disagreed (61%) or disagreed (27%) with this statement.

Two groups of possible learning outcomes among adults were investigated: religious outcomes and spiritual/relational outcomes. Hierarchical multiple regression was carried out to investigate possible predictors of these learning outcomes within the two groups of adult participants: *Attendees* (who attend traditional church monthly or more) and *Non-attendees* (who rarely attend traditional church). The aim here was not to generate a powerful mathematical model which explained as much variation in the dependent variable as possible, but rather to identify which independent variables were significant predictors of the dependent variables.

Means, standard deviations and maximum and minimum values of the adult learning outcomes are given in Table 10.3. Religious outcomes (Religious Transformation, About Faith, and Attitude to Christianity) are consistently significantly higher for church attendees than non-attendees.⁷ This is almost certainly due to the fact that church attendees receive additional opportunity for religious learning that non-attendees do not have (or have infrequently). The only other dependent variable to return significantly different scores between attendees and non-attendees was

⁷ Analysis of Variance tests to compare means show that for Religious Transformation $F(1,142) = 10.09; p < .01$; For About Faith: $F(1,142) = 32.94; p < .001$; And for Attitude to Christianity: $F(1,142) = 77.98; p < .001$). In the case of About Faith, Levine’s test is significant ($p < .01$) and so homogeneity of variance cannot be assumed. A planned contrast test was carried out to compare the two groups which generated a value of contrast equal to 2.57 and when analysed by t tests, a t value of 7.03 at 160.78 degrees of freedom was found to be significant at the $p < .01$ level. So, unsurprisingly, an attitude towards Messy Church such that it is About Faith is significantly more likely among those who attend traditional church frequently (monthly or more) than it is among those who attend infrequently or not at all. Cases were excluded list-wise.

Spiritual Transformation⁸ which was also significantly higher for attenders than non-attenders, although this time only at the 95% confidence level.

Correlations between dependent and independent variables are given in Tables 10.4 (attenders) and 10.5 (non-attenders). The spiritual/relational learning outcomes (Spiritual Transformation, Self-transcendence, Relational Belonging and Positive Change) are significantly inter-correlated but not at a level to suggest multicollinearity. For non-attenders the religious learning outcomes are also significantly inter-correlated, but again not at the level of multicollinearity. For attenders, a positive Attitude to Christianity stands out for the degree to which it lacks any significant correlation with the other learning outcomes (About Faith being the single exception). This is probably due to the fact that there is little variation among attenders in their Attitude to Christianity which is broadly positive. Participation stands out as the independent variable which most frequently correlates with the learning outcomes in both groups. For church attenders, Participation was significantly correlated with the number of Messy Church sessions attended. This was not the case for non-attenders, where instead Participation was significantly correlated with being female. Correlation between intuition and perceiving was significant for both groups, not unexpectedly since this association is typical for most groups (Myers and McCaulley 1985).

For non-attenders, there are more significant correlations between dependent and independent variables. In particular a preference for feeling in making judgements was seen to have significant association with five of the learning outcomes (Religious Transformation, Attitude to Christianity, Spiritual Nurture, Self-Transcendence, and Relational Belonging). This means that non-attending respondents who use feeling as their preferred mode of decision-making are more likely to admit to higher scores on these measures than those who prefer thinking.

The correlations in Tables 10.4 and 10.5 informed a hierarchical multiple regression analysis carried out in order to identify significant predictors of each of the learning outcomes. A summary of such predictors is given in Table 10.6 and is discussed in what follows.⁹ The regression analysis was carried out in two steps, the first step used gender and the four dichotomous psychological type preferences as predictor

⁸ Analysis of variance between the two groups (attenders and non-attenders) for Spiritual Nurture returned $F(1,142) = 5.30$; $p < 0.05$.

⁹ For large effects ($R^2 > .26$) Miles and Shevlin (2001:125) calculate that a six predictor regression model requires a sample size above 45 to achieve a high level of power (.8). Hence the sample sizes achieved here are adequate for the purposes of this regression analysis.

variables, and the second step introduced the additional independent variables of Duration (length of involvement in Messy Church) and Participation (a measure of how personally engaged the adult is).

Table 10.3 Means, standard deviations and maximum and minimum values for adult outcomes.

Outcome	Attendees					Non-Attendees					<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	
Religious Transformation (7 items)	92	22.12	4.69	13	35	96	19.50	5.21	7	32	**
About Faith (4 items)	94	16.95	1.88	12	20	97	14.38	3.04	8	20	***
Attitude to Christianity (7 items)	94	29.80	4.26	17	35	97	22.41	5.62	7	35	***
Spiritual Transformation (8 items)	92	28.35	5.44	12	40	93	26.95	5.10	8	39	*
Self-transcendence (3 items)	93	10.94	2.57	4	15	98	11.23	2.66	3	15	NS
Relational Belonging (5 items)	95	20.64	3.10	8	25	97	20.96	3.06	11	25	NS
Positive Change (5 items)	91	17.36	3.35	9	24	97	16.54	3.23	10	25	NS
Participation (5 items)	67	20.93	3.22	9	25	93	20.98	2.81	12	25	NS

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Multiple regression statistics for Religious Transformation are presented in Appendix F, Table F1. Religious Transformation in non-attenders is significantly predicted by a preference for intuition and feeling together with a willingness to engage as indicated by the Participation variable.

Multiple regression statistics for About Faith are presented in Appendix F, Table F2. An admission from non-attenders that Messy Church is About Faith for them personally is significantly predicted by having a judging preference in attitude toward the outer world (i.e. low scores for About Faith are predicted by a perceiving preference) and by a high Participation score.

Multiple regression statistics for Attitude to Christianity are presented in Appendix F, Table F3. A high Attitude to Christianity score in non-attenders is predicted by a feeling preference and by a high Participation score. Feeling preference and Participation are also significant predictors of Spiritual Transformation (Appendix F, Table F4) and Self-transcendence (Appendix F, Table F5) in non-attenders.

Relational Belonging (Appendix F, Table F6) in non-attenders is predicted by the duration of involvement in Messy Church and by Participation. This means that the longer that a non-attender is involved with Messy Church, and the more they participate in Messy Church for themselves, the more likely they are to admit that they belong there. Causation is not assumed. It could equally be said that those who feel a sense of belonging are more likely participate and to keep coming back.

Finally, Positive Change (Appendix F, Table F7) yields the single significant predictor of Participation.

For both attenders and non-attenders, Participation is the key predictor of the expected learning outcomes, present in all non-attender's outcomes and absent only from Attitude to Christianity in the case of attenders. This absence is understandable since the Attitude to Christianity of those who regularly attend church is likely to be fairly stable and unlikely to be influenced by Participation in Messy Church.

Gender and psychological type preferences are largely not predictors of learning outcomes in attenders. The single exception is that a perceiving preference in attitude toward the outer world is predictive of Relational Belonging in attenders.

For non-attenders gender is not predictive of any learning outcomes but psychological type preferences are shown to be much more significant. Preferences for intuition, feeling and judging all show up as predictors, with feeling being the most common of these occurring in four out of seven of the learning outcomes. In addition, Duration of involvement is a significant predictor of Relational Belonging in non-attenders.

Table 10.4 Correlations between dependent and independent variables for adult church attenders at Messy Church.

Pair-wise Pearson correlation coefficients, minimum $n = 63$.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Religious Transf.	-	.29**	.20	.73***	.52***	.51***	.76***	.09	-.10	.01	.05	.01	.19	.48***
2. About Faith		-	.44***	.26*	.40**	.14	.30**	.08	.11	-.05	-.02	-.02	.12	.36**
3. Attitude to Christianity			-	.05	.11	.16	.11	-.11	.23*	-.03	.11	-.18	.13	.32*
4. Spiritual Transf.				-	.54***	.47***	.76***	.32**	-.13	.00	.09	-.01	.10	.43***
5. Self-transcendence					-	.50***	.42***	.16	-.13	.03	.15	.09	.16	.58***
6. Relational Belonging						-	.44***	.23*	-.13	-.01	.15	.10	.23*	.69***
7. Positive Change							-	.15	-.10	.12	.09	.04	.16	.41**
8. Female								-	-.19	-.17	.15	-.19	.05	.15
9. Introversion									-	-.12	-.07	-.14	-.07	.08
10. Intuition										-	.14	.58***	.04	-.04
11. Feeling											-	.03	.05	.19
12. Perceiving												-	.15	-.11
13. Duration													-	.30*
14. Participation														-

Note. Transf. = Transformation. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 10.5 Correlations between dependent and independent variables for adult church non-attenders at Messy Church
 Pair-wise Pearson correlation coefficients, minimum $n = 87$.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Religious Transf.	-	.56***	.70***	.68***	.36***	.31**	.54***	.02	-.08	.22*	.23*	-.07	.08	.24*
2. About Faith		-	.72***	.42***	.19	.32**	.48***	.17	-.17	-.05	.14	-.16	.20*	.38***
3. Attitude to Christianity			-	.55***	.23*	.21*	.43***	.07	-.06	.02	.23*	-.08	-.00	.28**
4. Spiritual Transf.				-	.48***	.41***	.57***	.10	-.20	.12	.32**	.05	.04	.42***
5. Self-transcendence					-	.47***	.37***	.17	-.15	.11	.34**	.05	-.09	.33**
6. Relational Belonging						-	.54***	.28**	-.29**	.08	.21*	.02	.18	.57***
7. Positive Change							-	.11	-.16	.07	.20	-.04	.14	.48***
8. Female								-	-.15	.08	.31**	.15	-.15	.32**
9. Introversion									-	-.15	-.16	-.26**	.02	-.20
10. Intuition										-	-.04	.19	-.20*	-.06
11. Feeling											-	.11	-.02	.15
12. Perceiving												-	.01	-.06
13. Duration													-	.14
14. Participation														-

Note. Transf. = Transformation. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 10.6 Summary of significant predictors of learning outcomes for attenders and non-attenders from multiple regression analysis.

Participation is the dominant predictor for both attenders and non-attenders. Non-attenders with a feeling preference in their judging function are significantly predicted to be changed by their Messy Church experience in four out of seven measures.

	Religious Transformation		About Faith		Attitude to Christianity		Spiritual Transformation		Self-transcendence		Relational Belonging		Positive Change	
	A	Non-A	A	Non-A	A	Non-A	A	Non-A	A	Non-A	A	Non-A	A	Non-A
Female														
Introversion														
Intuition		.26*												
Feeling		.28**				.27*		.27*		.29**				
Perceiving				-.21*								.23*		
Duration													.24**	
Participation	.48***	.26*	.45***	.26*		.27*	.43***	.40*	.61***	.37**	.72***	.51***	.42**	.47***

Note. A = Attender. Figures are standardized regression coefficients from Model 2 in Tables F1 - F7 (Appendix F), shown only for those predictors that explained a significant proportion of the variation of the dependent variable. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Discussion of adult participants results

The fact that Participation is such a key predictor suggests that engaging with their Messy Church experience is significantly, though not necessarily importantly, associated with Christian becoming in all adults at Messy Church whether or not they attend church elsewhere. In other words the becoming that happens at Messy Church is not due to chance but is associated with personal engagement. Again causality is not assumed. It may be that Participation leads to Christian becoming, but it may also be true that Christian becoming leads to increased Participation. A closer look at those who score lowest on Participation reveals a significant correlation with those who prefer thinking as their mode of judging.¹

For non-attenders psychological type preferences are seen to be significantly associated with Christian becoming. A preference for feeling is predictive of both religious (Religious Transformation and Attitude to Christianity) and spiritual/relational (Spiritual Transformation and Self-transcendence) learning outcomes. People who prefer feeling to thinking tend to prioritise interpersonal values over logical facts. They prioritise relationships over organisational systems and structures. It is perhaps unsurprising then that Self-transcendence, which is a measure of increased concern for the inherently value-based welfare of others, and Spiritual Transformation, a measure of change in the rather value-laden notions of spiritual well-being, are predicted by a feeling preference. Attitude to Christianity purports to be a measure of religious affect and values rather than religious belief (Francis, Jones and Craig 2004). In that sense an association with a preference for feeling is also not unexpected although other studies have generated conflicting

¹ A Pearson correlation coefficient of .16 ($p = .045$) between Participation and feeling was returned when a bivariate correlation analysis was carried out on the whole group of adult participants (attenders plus non-attenders) for Participation and the four psychological type dichotomies. Participation was not significantly correlated with orientation, perceiving or attitude to the outside world.

results.² Among Messy Church adults, the fact that a feeling preference is predictive of a positive Attitude to Christianity only among non-attenders is evidence of the complex relationship between religiosity and psychological type. Religious Transformation is a combined measure of perceived change in religious affect, knowledge and practice. Closer investigation of the correlations between individual scale items and the judging process reveal that it is the items concerned with subjective meaning and perception (The Christian story means more to me now, I am more aware of God) which are significantly correlated with feeling preference in non-attenders and which contribute the largest effect on the association between Religious Transformation and feeling preference. Messy Church primarily attracts feeling types (59% of non-attenders and 63% of attenders prefer feeling) and the evidence suggests that feeling types are more likely to be religiously transformed at Messy Church. Messy Church leaders may need to address the questions of how to make the environment more attractive to and more transformative for thinkers. Thinking types are more at home in an environment attentive to reasoned logic rather than issues of shared value. Incorporating accurate historical or archaeological information, taking seriously questions concerning the logical progression of a story and making space for scepticism and doubt would help to ensure that thinkers are able to explore issues of importance for them. Feeling types may be content to avoid such questions since they prefer to focus on commonalities and shared values rather than exploring contentious differences. However, thinking types like to be able to ask and wrestle with such questions and would feel constrained by an environment that shied away from such issues.

Intuition is also predictive of Religious Transformation in non-attenders. Closer investigation of the correlations between individual scale items and the perceiving process reveal that it is the items concerned with perception, reflection and active engagement (“I am more aware of God”, “I am more curious about the Bible”, “I’ve

² In a survey of students using the FPTS, Francis et al. (2003) confirmed the result of a previous student survey (Jones and Francis 1999), conducted using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (KTS), which concluded that a feeling preference is associated with a positive Attitude to Christianity. However, Fearn, Francis and Wilcox (2001) found no association between judging preference (feeling or thinking) and Attitude to Christianity in their survey of pre-university religious studies students using the KTS. This result was confirmed by Francis, Jones and Craig (2004) in a broader study of general university students using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Francis, Jones and Craig (2004) point to several limitations in the studies which may contribute to the different results: the use of three different tools to assess psychological type (FPTS, KTS and MBTI); the disparity in sample sizes (between 82 and 437); and the different religious experience of the respondents (pre-university religious studies students, church attending university students and broader groups of university students).

had some great conversations about God”) which are significantly correlated with an intuiting preference in non-attenders and which contribute the largest effect on the association between Religious Transformation and intuition. Those who prefer intuition as their mode of perceiving tend to focus on “big picture” ideas and meanings that go beyond sensory accumulation of concrete information.

Furthermore, the NF temperament has been associated with a hunger for purpose and meaning in life and in this sense it is understandable that intuition and feeling together are the type functions that are predictive of religious transformation. Messy Church primarily attracts sensors (74% of non-attenders and 77% of attenders are sensors) but the evidence suggests that intuitives are more likely to be religiously transformed. Messy Church leaders may need to address the questions of how to make the environment more transformative for sensors, and more attractive to intuitives. Sensors will be comfortable in an environment rich in sensory stimulation but may attend to the detail (of the craft activities for example) without paying attention to the bigger question of why such details matter. Intuitives are more comfortable at making those connections but are more likely to become bored by the details if the possibility to explore their connection to the wider meaning is not given space, time and attention. Attracting intuitives to an environment rich in sensory activities, however, may be difficult unless it is clear that there is meaning and purpose behind the sensory stimulation. Advertising should spell out that Messy Church grapples with big questions concerning the meaning and purpose of faith and life as well as emphasising the concrete creative activities.

An admission from non-attenders that Messy Church is About Faith for them personally is predicted by having a judging preference in attitude towards the outer world. This makes sense since to indicate that Messy Church is About Faith requires the extraversion of that decision. Extraverting the decision-making process is essentially what it means to have a preference for judging in one’s attitude toward the outer world. Perceivers prefer to extravert the information-gaining process and to introvert the decision-making process. Judging types prefer an environment which supports their decision making by being structured, punctual and ordered. Perceivers prefer an environment which supports how they take in information through being flexible and offering multiple opportunities and possibilities. Messy Church primarily attracts judges (89% of non-attenders and 87% of attenders are judges) and the evidence suggests that judges are significantly more likely to admit that Messy Church is About Faith for them personally. Messy Church leaders may need to address the questions of how to make the environment more attractive and more transformative for perceivers. Perceivers are most comfortable in an environment which offers plenty of opportunity for exploration and discovery, coming to a

judgement only after sufficient time for exploration and perhaps then only privately. Open-ended craft activities which have not been overly prescribed would be more likely to appeal to perceivers who would be less comfortable in an overly structured environment which constrained options and placed unnecessarily strict limitations on time and resources. Perceivers are comfortable with innovation and creativity at the expense of conformity and getting something right. The experience and the process are more important than the outcome. In contrast, judges are more comfortable knowing what is expected of them and what they can expect of others. Too much unexpected innovation would be uncomfortable for judging types.

In church attenders, Christian becoming of any kind was largely unpredicted by psychological type preferences. The single exception to this was that a preference for perceiving in attitude toward the outer world was predictive of Relational Belonging. Although the number of perceivers at Messy Church is low, it seems that those who prefer to extravert their perception of the world are significantly associated with a sense that they belong at Messy Church. It may be that in comparison to the structure and order of traditional church, even a small amount of flexibility in proceedings, such as that afforded by Messy Church, is appreciated by perceiving attenders and this is expressed as a sense of belonging.

And lastly, duration of involvement is a predictor of Relational Belonging for non-attenders. In other words, the longer that a non-attender is involved in Messy Church the more likely they are to admit to feeling that they belong there. Whilst this is not unexpected, it is reassuring for Messy Church leaders to know that this is actually the case.

Helper Attitudes

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was carried out to explore possible predictors of helper attitudes towards Messy Church values. Three values were investigated: All-age, Hospitality and Spiritual Creativity. The regression analysis was carried out in two steps, the first step with age, gender and the four dichotomous psychological type preferences as predictor variables, and the second step introducing a dummy sorting variable, Leader (to determine the significance of whether the helper was involved in Messy Church in a main leader capacity) plus additional independent variables measuring attitudes to two learning processes: Socialisation and Child-led learning.

Means, standard deviations and maximum and minimum scores of the helper attitudes to the three most pertinent Messy Church values and the two possible learning processes are given in Table 10.7.

Table 10.7 Means, standard deviations and maximum and minimum values for helper attitude scales.

Scale (<i>n</i> items)	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
All-age (5)	235	15.75	3.60	6	25
Hospitality (7)	237	25.57	3.20	15	35
Spiritual Creativity (9)	226	33.65	4.13	22	45
Socialisation (8)	239	32.45	3.37	20	40
Child-led learning (9)	230	27.87	3.48	19	40

Concentrating first on the three Messy Church values there is a clear correlation between Hospitality and both All-age provision and Spiritual Creativity (Table 10.8). However, All-age provision and Spiritual Creativity are not significantly correlated with each other suggesting that some helpers hold one but not both of these values. Being female and younger significantly correlates with Spiritual Creativity but not with All-age or Hospitality. There is no correlation between psychological type preferences and Spiritual Creativity. Being female also correlates with a positive attitude toward Child-led learning but not to Socialisation. Intuition correlates with a positive attitude toward a genuinely All-age presence at Messy Church as does being a Leader. Hospitality is strongly negatively correlated with introversion, i.e. positively correlated with extraversion. This is unsurprising since extraverts are energised by interaction with others. The two learning processes (Socialisation and Child-led learning) are not correlated with All-age provision however they are strongly positively correlated with each other. Child-led learning strongly correlates with both Hospitality and Spiritual Creativity. Socialisation significantly strongly correlates with Hospitality and less significantly with Spiritual Creativity. This suggests that the Messy Church values of hospitality and creativity (but not all-age provision) are shared by the helpers who anticipate that Christian becoming happens at Messy Church, whether or not that becoming happens by Socialisation or by being Child-led.

The correlations in Table 10.8 informed a hierarchical multiple regression analysis carried out in order to identify significant predictors of each of the Messy Church values. A summary of such predictors is given in Table 10.9 and is discussed in what follows.

Multiple regression statistics for All-age provision are presented in Appendix G, Table G1. In model 1 All-age provision is significantly predicted by a preference for intuition, however this drops out of model 2 and is replaced by being a main leader.³

Multiple regression statistics for Hospitality are presented in Appendix G, Table G2. In model 1 Hospitality is significantly predicted by a preference for extraversion. In model 2, extraversion remains and two additional predictors of Socialisation and Child-led learning are found to be significant.

³ Note that the change in R squared is not significant for this model as a whole which means that the model does not accurately reflect changes in attitude to All-age provision across the sample. However, the concern here is not the overall power of the model, but the indication of significant predictor variables.

Table 10.8 Correlations between dependent and independent variables for helpers

List-wise Pearson correlation coefficients are given, $N = 186$.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. All-age	-	.27**	.12	.03	.03	-.10	.16*	.05	.05	.20**	-.03	.01
2. Hospitality		-	.34***	.05	.00	-.21**	.08	.05	-.05	.00	.43***	.50***
3. Spiritual Creativity			-	.22**	-.16*	-.04	.13	-.04	.11	.19**	.17*	.48***
4. Female				-	-.04	-.06	-.17*	.10	.02	.03	-.03	.18*
5. Age					-	-.12	-.13	.10	-.09	-.09	.05	.11
6. Introversion						-	-.03	.03	-.05	-.06	-.04	-.06
7. Intuition							-	.05	.31***	.15*	.07	.03
8. Feeling								-	-.04	-.00	-.02	.05
9. Perceiving									-	-.00	-.01	.08
10. Leader										-	-.02	.04
11. Socialisation											-	.40***
12. Child-led												-

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Multiple regression statistics for Spiritual Creativity are presented in Appendix G, Table G3. In model 1 Spiritual Creativity is significantly predicted by being female and by a preference for intuition. In model 2, being female remains a predictor but intuition drops out and is replaced by age (specifically by being younger), being a main leader and by a positive attitude toward a Child-led learning approach.

To summarise, there is no single variable which acts as a predictor for all three Messy Church values. There are two predictors (being a main leader and having a positive attitude toward a child-led learning process) which are predictive of two out of three of the Messy Church values indicating that leaders with an openness to being led by the child are the most likely to demonstrate adherence to all-age provision and spiritual creativity.

Gender and age are associated with only one of the Messy Church values investigated, namely Spiritual Creativity, with younger female helpers being more likely to demonstrate this value.

Two of the four dichotomous psychological type preferences (orientation and perceiving function) have some association with Messy Church values. Hospitality is predicted by extraversion, and Spiritual Creativity and All-age provision are predicted by intuition, although intuition drops out of the model when being a Leader is included.¹

Discussion of helper attitude results

The fact that Hospitality is associated with both learning processes suggests that this is the value which underpins much of what happens at Messy Church. Broadly speaking, helpers and leaders alike understand and share this value although the items which relate to friendliness and welcome are more strongly endorsed than the items relating to pastoral care and a deeper level of friendship. This may mean that the hospitality can be somewhat superficial. Hospitality is predictive of both socialisation and child-led learning which means that the helpers who value hospitality are those most likely to anticipate and endorse some kind of Christian becoming at Messy Church.

¹ All-age and Spiritual Creativity are significantly correlated with being a main leader which in turn is correlated with an intuitive preference, so intuition drops out of the regression model once being a leader is introduced (see Appendix G).

Table 10.9 Summary of significant predictors of attitudes to Messy Church values in helpers.
Standardised beta coefficients for significant predictors are shown.

	All-age	Hospitality	Spiritual Creativity
Female			.13*
Age			-.17**
Introversion		-.21***	
Intuition			
Feeling			
Perceiving			
Leader	.17*		.12*
Socialisation		.26***	
Child-led		.42***	.49***

Note. Figures are standardized regression coefficients from Model 2 in Tables G1 – G3 (Appendix G), shown only for those predictors that explained a significant proportion of the variation of the dependent variable. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

A Child-led approach to learning is predicted by Spiritual Creativity whereas an approach that relies on Socialisation is not. This suggests that Messy Churches where helpers demonstrate an openness to being led by the child are also likely to be places which facilitate spiritual creativity.

Extraversion is predictive of Hospitality. Extraverted helpers are more likely to enjoy the opportunity to interact over craft activities and at meal times and are happy to use these opportunities to help generate a hospitable welcome and develop friendships. Introverted helpers, however, may find prolonged periods of interaction more difficult and tiresome.

In the first step of the regression analysis, a preference for intuition in Messy Church helpers is predictive of positive attitudes towards both All-age provision and Spiritual Creativity. Intuition then drops out in model 2 almost certainly because it is replaced by being a main Leader.¹ This suggests that leaders are more in tune with Messy Church ideology than general helpers which is perhaps unsurprising. It also indicates that leaders have some work to do to aid other helpers in their understanding and application of these values. It suggests that the theoretical idea behind Messy Church is somewhat tempered by the practical outworking of that idea. Helpers predominantly prefer sensing over intuition (see Tables E1 and E4 in Appendix E) and this suggests that the practical organisation of Messy Church may come more easily to them than the more abstract values which shape the bigger picture of what is expected to happen there. The ideal scenario of all-ages being equally accommodated at Messy Church is not so readily embraced by general helpers with a sensing preference, since by focusing on the practicalities, they are more likely to have a pragmatic approach to all-age provision. Intuitive helpers and leaders, by contrast, are likely to be aided by their ability to see the bigger picture and their capacity for imaginatively conceiving of creative ways to accommodate children and adults alike.

The two learning processes of Socialisation and Child-led learning are also found to be predictive of Messy Church values. Socialisation is predictive of just one value, Hospitality. But having an openness to being led by the child in Christian learning is predictive of both Hospitality and Spiritual Creativity. It is perhaps not surprising that there is an association between creativity and child-led learning. If one has an expectation that others (child and adult) will create and innovate, whether it be in the abstract via insight and meaning or as concrete product via painting and sculpture, then it follows that such novelty affords opportunity for reciprocal learning.

¹ The correlation between being a leader and intuition is shown in Table 10.8.

However, if one understands the learning process as socialisation, a system of helping others to become “more like us”, then there is no obvious reason why successful socialisation should generate change and learning for “us”. Simply put, if my focus is to equip the child to become more like me, to have a faith like mine, to believe the same things as me, to understand things the same way as me, then any difference between the child and myself will look like an opportunity for the child to learn rather than for me to learn.

Age, specifically being young, is predictive of Spiritual Creativity. It may be that younger helpers are more likely to share postmodern suspicions of institutional conformity and be more open to a pluralistic environment which would require greater flexibility and creativity in spiritual matters.

It is not clear why being female would correlate with a positive attitude to spiritual creativity. On closer inspection, being female significantly correlates with only two items in the Spiritual Creativity scale, “Allow children to worship God their own way” (Pearson correlation coefficient = .18, $p < .01$) and “Let people be Christians without having to go to Sunday services” (Pearson correlation coefficient = .24, $p < .001$). Both of these items focus on non-conformity of spiritual expression rather than novel understanding or belief. It may be that, in some way, what counts as an expression of Christian worship, within the Messy Church event, is understood differently by men and women such that women are more likely to recognise and value original and non-typical expressions of worship in what happens there.

Conclusion

In summary, and with the caveat that results should be taken as indicative rather than definitive, Messy Church does seem to attract adults who rarely if ever attend conventional church, however this group of adults demonstrate a somewhat similar psychological type profile to helpers and church attenders at Messy Church indicating that Messy Church does not particularly address the issue of an over-representation of SJ temperaments and ISFJ types within UK church congregations, although there is some indication, among women but not men, that extraverts may be attracted to Messy Church, and some indication, among a small number of non-attending men (but not women), that Messy Church may attract thinking types.

Participation in Messy Church does appear to contribute to both religious and spiritual/relational outcomes in adults, however, the implementation of core values may be hindered by expectations of helpers for a particular kind of Christian becoming. This in turn may limit the possibilities for wider Christian becoming at Messy Church.

Part 4

Discussion and theological reflection

Introduction to Part 4

In this final Part of the thesis, theoretical constructs and empirical results come together to inform a theological reflection on the nature of Christian becoming at Messy Church. The reflection is structured around answers to three key questions: Does Messy Church reach non-church adults? Are Messy Church values recognised by helpers? And are adult participants undergoing Christian becoming? Chapter 11 addresses the first of these questions and returns to the issue of learning styles in order to approach a theological reflection on why individual differences matter. Chapter 12 addresses the second question and with insights from Martin Buber, reflects again on why the Messy Church values of hospitality, creativity and all age inclusion may be conducive to Christian becoming. Empirical evidence concerning helper expectations in regard to learning as a process of socialisation or as something that can be led by the child, are explored in light of Schwartz value theory, in order to further reflect on why values matter. Chapter 13 addresses the third and final question concerning adult becoming at Messy Church, again appealing to Buber for further insight. Suggestions are made concerning ways to nurture *I-Thou* relation at Messy Church. A future for the Messy Church movement is imagined in which the difficulties that have been identified in regard to the inclusion of difference, the conflicting nature of Messy Church values, and the often unconscious desire to approach people with an *I-It* attitude, rather than *I-Thou*, are overcome. This informs a discussion on why Christian becoming matters.

The final section of Chapter 13 deals with recommendations for the future concerning how to overcome some of the difficulties that have been identified. The Messy Church movement is encouraged to continue with its own process of becoming: by navigating its way through the learning process, grasping and wrestling with each Messy experience (through ongoing reflection and active experimentation); and by cultivating *I-Thou* relationships through an ongoing commitment to a conversational balance between individuality and relationality, and between status and solidarity.

Chapter 11

Messy Church and individual differences

Does Messy Church reach ‘non-church’ types?

Fresh expressions of church are commonly established “primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church” (Croft 2008:10). Despite concerns by some that not all Messy Churches should be classified as fresh expressions of church, it is a clearly stated aim of Messy Church that it should attract people who do not attend conventional church (Moore 2006:10). Furthermore, the Messy Church values, particularly the values of all-age inclusion, hospitality and creativity, have the potential to shape a distinctive and theologically robust fresh expression of church which reflects a radically different perspective of the Trinitarian God, a God of creativity and inclusive *I-Thou* relationship. Some implementations of Messy Church may fall short of fulfilling this potential, but as the theological imperative behind these values becomes more widely understood (as theology catches up with practice) the status of Messy Church as a unique fresh expression is likely to become more widely accepted, and what is more, conventional church is likely to become increasingly aware of the ways in which it has failed to adequately reflect the image of a creative and inclusive God in the contemporary context. For Lucy Moore (2006:16), the messiness of Messy Church is a reflection of the variety, difference and contrast in the people it is intended to reach, which is itself a reflection of the difference inherent in creation. Valuing mess is about valuing people’s differences. It might therefore be expected that Messy Church would attract a wide variety of people, especially those who are somewhat different to people involved in conventional church.

Two broad questions concerning difference were addressed by the survey. First, does Messy Church attract the people it sets out to attract, i.e. those who are not regular church attenders? Second, does Messy Church attract people who demonstrate different psychological type preferences to conventional church attenders? The answer to the first questions was yes, only 48% of adult participants attend conventional church at least once per month or more frequently. The remaining 52% rarely, if ever, attend conventional church and they are also less likely to admit to frequent Bible reading and prayer habits compared to those who attend church regularly.

The answer to the second question was, for the most part, no. In terms of psychological type preferences, men and women who attend Messy Church are quite

similar to those who run it (the exception being that male non-attenders are significantly more likely to prefer thinking compared to helpers and attenders who prefer feeling). In fact the one major significant difference between Messy Church congregations and Church of England congregations is that Messy Church congregations are even more strongly judging in their attitude towards the outer world. This is considerably different to the results of the Francis, Clymo and Robbins (2014) and Village (2015) surveys which indicated that fresh expressions of church attract more extraverts, intuitive types and perceiving types than conventional churches. This suggests that not all fresh expressions of church are the same in regard to psychological type profile, and may even add weight to the suggestion that Messy Church should not be considered as a fresh expression of church at all. Regardless of whether this contention is upheld, the data here demonstrate that Messy Church appears to be unlike other fresh expressions of church in terms of the psychological type preferences of those it attracts. Since Church of England congregations themselves have been shown to attract significantly more judging types than the UK population generally, the fact that Messy Church demonstrates an even stronger judging profile is indeed striking and deserves further reflection. The reader may recall that attitude towards the outer world was expected to influence the status/solidarity dialectic in conversational learning. A strong judging preference in the group suggests that status may be more likely to dominate over solidarity in the conversational learning space experienced at Messy Church, although if the preferred judging function is feeling, the status will almost certainly reflect the value norms of the group, contributing to a sense of pseudo-solidarity among those who recognise themselves in those norms.

The combination of sensing and judging is a further aspect of psychological type which may assist in developing an understanding of what happens at Messy Church. The SJ preference, dominates the four most common psychological types among both men and women at Messy Church making up 63.5% of men and 75.4% of women involved. This compares to 44.3% of men and 54.3% of women in the UK population (Kendall 1998), and 56% of men and 54.5% of women in Church of England congregations (Francis et al. 2004). A more recent study involving a larger sample of Church of England congregations (Francis, Robbins and Craig 2011) returned a much stronger SJ preference (71% of men and 73% of women) which more closely resembles that of Messy Church, particularly amongst women. SJs have a strong practical sense of order and tradition and have been described as guardians of “the old ways” (Keirseey and Bates 1978). Goldsmith and Wharton (1993:80) state that SJs are “bound together by their sense of duty” and suggest that SJs would be hesitant to do things outside of recognized routines seeking instead to maintain established order (Goldsmith and Wharton 1993:151). It seems strange,

therefore, to discover that these guardians of tradition are responsible for a distinctive alternative expression of church such as Messy Church. A clue to understanding this pattern comes from the fact that just over half (52.7%) of Messy Church helpers have previously been involved in running a children's holiday Bible club and almost two-thirds (64.6%) have been involved with running Sunday School. Whilst a clear 76% of helpers disagreed that Messy Church was like Sunday School, only 45.3% disagreed that it was like a holiday Bible club with adults present. This suggests that a slight majority of helpers may understand what they are doing at Messy Church in relation to a traditional holiday club. Goldsmith and Wharton (1993:152) suggest that SJs are good at bringing about necessary change in a gradual way which does not threaten the institution. Again this could indicate that SJs understand Messy Church not as something radically new, but more as a necessary evolution of something familiar, in this case the evolution of a holiday Bible club into something (at least nominally) inclusive of adults. Furthermore 52.6% of helpers agreed that Messy Church should act as a gateway to traditional church, with 22.5% uncertain and only 24.9% disagreed with this idea. This would exclude these churches from being classified as fresh expressions of church by the Church Army Research Unit (2013:10) whose ten parameters to define a fresh expression of church include the question "is there intention to be church?" which includes a key intention that they *not* be seen as a bridge back to "real church". This lends further weight to the suggestion that Messy Church may be understood by some as a necessary concession to a cultural context which is ultimately aimed at attracting much needed new members to conventional church. Further evidence that some Messy Churches are closer to conventional church than might be anticipated comes from the survey result that the most popular day on which to hold Messy Church is Sunday (34.3%) with 25.0% of these meeting on Sunday morning. This confirms results in previous studies which found weekends to be the most popular days of the week on which to hold Messy Church (Church Army's Research Unit 2013; Fisher et al. 2013).

Learning styles and Messy Church

In Chapter 4, psychological type differences were offered as a theoretical framework for understanding different learning styles in light of Kolb's (1984; 2015) *Experiential Learning Theory*. The experiential learning process is the same for everybody, but different psychological type preferences can mean that people develop a preference for one mode of grasping experience over another (concrete or abstract) and one mode of transforming experience over another (reflection or action). These preferences give rise to different learning styles. Limiting oneself to a

particular learning style may benefit specialisation in learning, but is likely to inhibit opportunities for deeper, holistic learning. In Conversational Learning, people may develop a preference for one mode of hospitality over another (status or solidarity) and one mode of intersubjectivity over another (individuality or relationality). These preferences give rise to different conversational learning spaces. Any prolonged bias or imbalance in the conversational learning space can therefore inhibit relationships and learning. This can happen whenever the learner's attention remains fixed on their preferred mode, when what is required to move forward is the dialectical opposite.

Godly Play (Berryman 1991) provides an important contrast to Messy Church through an alternative model of spiritual and religious education that is aware of the creative process to learning and acts to limit some of the contributory factors that can restrict movement through the process. In Chapter 2, attention was drawn to the safeguards that Godly Play instigates, in its ideal form, to ensure that children are free to work on what matters to them, and to protect children from adult comments or judgements, however positive they may be. This is done by restricting adult presence in the Godly Play classroom to those who have been trained and who understand how to interact with children in an open, empowering and non-evaluative way. Adult judgement is recognised as a possible distraction from, and hindrance to, the work of meaning-making since it may shift attention away from the work of the child towards earning praise or avoiding criticism (Berryman 2002:18).

In Chapter 7, the safe and trusting environment which is essential to Godly Play is shown to come about as a result of the creation-centred approach to learning adopted by Jerome Berryman, through an openness to insights from educational psychology. Berryman (2009:148) suggests that the psychological support offered by a sensitive and wise learning mentor can assist people when they become stuck in the learning process. In Godly Play, children are helped to more fully engage in the becoming process by the use of wondering questions which can help them to move on through the learning cycle. Wondering questions reflect how the work of grasping and wrestling with new experiences has been done by faithful others. The process of grasping and wrestling with experience is envisaged by Berryman (2009:232) as a cyclical movement through five stages: opening, scanning, insight, development and

closure.¹ As the listeners begin to do the work of moving through these stages via their own wondering and creative response, the Godly Play storyteller's role becomes one of identifying those who may have become stuck, and helping them to find a way to move on to the next stage in the creative process. Since different learners become stuck at different points in the process, their learning support needs are also be different. The storyteller does not need to be able to identify the reason that movement through the cycle has halted, merely that it has halted. Inviting reflection or action, through open questions and empowering statements such as "You can do it!" which "emphasise the child's ability to make choices, solve problems and articulate needs" (Berryman 2002:18), acts as encouragement to continue the work of meaning-making by affirming self-efficacy and confidence in the process. In short it empowers the learner as subject of their own faith journey and in so doing it helps to safeguard the intersubjectivity of the learner-teacher relationship.

Psychological type preferences, and a person's dominant function in particular, are likely to influence the points at which learners may become stuck. Table 10.2 summarises dominant functions of adults at Messy Church. Among male participants, 75.0% of attenders and 64.2% of non-attenders demonstrated a dominant perceiving function (sensing or intuition). Among female participants the figures were lower with 50.7% of attenders and 54.3% of non-attenders demonstrating a dominant perceiving function. People with a dominant perceiving function are more likely to become stuck in the scanning stage of the process and may need help to utilise their auxiliary judging function to help them recognise and value their own personal insight(s) and move towards closure. Godly Play wondering questions, such as "I wonder where you are in this story?", may be usefully employed to prompt a personal judgement regarding specific connection and meaning. In cases where use of the preferred judging function (thinking or

¹ Berryman's creative process cycle is similar to Kolb's ELT. Berryman's "opening" seems to be a more narrowly defined component of Kolb's "concrete experience" which does not carry the same "crisis" element to it as that understood by Berryman's "hard" and "soft" openings. The reflective "scanning" step appears to be the same as Kolb's "reflective observation". "Development" seems to be a combination of "abstract conceptualisation" and "active experimentation" and is understood by Berryman particularly as involving a negotiation with the cultural community subsequent to the specific "insight" step. For Kolb insight can come at any stage in the cycle and the "abstract conceptualisation" stage is particularly related to language and the sharing of experience with others. Finally, "closure" for Berryman seems to involve a decision or resolution, whereas for Kolb this aspect seems to be something which can occur in either of the transformation stages depending upon whether the resolution is one of intention or extension.

feeling) fails to bring about insight and closure, the learner may need support to utilise their inferior perceiving and judging functions which, according to Jung (1923:426), are partly unconscious. Creative activity (which can raise awareness of and give expression to these partly unconscious functions) and/or conversation with a fellow learner who has complementary judging preferences may help in this regard since both of these may act to broaden the learning space. A conversational space that is supportive of the status and solidarity dialectic will be important here. Too much status will likely impose an externally mediated judgement on the learner. Too much solidarity will likely cocoon the learner in the safety of the scanning stage.

Among male participants, 25% of attenders and 35.7% of non-attenders demonstrated a dominant judging function (feeling or thinking). Among female participants the figures were higher with 49.3% of attenders and 45.7% of non-attenders demonstrating a dominant judging function. People with a dominant judging function are more likely to become stuck in the closure phase because of inadequate attention to scanning which results in an inability to gain new insight. Moving too quickly through scanning and insight stages without utilising these processes fully can lead to poor judgement. These people may need support to return to scanning and utilise their auxiliary perceiving function to help them move towards their own personal insight. Godly Play questions such as “I wonder if these sheep are happy?” (from the parable of the lost sheep) may be usefully employed to prompt a return to scanning the story for details that may have been missed. In cases where the use of the preferred perceiving function fails to generate insight and closure, learners may need support to utilise their inferior perceiving and judging functions. Creative activity (which can raise awareness of partly unconscious inferior functions by giving them expression) and/or attentive conversation with a fellow learner who has complementary preferences may help in this regard. A conversational space that is nurturing of inside-out/outside-in dialectic will be important here. Too much emphasis on individuality is likely to simply reinforce the dominant judging function. Too much emphasis on relationality is likely to be tedious and frustrating for those with a dominant judging function, and especially for those with auxiliary intuition who prefer not to be overburdened by details. These types should be encouraged to know that it is not necessary for every perception to be scanned, merely that some new perceptions are brought into conscious awareness.

Does difference matter?

In the context of all-age worship, Lucy Moore (2010:18) has argued in favour of a mixed learning environment because “diversity is something to celebrate” and because she recognises that people can and do learn from each other. However, Moore (2006:20) herself has questioned whether some conventional church congregations may find the necessary change involved in including difference as too “painful”. This suggests that Messy Church is both a provision for those outside of church and also a protection for those within conventional church. Separating conventional church folk from Messy Church participants means that conventional congregations are shielded from the need to do the painful work of negotiating difference. It also shields Messy Church participants from the uncomfortable imposition of traditional expectations regarding church experience. Jerome Berryman similarly shields children from having to deal with adult expectations in a Godly Play session by restricting adult involvement. Segregation is a common, if historically suspect, strategy of managing tensions surrounding difference. However, conventional church and Messy Church together may need to address the issue of whether this separation is theologically justifiable in the long term. Separating people in this way reduces the opportunity for conversations which are necessary for building relationships between the people who have been separated. If Christian becoming crucially depends upon relationship, then a strategy which diminishes the opportunity for building relationship cannot be said to be truly nurturing of Christian becoming.

There are echoes here of the criticisms directed at the Homogeneous Unit Principle which states that “People like to become Christians without crossing racial/linguistic/class/cultural barriers” (McGavran 1955). The *Mission-shaped Church* (Church of England 2004:108-9) report acknowledges the criticisms of this perspective which argues that the New Testament sees Jesus as “reconciler, breaking down barriers between God and human beings, and between human person and human person”. But the report then goes on to argue in favour of increasing choice for people who are not drawn to conventional churches, citing the diversity of creation, the incarnation of Jesus into a particular time and culture, and the theology of the Good News for the Oppressed which shows that mixing different cultures in a social context does not tend to result in a healthy heterogeneous mix, rather than one culture (the richest and most educated) tends to dominate the other. Their answer is to endorse similarity within groups and diversity between groups which are held together in interdependent relationship. While this may seem to offer a pragmatic way forward, there is little to suggest that the dominance anticipated within a

heterogeneous group will not also become apparent in the relationships between groups unless a more constructive way to accommodate difference is found.

Consider the relationship between Messy Church and conventional churches. The quality of the connection resides in the hands of helpers and some Messy Church participants who are also attenders of conventional forms of church. These people are the carriers of tradition from conventional church to Messy Church, but they could and should also be carriers of creative insight from Messy Church back to conventional church. The fact that the majority of these helpers are predominantly SJ types suggests that they are more likely to recognise themselves as models of conventional Christianity at Messy Church but less likely to recognise themselves as models of creative learning at conventional church. SJ types whose judging preference is for feeling may also find the idea that they could somehow challenge the status quo at their home church distinctly uncomfortable because of the possibility that this might disturb or even offend some people and disrupt the status quo. It seems likely that this would result in an inevitable dominance of convention over creativity.

SJ types almost certainly contribute significantly to the smooth and efficient implementation of the Messy Church model, however, the culture of duty, responsibility, order and tradition which appeals to these types may inadvertently influence Christian becoming at Messy Church, restricting opportunities for spontaneous creativity and reinforcing expectations of conventional outcomes. However, the fact that SJ types also make up the majority of participant numbers suggests that the implementation of Messy Church largely appeals to those who are comfortable with its practical (S) organisation (J), and indeed these participants are not likely to demonstrate much desire for original meaningful creativity, as they are much more likely to prefer to focus on the practical completion of a prescribed craft activity. This may restrict opportunities for imaginative personal insight during the creative process.

Theological reflection on difference is informed by several key Christian doctrines and Bible stories. However, here I will focus on just one, the doctrine of creation.

Dominican André Lascaris (2013:233), insists that creation may or may not be a temporal event located in the past. Rather, following emphasis in Aquinas (1267:1, q.46, a.2), he insists that “It is the theological expression of the conviction that the universe, the world and human beings exist thanks to a relationship with God”. The being and becoming of people and the universe happens because God takes the initiative in relationship. The theology of creation is therefore not about the beginning of the universe (since it may have always existed), it is about the relationship between God and human beings and their world (Lascaris 2013:234).

From the perspective of relationship, Lascarlis draws attention to the first creation story in the Bible which tells of a God who makes distinctions and differences. There is a separation (or segregation) of light from dark, heaven from earth, and land from water. This separation is deemed “good”, as is the creation of different lights (sun and moon), different growth (plants and trees) different creatures (on land, sea and air) and different humans (male and female). In total, all this separation and difference is declared “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Consider the extent of the segregation in this creation story. The sun inhabits the day and the moon inhabits the night; birds inhabit the sky, sea creatures inhabit the water and legged creatures inhabit the land. But there is also a great deal of difference and variety among the creatures of each domain, which are not segregated.

Lascarlis (2013:236) draws together three uses of the creation phrase “In the beginning...”, and compares the different ways that this sentence is completed: “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1), “In the beginning is relation” (Buber 2013:13), and “In the beginning ... difference” (Derrida) to conclude that creating brings order out of chaos by introducing difference. Creative words and acts are means of communication which bring order to chaos. Communication presupposes a relationship, a difference. It bridges the difference and confirms the otherness of the one who is different. Chaos is absence of order, communication and creative relationship. When creative communication between different others happens, relationships flourish. This is the story of creation according to Lascarlis.

With reference to Girardian mimetic desire, Lascarlis (2013:237) elaborates on how imitation can bring about a return to chaos. When people imitate one another and desire to be like one another, difference is diminished and can become obscured. Rivalry and competition can be generated which can lead to violence and hence an elimination of difference and a return to chaos. In contrast, love brings about and maintains difference. Love as communication bridges the difference without diminishing it.

In a keynote address at the 2015 *Faith in Research* conference in Birmingham, UK, Leslie Francis (2015) appealed to a robust doctrine of creation to encourage theological attention to normal differences between humans including sex, ethnicity and psychological type. In the story of Adam and Eve, Francis detected a corruption of created difference. In redemption, he glimpsed the possibility of a restoration of difference. Finally, in sanctification, he spoke of difference as ongoing.

There are many differences noted in the Eden story, such as the difference between the tree of knowledge and the other trees, between the humans and God, and between Adam and Eve, who were both naked (making their difference apparent) and were “not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). As the fruit of the tree is eaten it becomes

more like all the other trees, which had already been eaten. Its difference is diminished. Eve is tempted to eat the forbidden fruit in order to diminish the difference between her and God (Genesis 3:5). Having both eaten the fruit, Adam and Eve are ashamed because of their nakedness (their difference) and they cover themselves, and thus hide the difference between them. Hence there appears to be a movement in the story from difference being “very good” towards difference being something that causes shame and is hidden away.

The doctrine of redemption has its roots in the story of Noah and the flood. The Genesis account of Noah and his family (chapters 6-9), depicts the covering of land by the waters of the flood, a reversal of the original separation of land from water during creation. The flood destroys people, animals, creeping things and birds of the air. It is an elimination of the variety and difference within the domains of land and sky. But, through Noah’s family and the gathering of creatures on board the ark, the story depicts a way in which variety and difference is to be rescued and once again made fruitful. Hence it is possible to see in this story a restoration of difference. There is a movement away from the violence of wickedness, through the chaos of the waters covering the land, and towards a new beginning, symbolised in the *different* colours of the rainbow.

When churches segregate children and adults because of their differences, they are in danger of ignoring and hiding away those differences. In light of the above, far better to build bridges across the difference through creative communication. At its best, when it succeeds in being genuinely for all ages, and nurturing of authentic creativity, Messy Church provides space for such relational bridge-building. When churches advocate hospitality that is aimed at overcoming the strangeness of the stranger, care must be taken to include the difference of the guest rather than eliminate the difference by persuading the guest to become more like the host. At its best Messy Church listens and includes those from outside of conventional church circles. But there is evidence, through psychological type profiles, to suggest that these guests are less strange than one might expect. The challenge for Messy Church is to go further and include stranger guests, particularly those with different psychological type preferences to the norm.

Conclusion

Difference matters precisely because relationships matter. Communication, conversation, creative expression, these are the things that bridge difference and build relationships. Whenever Messy Church pays attention to the different ways in which people function psychologically, including the ways in which people learn

and relate, it is participating in the creative movement from chaos to order, despite its “messy” label. However, the general lack of difference in psychological type preference between helpers, attenders and non-attenders, evidenced in the survey, particularly in regard to the widespread absence of perceiving types, suggests that Messy Church is failing to fulfil its potential to provide an authentically creative relational space. It may be that whenever Messy Church speaks the call of socialisation to “become like us”, rather than the call of Jesus to “become like children”, it moves away from being a place of creative communication, towards somewhere where difference is covered over or diminished. When this happens, relationships are likely to suffer as a result.

Chapter 12

Messy Church values

Are the Messy Church values recognised by helpers in the sample?

The Schwartz (1992) model of basic universal values, introduced in Chapter 5, conceptualises a hierarchical structure of motivational values which anticipates an ensuing tension when opposing values come into conflict. Monotheistic religions, including Christianity, have been shown to correlate significantly with conservative values of tradition and conformity, however Messy Church seems, to some extent, to promote somewhat different values of hedonism (fun), stimulation (activity) and self-direction (creativity), collectively known as ‘openness to change’ values. In addition, Messy Church has determined to provide hospitality for strangers of all ages which demonstrates benevolence and a step towards the inclusiveness of universalism. In Schwartz’s (1994:24) conceptualisation, values which are adjacent to each other in the circular representation are more likely to complement each other. The conservative values of conformity and tradition are adjacent to benevolence, and the openness to change value of self-direction (which includes creativity) is adjacent to universalism. The Messy Church decision to utilise creativity as a value alongside offering hospitality to strangers makes perfect sense in this understanding. Problems may arise, however, when the conservative values of tradition and conformity come into conflict with openness to change values. In extreme cases, creativity could be perceived as a threat to religious order (May 1975:27, 31). Given the tensions which these values may generate by being somewhat different to traditional religious values, the survey set out to determine how widely Messy Church values were endorsed by the helpers who run it.

The three values which most clearly distinguish Messy Church from conventional church are an all-age environment, hospitality and creativity. The survey of helpers at Messy Church revealed that these values are not universally endorsed by all of those involved in running Messy Church. First, there is some evidence of ambiguity concerning whether Messy Church successfully provides for all ages. While most helpers agree or strongly agree that Messy Church is for adults as much as for children (76.2%), most also admit that Messy Church is mainly for children (56.5%) and in particular is aimed mainly at children aged under ten (60.8%). Furthermore, only 37.9% of leaders indicated that all age-groups were provided for by their Messy Church. Second, while hospitality is recognised and affirmed by the vast majority of helpers, there are questions concerning the depth of relationship and the pastoral

care extended under the banner of hospitality, since these items were less strongly endorsed. And last, creativity was considered to have four components: imagination, originality, purpose and value. For brevity, attention here was restricted to originality. Furthermore, attention was restricted to originality in spiritual matters since it is in this area that the tension between creativity and traditional conformity is expected to be most evident. The survey revealed that spiritual creativity is widely endorsed by helpers at Messy Church. However, spiritual creativity is not predictive of socialisation which is the learning process most strongly endorsed by helpers. This suggests that although original creativity is respected and accepted, there is little expectation that this will lead to Christian becoming (nor indeed get in the way of it). Instead, learning to be more Christian is primarily understood to happen as a result of an increase in cognitive knowledge and understanding brought about by a process of socialisation which involves helpers being good role models in the faith, i.e. through conformity rather than through creativity.

In order for Messy Church to fulfil its potential in terms of generating a creative learning environment, the goodwill toward individual creativity that evidently exists in helpers and organisers needs to be complemented by increased awareness and confidence in the role that creativity has to play in Christian becoming. I anticipate that if creativity (and particularly its place in the learning process) were better understood this would lead to a stronger endorsement of child-led learning at Messy Church. This may result in the underlying tension between traditional understandings of Christianity and any playful exploration of Christianity on behalf of participants, becoming more obvious. This would in turn make it increasingly necessary for Messy Church organisers to give careful consideration to how to support sensitive negotiation surrounding these differences. Increased understanding of the Conversational Learning dialectics would no doubt be helpful in this regard.

I used the Schwartz values to raise questions concerning the kind of becoming that might be expected at Messy Church anticipating that different kinds of becoming would result from different value priorities. The survey showed that participants who were also church attenders demonstrated traditional religious becoming. But in fact the majority of adult participants, both attenders and non-attenders, demonstrated spiritual/relational becoming. This indicates that love of others and connection with others are important to adults at Messy Church and suggests this aspect of Christian becoming is indeed nurtured there. In order to also encourage traditional religious becoming, helpers need to be able to demonstrate how religious values are compatible with love across both benevolence and universalism. In other words, helpers need to better communicate how prayer, Bible study and so on can motivate them towards love for others, their enemy as well as their neighbour. In

order to encourage playful child becoming, such as that observed in young Robbie, helpers need to get better at recognising how self-directed creativity can also motivate people towards a love for others which flows out of love for self. When understood to be in service of the higher goal of love for others, both conservation and openness to change values can be called upon to assist in achieving this ultimate goal.

I-Thou relating and Messy Church values

In Chapter 6, Martin Buber's *I and Thou* provided an insightful approach to intersubjectivity in relationships. Buber (2013) has poetically depicted two ways in which a human being can engage with world, as an *It* (as an object) or as a *Thou* (as a subject). For Buber, although *I-It* is necessary for living, the imperative is for *I-Thou* relation, which he insists is the very substance of life. The Messy Church values of hospitality, creativity and all-age environment lean towards and extend the possibility of *I-Thou* relation in several ways that bear further exploration.

Hospitality offers welcome, friendship, warmth and connection. Ideally hospitality is fundamentally an openness to the other which is an essential pre-requisite for *I-Thou* relation. But hospitality can remain trapped in *I-it* experience if the focus is on some kind of end goal whereby the recipient (of the hospitality) is manipulated and objectified. If traditional values of Christ-centredness and celebration of worship are also understood as end goals that participants are expected to conform to, this can exacerbate the sense that Messy Church offers only *I-It* experience. On the other hand, if helpers demonstrate their Christ-centredness and their Christian worship out of a desire to be fully and vulnerably present to participants, and as an invitation to participants to ongoing relation, it is entirely possible for Messy Church to nurture *I-Thou* relation through these traditional values. Of course, if the recipient responds with an attitude of *I-It* such that she takes advantage of the hospitality offered and objectifies the helpers, perhaps by stereotyping their traditions, *I-Thou* relation may remain obscured. Buber (2013:9) suggests though that even then relation may still exist when “the man [woman] to whom *I* say *Thou* is not aware of it ... for *Thou* is more than *It* realises”.

The Messy Church value of creativity perhaps offers the greatest potential for generating a unique environment for *I-Thou* to flourish. Creative art expression is described by Buber (2013:7) as an act of being that arises out of an invitation to *I-Thou* relation. The art work is offered as an expression of “direct relation”. It is caused by the confrontation of a *Thou* (in nature, in human form or in spiritual form), and the effect or outworking of this meeting of *I* with *Thou* is that the art

work enters the domain of “things” but remains endlessly active, as *It* but also as *Thou*, inspiring ongoing *I-Thou* relation (Buber 2013:11).

Buber (2013:8) describes the work of art as “sacrifice” and “risk”. Sacrifice because the endless possibility of what could be is cast aside for the single work produced. Risk because *I-Thou* can only be approached by the whole person, otherwise “it is broken, or it breaks me”(Buber 2013:8). This is serious business. Such art work is not birthed by inner fantasy or imagination, rather from “that which exists in the present” (the relation between *I* and *Thou*) even though objectively speaking it is “not there”.

Buber’s description of the creative process resonates with the wrestling and resolution of Kolb’s experiential learning cycle, although his description is of course more mystical. For Kolb (1984:38) knowledge is created through the process of transforming experience. In a similar way Buber writes of the creativity as the process of giving form to that which is encountered in direct relation:

To produce is to draw forth, to invent is to find, to shape is to discover. In bodying forth I disclose it. I lead the form across into the world of *It*. The work produced is a thing among things, able to be experienced and described as a sum of qualities. But from time to time it can face the receptive beholder in its whole embodied form. (Buber 2013:8)

The “receptive beholder” here can approach such art work with an attitude of *I-Thou* such that the beholder may dialogue with the art work. Openness to such dialogue generates a means of grace, a means of encountering the eternal *Thou* (Buber 2013:8).

It is in this sense that creativity is not merely an outcome (or part of the process) of the learning cycle. It may indeed be that. But if birthed through a relational encounter of *I* with *Thou*, and because all *I-Thou* relation is embraced by the eternal *Thou*, the art work holds within it a “seed” of relation to the eternal *Thou* which affirms the subjectivity of *I* and invites the beholder to enter into relation. This may happen whatever the content of the creative work, there is no need for it to be in any way religious. It is the receptivity to *I-Thou* relation which is key. In his autobiography, edited by Jaffe, Carl Jung (1965:201) speaks of the therapeutic nature of being able to locate “images concealed in the emotions”. Images concealed in the unconscious point to a subjectivity which becomes apparent in conscious emotions. Locating these images is a way of bringing form to aspects of subjectivity. This is comparable to Buber’s description of art as leading the work into the world

of *It*.² As such it is an outward expression (extraverted judgement) of *I* in *I-Thou* relation. Anne Holmes (2011:79) writes of the healing property of such creativity, “When we engage in creative activity we draw from the well-springs of the divine source and thus are bound to repair our own energy if we are open to that possibility”. For Holmes and for Buber, the receptive observer of such work may also be caught up in this work of healing grace. This may be regarded as an inner recognition (introverted perception) of and response to *Thou* in *I-Thou* relation. The key component is the *I-Thou* attitude of the artist or beholder such that “In the beginning is relation” (Buber 2013:13).

Messy Church creativity may enable subjective expression which constitutes both a response and an ongoing invitation to conversation or dialogue. As with hospitality it can invoke an opening up to *I-Thou* connection, indeed it may be a response to the speaking of the primary word *I-Thou* by those hospitable helpers who run Messy Church. But if there is no subjective response to the creative work, or worse if the response is one of objectification of the creative product, the relation is closed down and the creator is left to feel the anguish of that loss of relation. If the situation arises where both helper and participant desire merely the production of a beautiful object, with no expectation of relation from either party, then the attitude of both can be understood to be that of *I-It*.

The Messy Church value of all age inclusion would seem to be an essential element for generating a space nurturing of *I-Thou* relation. The inclusion of the other is central to the definition of relation. However, if Messy Church organisers approach participants, whatever their age, with a singular attitude of *I-It* not *I-Thou*, then the nature of the all-age environment will not be conducive to relation. Hope for *I-Thou* relation then rests primarily upon participants, especially children who are models of faith for adults because of their openness to *I-Thou* connection and their ability to create space for the Spirit who dwells between *I* and *Thou*. Children hunger for *I-Thou* connection, expressed in the overtly mimetic nature of childhood, and are much less ashamed of opening themselves to it than adults due in large part to their lack of shame regarding their need for models (Girard 1979:164). A sensitivity on the part of an adult to discerning this hunger for connection in the child may open up relational encounter with the child, but it comes at risk of rejection for the children involved, should the adult respond by treating the child as *It* not *Thou*. Jerome Berryman seeks to protect children in a Godly Play environment by insisting there should be only two trained adults present who have learned to be sensitive to

² Such forms could also be considered to be an example of Winnicott’s (2005) *transitional objects*.

children's spirituality. In cautioning against "anti-Godly Play" that teaches children to "swallow their questions, extinguish their wonder, and become mindless mimics of Christian life and language", Berryman appears to condemn an *I-It* approach where "the goal is to tell children how to think and feel" rather than to listen and respond in genuine intersubjective conversation (Berryman 2013:178).

Traditional approaches to Christian becoming have tended to settle for an understanding of becoming as something that happens to the learner as a result of being taught or disciplined by a teacher. I have deliberately chosen the phrase *Christian becoming*, instead of more traditional terms, in order to move away from the notion of something being done by someone to someone else, but this does not mean that there is no place for teaching. Buber (2013:30-31) identifies something of the difficulty involved in trying to teach someone who does not seem ready to learn in his comments on the nature of teaching as part of life:

This life is presented then, to those who come later, to teach them not what is and what must be, but how life is lived in the spirit, face to face with the *Thou*. That is, it is ready on every occasion to become *Thou* for them, and open up the world of *Thou* – no; it is not ready; it continually approaches and touches them.

Buber presents an image of teaching here that is not about passing on an understanding of "what is and what must be", but which is an ongoing openness to share oneself as *Thou*, even when the other is not ready. This willingness to be open, even when the other is unready, indicates a patient vulnerability, a waiting for a dance partner. In Chapter 7, I introduced the metaphor of dancing to help explain the relational dependence of Christian becoming as something that happens *with* another. When I aim to share my dance of Christian becoming, I can do no more than offer an invitation to dance and a willingness to share my own footwork. My own dance has been forged in me through my experience of dancing with others. When teaching is viewed in this way, as a willingness to share oneself, not simply to pass on the information one has remembered, but to establish relationship, to become dance partners, then relationship remains an obvious, necessary and ongoing part of the becoming process. The hospitality and creativity that have become central pillars of Messy Church establishment, have the potential to proffer an invitation to the dance of Christianity to interested participants. Furthermore, Messy Church seems to have created a kind of observation room, whereby those who are not ready to dance are welcomed anyway, and who can take their time to watch, and to learn to hear again the music of the Spirit. But it is in the all-age inclusiveness of Messy Church that there exists even greater potential for the dance of becoming. Children are naturally adventurous becomer-dancers. They continually approach others looking for a partner to dance with, play with and learn from. Wariness to

approach others in this way is a learned behaviour brought about through experience of rejection. If Messy Church adults can be encouraged to respond to the invitation of the child to dance in *I-Thou* relationship, it is possible that the encounter could rekindle a perhaps long-forgotten memory in those adult participants, a memory of childhood spirituality and of the simple joy of the dance. Such is the potential of all-age becoming.

Do values matter?

Theology is fundamentally concerned with the knowledge of God and practical theology in particular is concerned with how humans understand and act on their knowledge of God. As a theory of action, “practical theology is the empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society” (Heitink 1999:6). Values are important in the consideration of practical theology because of their conceptualisation as “motivational goals”. It is the relative importance of multiple values that influence human decision-making and action.

The Schwartz model of basic universal values, introduced in Chapter 5, offers the practical theologian a conceptual tool with which to approach the subject of motivation in Christian becoming. Empirical studies have shown that certain values are significantly strongly correlated with monotheistic religion, specifically the conservative values of tradition and conformity and to a lesser extent security, and limited self-transcendence (benevolence but not universalism) (Saroglou, Delpierre and Dernelle 2004; Schwartz and Huisman 1995). Christianity purports to uphold the Scriptural commandments (echoed by Jesus) to love the Lord God and to love others as one would love oneself,³ and even goes as far as commending love for one’s enemies.⁴ The hierarchical nature of the Schwartz model begs the question which is the most important value? There is a case to be made, from the standpoint of Christian theology, for insisting upon love as the ultimate value. Love for God, for one’s neighbour, for oneself, and also for one’s enemy (see Matthew 5:44). Schwartz (2012:7) defines benevolence as “preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact”, which appears to include one’s neighbour; and universalism is defined as “understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature”, which appears to include one’s enemy. Hence, it seems reasonable to point jointly to benevolence

³ Mark 12:28-33, Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-28.

⁴ Matthew 5:43-48 and Luke 6:27-36.

and universalism as the most important Christian values. Love for oneself, although only indirectly alluded to in the gospel verses indicated above, seems to be located in the openness to change values of Schwartz model (self-direction, stimulation and hedonism). The location of universalism alongside self-direction suggests that love for oneself and love for one's enemy are somewhat compatible, similarly benevolence and the adjacent tradition/conformity values are also relatively compatible. The empirical evidence presented by Schwartz of a negative correlation between Christianity and universalism presents a challenge to traditional expressions of Christianity.⁵

Messy Church has chosen values which are located in several sections of the Schwartz diagram: creativity (a self-direction value); all-age (a universalism value); hospitality (a benevolence/universalism value); Christ-centred (the position of this value depends upon your conception of Christ, but for arguments sake I will assign this value to tradition); and celebration (if the definition of celebration as a short act of worship is the criteria, then this is a traditional value, but in choosing the word celebration, Messy Church leaves the possibility open that this may link to a party or feast which would perhaps locate it as a hedonism value). The relative importance of these values will determine the nature of the Messy Church event. If the traditional values are pre-eminent, the event is expected to be somewhat similar to traditional church (in particular, if helpers are focused mainly on children, this could mean that Messy Church resembles traditional expressions of Christian children's work, such as a holiday Bible club). If the self-direction/universalism values are pre-eminent then the event will undoubtedly be a somewhat different experience particular to the social context.

Although there was some indication of reservations concerning pastoral care and deeper intimacy, hospitality was strongly endorsed by the sample. This is unsurprising since benevolence values are known to weakly but significantly correlate with Christianity. The all-age value which represents a step in the direction of universal provision was somewhat ambiguously endorsed, suggesting that there remains some confusion of the place of this value at Messy Church. The fact that being a Messy Church leader is predictive of this value suggests that the value may

⁵ The three types of Christianity investigated by Schwartz and Huisman (1995:98) were Dutch Calvinist Protestants, Spanish Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox Christians. Universalism was most strongly negatively correlated with Greek Orthodox Christianity followed closely by Spanish Roman Catholics. Although negatively correlated with Dutch Calvinist Protestants, the correlation in this case was not significant.

be conceptually acknowledged but that the practical implementation of it in the hands of a wider group of helpers does not match up to the ideal.

Spiritual Creativity was strongly endorsed as a value by the Messy Church helpers who took part in the survey. However there is some evidence to suggest that creativity may not be recognised as important in the learning process. Simply by identifying creativity as a value, Messy Church has challenged traditional expressions of Christianity to consider the role that self-direction has in approaching the goal of love for others. However, the potential for this to be distorted into pseudo-creativity, apparent to a certain extent through the strong endorsement for socialisation compared to child-led learning evidenced in the survey, together with the regression analysis outcome which identified creativity as a significant predictor of child-led learning but not of socialisation, suggests that for a significant proportion of Messy Churches, self-direction remains fairly low in the value hierarchy. Again this value was predicted by being a main leader which suggests a disconnect between the big picture of the ideal vision and the common sense practical outworking of this ideal in the hands of the helpers.

Conclusion

The five Messy Church values of hospitality, creativity, all age inclusion, Christ-centredness and celebration of worship can generate different kinds of Messy Church experience depending on which values take priority. Of the three values investigated in this study, hospitality and creativity were the most widely endorsed (though doubts were raised about both) and all age inclusion returned ambiguous results. The empirical results were reflected on in light of Martin Buber's *I and Thou*. The Messy Church values were demonstrated to lean towards and extend the possibility of *I-Thou* relation in several ways: through the vulnerable openness to the stranger of hospitality; through creativity as constitutive of the work of learning and relating, as both an invitation and response to *I-Thou*; and through offering the possibility of relationship with children, as partners in the dance of Christian becoming.

The Schwartz model of basic values was utilised in order to identify love for others, neighbour and enemy, as the highest Christian value. When viewed as being in service of this highest value, openness to change values and conservative values can be conceived as beneficial and compatible to the goal of love, though they may act so as to conflict with each other. It is necessary, therefore, for Messy Church to invest in ways to balance the dialectical tensions that may arise as they try to build a Christian community shaped by their five distinctive values.

Chapter 13

Christian Becoming at Messy Church

Are adult participants ‘becoming’?

There is some evidence in this sample that adult participants admit to some aspects of Christian becoming at Messy Church. The survey set out to measure the extent to which adult participants perceived themselves as having changed in respect to both religious and spiritual/relational attributes since coming to Messy Church. Religious outcomes were found to be significantly more likely among church attenders, however relational outcomes were identifiable across both attenders and non-attenders.

Christian becoming was conceptualised in Chapter 6 as a dual process of learning and relating. Learning outcomes therefore reflect only a part of Christian becoming which is a much broader theological concept. The outcomes that were measured are in no sense exhaustive, they are simply chosen as indicative of these different kinds of attributes.

Adult participants who also regularly attend conventional church were significantly more likely to admit that Messy Church was about faith for them personally, to demonstrate a strongly positive attitude to Christianity, and to admit to being religiously and spiritually transformed than non-attenders of conventional church. Unsurprisingly, there were no outcomes which were significantly more likely in non-attenders than in attenders, however, the similarity of mean value scores for other variables (self-transcendence, relational belonging, positive change and participation - see Table 10.3) suggests that connection to others, both in consideration of caring for others and in being accepted and cared for, is important for both groups. This accords with the high priority that Messy Church places on hospitality and relationships.

Becoming in light of Buber’s *I and Thou*

As stated in Chapter 6, it is my understanding that Buber’s *I-It* attitude represents an appropriate attitude for learning whereas *I-Thou* is the appropriate attitude for human relationship. Christian becoming is a process of both learning and relating, and it therefore combines both *I-It* and *I-Thou*, however, *I-Thou* is fundamentally important to a religion which bases its understanding of God on Trinitarian relation. An *I-Thou* attitude demands being vulnerably and fully in view in the present

moment and open and inclusive of the fullness of the other person. An *I-It* attitude involves separation, comparison, analysis, order, and judgement over space and time. Empirical study necessarily involves approaching Messy Church with an *I-It* attitude in order to learn something about what is happening there. This does not negate the value of the study as a means of understanding more of Christian becoming and *I-Thou* relation since *I-It* is essential to any cognitive understanding. However *I-It* is not all there is.

Empirical study and *I-Thou*

Unfortunately, the central importance of *I-Thou* relation to Christian becoming, and hence to this study, did not become apparent until after many of the decisions concerning research methods had already been taken. The survey questionnaires were developed to address questions concerning religious, spiritual and relational outcomes among adults at Messy Church, but the Buberian understanding of *I-Thou* relation did not inform the construction of these questions. This means that the scale items for the relational measures were not intentionally focussed on subject-subject relating, which makes it difficult to come to any conclusions regarding whether Messy Church is a place which nurtures *I-Thou* relating. However, factor analysis and the grouping together of items into scales was certainly influenced by a Buberian understanding of an appropriate attitude towards life-affirming relationship. Although Self-transcendence does measure concern for others, it is possible that this concern may be underpinned by an *I-It* attitude, motivated by a functional desire to improve matters for others, rather than an *I-Thou* relational desire which is first and foremost about being with others in mutual relationship. Similarly, Relational Belonging measures the extent to which participants have made friends and feel part of a community at Messy Church, but this measure does not detect whether the attitude towards the community and friendships is functional or relational. It is possible that adults understand themselves to belong to Messy Church because of a common appreciation of the service it provides them, which results in friendships based on the shared experience of the craft activities and meal, rather than an appreciation of each other in relationship. This would be more like standing side-by-side in the Messy Church experience as opposed to face-to-face. The likelihood of this increases if the hospitality offered by the helpers is primarily focused on service rather than relationship. In order to discern a deeper level of relationship, it would be necessary to include questionnaire items concerning the inclusion of difference, such as “I can say what I really think here. It’s OK to think differently.” or “People accept me as I am here. I don’t have to pretend to be something I’m not”.

Helpers demonstrated a widespread endorsement for hospitality as a shared value. However, the data also reveal that the hospitality offered at Messy Church, whilst friendly and warm, is less attentive to pastoral needs and only rarely endorsed as leading to intimacy (Table 9.10). The organisation of the Messy Church event lies predominantly in the hands of FJ types (54.3% of male helpers and 66.1% of female helpers) who, if acting according to type, would seek to maintain hospitality through the peace and harmony of shared values. When they approach others with an *I-It* attitude, FJ types are likely to respond to any disturbance to group harmony, perhaps through the introduction of difference, by diminishing rather than including such difference, in order to perpetuate value norms. Recall the story of the child Robbie, who acted somewhat differently to the other children at the craft activity station where figures of the Patriarch Joseph were to be adorned with a coat of many colours. Robbie coloured the coat of his Joseph figure completely black. The response of the helper in question was to immediately try to restore *normal* practice by attempting to persuade Robbie to use the coloured strips of paper which would “look much nicer”. However, genuine hospitality, understood as openness to the stranger, requires FJs to be prepared to include and live with the tension and vulnerability introduced by the stranger’s (or the child’s) difference. Without a deliberate intention toward *I-Thou* relation, the likely response of an FJ to this kind of situation, is precisely the response given to Robbie, in that his difference was largely ignored and remained somewhat hidden. The interaction between Robbie and the helper could have been quite different if the helper had been better prepared for the intrusion of difference.

Nurturing *I-Thou* at Messy Church

Although there is little empirical evidence to inform reflection on *I-Thou* relating at Messy Church, there remains much to be gained from reflecting upon the theoretical implications of nurturing *I-Thou* relation at Messy Church. In order to try and tease out some practical ramifications inherent in fostering *I-Thou*, attention is restricted to three fundamental requirements of *I-Thou* relation: that *I* be fully present, that *Thou* be fully included, and that a relational bridge between the two should be constructed or adopted.

In order for *I* to be fully present, it is necessary that *I* become more self-aware. Bringing more of the self into conscious awareness opens up the possibility for more of self to be shared in relation. One way to do this would be by increasing awareness of psychological type preferences among helpers at Messy Church. This would help them to prepare for the inner discomfort that would likely occur when faced with participants demonstrating somewhat different type preferences. It would better

equip helpers to be able to hold the tension and include any apparent difference without any need to relinquish their own psychological space.

If helpers and attenders also develop an understanding of how psychological type preferences can influence the learning and becoming process, this may enable them to develop a greater understanding for the ways in which their own religious practices, such as prayer, Bible study, church attendance, etc., are helpful and meaningful to them personally. It may also lead them to being open to creatively exploring new practices. Increasing self-awareness regarding religious practice may lead to a greater willingness to be vulnerably open concerning these things, not in order to convince or persuade others to adopt the same practices, but in order to strengthen relationships by being more fully present to the other. When approached in this way, non-attenders have no need to shield themselves from the threat of being treated as an object to be moulded into the traditional expectations of what it means to be Christian, instead they are free to explore their own spiritual practices, motivated by their own intrinsic curiosity and spiritual hunger, perhaps spurred on by the encroaching curiosity and spirituality of the children in the midst.

In order for *Thou* to be fully included, helpers simply need to focus attention on really *seeing* what participants permit them to see. Paying attention to what is freely given by the participant and then signalling that attention has been paid, without the judgement or evaluation associated with *I-It*, is an appropriate invitation and response to *I-Thou* attitude. This sounds so simple, but in practice the urge to conform to social expectations regarding interpersonal engagement can mean that helpers fall into unconscious patterns of interaction, small talk, that inadvertently signals *I-It*. The desire to say the right thing, the expected thing, the acceptable thing can overwhelm any genuine interest in seeing and attending to the person.

To illustrate this point, I would like to recount an incident which happened, not at Messy Church, but at a creative retreat that I recently attended. I found myself sitting at a table with a young girl aged around seven or eight. The two of us were playing with watercolour paints, an activity new to both me and the child. As we became engrossed in our work several people walked past our table and glanced at our paintings. On at least half a dozen occasions people stopped and expressed delight over the young girl's work, "Oh how lovely", "What a beautiful picture", "You are so clever", etc. This was punctuated by several comments regarding the young girl's appearance, her dress, her hair, how pretty she was. Superficially, lots of people paid attention to this child. However, no-one engaged her in any kind of meaningful conversation. No-one appeared to really see *her* as subject rather than as object. The people passing by did not direct any comments of this nature towards my painting or to my appearance because to do so would have been inappropriate.

We had been clearly instructed by the leader to resist commenting on each other's creative works. However, there seem to be different social conventions at work regarding the way that adults are allowed and even expected to engage with children. I suggest that the comments made by these adults marked out their approach as *I-It* and not *I-Thou*.

The bridge between *I* and *Thou*, for Buber, is built through dialogue and communication. The bridge occupies the relational space between *I* and *Thou*. Baker, Jensen and Kolb's Conversational Learning theory focuses on creating a conversational space for learners which is bounded by the opposing dialectics of the learning process (see Chapter 6). There is similarity here with Jerome Berryman's (2013:87-88) conceptualisation of a "centre-point" where "classical Christian language needs to be absorbed and activated so it can do what it was created to do". Berryman's insights, however, suggest that the bridge need not be exclusively verbal. Drawing from Winnicott's (1985:5) notion of transitional space, Berryman (2013:91-93) suggests that objects can be invested with qualities that ground relation in reality rather than abstraction. Godly Play materials are understood to engage children somewhat like transitional objects. The Godly Play storyteller invests love, care and respect in the materials and children sense that they too will be loved, cared for and respected in the Godly Play classroom (Berryman 2013:96). Messy Church does not seem to have anything comparable to these transitional objects. However, creative expression produces a work which can also act as a relational bridge. As a (sometimes unconscious) work of subjective expression, created images can increase self-awareness as well as other awareness. This enables *I* to be more fully present. When *Thou* approaches the work of art in a reciprocal attitude of attention and presence, the work offers an opportunity for relational engagement. Instead of evaluative comments which communicate objectification of the work (and therefore the worker), descriptive comments simply signal that the work has been seen. If this attention is warmly received such that *I* continues to be open to *I-Thou* relation, it is possible for *Thou* to build on this and reveal something of *Thou* to *I*. And so the creative work may act as a bridge that fosters connection between creator and observer.

The flow of inside-out expression and outside-in attention necessary for *I-Thou* connection is typical of the individuality-relationality dialectic described in Conversational Learning. In order for Messy Church to build on the potential it has for providing a space that is conducive to *I-Thou* relation, and hence to Christian becoming, the insights of Conversational Learning would need to be more fully implemented at Messy Church. I shall return to this later in this chapter.

It may be possible to develop activities, Messy Church rituals if you will, that specifically nurture *I-Thou* relationships. Such activities would look to facilitate the bridge, the means of connection, between *I* and *Thou*.

As stated above, craft activity, particularly when it is authentically creative, can provide the basis for such a bridge. However, Messy Church could also explore alternative ways to nurture *I-Thou* connection. For example, a visual display of information and artwork inspired by a social justice campaign, accompanied by reflective questions such as “How does this make you feel?” or “Which part of this image stands out for you?” may provide opportunity for relational connection. If this is supplemented by additional opportunities for participants to respond to the display, not just through reflective observation but through active experimentation (fundraising, lobbying MPs, creative responses, etc.) this may foster continued interaction and ongoing relational development. The aim is to nurture attention and interest in order to both invite and mediate *I-Thou* relation.

Bible narrative can also act as a relational bridge, particularly when followed by wondering questions and/or an opportunity for a creative response, such as in Godly Play. In this regard, Messy Church would benefit from restructuring the event so that participants encounter the Biblical narrative *before* the craft activity time. Understanding creativity as a component in the work of personal meaning-making, rather than as an aid to memory, is fundamental to this rationale.

The ongoing becoming of the Messy Church movement

In an ideal eco-system for Christian becoming, differences would be recognised and respected and would contribute to ongoing creativity and mutual relation. The expectation is that this would generate original, imaginative, purposeful and valuable religious acts, which in turn inspire further creative expressions born out of a perpetual desire for meaningful relation with others and with God. This generative creativity in worship experienced at Messy Church would then be carried back to conventional church by church attenders and helpers, impacting upon conventional church worship in a way that moves towards a reprioritising of intersubjectivity and hospitality in the conventional worship space. If conventional churches then also become known for nurturing an *I-Thou* attitude towards different others, they too would become places which non-attenders were willing to explore and frequent. The eventual outcome of a widespread adoption of *I-Thou* attitude and inclusion of difference would be that the religious distinctions between the three groups in this sample, between helper, attender and non-attender would gradually disappear. Intersubjectivity and inclusion of difference would escalate creative expression

making it no longer possible to segregate along the lines of religious similarity, because the variety of difference in religious practice will be too great to submit to any simple categorisation. The question “How often do you pray?” will perhaps more frequently prompt the response “What do you mean by prayer?” as people become more confident that their own personal ways in which they try to remain connected to others (and the Other) beyond themselves, can in fact be understood as prayer. In Kierkegaard’s (1998) words “With Christ, Christianity is the individual, here, the single individual”.

Paradoxically, relationship with Christ remains increasingly bound up in each individual’s authentically intersubjective relationship with other Christ-image-bearing individuals. It is through being treated as acting subject and recognising the desire for my subjectivity in the eyes of another, that I am free to inhabit my own subjectivity and able to reciprocate by desiring the subjectivity of the other. This is what it means to love one another and to imitate (follow in the way of) Jesus (Adams 2000:302). This is Christian becoming.

Does Christian becoming matter?

The question as to whether Christian becoming matters depends on how such becoming is understood. If Christian becoming is understood to be about the formation of a certain Christian character, then it matters so long as the said character has value to the individual, to the church and to the wider society. If Christian becoming is understood to be instruction in the Christian religion, then it matters so long as the religion has value to the individual, to the church and to the wider society. If Christian becoming is understood to be the discipleship in the way of Jesus Christ, then it matters so long as the way of Jesus has value to the individual, to the church and to the wider society. But if Christian becoming is understood to be not just about the learning of character, religion and following Jesus, but it is also, fundamentally, about loving relationship, with God, with other people, and with oneself, then Christian becoming matters because relationships matter. Love matters. And if Buber is correct, then the kind of relationships that matter, the ones that are termed *I-Thou*, these are fundamental to human living and becoming.

In directing the attention of the church back upon its relationships with those outside of church, to the strangers in the midst, through the adoption of a distinctly different set of values and structure, Messy Church has done the Christian church a great service. In seeking to build a new community, a fresh expression, which is attentive to the presence of the child in the midst, Messy Church has, at least tentatively,

begun to restore a humility and playfulness in its learning and relationships which appears to have been somewhat lost to the church as it has endeavoured to grow up over the past two millennia. The success of the Messy Church project will no doubt depend upon the strength of the relationships which it forges, relationships with strangers, with children, and with the traditional church. The strength of the relationships at Messy Church depend upon the ability of individuals to really see and include the difference of the other individuals, the child, the non-attender, the NTP types. It is through noticing and including different others that one comes close to noticing and including the Supreme Other.

Becoming like a child is only possible through relationship with a child. Christian becoming is only possible through relationship with those who are also themselves becoming Christian, though my use of the term “Christian” is heavily dependent on the understand of Christ as model for subject-subject relation as described in this thesis. I have anticipated that Christian becoming will be nurtured in an environment which pays attention to the dialectical tensions apparent in individuals (through psychological type preferences), in relationships (through the Conversational Learning process), and in human values. Managing these tensions is important because difference matters, values matter, and because relationships matter. Above all, Christian becoming matters because people matter as acting subjects in their own right. Only by approaching another intersubjectively, subject-to-subject, can one become with them. Only by approaching a child intersubjectively, subject-to-subject, can one become like a child.

Recommendations for the future

The five Messy Church values do not necessarily motivate organisers and helpers to produce uniform expressions of Messy Church. The hierarchical ordering of the values at each individual expression is likely to influence the nature of the event. Messy Churches which prioritise creativity and which make a constructive effort to nurture creativity among participants, will offer a somewhat different experience to Messy Churches which are more concerned to reflect the traditional Christ-centredness of conventional church. Traditionally-oriented Messy Churches are more likely to ‘teach creatively’ than to ‘teach for creativity’ simply because of the tensions which can arise between creativity and conformity. Similarly, Messy Churches which are determined to provide an environment which is inclusive of all ages will probably be repeatedly in conversation with children and adults (to gauge whether they have successfully achieved this) and adjusting what they do as a result. Messy Churches which understand what they do simply as a kind of next-step evolution of a holiday Bible club are less likely to do this kind of reflective work.

There are probably countless ways to consolidate the Messy Church values in order to further facilitate Christian becoming within a Messy Church environment.

Conversational Learning theory provides insight into how to facilitate a learning environment that is conducive to *I-Thou* relation. It does this through attempting to balance five dialectical tensions apparent in the learning process, tensions in perception, transformation, the hermeneutic spiral, intersubjectivity and hospitality. Messy Church leaders would be wise to invest in implementing the insights of Conversational Learning at Messy Church in order to foster balance across each of these learning dialectics. Here I offer just five suggestions loosely based around the insights of Experiential Learning Theory and Conversational Learning.

Start the Messy Church session with a story

Kolb's ELT sets out how individuals learn from their experience by grasping hold of it and transforming it into new knowledge. The creative materials and opportunity for learning conversations at Messy Church provide participants with the necessary tools to do the work of transforming their Messy experience in order to learn from it. But in order to transform one's experience, one must first have an experience to grasp hold of. Placing the Bible story, or some other Christian narrative, at the start of the Messy event provides participants with a learning opportunity which is the substance needed for them to engage in the work of becoming. Without this participants are more likely to focus on the experience of doing craft together and may miss the existential connections until they are made explicit during the celebration. This then leaves them with little time to discuss and no time to create in response to these connections.

Nurture Christian becoming among helpers and organisers

If helpers and organisers are to nurture Christian becoming among Messy Church participants, they would benefit by increasing their own awareness of how the Christian becoming process occurs within themselves. Leaders can facilitate this by nurturing a Conversational Learning space among teams as part of the process of planning and implementing Messy Church. This would help to generate opportunities for personal learning and relating among helpers and organisers. Teams need to take time to learn from their own Messy Church experience by doing their own work of transforming experience into new knowledge through reflection and experimentation, and through intentionally seeking to balance status and solidarity (by making sure that different voices are included in the planning) and individuality and relationality (by vulnerable sharing of thoughts, emotions,

problems and insights, and by paying attention to the things that are shared by others). Implementing the guidelines of Conversational Learning within planning meetings will help these meetings to be conducive to the Christian becoming of the helpers. This would increase awareness among helpers of the benefits to paying attention to different others as a means of supporting each and every person's own individual work of becoming. It may also help teams to broaden their understanding of creativity as something much more than craft activity, so that they can appreciate the wider significance of this value as essential to learning construction.

An understanding of learning as a process that the learner constructs for himself in relation with others, rather than something that the teacher imparts, would relieve the helper of an unnecessary sense of responsibility to attend to predetermined outcomes. In this understanding of Christian becoming, the helper has no responsibility to the learner other than that of loving relationship with the learner.⁶ Godly Play training encourages storytellers to “trust the process” (Berryman 2009:104). The emphasis in Godly Play is on providing a quality environment with suitable tools which empower children to do the work of meaning-making for themselves. The story of Joseph and the resources of the craft activity were the tools that Robbie needed to do his work of meaning-making. The helper did not need to add anything other than attentive support. A simple acknowledgement that she had seen and recognised the work being done, perhaps saying “That is very dark work you are doing there” would have been suffice to affirm the learning process in Robbie. It would have also provided the helper with an opportunity to build her relationship with Robbie.

Imagine if Robbie's helper had simply taken her own cardboard Joseph figure and copied Robbie's actions by colouring her own figure black, without saying a word, simply paying close attention to Robbie's work and reproducing it. Imagine if Robbie noticed what the helper was doing. It is difficult to know how this would have impacted upon their relationship. But it is not difficult at all to imagine the possibility that it would indeed have made an impact. Simply paying attention to the difference of others, and then signalling that attention has been paid, acts as a bridge across the difference, a bridge for relation. In some mysterious way Robbie's creative act resonates with the words spoken over the prototypical creativity, that it was “very good”. Paying attention to Robbie's creativity, being open to the difference of the child, somehow reminds us that we are all caught up in the work of

⁶ This sentiment seems to be echoed in the words of the apostle Paul “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13:8).

Divine Creativity. In attending to the creativity of a child, it is possible that adults catch a glimpse of the creativity of the One who was there “in the beginning”. In this way the face of Jesus can become apparent in the face of the most vulnerable. When Jesus taught about the judgement of the nations, he pointed to the actions of those who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, welcomed the stranger and took care of the sick, saying “Just as you did it to one of the least of these ... you did it to me” (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus spoke these words in response to the people’s request for clarification, “When was it that we *saw* you...?” [italics added]. This suggests that whenever people really “see” the most vulnerable, then they “see” Jesus. Being able to really see those in need comes before being able to offer them help. For this reason alone, it is good practice to pay attention to the children at Messy Church, to be determined to really see them. When teachers try to teach children without really seeing them, they undoubtedly approach them with an *I-It* attitude. *I-Thou* relation can only begin when *I* see *Thou*.

Increase inclusivity

Including people who are different, whether they be children, non-church folk, or simply those who have different preferences in their psychological functioning, can be extremely uncomfortable. Making a deliberate decision to include difference and to learn how to live with the ensuing discomfort, perhaps managing it through creative expression and sensitive negotiation, is essential if Messy Church is to fulfil its potential to be a place of Christian nurture.

Messy Church ostensibly includes all ages, though empirical evidence shows that not all Messy Churches succeed or even attempt to succeed in delivering this. Empirical data suggest that all-age inclusivity is significantly associated with being a leader of Messy Church rather than a helper. Leaders can help to encourage a broader acceptance of all-age inclusivity by demonstrating that different developmental needs of participants are accommodated not by providing increasingly complex explanations to aid cognitive understanding at different levels, but by providing different tools and resources in order to support each individual in their own work of learning construction. For example, toddlers and small children will be assisted in this by being able to use concrete materials. Older children and adults are more able to verbalise their work of meaning-making, but in fact all are assisted by the availability of creative materials which enable the work to extend beyond language. As helpers become more self-aware and develop greater understanding regarding what helps them personally in their own work of becoming Christian, they will be better equipped to recognise the different ways that others

may do the work of Christian becoming, hence they will be better equipped to support others in this process.

Another way that leaders can encourage a wider acceptance of all-age inclusivity is by fostering a deeper understanding of the ways in which adults can learn from children. There is significant potential at Messy Church for adults to rediscover how to learn from and with children. Each Messy Church event offers opportunity for ongoing relation with children and for being attentive to the becoming of the child, not in order to influence the child's becoming, but simply so that the relationship with the child can flourish. Adults all too often focus too quickly on what they can do to help the child, affirm the child, encourage the child, teach the child, in other words what they can do *to* or *for* the child. But before the child can receive anything from the adult, the adult needs to begin by clearly seeing the child and engaging *with* the child. If the adult is motivated by their own intrinsic curiosity and spirituality, free to join in with whatever the child is doing, they may discover that they change and become like the child as a result. It would seem perfectly natural then for the child as subject, to pay attention to the adult, and be willing to also change and learn together with them.

In Chapter 6, attention was drawn to a major difference between children and adults in regard to the humility that is required to learn from others. Children naturally understand themselves as learners who need to grow through relating with those around them. By contrast adult motivation to learn can become distorted by their need to perform social roles which often push them towards an understanding of themselves as teacher rather than learner, particularly, though not exclusively, when children are involved. This can make them blind to their own need to learn from others. Jesus criticised this tendency to try to change others without attending to the need for personal change, by invoking the metaphor of a plank in the eye (Matthew 7:3-5). With a plank in the eye it is difficult to see clearly. Children, however, clearly see their own need to learn. This makes them vulnerable to the influence of those around them. Adults are no doubt more aware of the vulnerability inherent in listening to and learning from others, which is why due care and attention must be made to ensure that Messy Church is a safe learning environment which encourages *I-Thou* relation. There is little threat from someone who approaches in *I-Thou* attitude because there is no intention to use, experience or change the other. The intention is to relation.

This study has concluded that there is a need to go beyond all-age inclusion to nurture a broader inclusion of difference. It is apparent in the Messy Church literature that the different preferences of men and boys have been recognised and there is some work being done to accommodate these preferences. For example,

Lucy Moore suggests making sure that men are involved in the planning (Moore 2012:25) and larger construction projects, are recommended in order to specifically appeal to men and boys (although they would undoubtedly appeal to some women and girls as well). A particular contribution of this study is the insistence that an increased awareness and accommodation of different psychological type preferences would be an important step towards bringing about a more inclusive Messy Church.

The perception and transformation dimensions of Conversational Learning are the dimensions which are most strongly influenced by psychological type preferences. Empirical evidence shows that Messy Church predominantly attracts SJ types. Developing practical strategies which enable NP preferences to flourish at Messy Church will require SJ helpers in particular to be open to the discomfort that different preferences may generate in the learning space. Intuitives (N) will need to be allowed to explore the possibilities that they see in the stories, themes and activities provided without being constrained to attend to too many concrete details which can be experienced as unwanted distractions. The preferences of SP for physical action and against the confines of a rigid structure, suggest that provision for a longer period of engaged activity whereby participants can become absorbed in a more physical creative work would suit this type. An example might be an ongoing gardening project which participants can return to at times which suit them. Opening the church building for longer periods as a resource centre for spiritual and religious nurture, where newcomers can find tools, information and relationships that will assist them in their own work of becoming, would make it more accessible to perceivers. Perhaps this could take the shape of a Messy Cafe, hosted by spiritual mentors, where food and creative materials are available daily and thus more readily accessible. The strong desire that NF temperaments have to explore meaningful dialogue around symbol and mystery suggest that word-based activities may be more appealing to this group. Creativity around songs, poems and prose, through book groups, blog entries and discussions may offer ways to extend Messy Church which would cater for these preferences.

Increase solidarity

The hospitality dialectic of Conversational Learning insists on a balance between the structure and boundaries imposed by status, and the mutuality and reciprocity that come through solidarity. Traditional religious values of Christ-centred celebration ensure that the status end of this dialectic is strongly represented at Messy Church. One way for Messy Church to increase solidarity is to allow *different* people to become influencers and helpers at Messy Church. This means finding ways to really listen to and empower more non-attenders, children, and NPs to get involved in

ways that confirm the value of their different perspectives. Sharing power and authority with those who are different ensures that those different voices get a chance to speak and make a contribution. This will inevitably cause discomfort for those who traditionally hold the power. Learning how to negotiate and include difference without having to relinquish all that is held dear will not be easy.

One way to build solidarity is to canvas for ideas from different psychological types. Ideas that are imaginative and about future possibilities (which appeal to intuitives) should be considered without being quick to dismiss them because of practical issues that may make them difficult to implement. Ideas that address, or at least creatively make space for, logic and reasoned argument (preferred by thinkers) should also be incorporated where possible. The most difficult aspect of psychological type preference to accommodate may be that of perceiving attitudes towards the outer world, since their preference for informality and flexibility makes them precisely the people who tend to shy away from formal institutions and gatherings. However, the significance of the meal should not be underestimated as having appeal to many different types.

The next step is then to take one of the new ideas, particularly one which makes the existing planning team uncomfortable, and to implement it. If the planning team have developed some knowledge of psychological type preferences, they may be able to identify the source of any discomfort they feel at the new suggestion and this may help them to manage the discomfort, particularly if they also recognise it as a necessary step towards *I-Thou* relation and the inclusion of the other.

If the contributor of the idea wishes to be involved in its implementation, so much the better, as this may lead to a more regular involvement of different perspectives in the planning. However, it may be that the contributor would prefer a one-off involvement, or even to make no further contribution beyond the initial idea. Respecting the desire of the contributor in this would confirm that the planning team are open to including difference without insisting that the contributor become more like them. It is important that different others are empowered to find a way to contribute that accommodates and respects their differences.

Another way to build solidarity is to recruit different people as helpers. The survey sample indicated that non-attenders are only rarely involved as helpers (only 3.6% of helpers indicated that they rarely attended conventional church). This is despite the fact that Lucy Moore (2012:34) advocates for this to happen. It is important to increase the number of non-attenders involved in running Messy Church in order to bring about a greater balance in the status and solidarity dialectic. At present those in power at Messy Church predominantly come from conventional church. Involving non-attenders in planning and preparation will help to ensure that the

perspective of these participants is attended to. Gradually increasing the involvement of non-attenders is also the first step towards developing a new generation of Messy Church leaders who have not come from conventional church. The contribution of these future leaders to the debate surrounding fresh expressions of church and the understanding of Christian becoming in the twenty-first century is likely to be invaluable.

Building solidarity by affording children greater status can be somewhat difficult, particularly in regard to giving them a greater say in the planning. Planning meetings often take place in the evenings when children are not available. Attending to the voice of the child during Messy Church sessions may lead to learning opportunities within the helper that inspire ongoing reflection and innovation. In this way, children may indirectly influence planning through their ongoing relationships with helpers, rather than by being directly involved in a separate planning meeting. I have already pointed out the fundamental need to really see the child. I might add that there is an associated need to really hear the child. It can take time to really listen to children and it can require imagination to interpret their contributions in ways that are practically feasible, but a commitment to increased solidarity with children would be a commendable step in this direction.

Increase relationality

Managing the discomfort that arises from increasing inclusivity by including different others, and by increasing solidarity by sharing power with those who are different, will require all of those involved to be prepared to both listen to others and to speak up about their own qualms and concerns. Increasing relationality by paying attention to the balance between the outside-in and inside-out dimensions of this dialectic will be crucially important in this regard. The intersubjectivity dialectic in Conversational Learning insists on a balance between individuality, the outside-in dynamic in learning, and relationality, the inside-out dynamic of personal vulnerability in relationship. The widespread endorsement of socialisation as a learning process, in contrast with the less well endorsed child-led learning, suggests that individuality is the main priority among helpers in the sample. In other words helpers seem to be concerned that participants take in information (outside-in), and less concerned with fostering a reciprocal sharing of personal thoughts and emotions (inside-out) in order to nurture a two-way learning and relating process. Prioritising the socialisation message of ‘become like me’ may even result in helpers keeping silent about any negative emotions they may be experiencing in order to present a socially acceptable version of themselves as models. If Messy Church were to become more explicit about the expectation of discomfort which can arise through

the inclusion of difference and the sharing of power, helpers would be empowered to own their own personal experience of Messy Church and participate in their own process of learning and becoming by working through their discomfort. This is likely to involve both private reflection and social discussion. Increasing relationality through balancing the intersubjectivity dialectic will be essential if this difficult terrain is to be negotiated safely and constructively.

The intersubjectivity dialectic is the dimension of Conversational Learning that is most closely linked with *I-Thou* relation. Implementing the steps, outlined above, that are important to the nurturing of *I-Thou* relation at Messy Church, will at the same time act to restore balance across this dialectic by increasing relationality at Messy Church. Since I have addressed this in detail above, there is no need for repetition here.

Conclusion

Messy Church pioneers can rise to the challenge of a continually evolving culture by understanding themselves as an acting subjects, willing to reflect upon and learn from their own actions, but also as a subjects-in-relationship with other active and creative (yet uniquely different) subjects, willing to pay attention and learn from the creative difference of others, without any loss or diminishing of self as subject. Buber's treatise emphasises the importance, not only of recognising the subjectivity of self, *I*, but also of respecting the subjectivity of *Thou*. The challenge of the Enlightenment, through the ensuing subjectivisation of religion, can be met "by the Christian community that understands itself as an acting subject" (Heitink 1999:47). However, the Christian community must go further and recognise the same of others, especially those distinctly different others, that they are acting subjects in their own right. Only then can the Christian community hope to demonstrate the kingdom value inherent in its becoming like children.

The Messy Church movement will continue to thrive on its own distinctive path of Christian becoming, only if it successfully manages to do its own work of becoming: by cycling through the learning process, grasping and wrestling with each experience (through ongoing reflection and active experimentation); and by cultivating *I-Thou* relationships which are committed to negotiating a conversational balance between individuality and relationality and between status and solidarity. *I-Thou* relationships must be cultivated, not just between helpers and participants, but between leaders and the BRF, between attenders and their traditional church friends, and between Messy Church leaders and leaders of their traditional Church partners, both locally and nationally. In fact every individual and organisation that can be said

to be in any kind of relationship with Messy Church, should be approached, wherever possible, with an *I-Thou* attitude, as subject to subject, attentive and listening to the other but also open and willingly vulnerable in order to be fully present without having to relinquish self.

Perhaps the most important relationships to the success of Messy Church are to be found in the relationships between adults and children. Approaching children with an *I-Thou* attitude, attentive to the whole child in the present moment, and vulnerably present to the child, provides a unique opportunity for the kind of Christian becoming portrayed by Jesus, as he placed a small child in the midst of his followers and said “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”. Unless you change and become, as children change and become, subject to subject, you will never enter the embrace of the Eternal *Thou*, because *Thou* will remain *It* until you do.

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List of Abbreviations

ACC	Anglican Consultative Council
CITC	Corrected Item Total Correlation
ELT	Experiential Learning Theory
FPTS	Francis Psychological Type Scales
KTS	Keirsey Type Sorter
MBTI	Myers Briggs Type Indicator
NACCCE	National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education

Appendix A – Survey Statement

The following statement was read aloud at the start of the Messy Church session in which the survey questionnaires were distributed.

*To ensure that the survey is conducted in an ethically sound manner this statement should be read out at the Messy Church Session **before** anyone is given a questionnaire:*

"Our Messy Church is taking part in a survey organized by Mandy Aspland a research student at York St John University. With the approval of the Messy Church national team she is conducting a survey to find out about what people think and feel about Messy Church.

She wants to hear from both adults and children. If you are happy for your children to take part in this survey, please tick the permission box on their white form headed "Child Questionnaire". Children who can read have some questions to answer. Younger children have a yellow sheet where they can draw a picture to show how they feel. Adults have a green form headed "Adult Questionnaire".

The questionnaires are anonymous so you don't have to give your name or the names of your children. The answers you give will be treated confidentially, so you are free to express your opinions honestly. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, so please indicate what YOU feel and think.

You don't have to take part if you don't want to, but the more people who take part, the more useful the results will be.

It would be best if you could complete the forms whilst you are here today but if you need to take them home and return them later that's OK too. Please take a prepaid envelope and just pop them in the post. Or use the link to the online version.

Thank you for taking part. Your opinions are really helpful for this important research. "

Mandy Aspland, Research Student, York St John University

Appendix B – Main Leader Questions

Some of the information we want to collect, like the name of the Messy Church, is the same for everyone and therefore only needs to be given once. So we would like someone, preferably the person in charge of Messy Church, to complete this extra set of questions. Again the questionnaire is anonymous and the answers you give will be treated confidentially.

1. Name of Messy Church? _____
2. How often do you meet? _____
3. Where do you meet (please give the postcode)? _____
4. What day/time do you meet? _____
5. Why did you choose this day/time? _____
6. How long have you been running? _____
7. How many helpers are involved in the **planning** of Messy Church?_
8. How many helpers are involved in the **running** of Messy Church?_
9. What age-range does your Messy Church cater for? _____
10. Which denomination does your Messy Church belong to?
 - a. Church of England / Church in Wales / Scottish Episcopal
 - b. Methodist
 - c. Roman Catholic
 - d. Baptist
 - e. Pentecostal
 - f. Churches together in _____
 - g. Other (specify) _____
11. Which of the following words would you use to describe your Church? (Tick all that apply)
 - a. High church
 - b. Low church
 - c. Middle-of-the-road
 - d. Anglo-catholic
 - e. Conservative
 - f. Evangelical
 - g. Charismatic
12. How would you describe the area where your Messy Church is based?
 - a. Inner city
 - b. Suburban
 - c. Small town
 - d. Village
13. How many visiting adults normally come to Messy Church (not including helpers)? _____
14. How many of these adults don't go to Church anywhere else? _____

15. How many children normally come to Messy Church? _____
16. How many of these children don't go to Church anywhere else? ____
17. How many teenagers normally come to your Messy Church? _____
18. How many of these teenagers don't go to Church anywhere else? __
19. How is your Messy Church funded? (Tick all that apply)
- a) The mother church (or churches) funds it
 - b) We get a grant
 - c) People give donations
 - d) The helpers pay for things.
20. Which of the following do you use when planning Messy Church? (tick all that apply)
- a. Lucy Moore's books on Messy Church
 - b. The Messy Church web-site
 - c. The Get Messy! Magazine

In the following questions please circle the appropriate response:

21. Is your Messy Church registered on the official Messy Church web-site?
Yes / No / Not sure
22. Would you say that attendance is
increasing / decreasing / staying about the same?
23. Have you had any children baptised through Messy Church?
Yes / No / Not sure
24. Have you had any adults baptised through Messy Church?
Yes / No / Not sure
25. Have you ever served Holy Communion at your Messy Church?
Yes / No / Not sure
26. Do you plan your Messy Church for children or adults:
- | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------|
| All for
children | Mostly for
children | Equally | Mostly for
adults | All for adults |
|---------------------|------------------------|---------|----------------------|----------------|
27. How important is it that people have fun at Messy Church?
- | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|------------------------|
| Extremely
Important | Quite
important | Not sure | Unimportant | Totally
unimportant |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|------------------------|
28. How important is it that people become Christians through Messy Church?
- | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|------------------------|
| Extremely
Important | Quite
important | Not sure | Unimportant | Totally
unimportant |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|------------------------|
29. How important is building a strong community at Messy Church?
- | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|------------------------|
| Extremely
Important | Quite
important | Not sure | Unimportant | Totally
unimportant |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------|------------------------|

30. How important is it that families eventually come along on a Sunday morning?

Extremely Important	Quite important	Not sure	Unimportant	Totally unimportant
------------------------	--------------------	----------	-------------	------------------------

Appendix C – Helper Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey, which should take 15-20 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is anonymous and the answers you give will be treated confidentially, so you can feel free to express your opinions. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. We are interested in what YOU feel and believe.

Mandy Aspland (a.aspland@yorks.ac.uk)

York St John University, Lord Mayor’s Walk, YORK, YO31 7EX

Please answer ALL the questions. Try not to dwell too long on each one, the first answer is usually the best. If you prefer you can answer the questions online at <http://tinyurl.com/messyhelpers>

Name and address of Messy Church _____

_____ Postcode:

PART 1 – You and Messy Church

How long have you been helping at Messy Church? Years _____ Months _____

Were you involved in starting your Messy Church? Yes No

Have you ever been (or are still) involved in:

A Sunday school or similar group for primary aged children _____

A youth group for teenagers _____

A church holiday club _____

A church parent & toddlers group or similar _____

Godly Play _____

What is your role at Messy Church? (Tick all that apply)

I am an overall leader _____

I help with creative activities _____

I help with worship _____

- I help with food & drink _____
- I help make people feel welcome _____
- I help with admin and paper work _____
- I help with evangelism _____
- I look out for people who may need a listening ear _____
- I try and make friends with people who come to Messy Church _____
- I regularly bring children along to Messy Church _____
- I regularly invite adults to Messy Church _____

PART 2 - Your Messy Church

This part asks about your experience and opinions of your Messy Church

For EACH statement, please circle a response to indicate if you agree or disagree.

If you Agree Strongly , put a ring round _____	(AS)
If you Agree , put a ring round _____	(A)
If you are Not Certain , put a ring round _____	(NC)
If you Disagree , put a ring round _____	(D)
If you Disagree Strongly , put a ring round _____	(DS)

How far do these statements apply to your Messy Church?

Our Messy Church....

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|
| Is mainly for children | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Provides smells, tastes, sounds and textures that stimulate the senses | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Is a place where people get to know each other well | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Is a place where parents mostly watch rather than participate | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Is boring for teenagers | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Wants to follow where children lead | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Is where parents come to share their problems | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Expects children to explore issues that matter to them | AS | A | NC | D | DS |
| Sees building friendships with people as more important than teaching the faith | AS | A | NC | D | DS |

Is like a holiday Bible club with adults present	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Keeps a tight lid on the children	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is about helping parents relate better to their children	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Tends to “go with the flow”	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is for adults as much as for children	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is entertaining more than informative	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Knows families learn best when they learn together	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Sees Christians as role models for other adults	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is aimed mainly at children under 10	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Provokes stimulating conversations	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is more about the creative process than the end product	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Seeks to bless rather than to teach	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is hard work	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Needs a more practical space really	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is busy so it’s hard to have good conversations with people	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Finds out what parents need and provides it	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Develops deep intimate relationships with people	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Achieves what it sets out to do	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is all about having fun	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is pretty much like Sunday School	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Excels at making people feel at home	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Knows that the crafts are an essential component	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Respects everyone’s ideas, even if they are not very Christian	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Is more about getting to know children than teaching them	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Allows people to be themselves - whatever that might mean	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Provides people with time to really focus	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Knows that children are more sensitive to God than adults	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Values awe-struck naivety more than conventional wisdom	AS	A	NC	D	DS
In my view, Messy Church is BEST when					
The theme comes from the Bible	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Children go home knowing something new about God	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Visitors help clear up	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Children respect their elders	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Helpers show by example what kind of people they want children to become	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Helpers go out of their way to build friendships with the adults	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Children respond in unexpected ways	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Adults become more like children	AS	A	NC	D	DS
People don't want to go home	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Children get lost in a world of their own	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Children show they have understood the theme	AS	A	NC	D	DS
The real lessons are taught by the children	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Children are expected to behave sensibly	AS	A	NC	D	DS
The activities have a strong link with the message	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Children know they won't be told off whatever they do	AS	A	NC	D	DS

In my view, Messy Church SHOULD:

Pass on to children the things we learnt when we were young	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Help people to search rather than help people to find	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Expect children to question what they are told	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Help children to get used to religious language	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Take place in a beautiful space	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Expect God to speak through the children	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Teach children right from wrong	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Challenge adults to become more like Jesus	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Allow children to worship God their own way	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Teach the right questions rather give the right answers	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Explain to children what the Bible stories mean	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Build relationships in order to share our faith with others	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Let people be Christians without having to go to Sunday services	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Bring people to faith rather than bring them to church	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Trust children to make meaning for themselves	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Provide a safe place rather than teaching	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Listen extremely closely when children say unexpected things	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Expect people to stay until the end and not leave half way through	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Be a gateway to Sunday morning worship	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Teach people how to become Christians	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Give people resources rather than tell them truths	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Seek to draw something out of children rather than put something into them	AS	A	NC	D	DS

PART 3 – These questions are about you.

Are you:

Male Female

How old are you?

13-19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69
70+

Do you belong to a religious faith? No / Christian / Other (specify) ___

If Christian, what sort of church do you belong to:

Church of England / Church in Wales / Scottish Episcopal

Methodist

Roman Catholic

Baptist

Pentecostal

Other (specify) _____

On a scale from 1 to 10, where “1” represents “slightly” and “10” represents “extremely”, please indicate how religious and how spiritual you would say you are. This is regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion. (*Please tick (✓) ONE box in each of the scales.*)

How RELIGIOUS are you?

- Not at all
- 1 [slightly religious]
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 [extremely religious]

How SPIRITUAL are you?

- Not at all
- 1 [slightly spiritual]
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10 [extremely spiritual]

How often do you attend a service in Church (**NOT** including Messy Church)?

- Never
- Hardly ever
- At least six times a year
- Once a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

How often do you read the Bible by yourself?

- Never
- Hardly ever
- Once a month
- Once or twice a week
- Every day

How often do you pray by yourself?

- Never
- Hardly ever
- Once a month
- Once or twice a week
- Every day

If you do pray do you:

- use formal prayers like “The Lord’s Prayer”
- use your own words
- pray without words

Have you ever experienced a religious conversion?

- No
- Yes suddenly
- Yes gradually

Have you ever had something you would describe as a religious or spiritual experience?

- No
- Perhaps but not really sure
- Yes definitely

Have you ever had a religious or spiritual experience at Messy Church?

- No
- Perhaps but not really sure
- Yes definitely

God means a lot to me_____	AS	A	NC	D	DS
I know that Jesus helps me___	AS	A	NC	D	DS
I think going to traditional Church is a waste of time.	AS	A	NC	D	DS
God helps me to lead a better life_____	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Prayer helps me a lot_	AS	A	NC	D	DS
I know that Jesus is very close to me_	AS	A	NC	D	DS
I think the Bible is out of date.	AS	A	NC	D	DS

PART 4

This section is different from the rest. The questions may seem strange, but they have been professionally formulated to give a brief personality profile of respondents. Completing this section will greatly help the interpretation of the results.

(✓) **ONE** box next to that characteristic which is **closer** to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you, tick the characteristic that reflects the real you, even if other people see you differently. **PLEASE COMPLETE EVERY QUESTION**

- Do you tend to be more _____ active or reflective
- Do you tend to be more _____ interested in facts or interested in theories
- Do you tend to be more concerned for harmony or concerned for justice
- Do you tend to be more _____ happy with routine or unhappy with routine
- Are you more _____ private or sociable
- Are you more _____ inspirational or practical
- Are you more _____ analytic or sympathetic
- Are you more _____ structured or open-ended
- Do you prefer _____ having many friends or a few deep friendships
- Do you prefer _____ the concrete or the abstract
- Do you prefer _____ feeling or Thinking
- Do you prefer _____ to act on impulse or to act on decisions
- Do you _____ dislike parties or like parties
- Do you _____ prefer to design or prefer to make
- Do you _____ tend to be firm or tend to be gentle
- Do you _____ like to be in control or like to be adaptable
- Are you _____ energised by others or drained by too many people
- Are you _____ conventional or inventive
- Are you _____ critical or affirming
- Are you _____ happier working alone or happier working in groups
- Do you tend to be more _____ socially detached or socially involved
- Do you tend to be more _____ concerned for meaning or concerned about details
- Do you tend to be _____ logical or humane

- more**
- Do you tend to be more** _____ orderly or easy-going
- Are you more** _____ talkative or reserved
- Are you more** _____ sensible or imaginative
- Are you more** _____ tactful or truthful
- Are you more** _____ spontaneous or organised
- Are you mostly** _____ an introvert or an extravert
- Do you mostly focus on** _____ present realities or future possibilities
- Are you mostly** _____ trusting or sceptical
- Are you mostly** _____ leisurely or punctual
- Do you** _____ speak before thinking or think before speaking
- Do you prefer to** _____ improve things or keep things as they are
- Do you** _____ seek for truth or seek for peace
- Do you** dislike detailed planning or like detailed planning
- Are you** _____ happier with uncertainty or happier with certainty
- Are you** _____ up in the air or down to earth
- Are you** _____ warm-hearted or fair-minded
- Are you** _____ systematic or casual

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your Messy Church?

Please use this space here to add any further comments:

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. You're feedback is much appreciated.

Appendix D – Adult Questionnaire

This survey aims to find out about what people think and feel about Messy Church.

There are different questionnaires for adults and children. If you are happy for your children to take part in the survey, please tick the permission box on their form and return it with your own form, either to your Messy Church today or to York St John University in the envelope provided.

This questionnaire should take about twenty minutes to complete. It is anonymous and the answers you give will be treated confidentially, so you can feel free to express your opinions. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. I am interested in what YOU feel and believe.

Please answer ALL the questions. Try not to dwell too long on each one, the first answer is usually the best.

Mrs. Mandy Aspland

Faculty of Education and Theology, York St John University, Lord Mayor’s Walk,
YORK, YO31 7EX

a.aspland@yorks.ac.uk

You can answer this ONLINE at: <http://tinyurl.com/messvadults>

Name and address of your Messy Church:

_____ Postcode if you know it:

SECTION 1 – These questions are about you.

Are you:

Male Female

How old are you?

13-19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69
70+

Do you belong to a religious faith? No / Christian / Other (specify) _

If Christian, what sort of church:

Church of England / Church in Wales / Scottish Episcopal _____ Methodist _____ Roman Catholic _____ Baptist _____ Pentecostal _____

Other (please specify) _____

How often do you attend a service in Church (**NOT** including Messy Church)?Never _____ Hardly ever _____ At least six times a year _____ Once a month _____ Once a week _____ More than once a week _____

Have you ever experienced a religious conversion?

No _____ Yes suddenly _____ Yes gradually _____

Have you ever had something you would describe as a religious or spiritual experience?

No _____ Perhaps but not really sure _____ Yes definitely _____

Have you ever had a religious or spiritual experience at Messy Church?

No _____ Perhaps but not really sure _____ Yes definitely _____

How often do you read the Bible by yourself?

- Never _____
 Hardly ever _____
 Once a month _____
 Once or twice a week _____
 Every day _____

How often do you pray by yourself?

- Never _____
 Hardly ever _____
 Once a month _____
 Once or twice a week _____
 Every day _____

If you do pray do you: (*tick all that apply*)

- use formal prayers like "The Lord's Prayer" _____
 use your own words _____
 pray without words _____

Roughly how many Messy Church sessions, including today, have you been to?

This is my first 2-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20+

On a scale from 1 to 10, where "1" represents "slightly" and "10" represents "extremely", please indicate how religious and how spiritual you would say you are. This is regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion.

(Please tick (✓) ONE box in EACH of the scales).

How RELIGIOUS are you?

- Not at all
 1 [slightly religious]
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9

How SPIRITUAL are you?

- Not at all
 1 [slightly spiritual]
 2
 3
 4
 5
 6
 7
 8
 9

10 [extremely religious]

10 [extremely spiritual]

SECTION 2 – MESSY CHURCH

This part asks about your experience and opinions of the Messy Church you attend.

For EACH statement, please circle a response to indicate if you agree or disagree.

If you Agree Strongly , put a ring round _____	AS
If you Agree , put a ring round _____	A
If you are Not Certain , put a ring round _____	NC
If you Disagree , put a ring round _____	D
If you Disagree Strongly , put a ring round _____	DS

Messy Church and You

- I feel more welcome in Messy Church than in “normal church”_ AS A NC D DS
- I feel a strong sense of belonging to Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I feel a bit out of place at Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I look forward to Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I feel part of a community at Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I often feel close to God at Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- Messy Church strengthens my inner faith_____ AS A NC D DS
- For me Messy Church is not about faith_____ AS A NC D DS
- I find Messy Church very comforting_____ AS A NC D DS
- I usually leave Messy Church feeling better than when I arrived_ AS A NC D DS
- I don’t think of Messy Church as a real church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I find Messy Church quite moving_____ AS A NC D DS
- For me Messy Church is a bit boring_____ AS A NC D DS
- I like to join in with the crafts_____ AS A NC D DS
- I don’t usually join in with the songs_____ AS A NC D DS
- I’d prefer less God stuff at Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I don’t feel pressured to believe in God at Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I would like to be involved with the running of Messy Church__ AS A NC D DS
- I’d like more activities for adults at Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- I am happy to give money to support Messy Church_____ AS A NC D DS
- Messy Church is all the church I need_____ AS A NC D DS
- I often hang around afterwards and help clear up_____ AS A NC D DS
- Since coming to Messy Church...**
- I am more aware of God_____ AS A NC D DS
- The Christian story means more to me now_____ AS A NC D DS

I have made some really good friends _____ AS A NC D DS
 I rarely think about God _____ AS A NC D DS
 I am more curious about the Bible _____ AS A NC D DS
 I feel more alive _____ AS A NC D DS
 I haven't changed much at all _____ AS A NC D DS
 I feel more thankful about the good things in life _____ AS A NC D DS
 I am more certain that Christianity is **NOT** for me _____ AS A NC D DS
 I care more about making the world a better place _____ AS A NC D DS
 I care more about other people _____ AS A NC D DS
 I am more conscious that we need to look after the earth _____ AS A NC D DS
 The Bible has come alive for me _____ AS A NC D DS
 My priorities in life are pretty much unchanged _____ AS A NC D DS
 I pray more _____ AS A NC D DS
 I find it easier to accept Christianity than I used to _____ AS A NC D DS
 I've had some great conversations about God _____ AS A NC D DS

Messy Church....

Is what a church should be _____ AS A NC D DS
 Makes very little difference to my life _____ AS A NC D DS
 Has made me more positive about the Church generally _____ AS A NC D DS
 Challenges me to be a better person _____ AS A NC D DS
 Makes me think more about the big questions in life _____ AS A NC D DS
 Is where I reflect on the mysteries of life _____ AS A NC D DS
 Doesn't inspire me at all _____ AS A NC D DS
 Nurtures my soul _____ AS A NC D DS
 Makes me feel like I matter _____ AS A NC D DS
 Helps me to celebrate life _____ AS A NC D DS
 Helps me feel connected to the Christian Church _____ AS A NC D DS
 Helps me see beyond my day to day life _____ AS A NC D DS
 Brings me closer to the faith I grew up in _____ AS A NC D DS
 Helps me feel close to God _____ AS A NC D DS

You and Christianity

God means a lot to me _____ AS A NC D DS
 I know that Jesus helps me _____ AS A NC D DS
 I think going to traditional Church is a waste of time _____ AS A NC D DS
 God helps me to lead a better life _____ AS A NC D DS
 Prayer helps me a lot _____ AS A NC D DS
 I know that Jesus is very close to me _____ AS A NC D DS
 I think the Bible is out of date _____ AS A NC D DS

Did you bring any children with you to Messy Church today?

No Yes How many? _____

If you do bring children sometimes please answer all the questions in this box:

I'd prefer to leave the children and collect them afterwards_____	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Messy Church is for me as much as for the children_____	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Messy Church gives me a break from the stress of child care__	AS	A	NC	D	DS
I want the children to learn the Bible stories_____	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Messy Church teaches children right from wrong_____	AS	A	NC	D	DS
Messy Church is very important for us as a family_____	AS	A	NC	D	DS

Which of the following would you say is most important for you at Messy Church?

Please (✓) ONE box for EACH pair of answers, even if that's hard:

Part 1 – What's more important for the children?

That children are creative <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That children are polite
That children follow instructions <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That children choose their own goals
That children remember a Bible story <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That children are curious about a Bible story
That children respect their elders <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That children grow in self-worth
That children have fun <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That children feel they belong

Part 2 – What's more important for you?

That you enjoy yourself <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That you learn about Jesus
That you feel you belong <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That you can be creative
That Messy Church is fun <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That Messy Church builds community
That you can choose what to do <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That you are shown what to do
That Messy Church teaches right from wrong <input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	That Messy Church provides space to think about the big questions in life

SECTION 3

This section is different from the rest. The questions may seem strange, but they have been professionally formulated to give a brief personality profile of respondents.

Completing this section will greatly help the interpretation of the results.

(✓) **ONE** box next to that characteristic which is **closer** to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you, tick the characteristic that reflects the real you, even if other people see you differently. **PLEASE COMPLETE EVERY QUESTION.**

- Do you tend to be more** _____ active or reflective
- Do you tend to be more** _____ interested in facts or interested in theories
- Do you tend to be more** _____ concerned for harmony or concerned for justice
- Do you tend to be more** _____ happy with routine or unhappy with routine
- Are you more** _____ private or sociable
- Are you more** _____ inspirational or practical
- Are you more** _____ analytic or sympathetic
- Are you more** _____ structured or open-ended
- Do you prefer** _____ having many friends or a few deep friendships
- Do you prefer** _____ the concrete or the abstract
- Do you prefer** _____ feeling or Thinking
- Do you prefer** _____ to act on impulse or to act on decisions
- Do you** _____ dislike parties or like parties
- Do you** _____ prefer to design or prefer to make
- Do you** _____ tend to be firm or tend to be gentle
- Do you** _____ like to be in control or like to be adaptable
- Are you** _____ energised by others or drained by too many people
- Are you** _____ conventional or inventive
- Are you** _____ critical or affirming
- Are you** _____ happier working alone or happier working in groups
- Do you tend to be more** _____ socially detached or socially involved
- Do you tend to be more** _____ concerned for meaning or concerned about details
- Do you tend to be more** _____ logical or humane

- Do you tend to be more** _____ orderly or easy-going
- Are you more** _____ talkative or reserved
- Are you more** _____ sensible or imaginative
- Are you more** _____ tactful or truthful
- Are you more** _____ spontaneous or organised
- Are you mostly** _____ an introvert or an extravert
- Do you mostly focus on** _____ present realities or future possibilities
- Are you mostly** _____ trusting or sceptical
- Are you mostly** _____ leisurely or punctual
- Do you** _____ speak before thinking or think before speaking
- Do you prefer to** _____ improve things or keep things as they are
- Do you** _____ seek for truth or seek for peace
- Do you** dislike detailed planning or like detailed planning
- Are you** _____ happier with uncertainty or happier with certainty
- Are you** _____ up in the air or down to earth
- Are you** _____ warm-hearted or fair-minded
- Are you** _____ systematic or casual

Do you have any further comments that you would like to make about Messy Church?

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

Your feedback is much appreciated!

Appendix E – Psychological type distribution tables

It has become the norm in academic literature to present psychological type information in the form of *type tables* (Francis, Clymo and Robbins 2014:259). This ensures that the data can be integrated with established literature and provide the data necessary for secondary analysis. The tables included below follow this established convention.

Table E1 Type distribution for male helpers

N = 46

+ = 1% of N

<i>The sixteen complete types</i>				<i>Dichotomous preferences</i>				
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	E	n = 22	(47.8%)		
n = 7	n = 9	n = 5	n = 3	I	n = 24	(52.2%)		
(15.2%)	(19.6%)	(10.9%)	(6.5%)	S	n = 29	(63.0%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	N	n = 17	(37.0%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++	+	T	n = 18	(39.1%)		
+++++	+++++			F	n = 28	(60.9%)		
	++++			J	n = 42	(91.3%)		
				P	n = 4	(8.7%)		
				<i>Pairs and temperaments</i>				
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP	IJ	n = 24	(52.2%)		
n = 0	n = 0	n = 0	n = 0	IP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	EP	n = 4	(8.7%)		
				EJ	n = 18	(39.1%)		
				ST	n = 12	(26.1%)		
				SF	n = 17	(37.0%)		
				NF	n = 11	(23.9%)		
				NT	n = 6	(13.0%)		
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP	SJ	n = 27	(58.7%)		
n = 1	n = 1	n = 2	n = 0	SP	n = 2	(4.3%)		
(2.2%)	(2.2%)	(4.3%)	(0.0%)	NP	n = 2	(4.3%)		
++	++	++++		NJ	n = 15	(32.6%)		
				TJ	n = 17	(37.0%)		
				TP	n = 1	(2.2%)		
				FP	n = 3	(6.5%)		
				FJ	n = 25	(54.3%)		
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	IN	n = 8	(17.4%)		
n = 4	n = 7	n = 4	n = 3	EN	n = 9	(19.6%)		
(8.7%)	(15.2%)	(8.7%)	(6.5%)	IS	n = 16	(34.8%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	ES	n = 13	(28.3%)		
+++	+++++	+++	+	ET	n = 8	(17.4%)		
	+++++			EF	n = 14	(30.4%)		
				IF	n = 14	(30.4%)		
				IT	n = 10	(21.7%)		
<i>Jungian types (E)</i>		<i>Jungian types (I)</i>		<i>Dominant types</i>				
	n	%		n	%	n	%	
E-TJ	7	15.2	I-TP	0	0.0	Dt. T	7	15.2
E-FJ	11	23.9	I-FP	0	0.0	Dt. F	11	23.9
ES-P	2	4.3	IS-J	16	34.8	Dt. S	18	39.1
EN-P	2	4.3	IN-J	8	17.4	Dt. N	10	21.7

Table E2 Type distribution for male attenders

N = 20				+ = 1% of N				
<i>The sixteen complete types</i>				<i>Dichotomous preferences</i>				
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	E	n = 6	(30.0%)		
n = 6	n = 4	n = 1	n = 1	I	n = 14	(70.0%)		
(30.0%)	(20.0%)	(5.0%)	(5.0%)	S	n = 12	(60.0%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	N	n = 8	(40.0%)		
+++++	+++++			T	n = 10	(50.0%)		
+++++	+++++			F	n = 10	(50.0%)		
+++++				J	n = 15	(75.0%)		
+++++				P	n = 5	(25.0%)		
				<i>Pairs and temperaments</i>				
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP	IJ	n = 12	(60%)		
n = 0	n = 0	n = 1	n = 1	IP	n = 2	(10%)		
(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(5.0%)	(5.0%)	EP	n = 3	(15.0%)		
		+++++	+++++	EJ	n = 3	(15.0%)		
				ST	n = 6	(30.0%)		
				SF	n = 6	(30.0%)		
				NF	n = 4	(20.0%)		
				NT	n = 4	(20.0%)		
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP	SJ	n = 12	(60.0%)		
n = 0	n = 0	n = 1	n = 2	SP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(5.0%)	(10.0%)	NP	n = 5	(25.0%)		
		+++++	+++++	NJ	n = 3	(15.0%)		
			+++++	TJ	n = 7	(35.0%)		
				TP	n = 3	(15.0%)		
				FP	n = 2	(10.0%)		
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	FJ	n = 8	(40.0%)		
n = 0	n = 2	n = 1	n = 0	IN	n = 4	(20.0%)		
(0%)	(10.0%)	(5.0%)	(0.0%)	EN	n = 4	(20.0%)		
	+++++	+++++		IS	n = 10	(50.0%)		
	+++++			ES	n = 2	(10.0%)		
				ET	n = 2	(10.0%)		
				EF	n = 4	(20.0%)		
				IF	n = 6	(30.0%)		
				IT	n = 8	(40.0%)		
<i>Jungian types (E)</i>		<i>Jungian types (I)</i>		<i>Dominant types</i>				
	n	%		n	%	n	%	
E-TJ	0	0.0	I-TP	1	5.0	Dt. T	1	5.0
E-FJ	3	15.0	I-FP	1	5.0	Dt. F	4	20.0
ES-P	0	0.0	IS-J	10	50.0	Dt. S	10	50.0
EN-P	3	15.0	IN-J	2	10.0	Dt. N	5	25.0

Table E3 Type distribution for male non-attenders

N = 14				+ = 1% of N				
<i>The sixteen complete types</i>				<i>Dichotomous preferences</i>				
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	E	n = 5	(35.7%)		
n = 7	n = 1	n = 0	n = 1	I	n = 9	(64.3%)		
(50.0%)	(7.1%)	(0.0%)	(7.1%)	S	n = 12	(85.7%)		
+++++	+++++		+++++	N	n = 2	(14.3%)		
+++++	++		++	T	n = 11	(78.6%)		
+++++				F	n = 3	(21.4%)		
+++++				J	n = 14	(100%)		
+++++				P	n = 0	(0.0%)		
+++++								
+++++								
				<i>Pairs and temperaments</i>				
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP	IJ	n = 9	(64.3%)		
n = 0	n = 0	n = 0	n = 0	IP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	EP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
				EJ	n = 5	(35.7%)		
				ST	n = 10	(71.4%)		
				SF	n = 2	(14.3%)		
				NF	n = 1	(7.1%)		
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP	NT	n = 1	(7.1%)		
n = 0	n = 0	n = 0	n = 0	SJ	n = 12	(85.7%)		
(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	SP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
				NP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
				NJ	n = 2	(14.3%)		
				TJ	n = 11	(78.6%)		
				TP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
				FP	n = 0	(0.0%)		
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	FJ	n = 3	(21.4%)		
n = 3	n = 1	n = 1	n = 0	IN	n = 1	(7.1%)		
(21.4%)	(7.1%)	(7.1%)	(0.0%)	EN	n = 1	(7.1%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++		IS	n = 8	(57.1%)		
+++++	++	++		ES	n = 4	(28.6%)		
+++++				ET	n = 3	(21.4%)		
+++++				EF	n = 2	(14.3%)		
+				IF	n = 1	(7.1%)		
				IT	n = 8	(57.1%)		
<i>Jungian types (E)</i>		<i>Jungian types (I)</i>		<i>Dominant types</i>				
	n	%		n	%			
E-TJ	3	21.4	I-TP	0	0	Dt. T	3	21.4
E-FJ	2	14.3	I-FP	0	0	Dt. F	2	14.3
ES-P	0	0	IS-J	8	57.1	Dt. S	8	57.1
EN-P	0	0	IN-J	1	7.1	Dt. N	1	7.1

Table E4 Type distribution for female helpers

N = 186				+ = 1% of N				
<i>The sixteen complete types</i>				<i>Dichotomous preferences</i>				
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	E	n = 98	(52.7%)		
n = 20	n = 50	n = 9	n = 0	I	n = 88	(47.3%)		
(10.8%)	(26.9%)	(4.8%)	(0.0%)	S	n = 150	(80.6%)		
+++++	+++++	++++		N	n = 36	(19.4%)		
+++++	+++++			T	n = 51	(27.4%)		
	+++++			F	n = 135	(72.6%)		
	+++++			J	n = 169	(90.9%)		
	+			P	n = 17	(9.1%)		
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP	<i>Pairs and temperaments</i>				
n = 1	n = 3	n = 3	n = 2	IJ	n = 79	(42.5%)		
(0.5%)	(1.6%)	(1.6%)	(1.1%)	IP	n = 9	(4.8%)		
	+	+	+	EP	n = 8	(4.3%)		
				EJ	n = 90	(48.4%)		
				ST	n = 45	(24.2%)		
				SF	n = 105	(56.5%)		
				NF	n = 30	(16.1%)		
				NT	n = 6	(3.2%)		
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP	SJ	n = 145	(78.0%)		
n = 1	n = 0	n = 6	n = 1	SP	n = 5	(2.7%)		
(0.5%)	(0.0%)	(3.2%)	(0.5%)	NP	n = 12	(6.5%)		
		+++		NJ	n = 24	(12.9%)		
				TJ	n = 46	(24.7%)		
				TP	n = 5	(2.7%)		
				FP	n = 12	(6.5%)		
				FJ	n = 123	(66.1%)		
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	IN	n = 14	(7.5%)		
n = 23	n = 52	n = 12	n = 3	EN	n = 22	(11.8%)		
(12.4%)	(28.0%)	(6.5%)	(1.6%)	IS	n = 74	(39.8%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++	+	ES	n = 76	(40.9%)		
+++++	+++++	+		ET	n = 28	(15.1%)		
++	+++++			EF	n = 70	(37.6%)		
	+++++			IF	n = 65	(34.9%)		
	+++++			IT	n = 23	(12.4%)		
	+++							
<i>Jungian types (E)</i>		<i>Jungian types (I)</i>		<i>Dominant types</i>				
	n	%		n	%	n	%	
E-TJ	26	14.0	I-TP	3	1.6	Dt. T	29	15.6
E-FJ	64	34.4	I-FP	6	3.2	Dt. F	70	37.6
ES-P	1	0.5	IS-J	70	37.6	Dt. S	71	38.2
EN-P	7	3.8	IN-J	9	4.8	Dt. N	16	8.6

Table E5 Type distribution for female attenders

N = 73 + = 1% of N

<i>The sixteen complete types</i>				<i>Dichotomous preferences</i>				
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	E	n = 39	(53.4%)		
n = 11	n = 17	n = 4	n = 0	I	n = 34	(46.6%)		
(15.1%)	(23.3%)	(5.5%)	(0.0%)					
+++++	+++++	+++++		S	n = 57	(78.1%)		
+++++	+++++			N	n = 16	(21.9%)		
+++++	+++++			T	n = 24	(32.9%)		
	+++++			F	n = 49	(67.1%)		
	+++			J	n = 66	(90.4%)		
				P	n = 7	(9.6%)		
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP	<i>Pairs and temperaments</i>				
n = 0	n = 0	n = 2	n = 0	IJ	n = 32	(43.8%)		
(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(2.7%)	(0.0%)	IP	n = 2	(2.7%)		
		++		EP	n = 5	(6.8%)		
				EJ	n = 34	(46.6%)		
				ST	n = 22	(30.1%)		
				SF	n = 35	(47.9%)		
				NF	n = 14	(19.2%)		
				NT	n = 2	(2.7%)		
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP	SJ	n = 56	(76.7%)		
n = 1	n = 0	n = 4	n = 0	SP	n = 1	(1.4%)		
(1.4%)	(0.0%)	(5.5%)	(0.0%)	NP	n = 6	(8.2%)		
+		+++++		NJ	n = 10	(13.7%)		
				TJ	n = 23	(31.5%)		
				TP	n = 1	(1.4%)		
				FP	n = 6	(8.2%)		
				FJ	n = 43	(58.9%)		
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	IN	n = 6	(8.2%)		
n = 10	n = 18	n = 4	n = 2	EN	n = 10	(13.7%)		
(13.7%)	(24.7%)	(5.5%)	(2.7%)	IS	n = 28	(38.4%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++	++	ES	n = 29	(39.7%)		
+++++	+++++			ET	n = 13	(17.8%)		
+++	+++++			EF	n = 26	(35.6%)		
	+++++			IF	n = 23	(31.5%)		
	+++++			IT	n = 11	(15.1%)		
<i>Jungian types (E)</i>		<i>Jungian types (I)</i>		<i>Dominant types</i>				
	n	%		n	%	n	%	
E-TJ	12	16.4	I-TP	0	0.0	Dt. T	12	16.4
E-FJ	22	30.1	I-FP	2	2.7	Dt. F	24	32.9
ES-P	1	1.4	IS-J	28	38.4	Dt. S	29	39.7
EN-P	4	5.5	IN-J	4	5.5	Dt. N	8	11.0

Table E6 Type distribution for female non-attenders

N =81				+ = 1% of N				
<i>The sixteen complete types</i>				<i>Dichotomous preferences</i>				
ISTJ	ISFJ	INFJ	INTJ	E	n = 46	(56.8%)		
n = 10	n = 19	n = 2	n = 3	I	n = 35	(43.2%)		
(12.3%)	(23.5%)	(2.5%)	(3.7%)	S	n = 61	(75.3%)		
+++++	+++++	++	+++	N	n = 20	(24.7%)		
+++++	+++++			T	n = 29	(35.8%)		
++	+++++			F	n = 52	(64.2%)		
	+++++			J	n = 70	(86.4%)		
	+++			P	n = 11	(13.6%)		
ISTP	ISFP	INFP	INTP	<i>Pairs and temperaments</i>				
n = 0	n = 0	n = 0	n = 1	IJ	n = 34	(42.0%)		
(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(1.2%)	IP	n = 1	(1.2%)		
			+	EP	n = 10	(12.3%)		
				EJ	n = 36	(44.4%)		
				ST	n = 20	(24.7%)		
				SF	n = 41	(50.6%)		
				NF	n = 11	(13.6%)		
				NT	n = 9	(11.1%)		
ESTP	ESFP	ENFP	ENTP	SJ	n = 55	(67.9%)		
n = 1	n = 5	n = 3	n = 1	SP	n = 6	(7.4%)		
(1.2%)	(6.2%)	(3.7%)	(1.2%)	NP	n = 5	(6.2%)		
+	+++++	+++	+	NJ	n = 15	(18.5%)		
	+			TJ	n = 26	(32.1%)		
				TP	n = 3	(3.7%)		
				FP	n = 8	(9.9%)		
				FJ	n = 44	(54.3%)		
ESTJ	ESFJ	ENFJ	ENTJ	IN	n = 6	(7.4%)		
n = 9	n = 17	n = 6	n = 4	EN	n = 14	(17.3%)		
(11.1%)	(21.0%)	(7.4%)	(4.9%)	IS	n = 29	(35.8%)		
+++++	+++++	+++++	+++++	ES	n = 32	(39.5%)		
+++++	+++++	++		ET	n = 15	(18.5%)		
+	+++++			EF	n = 31	(38.3%)		
	+++++			IF	n = 21	(25.9%)		
	+			IT	n = 14	(17.3%)		
<i>Jungian types (E)</i>		<i>Jungian types (I)</i>		<i>Dominant types</i>				
	n	%		n	%	n	%	
E-TJ	13	16.0	I-TP	1	1.2	Dt. T	14	17.3
E-FJ	23	28.4	I-FP	0	0.0	Dt. F	23	28.4
ES-P	6	7.4	IS-J	29	35.8	Dt. S	35	43.2
EN-P	4	4.9	IN-J	5	6.2	Dt. N	9	11.1

Appendix F – Adult Multiple Regression Tables

Table F1 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting Religious Transformation among attenders and non-attenders

		ΔR^2	Predictor variable	β	t
Attenders (N=62)					
Model 1	.02		Female	-.07	-.51
			Introversion	-.11	-.78
			Intuition	.04	.26
			Feeling	.06	.39
			Perceiving	-.06	-.39
Model 2	.26 ^{***}		Female	-.16	-1.26
			Introversion	-.12	-1.04
			Intuition	.04	.28
			Feeling	-.06	-.47
			Perceiving	-.03	-.21
			Duration	.10	.74
			Participation	.50	3.96 ^{***}
Total R^2	.28 ^{***}				
Non-attenders (N=87)					
Model 1	.14 [*]		Female	-.02	-.19
			Introversion	-.02	-.17
			Intuition	.26	2.39 [*]
			Feeling	.29	2.65 [*]
			Perceiving	-.14	-1.30
Model 2	.06 [*]		Female	-.09	-.80
			Introversion	.04	.33
			Intuition	.30	2.85 ^{**}
			Feeling	.28	2.61 [*]
			Perceiving	-.11	-.97
			Duration	.09	.89
			Participation	.24	2.11 [*]
Total R^2	.20 [*]				

Table F2 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting About Faith among attenders and non-attenders

		ΔR^2	Predictor variable	β	t
Attenders (N=64)					
	Model 1	.05	Female	.07	.56
			Introversion	.04	.29
			Intuition	-.02	-.10
			Feeling	-.14	-1.02
			Perceiving	.21	1.39
	Model 2	.18**	Female	.03	.20
			Introversion	-.01	-.06
			Intuition	-.02	-.13
			Feeling	-.21	-1.68
			Perceiving	.26	1.86
			Duration	-.05	-.38
			Participation	.45	3.55**
	Total R^2	.23**			
Non-attenders (N=88)					
	Model 1	.13*	Female	.16	1.43
			Introversion	-.22	-1.96*
			Intuition	-.06	-.53
			Feeling	.10	.89
			Perceiving	-.24	-2.22*
	Model 2	.11**	Female	.09	.84
			Introversion	-.14	-1.33
			Intuition	.01	.09
			Feeling	.09	.89
			Perceiving	-.21	-1.96*
			Duration	.19	1.89
			Participation	.26	2.38*
	Total R^2	.24**			

Table F3 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting Attitude to Christianity among attenders and non-attenders

		ΔR^2	Predictor variable	β	t
Attenders (N=64)					
	Model 1	.07	Female	-.13	-1.00
			Introversion	.09	.69
			Intuition	.02	.15
			Feeling	.19	1.46
			Perceiving	-.15	-1.00
	Model 2	.11*	Female	-.20	-1.54
			Introversion	.09	.71
			Intuition	.03	.22
			Feeling	.12	.89
			Perceiving	-.17	-1.12
			Duration	.17	1.23
			Participation	.26	1.95
	Total R^2	.18*			
Non-attenders (N=87)					
	Model 1	.09	Female	.01	.10
			Introversion	-.08	-.71
			Intuition	.03	.31
			Feeling	.27	2.43*
			Perceiving	-.13	-1.13
	Model 2	.06	Female	-.08	-.64
			Introversion	-.02	-.17
			Intuition	.07	.59
			Feeling	.27	2.44*
			Perceiving	-.09	-.78
			Duration	-.00	-.02
			Participation	.27	2.31*
	Total R^2	.15			

Table F4 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting Spiritual Transformation among attenders and non-attenders

		ΔR^2	Predictor variable	B	t
Attenders (N=62)					
	Model 1	.02	Female	.09	.62
			Introversion	-.05	-.37
			Intuition	.09	.54
			Feeling	.05	.38
			Perceiving	-.07	-.45
	Model 2	.19**	Female	.01	.11
			Introversion	-.09	-.69
			Intuition	.09	.58
			Feeling	-.06	-.47
			Perceiving	-.04	-.29
			Duration	.07	.52
			Participation	.43	3.26**
	Total R^2	.21**			
Non-attenders (N=84)					
	Model 1	.13*	Female	.02	.13
			Introversion	-.14	-1.25
			Intuition	.08	.72
			Feeling	.29	2.65*
			Perceiving	-.04	-.33
	Model 2	.14**	Female	-.11	-.97
			Introversion	-.04	-.39
			Intuition	.17	1.55
			Feeling	.27	2.59*
			Perceiving	.00	.03
			Duration	.07	.71
			Participation	.40	3.59**
	Total R^2	.27**			

Table F5 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting Self-transcendence among attenders and non-attenders

	ΔR^2	Predictor variable	B	t
Attenders (N=63)				
Model 1	.04	Female	.07	.51
		Introversion	.05	.39
		Intuition	.05	.30
		Feeling	.17	1.26
		Perceiving	-.00	-.03
Model 2	.32 ^{***}	Female	.01	.10
		Introversion	-.02	-.16
		Intuition	.02	.16
		Feeling	.05	.40
		Perceiving	.11	.80
		Duration	-.07	-.57
		Participation	.61	5.11 ^{***}
Total R^2	.36 ^{***}			
Non-attenders (N=87)				
Model 1	.13 [*]	Female	.09	.85
		Introversion	-.02	-.17
		Intuition	.11	1.02
		Feeling	.31	2.83 ^{**}
		Perceiving	-.01	-.10
Model 2	.10 ^{**}	Female	-.04	-.33
		Introversion	.05	.50
		Intuition	.14	1.36
		Feeling	.29	2.85 ^{**}
		Perceiving	.05	.46
		Duration	-.08	-.79
		Participation	.37	3.27 ^{**}
Total R^2	.24 ^{**}			

Table F6 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting Relational Belonging among attenders and non-attenders

		ΔR^2	Predictor variable	B	t
Attenders (N=65)					
	Model 1	.08	Female	.12	.93
			Introversion	-.05	-.38
			Intuition	-.15	-.99
			Feeling	.21	1.64
			Perceiving	.15	.99
	Model 2	.47***	Female	.04	.37
			Introversion	-.12	-1.28
			Intuition	-.16	-1.44
			Feeling	.09	.89
			Perceiving	.23	2.08*
			Duration	-.05	-.46
			Participation	.72	7.46***
	Total R^2	.54***			
Non-attenders (N=87)					
	Model 1	.13*	Female	.120	1.79
			Introversion	-.24	-2.11*
			Intuition	.05	.45
			Feeling	.10	.90
			Perceiving	-.10	-.90
	Model 2	.31***	Female	.05	.50
			Introversion	-.13	-1.45
			Intuition	.16	1.76
			Feeling	.07	.78
			Perceiving	-.02	-.26
			Duration	.24	2.70**
			Participation	.51	5.32***
	Total R^2	.44***			

Table F7 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting Positive Change among attenders and non-attenders

		ΔR^2	Predictor variable	B	t
Attenders (N=62)					
Model 1	.03		Female	-.04	-.30
			Introversion	-.05	-.36
			Intuition	.14	.88
			Feeling	.04	.31
			Perceiving	-.10	-.64
Model 2	.20**		Female	-.12	-.96
			Introversion	-.08	-.60
			Intuition	.14	.97
			Feeling	-.08	-.64
			Perceiving	-.08	-.58
			Duration	.13	.94
			Participation	.42	3.22**
Total R^2	.22**				
Non-attenders (N=88)					
Model 1	.08		Female	.03	.22
			Introversion	-.17	-1.49
			Intuition	.07	.63
			Feeling	.18	1.62
			Perceiving	-.14	-1.21
Model 2	.20**		Female	-.11	-1.06
			Introversion	-.06	-.52
			Intuition	.14	1.42
			Feeling	.17	1.72
			Perceiving	-.07	-.64
			Duration	.09	.92
			Participation	.47	4.35***
Total R^2	.29**				

Appendix G – Helper Multiple Regression Tables

Table G1 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting an attitude to All-age Messy Church among helpers

N=199

	ΔR^2	Predictor variable	β	t
Model 1	.04	Female	.04	0.51
		Age	.04	0.57
		Introversion	-.10	-1.43
		Intuition	.16	2.14*
		Feeling	.02	0.31
		Perceiving	-.00	-0.04
		Model 2	.03	Female
		Age	.05	0.72
		Introversion	-.09	-1.26
		Intuition	.14	1.88
		Feeling	.03	0.39
		Perceiving	.01	0.07
		Leader	.17	2.40*
		Socialisation	-.03	-0.40
		Child-led	.00	0.00
Total R^2	.07			

Table G2 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting Hospitality at Messy Church among helpers

N = 201

	ΔR^2	Predictor variable	β	t
Model 1	.07*	Female	.02	0.24
		Age	-.02	-0.29
		Introversion	-.23	-3.34**
		Intuition	.12	1.58
		Feeling	.04	0.62
		Perceiving	-.11	-1.44
		Model 2	.32***	Female
Age	-.09			-1.46
Introversion	-.21			-3.74***
Intuition	.06			0.99
Feeling	.05			0.95
Perceiving	-.11			-1.91
Leader	-.04			-0.63
Socialisation	.26			4.17***
Child-led	.42			6.56***
Total R^2	.40***			

Table G3 Hierarchical multiple regression predicting attitudes to Spiritual Creativity at Messy Church among helpers

N=198

	ΔR^2	Predictor variable	β	t
Model 1	.10**	Female	.22	3.09**
		Young	.12	1.69
		Introversion	-.06	-0.92
		Intuition	.18	2.33**
		Feeling	-.07	-0.10
		Perceiving	.01	0.09
Model 2	.26***	Female	.13	2.10*
		Young	.17	2.80**
		Introversion	-.03	-0.50
		Intuition	.12	1.84
		Feeling	-.07	-1.09
		Perceiving	-.01	-0.12
		Leader	.12	2.07*
		Socialisation	.01	0.16
		Child-led	.49	7.38***
Total R^2	.36***			