

SAINT STEPHENS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

903 E 2nd Street
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452

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www.ststephensucc.net

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, OR WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, YOU'RE WELCOME HERE!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EVENT: Messy Church

DATE: November 14 and every 2nd Sunday of the month

TIME: 4-6pm

FOR FURTHER INFO: Mike Southcombe, mike@ststephensucc.net

St. Stephens UCC is happy to share with Merrill and the surrounding community the launch of a new way of worship and fellowship that has been sweeping the world: Messy Church!

Messy Church enables people of all ages to belong to Christ together through their local church. It is a way of being church that is particularly suited to families, is intergenerational, and is particularly welcoming to people who have never belonged to a church before, who have been spiritually wounded at another church, or who have not found traditional forms of worship to be particularly helpful. This month's Messy Church is November 14 from 4-6 pm.

It is immersive and experiential. No sermons. We read a scripture passage, find a theme within it and then explore that theme through physical activities, games, crafts, foods, and other experiences together. We might sing a song. We will have conversations, and we will eat dinner together! A meal concludes our Messy Church every month.

Rev. Mike Southcombe, senior pastor at St. Stephens is not a newcomer to Messy Church. "I began bringing the Messy Church program to churches I was serving as an Interim Minister 5 years ago. It rejuvenated one of those churches, bringing in people and families who found traditional church irrelevant to their lives. Many of those people were children and grandchildren of some of the members who had been trying for years to find a way to get them back into church."

It is not just for revitalization, however, explained Southcombe. "The second church was doing very well but Messy Church expanded their outreach, adding 5 or 6 dozen families to the people connecting with that church every month. It was such a natural extension of their existing programs their Director of Faith Formation is now one of Messy Church USA's ambassadors and trainers."

Southcombe continued, "Messy Church is not just an activity a church hosts. It is a philosophy of what the church should be. Members adhere to 5 core values: **Christ-Centered**—everything we do comes out of a desire to experience, proclaim, and grow in Christ; **All Ages are Welcome**; **Creativity** that recognizes and nurtures the God-given creativity of every individual; **Hospitality** that reflects a God of unconditional love, and **Celebration** which reflects a God who wants to dance with us in joy."

St. Stephens began their Messy Church events over the summer, and they are now ready to invite the wider public to join. "We've got the bugs worked

out, folks here have a better understanding of the purpose and flow of the event, and we are ready to bring others into a relationship with Christ and the church through a fun, engaging afternoon of activities and fellowship and a free dinner for the whole family to enjoy together,” said Southcombe.

According to www.messychurch.org.uk, Messy Church has spread to over 4000 registered Messy Churches in 30 different countries. Over 500,000 throughout the world worship monthly at Messy Church. The movement began in the church of England in 2006 but is now in over a dozen denominations and fellowships across the globe. Working with the international founders, Messy Church USA, was founded about 5 years ago and members share ideas, successes, ask for help and suggestions and arrange regional training and workshops.

St. Stephens UCC at 903 East 2nd Street in Merrill welcomes everyone to this month’s Messy Church celebration on the theme of ***Thanksgiving to God***, exploring Psalm 107 which begins “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

Church member Leanne Schnabl jumped at the chance to be the Messy Church Coordinator for St. Stephens. “It brings it all together,” said Schnabl. “You get to explore the bible with all your senses and all the different kinds of intelligences we have rather than just listen to a sermon—but Pastor Mike’s sermons are wonderful,” she quickly added. “But people learn in different ways.”

Southcombe agreed. “A lot of people get much more out of the hymns than the sermon on any given Sunday, or the prayers or the Mission Moment. People need to experience the love of God and the fellowship of the church more than they need to hear about it. Messy Church is one way we do that.”

“This month we will have a scavenger hunt, pumpkin spice playdough; dancing popcorn; sculptures made from toothpicks, cranberries, and marshmallows; a couple of turkey-related crafts; a turkey on a zipline, and a turkey dinner with all the trimmings to finish,” said Southcombe. “At every activity station, the host talks about how the activity relates to the theme. Messy Church activates the right brain and the left brain, and we have fun in the process.”

If you would like to try out Messy Church, please register on the church website: www.ststephensucc.net or call 715-536-7322. They ask for registrations to know how many to plan for but welcome everyone even if they did not have a chance to sign up.

For further background check:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSc8fo7vral>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXeEup9tTMc>