



# Messy Church at home: July Jonah's Messy Olympics

Original session by Claire Dawe

The Tokyo Olympics may have been postponed,  
but the Jonah Olympics are about to happen in your own home!

## Activities

If you can't get exactly these materials, just see what you can find around the house instead!

### 1 Ping-pong races

**You will need: numbered ping-pong balls; a racetrack marked on the floor using masking tape, with start and finish lines; paper straws**

Two people race down the track by blowing their ping-pong balls, either through their straws or not.

**Talk about** how the storm that blew Jonah's ship was very strong. I wonder how the sailors felt. When they were scared by the wind, they prayed to their gods for help. Who do you pray to for help?

### 2 Find Jonah



**You will need: a tray; sand, shaving cream, hair mousse or slime; a Lego figure (Jonah); blindfolds; a timer**

One person hides Jonah in the sand (or other material) so no one can see him. Put a blindfold on and try to find Jonah in the sand with one finger only – or a hand for smaller people. Take it in turns and time yourselves. Make it a race!

**Talk about** what you do when you are searching for someone or something. Do you just run off and turn everything over, or do you have a plan? How did God know where to find Jonah?

### 3 Plastic fish

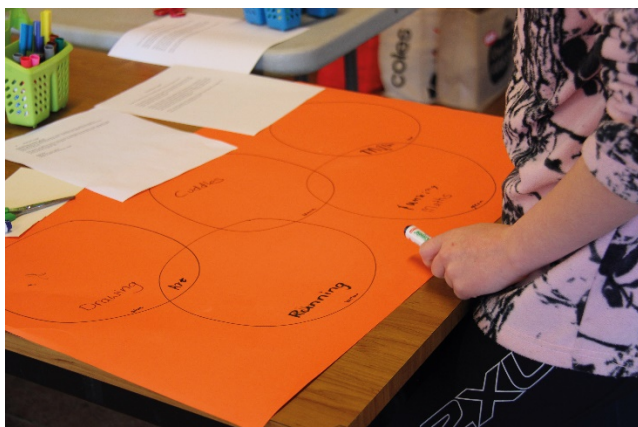


**You will need: a large piece of card with a fish outline drawn on it; glue; scissors; recycled plastic wrappers**

Glue pieces of plastic on to the fish. This will be used later in the celebration and prayers.

**Talk about** how sea creatures are being hurt with plastic rubbish in the sea. There are masses of plastic waste, which are causing environmental hazards for fish and other wildlife. What can we do? In Australia, there are clean-up days at beaches. Inventors and scientists are developing ways to vacuum or collect the plastic, which is then removed from the sea. But it would be far better if it was never there in the first place.

### 4 Olympic rings



**You will need: a large piece of card with the Olympic rings drawn on it; pencils/pens**

Jonah had gifts of speaking and teaching – that’s why God asked him to speak to the people in Nineveh. What are your gifts? What are you good at? If you aren’t sure, ask someone! Write or draw inside the Olympic rings a list of all your different gifts and how you could or do use them to share God’s love with others.

**Talk about** how sportspeople have to work incredibly hard to reach a level to represent their country at the Olympics. Yes, they are gifted, but it also takes hard work and commitment. God gives us gifts to use for the whole of creation, but it doesn’t mean we don’t have to work hard at improving them. God gives us the gifts, but it’s up to us to develop them and put them to good use. How do you improve and build your gifts?

## Celebration

1. **Sing** your favourite Messy Church song from YouTube.
2. **Read the story** of Jonah from a Bible storybook or watch it on a video. There’s a 2:41 version [here](#). Or the [VeggieTales version](#) is great but long – the story starts 4:07 in and lasts about ten minutes.
3. Ask:
  - When do we run away from God? How does that work for us? Have you ever felt called to do something?
  - What did you learn about yourself today?
  - Imagine if you felt called by God to go to your village/town/city – what message would you share with others about caring for creation?
4. Pray: using the cardboard ‘rubbish’ fish as a prop. Ask people to share what they feel about seeing this fish. Include the following if they aren’t offered: we have not been good stewards of creation; our wastefulness is reflected in the rubbish that clogs our oceans and destroys sea life; we all have gifts and talents – perhaps not everyone is an Olympic athlete but we can all use our gifts; we should commit ourselves to stop living selfishly and start living with compassion for all life. Use these thoughts to pray for creation and commit to making a difference for the environment.
5. Say the [Lord’s Prayer](#) together, with or without actions.
6. Say the [Messy Grace](#) if you usually do that at Messy Church.

## Mealtime

See if you can find food from different Olympic countries.

## Massive fish prayer space



**You will need: a tent or parachute; lots of brown paper; coloured paper; scissors; sticky tape; marker pens; bottles; pens**

Put up the tent and leave the door open as the mouth of the fish. Then cover the tent with paper, adding eyes, teeth, scales, a tail. Inside the tent have a supply of bottles, pieces of paper and pens. Write prayers that start, like Jonah's prayer in Jonah 2, 'Lord God, HELP!...' and put the message in a bottle. You could also use a parachute if you can't get hold of a tent.

**Talk about** the way God hears our prayers even in the deepest, darkest places.

Send us a photo of you all doing your Messy Church at home!

We miss you; we hope you're well and safe and we look forward to seeing you again.  
And until that day may God hold you in the palm of his hand.