



Murder at

St Ethel's



Keep Out

Keep Out

Keep Out

Keep Out

Keep Out

Police

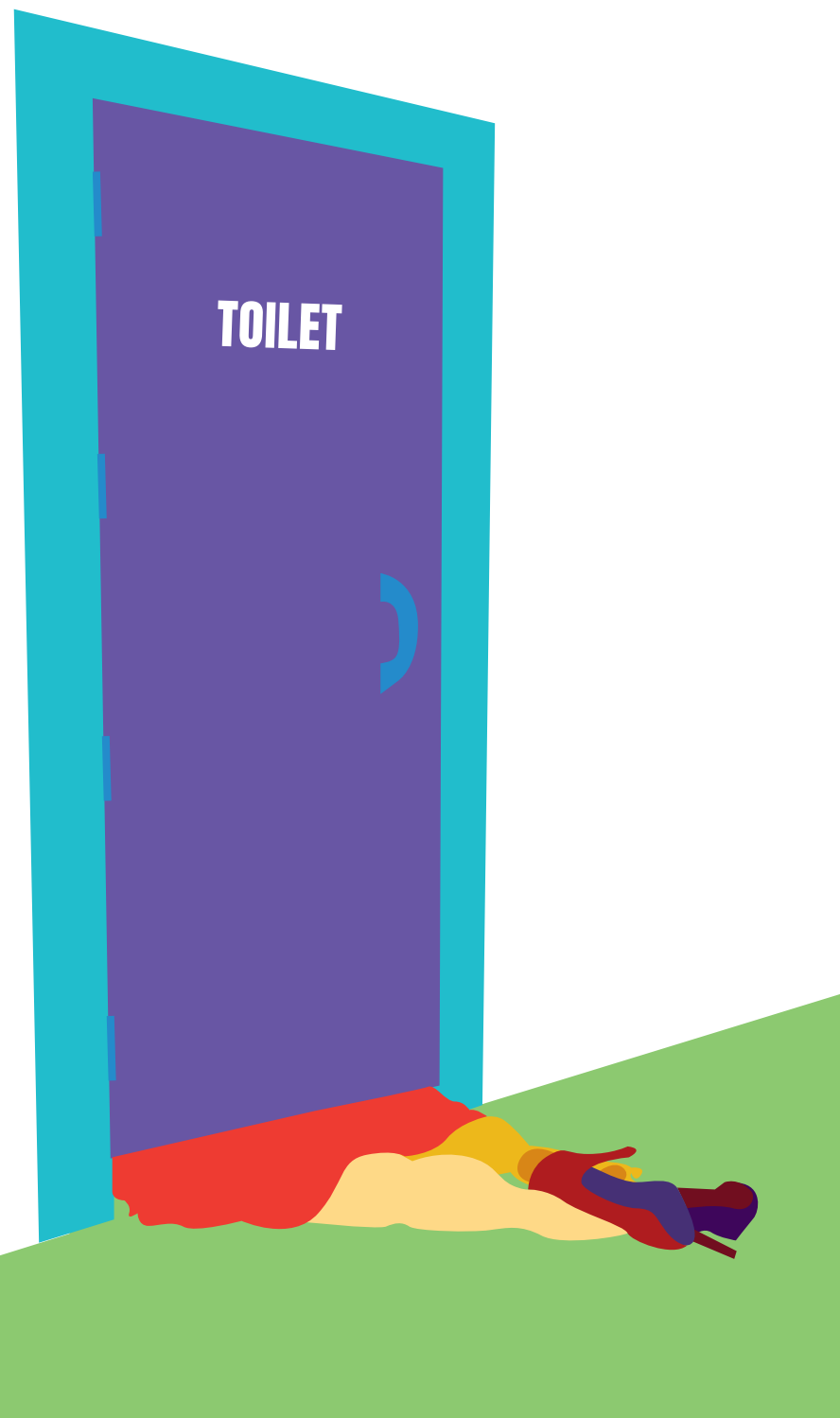
Police

Police

Police

Police





Here is a Messy Murder Mystery you can put on with minimum effort at your church, perhaps as a fundraiser for BRF, perhaps just for fun. The whole mystery takes about an hour and a half. Nobody needs to learn lines. The six suspects just need to get their heads around their own part in the plot.

Setting up



Put out a table and chairs in six spots in the room. Candles and flowers make it atmospheric. Invite guests to bring their own drinks and nibbles. You may want to provide glasses and a corkscrew/bottle opener.

The guests (detectives) sit at their own table for the evening and every six minutes, the suspects move on to the next group. The host will need to tell them when the time is up.

At the start, hand out the Detectives' Notes and pens to everyone. Gather everybody around the door to the toilet from which the corpse's legs are sticking out. (You can stuff a pair of tights with newspaper and jam them into a pair of stiletto shoes.) If you feel inclined, sound effects of thunder and lightning and driving rain and wind could be played briefly.

It would also be fun to have a pair of handcuffs ready to put on the murderer at the end.

Note

Ham acting is the order of the day. If in doubt, the actors should give away more information, rather than less. Lydia can lie if necessary but everyone else should tell the truth, even if it's very reluctantly.

You will see the script allows for several of the characters to be male or female to make it as flexible for you as possible. But Amelia, Colin and Trevor should stay the gender they are or it's going to be even more incredibly convoluted than it already is.

Props and costumes will help the detectives to ask good questions.



Revd Monstrance (This character can also be male)
Minister of St Ethel-the-Less of Snoddington

Costume: a cassock and dog collar

Props: a Jiffy Bag addressed to the vicar, with wording on the outside:
'DRUGS BY POST', 'Internet toxins – handle with care', 'Drug-U-Like',
'Botox for Beginners' and similar unsubtleties

Lydia Lettemin (This character can also be male: Leslie, wearing suit and tie)
The Messy Church head leader

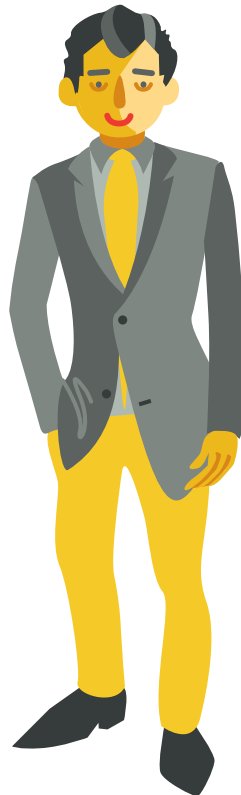
Costume: very proper, twinset and pearls

Props: a copy of the parish magazine and a clipboard

Trevor Trove
The church treasurer

Costume: suit and cravat or similar well-heeled look

Props: no special props



Amelia Artypants
Organiser of all the Messy activities

Costume: arty, hippy floaty scarves, skirts, felt-tip pens tucked in her hair, paintbrushes behind her ear, in pockets, etc.

Props: a large and ostentatious ring, ideally with a secret compartment

Colin Coalbucket
The church caretaker

Costume: very scruffy, down at heel, lots of pockets with unpleasant things in, such as dead rats and tins of pesticide

Props: a selection of bottles and boxes labelled as pesticides, broom, hip flask (smelling of bleach if you want to be thorough)

Kitty Kupcake (This character can also be male: Kevin)
The Messy cook

Costume: frilly pinny or Messy Church apron

Props: a recipe book entitled *Messy Recipes by Kitty Kupcake, inventor of the famous Tangy Tomato Tart. As seen on TV!*



HOST: Here we are in the Snoddington Church of St Ethel-the-Less, high on the hill. It is a wild night. The storm is raging. I am amazed you all made it to Messy Church here tonight. Do you not realise that the River Snod has flooded since everyone arrived, and no one can get in and no one can get out?

This makes our tragedy doubly terrible. We have a dead body in the toilet. The murderer can only be one of the people here present.

Let me run over the events so far this evening pertaining to this catastrophe.

As the storm was at its height, you remember, when you were all already here, getting on with your gluing and glittering, the door was flung open at 6.30 and the stranger strode in. For some reason, each of the Messy Church leadership team looked up, saw her and gave a gasp:

[Each of the cast gasps in unison. Cheesily.]

Was this a gasp of horror or delight? We do not yet know.

[As each character is mentioned, they stand up and take up a statue-like posture]

The stranger was welcomed, given a cup of tea by **Lydia/Leslie Lettemin**, the Messy Church leader, and a biscuit by **Trevor Trove** the treasurer. During the next ten minutes, she talked quietly with each of these six people. She sauntered to the activity table where **Amelia Artypants** was supervising decorated fairycakes. She snatched the one that **Amelia** offered her and licked off the icing. She stuck her head into the kitchen, laughed when she saw **Kitty/Kevin Kupcake** and stole and ate a portion of the famous famous Tangy Tomato Tart. She stole a swig from the Communion wine bottle that **Revd Monstrance** had left on the shelf ready for the celebration. Smacking her lips, she turned to us, demanded silence and declared, 'I have something very interesting to tell all you Snoddington people; something that will really change things round here for a lot of people. But first, I need the loo.' She staggered off, clutching her stomach. The electricity went off in the storm for about two minutes. When the lights came on again, there was the stranger: dead in our toilet.

In her wallet was a credit card in the name of **Wilma Wotaclot** from the Bank of Kuala Lumpur.

Let me introduce you properly to the six people who are the only possible culprits.

- **Revd Monstrance**, minister of St Ethel-the-Less of Snoddington for the last 20 years
- **Lydia/Leslie Lettemin**, the Messy Church leader
- **Trevor Trove**, the longtime treasurer of St Ethel-the-Less
- **Amelia Artypants**, organiser of all the Messy activities
- **Colin Coalbucket**, the church caretaker since forever
- **Kitty/Kevin Kupcake**, the Messy cook

Detectives, it is your job to interrogate these six suspects during the next hour and to discover which of them is responsible for the demise of the person in the toilet.

In your teams you will have just six minutes for your investigation with each suspect. When the bell rings, you should draw your interrogation of that suspect to a close and your next suspect will move to your table.

Remember, the river Snod has flooded and none of us – including the murderer – can leave till it subsides. Only my mobile appears to be working: help from the outside world is limited and the forensics team cannot get to us. The murderer may strike again: we must stay together and solve this heinous crime as soon as we can. Who killed **Wilma Wotaclot**? Good luck, detectives.



CHARACTER INFORMATION

Revd Monstrance (This character can also be male)

Minister of St Ethel-the-Less of Snoddington for the last 20 years

Costume: a cassock and dog collar

Props: a Jiffy Bag addressed to the vicar, with wording on the outside:
'DRUGS BY POST', 'Internet toxins – handle with care', 'Drug-U-Like',
'Botox for Beginners' and similar unsubtleties

You have been embezzling the church funds for years to pay for your determination to be eternally beautiful, which means you are stockpiling vast quantities of expensive black-market Botox at home. You have enough to kill a buffalo, but you just can't stop buying it. You recognised the stranger as **Wilma Wotaclot** from ten years ago, when she was a young member of the church and she caught you putting the collection money in your pocket after the service. She threatened to tell the treasurer, **Trevor**. You were delighted when **Wilma** suddenly disappeared from Snoddington and hasn't been seen until this moment. You are in line for becoming the new Bishop of Bognor in the next few days; if news of your past misdeeds gets out, you don't stand a chance of getting that job.

You were horrified to see **Wilma** again. You think she's about to announce how criminal you were and still are.

Extra detail for the detectives to discover from you:

You saw **Colin Coalbucket** the caretaker doing something at the sink in the vestry with his back to you at about 6.40 tonight. You couldn't see what it was but it smelt very much like bleach.



CHARACTER INFORMATION

Lydia Lettemin (This character can also be male: Leslie, wearing suit and tie)

The Messy Church head leader

Costume: very proper, twinset and pearls

Props: a copy of the parish magazine and a clipboard

You started this Messy Church at the request of the vicar, and it has been going remarkably well – too well! You have only a burning passion to see all these people in pews on a Sunday, safely doing traditional services. You have come to hate Messy Church from the depths of your heart, but it just keeps on growing. You've tried flagrant health and safety breaches, like leaving the Communion wine out and putting the caretaker's supply of pest control poisons on a shelf easily accessible to small children, but still nobody seems to want to close it down! You are in despair!

Plus **Revd Monstrance** has announced that the beautiful liturgical services on Sundays, at which you are the only congregation member, are going to change to a more Messy style. You cannot bear it! You must get rid of this vicar! In a moment of crazed fury, you put **Colin's** vole poison Vole-D-Mort into the Communion wine bottle when you arrive at church at 5.30, knowing that it will act so quickly that no one else will be harmed after the vicar has taken the first mouthful and expired.

Unfortunately, the stranger drank the wine before you could stop her and died. Now you will have to plan to murder the vicar a different way... You must try to get **Amelia Artypants** incriminated so you can carry on with your plans (**Amelia** is too good at Messy Church anyway). The future of St Ethel-the-Less depends on you! You have no idea what the stranger is about to announce, and you don't really care. She's just another person coming, another sign that Messy Church is succeeding.

To make things worse, you've discovered **Colin Coalbucket** is the author of the gossip column in the parish magazine, which has printed some very nasty rumours about you (and others), so you have confronted **Colin** and told him you're going to sue him for slander. He hinted, for example, that the large numbers of parcels coming from a pharmaceutical company addressed to the vicar are actually destined for you (you live next door to the vicar) and that you're buying drugs off the internet. Ridiculous!

Extra detail for the detectives to discover from you:

You noticed, as you were near the door at the time, that just as the stranger arrived, she paused by the coat hooks, rummaged through the pockets of the coats hanging by the door, took some money from one coat pocket, took out a hipflask from another jacket pocket and knocked back a furtive mouthful, before shoving it back quickly with a grimace. You can say you think the jacket was **Amelia's**, though you know it was **Colin's**!



CHARACTER INFORMATION

Trevor Trove

The longtime treasurer of St Ethel-the-Less

Costume: suit and cravat or similar well-heeled look

Props: no special props

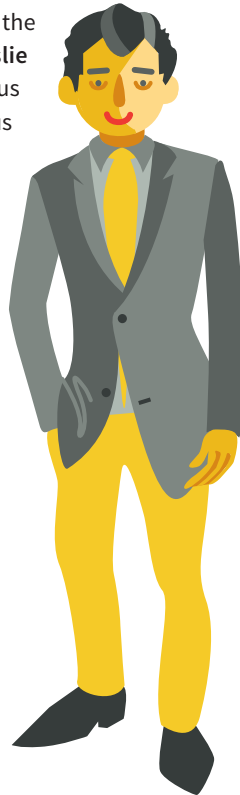
You have been in love with **Wilma Wotaclot** for 20 years and could have married someone else but stayed true to her. Even when she suddenly vanished ten years ago with no explanation, you have been constant. She has been writing to you and emailing you, stringing you along cruelly for those ten years, but never letting you know where she was. Her last email made you overjoyed, however! She's back in the country! She suggested a rendez-vous in the local pub, The Warty Snod, just last night. You went, full of hope, with an armful of red roses and a diamond ring in your pocket. But all she wanted was to tell you that she was about to reveal a secret that would make her a celebrity and that she would therefore be looking for a husband who was at the very least a Duke, if not a lottery millionaire. She was meeting to break it off with you once and for all. You gave her the roses; she laughed derisively and trampled them under her stiletto heel. You thrust the ring at her; she sneered and threw it into the foaming waters of the Snod. You left the pub, blinded by tears of hate and disillusion, vowing never to think of **Wilma** again.

You are an ardent supporter of Messy Church and want to sell off the church pews to raise the money needed to run it, but **Lydia/Leslie** refuses to let you. You are a passionate member of the local Poisonous Plants Partnership and have mail-order deliveries of several poisonous plants every month. Although you have sensed for some time there is something wrong with the church accounts, you haven't examined them too closely because you are creaming off a little something from every collection, jumble sale and coffee morning to pay for your expensive plants that are your only comfort in your loveless life. You have no idea that **Amelia** is in love with you.

You were near the door when she arrived and sadly offered her the last chocolate digestive, even though you'd wanted it yourself.

Extra detail for the detectives to discover from you:

Although **Wilma** and **Kitty** are siblings, they are so very unlike each other, you've often wondered if they are really related by blood.



CHARACTER INFORMATION

Amelia Artypants

Organiser of all the Messy activities

Costume: arty, hippy floaty scarves, skirts, felt-tip pens tucked in her hair, paintbrushes behind her ear, in pockets, etc.

Props: a large and ostentatious ring, ideally with a secret compartment

You fell in love with **Trevor** the Treasurer ten years ago, but he was in love with **Wilma Wotaclot** and only had eyes for her. You had to get rid of **Wilma** so the field would be clear for you and **Trevor** to fall in love! With your amazing artistic talent, you created a faked passport and forged banknotes – an incredible feat of ingenuity. You presented them to **Wilma** and told her she could have the lot if she would only leave Snoddington and never return. To your delight, the hussy did just that, took your forgeries and disappeared. Sadly, **Trevor** still didn't look your way, but you live in hope of attracting his eye. You've been working on him for ten years and he seems to be on the point of proposing. But now – tonight – **Wilma** has returned!

You know about poisons because you studied Lucrezia Borgia during your art degree and your thesis was on symbols of death in the paintings of the Renaissance. You still have a few interesting specimens of plant-based poisons like belladonna and digitalis at home on a shelf.

You think **Wilma** is cruelly going to expose your criminal past and your enduring but hopeless love for **Trevor**. You have a Lucrezia Borgia-type ring full of poison on your finger as a historic artefact: can you get the poison on to a cupcake to offer **Wilma**? Alas, no; **Wilma** snatches a cupcake too quickly for you to put the poison on it. You didn't kill her, but you so wanted to!

Extra detail for the detectives to discover from you:

Last summer, you were intrigued by the fact that **Colin Coalbucket** the caretaker disappeared for a month and came home with a tan and a t-shirt saying 'I *heart* Kuala Lumpur', but looking very miserable. He wouldn't tell anyone what sort of a holiday he'd had.



CHARACTER INFORMATION

Colin Coalbucket

The church caretaker since forever

Costume: very scruffy, down at heel, lots of pockets with unpleasant things in, such as dead rats and tins of pesticide.

Props: bottles/boxes labelled as pesticides, broom, hip flask (smelling of bleach)

You are retired now, but used to be a pest control expert. You are actually **Wilma's** biological father (though not **Kitty/Kevin's**), after an illicit one-night stand with their mother Ermintrude in the back of the Pest Control van. During that night of passion, you narrowly escaped being suffocated by a sack full of dead moles landing on your face, and haven't been able to contemplate a relationship since without a sense of being smothered. You have avoided women for ten years.

But last summer, when you had a near-miss and almost mistook your illegal bat poison for your evening tippie (you keep on doing that!), you realised it was time to try to set matters straight before you die. You tracked down **Wilma**, who was running a dodgy casino in Kuala Lumpur, and explained over the roulette table that you were her biological father. But she laughed in your face and told you never to come near her again, that she didn't want a mere caretaker as a father and she wanted nothing to do with you, ever. Since then, heartbroken, you seek consolation from your hipflask, but get a bit muddled between which bottle you've filled it from. Today, you can't actually remember if you filled it from your Glenmorangie single malt bottle or the Vole-D-Mort bottle.

You write an anonymous gossip column for the parish magazine and have spread rumours about almost everyone in St Ethel-the-Less, so that they're so busy gossiping about each other that they never find out your guilty secret. However, **Lydia/Leslie** has recently discovered you are the author and is suing you for slander. (You suggested the large number of parcels from a pharmaceutical company arriving at the Vicarage addressed to the vicar were actually destined for **Lydia/Leslie**, who lives next door, and were drugs off the internet.)

Extra detail for the detectives to discover from you:

You suddenly remembered you left your hipflask in your jacket pocket where the families hang up their coats. But when you checked it, it was half empty! Has one of the children drunk your – tippie? Or worse, did **Wilma**? And did you really put in single malt or was it Vole-D-Mort? You emptied it out and bleached it quickly just in case it was Vole-D-Mort after all. Unfortunately **Revd Monstrance** saw you at the sink in the vestry, but you don't think the vicar realised what was going on.



CHARACTER INFORMATION

Kitty Kupcake (This character can also be male: Kevin)

The Messy cook

Costume: frilly pinny or Messy Church apron

Props: a recipe book entitled *Messy Recipes by Kitty Kupcake, inventor of the famous Tangy Tomato Tart. As seen on TV!*

You have been a big fish in a small pond since your much more attractive, talented, confident, but deeply unpleasant little sister **Wilma** left suddenly ten years ago with no explanation. (**Wilma** always took delight in humiliating you in as public a way as she could.) You read the diaries she left behind and discovered a recipe **Wilma** had invented. You made it, presented it as your own, and since then have been making your fame and fortune from the fabulous Tangy Tomato Tart. The recipe is secret but your other recipes have been published in a book, your YouTube video has gone viral and as a result, you've just been invited to appear in your own TV series, *Cooking the Messy Way*. Everyone loves you because you make this wonderful dish for them. It has a secret ingredient that nobody but you (and your sister) knows!

But now your sister has returned and will no doubt tell everyone it's her recipe, not yours! She will share the secret ingredient! It cannot be endured. You have no time to waste. What can you do? You decide to pop home as soon as you can, to collect your old stock of out-of-date tranquillisers, and somehow sneak them into **Wilma's** drink. But before you can take any action, she's dead! But you must try to hide how delighted you are, of course. The trouble is, you think it's such good news that hiding your glee is really hard...

You know all about poisons, as you used to be a clinical pharmacist before your career in cookery took off. You think **Wilma** is going to reveal that it's her recipe, not yours.

The secret ingredient is wine... That evening, you had run out of wine at home and so had 'borrowed' some of the Communion wine – crucially – BEFORE anyone else arrived at St Ethel's that evening. You arrived first and nicked the wine at 5.00 pm.

Extra detail for the detectives to discover from you:

Yesterday evening, you saw **Trevor Trove** going to the pub (The Warty Snod) with a huge bunch of roses.





So! In summary!

(Host to read this out after the mystery has been revealed at the end of the evening)

A long time ago, **Colin Coalbucket** had a one-night stand with **Kitty/Kevin's** mother, Ermintrude, which resulted in **Wilma**. Nobody knew the two siblings had different fathers, though it was puzzling that they had so little in common. **Kitty/Kevin** was always lovely; **Wilma** was always a bully.



Ten years ago, **Amelia** fell in love with **Trevor**, who was in love with **Wilma**. **Amelia** forged a passport and bank notes to persuade **Wilma** to leave without trace, which she did. But not before she had told the **vicar** that she knew she/he was stealing money from the church, and not before she had made life miserable for her nicer but more timid older sibling **Kitty/Kevin** in the ways only a bullying sister can.

Revd Monstrance, the **vicar**, started a Messy Church at St Ethel's, with **Lydia/Leslie** as the reluctant leader, but it is going too well and **Lydia/Leslie** has changed her/his mind about wanting new people in church: she/he wants tradition and to keep everything the same forever. So she/he decides to get rid of the **vicar** by putting poison in the Communion wine.

Wilma was in Kuala Lumpur running a casino, saw **Kitty/Kevin** on YouTube, becoming famous, pretending that **Wilma's** recipe was hers. So she decided to come home and claim the recipe, fame and fortune as her own. She has kept **Trevor** on the boil for ten years, mostly to spite **Amelia**, who, **Wilma** knows, is in love with **Trevor** herself. But of course she has to shrug off **Trevor** if she's about to be famous – a glamorous husband is what's needed instead of **Trevor**. And as for her biological father turning up last year and wanting to be part of her life! A caretaker? Seedy **Colin**? Absolutely not! She is going to announce the Tangy Tomato Tart recipe is hers so that **Kitty/Kevin** will be publicly shamed and humiliated.

She arrives at the Messy Church ready to humiliate her sibling, expose the **vicar** and reveal **Colin's** guilty secret.

But before she can destroy everyone's lives, she dies.



So what happened when?

Yesterday at 8.00 pm, **Kitty/Kevin** sees **Colin** heading to the pub with a huge bunch of roses. He meets **Wilma** there. She rejects him.

Today at 5.00 pm, **Kitty/Kevin** arrives and steals some Communion wine to put in the Tangy Tomato Tart.

5.30 **Lydia/Leslie** arrives to set up and puts the vole poison in the Communion wine to kill the **Revd Monstrance** in order to keep the church services traditional.

5.45 **Amelia** arrives, sets up the activities and organises her own activity of decorating cupcakes. **Lydia/Leslie** sets up the welcome table in the foyer and prepares to smile at people as they arrive. After welcoming people, **Lydia/Leslie** hovers near the door serving cups of tea.

6.30 **Wilma** arrives, rummages through the coat pockets in the foyer, takes a swig from someone's hipflask and bursts into the church.

6.35 **Colin** remembers his hipflask may have Vole-D-Mort in and goes to check it. It's half empty! He quickly pours the rest down the drain and bleaches it out in the vestry, then puts the empty hipflask back in his jacket pocket. The **vicar** pops into the vestry to collect a pen and sees **Colin** at the sink with his back to him and smells bleach.

6.40 **Wilma** does the rounds of the Messy Church tables and kitchen as described above.

6.50 She dies horribly in the toilet.





Murder at St Ethel's



Keep Out

Keep Out

Keep Out

Keep Out

Keep Out

Police

Police

Police

Police

Police



messychurch.org.uk



@MessyChurchBRF



facebook.com/messychurchBRF



[messychurch](https://messychurch.org.uk)



pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF

