



Getting to know nature

As Salvationists take part in Muddy Church at Together 2023, Captain Wendy Watkins talks to *Salvationist* about how to do it where you are

What is Muddy Church?

It's a different way of doing church to help people get to know God's creation. Through activities and conversations, it's a way of thinking about God that you might not normally do. It was created by Lucie Hutson several years ago. It's all based on the Monterossi method of education, which involves creative choices, hands-on learning and collaborative play. We worked with Territorial Environmental Officer Major Heather Poxon to base our Together 2023 materials around the theme of Tread Softly, so it ties in with the Army's ethos of caring for creation.

What's happening at Together 2023?

We have four areas in the park with big boards for each. Each of the boards covers certain things – whisper gently, love greatly, hold kindly and smell hopefully. For example, asking people how many sounds they can hear. People can also take pictures and go away and try activities for themselves in their own time, such as puddle jumping, going on a barefoot walk or mud modelling.

We'll be going on a muddy walk through the park, from one board to the next. I'm going to put some pinecones, feathers and twigs down, so that when people are walking they can notice the things they find to help with the conversations.

We're also going to do litter-picking and

make some wooden hearts that say 'God loves...', so you can go up to something, take a picture, and then hashtag it.

How often do you do Muddy Church at Hadleigh Farm?

We do it regularly. It's our way of trying to connect with people who don't do church. We've also been doing a drop-in Muddy Church, where people can turn up when it suits them in about a two-hour period.

Can Muddy Church be done anywhere?

Absolutely. There's no right or wrong way of doing Muddy Church. It's not prescriptive. It's about setting a time, going for a walk and finding out how it works for you. At Hadleigh Farm Estate, we have 900 acres of land. But you might be in an inner city with a little park – and that park is important, because it might be the only green space in the area.

What materials are available for people to do Muddy Church?

The materials we have for Together 2023 are all freely available and illustrated by Lucie. She's also put together booklets outlining our trail on recycled paper.

● For more information and materials to try Muddy Church where you are, email environment@salvationarmy.org.uk.

4 STEPS TO START YOUR OWN MUDDY WALK

FIND A SPACE

Find any space that can work for you. It might not be a space that you regularly at this point connect with.

TALK TO THE LANDOWNER

Talk to the person who owns the bit of land wherever that might be and get their support and permission. Most people will be delighted that you want to be in their park. Work with them to put up posters so you can start advertising to people what you're going to do and when.

ADAPT IT TO YOUR SETTING

See what happens and think about what works in your setting – don't worry about doing it out of the box. You might be really surprised at who connects with it.

CONNECT

Muddy Church isn't about making people feel guilty about not doing enough to help the planet. It's about having conversations with each other about what we appreciate about the world in which we live. You can't love what you don't know, and when you love something you want to take care of it.