

*Acts 10:34–43 or
Isa. 25:6–9
Ps. 118:1–2, 14–24
1 Cor. 15:1–11 or
Acts 10:34–43
John 20:1–18 or
Mark 16:1–8*

Easter Joy

Goal for the Session

Children will enjoy the Easter story from Mark’s Gospel and practice responses to the awe of the resurrection.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 16:1–8

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Beverly Roberts Gaventa

“*He is not here.*” Other details in the story point in a different direction. The reference to the rising of the sun (16:2) seems redundant, given that the narration has already stipulated that “sabbath was over” and that it was “very early on the first day of the week,” but the sunrise stands in contrast with the noonday darkness of 15:33. And the fact that the very large stone, a source of desolation, has already been rolled away, suggests that this story is not to remain mired in desolation. Similarly, the presence of the young man “dressed in a white robe” both contrasts with the terrified flight of the young man in 14:51–52 and signals the presence of the divine (9:3).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Serene Jones

We face the reality of God’s presence to us in the sturdy, raw facticity of history. God is present not only in the loud hallelujahs and glorious proclamations of a grand, churchly Easter morning, forgiving prideful sinners. God persists as well in the midst of speechlessness, in death, in the outer regions of our own experiences and of our social lives, where life unfolds underfoot, as it were. Where we expect to find him dead, the tomb does not hold him. And with often unspoken force, grace abounds.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” D. Cameron Murchison

Their encounter strikes them with “terror and amazement” and reduces them to silence, “So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (Mark 16:8). But why is terror the primary emotion here? The good news of this story seems to escape those who were its first witnesses. The message is that the dream is alive, that God is not dead, that the reign of God begun in Jesus’ ministry continues decisively in his resurrection! And yet it is frightful to these first witnesses.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Gail R. O’Day

In the face of theophany, silence is not a failed or inadequate response. Silence is a wholly appropriate response, because the women’s silence creates a space for the voice and presence of God to resound. What adequate words can the women speak in those first few moments as they leave the tomb that would not trivialize the moment, that would not make the empty tomb into a story about what *they* have seen instead of being a moment about what *God* has done? The women’s restraint and Mark’s parallel restraint in recounting the Easter story combine to allow a moment of holy awe for the reader of the Gospel.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 16:1–8

Focus on Your Teaching

Children have a variety of reactions to the story of Jesus' resurrection—awe, fear, confusion, and joy. As you explore the story of Easter, assure learners that God's gift of new life does not depend on their ability to understand it. It is possible that your class may include visitors this session. Expect the children to be excited about Easter gifts, new clothes, and special holiday activities. Pace your activities to allow for their excitement. Being familiar with the session activities will make it easier to make changes as needed.

God, help me to pause my busy-ness and focus on the joy of Easter. Work through me to convey the importance of this celebration to the children I teach. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- Colors of Lent booklets (from March 7)
- Easter stickers
- small table or large box
- white cloth
- cross
- flowers or ribbons
- Color Pack 6, 10, 11, 31
- tape
- Bible
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 1 on card stock, scissors, colorful tissue paper, white glue, pencils, small paper plates
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, construction paper, scissors, markers, glue sticks
- option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 2, scissors, fill-able plastic eggs, 2 bowls

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, make a worship table by covering a small table or large box with a white cloth and placing a cross and colorful flowers or ribbons on it. Put an Easter sticker on the yellow page in each Colors of Lent booklet. Tape the top edge of Color Pack 10 to the bottom edge of Color Pack 6. Practice telling the story in Exploring so you can do the actions while you speak. If you are using option 1 in Responding, cut colorful tissue paper into 1½" squares, about 30 per child. If you are using option 2, cut off "Card Cutouts" from Resource Sheet 2 (Session Resources) for each child. If you are using option 3, bring one plastic egg for each child; cut out the "Sentence Strips" on Resource Sheet 2 (Session Resources) and put one inside each egg.

Greet each child by saying, "Happy Easter!" Gather everyone around the worship table. Announce that today is Easter, the day Christians celebrate that God raised Jesus from death. Hold up Color Pack 6 and 10 (taped together). Read aloud the words in unison. Form two groups, one to say the first two lines and the other to say the last two lines. Tell learners to spread out so they can jump like the people in the photo as they speak their words. Have the groups exchange the greeting several times.

Distribute the Colors of Lent booklets. Invite learners to tell what each color means.

(Purple) *Remember that Jesus is our king!*

(Green) *Remember how people waved leafy branches / to welcome Jesus.*

(Brown) *Remember how Jesus died on a cross.*

(Yellow) *Remember that God raised Jesus / from death on Easter / and gives us new life too.*

(White) *Remember that in Jesus' name, / God forgives our sins.*

Thank you, God, for loving us. Amen.

Don't expect the children to say the Colors of Lent statements exactly as printed. The goal is that they have the general idea. If you have visitors, you may prefer to say the statements and have learners repeat them.

EXPLORING

Stand in a circle with the children. Open your Bible to Mark 16 and say this is where the Easter story is written. Invite them to help you tell the story. Explain that you will do an action as you tell each part of the story; they will echo your words and actions.

It was early in the morning. (*Yawn and stretch.*)

Mary Magdalene and Mary set out walking. (*Walk in place.*)

They were going to the tomb where Jesus was buried. (*Walk in place.*)

They brought spices with them to put on Jesus' body, as was the custom. (*Hold up an imaginary bag.*)

They talked about who would roll the stone away. (*Pretend to push heavy stone.*)

But the stone was already rolled back! (*Astonished look on face, hands up.*)

They moved toward the tomb. (*Tiptoe in place.*)

They saw a man in a white robe. (*Look to the right.*)

The women were startled. (*Startled look, jump back.*)

The man said, "Don't be afraid!" (*Hand in "stop" position.*)

You are looking for Jesus who died on a cross. (*Hand above eyes, looking for something.*)

Jesus is not here! God has raised him from death! (*Clap hands, big smile.*)

Go and tell his disciples! (*Arm extended, hand pointing away.*)

The women ran from the tomb. (*Run in place.*)

But guess what! (*Lift hands with palms up.*)

They did not say a word because they were afraid. (*Finger up to mouth—shh.*)

Be seated with learners and hold up Color Pack 11. Invite learners to tell what part of the Easter story this illustrates. Discuss:

- ✪ Who went to Jesus' tomb that morning?
- ✪ What did they plan to do there?
- ✪ What surprised them when they got there?
- ✪ Why do you think they were afraid to tell the other disciples that God had raised Jesus from death?
- ✪ Do you think they eventually told the other disciples this good news? Why or why not?

Option: Take learners on a walk around the church to look for signs of Easter celebration.

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

Christ the Lord is risen
today! Alleluia!
All creation join to say;
Alleluia!
Raise your joys and
triumphs high; Alleluia!
Sing, O heavens, and earth
reply, Alleluia!

Proclaim that the good news of Easter is that God raised Jesus from death and that God promises to love us and to give us life with God that never ends! Talk about the ways your church is celebrating Easter today.

Say that one way Christians can share their Easter joy with others is by singing. Play "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" (Color Pack 31; track 3 on *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*). Teach the words line by line, and then sing the song together, clapping as you sing the word *alleluia*.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:



EASY
PREP

- 1. Easter Cross** Learners will create an Easter celebration cross to display at home. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Easter Cross) made on card stock. Set out tissue paper squares and several small paper plates. Squirt a puddle of glue on each plate. Demonstrate how to twist a square of tissue paper around the end of your pointer finger or a pencil, dip it lightly in glue, press it inside the cross outline, and then pull out your finger or pencil. Comment that it looks like an Easter flower. Invite learners to fill in their crosses in this way. Encourage them to take these crosses home and teach the Easter greeting to their families.
- 2. Easter Card** Making a card will help learners respond to the Easter message by telling the good news to others. Say that Easter is important for Christians, but that some people can't come to church today because they are sick or they have to work. Say you will make cards for these people. Distribute the "Card Cutouts" section of Resource Sheet 2 (Session Resources), construction paper, markers, scissors, and glue sticks. Have learners fold the paper in half to make a card. Invite them to color the cutouts, cut them out, and glue them to their cards. Encourage them to draw other Easter pictures. Ask each learner to name someone he or she can give the card to. If learners can't think of anyone, give the finished cards to your pastor to deliver to members in a hospital or care facility.
- 3. Easter Egg Relay** Learners will practice proclaiming the good news of Easter. Form two teams and have them stand in lines on one side of your learning space or a large open area. Divide the prepared plastic eggs between two bowls. Go to the other side of the space and place one bowl on the floor across from each team. On your signal, the first child of each team runs to the bowl, opens a plastic egg, and shouts out the words written on the paper. They then take the egg, run back, and touch the next child in line. Continue in this way until each child has an egg. Encourage learners to open the egg at their family's Easter dinner and read it.

Stand near the bowls to help and offer to shout out the words in unison with any child who has difficulty reading the words.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the worship table. As you did in Gathering, hold up Color Pack 6 and 10 (taped together) and form two groups to speak the two parts of the greeting. Have groups exchange the greeting several times.

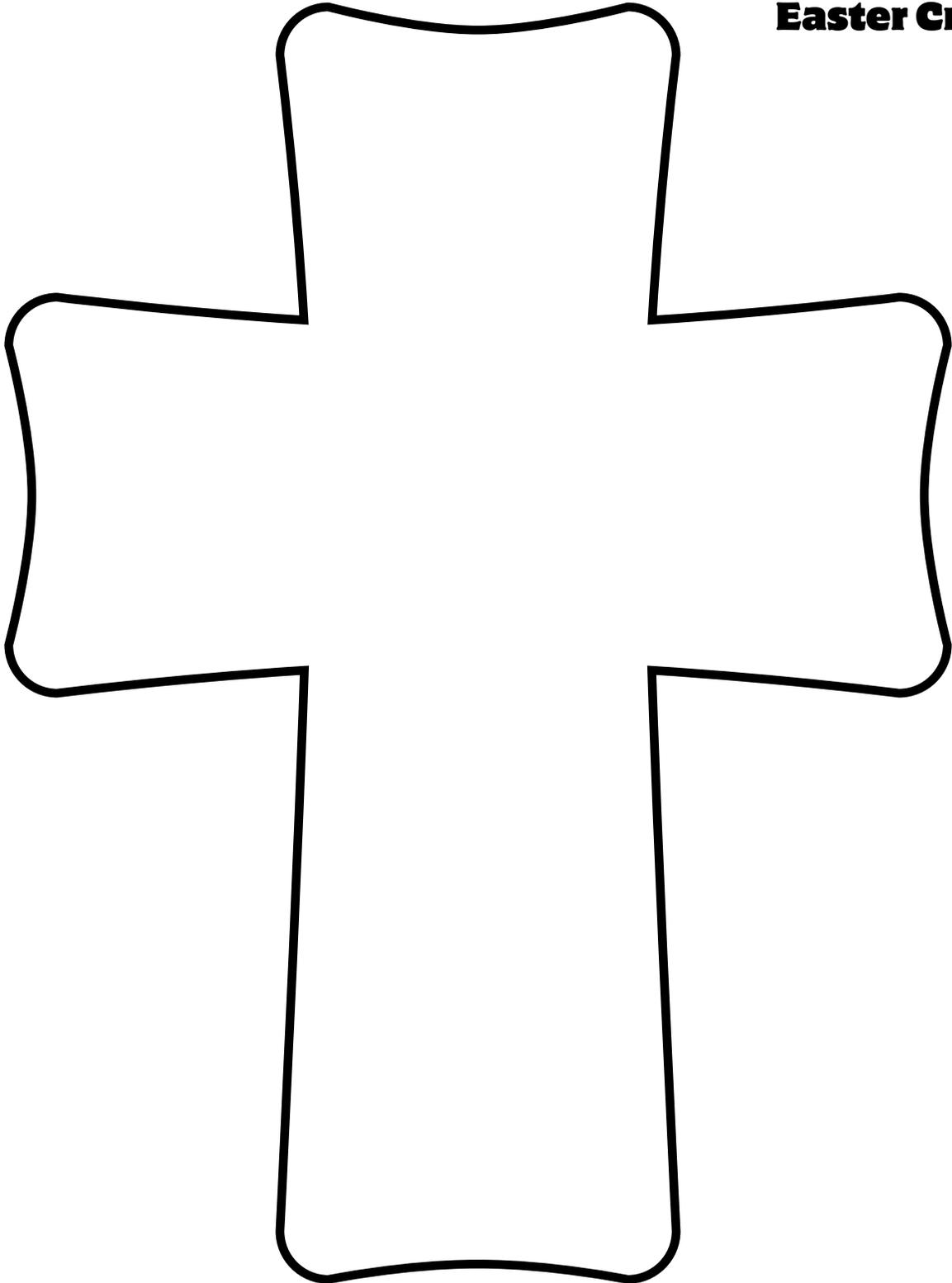
Move to each child. Place a hand on his or her shoulder as you say: "(Name), God bless you with Easter joy!"

Give each child a Colors of Lent booklet to take home.

April 4, 2021
Easter Joy

Grades K–2
Resource Sheet 1

Easter Cross



Alleluia! Christ is risen!

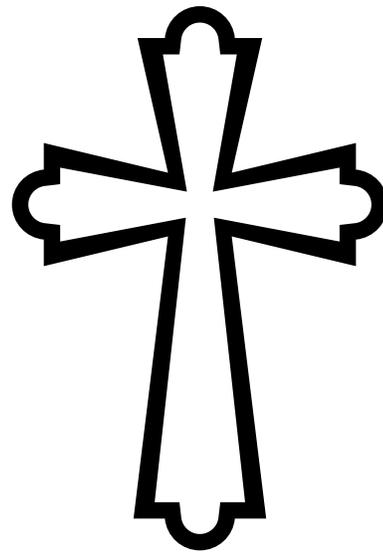
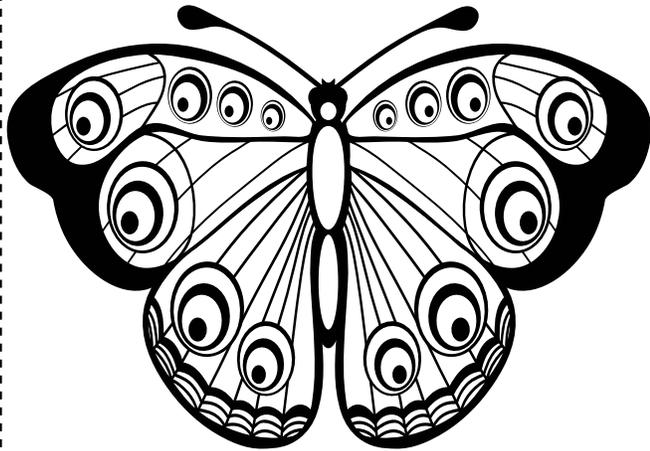
April 4, 2021
Easter Joy

Grades K–2
Resource Sheet 2

Session Resources

Card Cutouts

Happy Christ
Easter! is risen!



cut here

Sentence Strips

God raised Jesus from death.
Christ is risen! Alleluia!

God raised Jesus from death.
Christ is risen! Alleluia!

God raised Jesus from death.
Christ is risen! Alleluia!

God raised Jesus from death.
Christ is risen! Alleluia!

God raised Jesus from death.
Christ is risen! Alleluia!

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