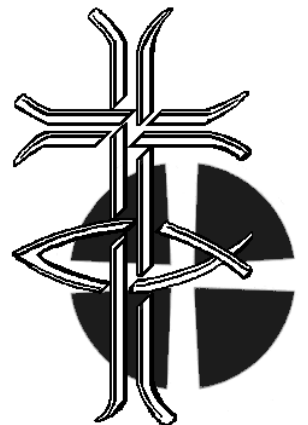


EXPERIENCE EASTER

A series of
REFLECTIVE WORKSHOPS



The Easter story

"Welcome to Experience Easter. Later on, you're going to divide up into groups to think about different parts of the Easter Story. But before that, you're going to hear an account of the first Easter week. Listen very carefully.

" We are going on a journey to a place far away & long ago.

To prepare for your journey, shut your eyes.....

and listen to all the noises around you.....

Imagine you are travelling far away, leaving all those noises behind

Now listen to all the noises inside you - your breathing, your heart beating.....

Quietly take a deep breath.....

Let it out very slowly. As you let it out, imagine you're travelling on, leaving everything behind.

You've arrived. Everything is new & exciting. Now quietly open your eyes."

New voice:

"Jerusalem was busy with people, who had come for the Passover festival. Jesus & his friends were going there, too. When they reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his followers on ahead, to find a donkey for him to ride. They put some of their clothes on the donkey to make a saddle, and Jesus got on. The people in the crowd gave him a royal welcome. Crowds ran ahead and crowds followed, all of them shouting "Hosanna to King David's heir!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name!"

All this fuss made the Jewish leaders angry. His popularity and wise words made Jesus a threat to their authority. So they hatched a plot to kill him. Meanwhile, Jesus carried on telling people about God and the way they could live. One mealtime, Jesus got up from the table before he & his friends started eating and began to wash their feet, drying them with his apron. "I have given you an example" he said. "Live as God wants".

Their Passover meal together was very special "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this with you, before I enter my time of suffering." Jesus said. "It's the last meal I'll eat until we all eat together in Heaven." Then, taking the cup, he blessed it. "Take this and pass it around." Then Jesus picked up the bread, thanked God, broke it, and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in my memory."



After Supper, Jesus and his friends walked to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus told his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." He prayed for himself, for his followers & for the whole world. Meanwhile, his friends were fast asleep. As he was waking them up, Judas arrived with a group of Roman soldiers, all fully armed. The disciples tried to stop them arresting Jesus, but he insisted on handing himself over peacefully.

Jesus was sent to the Jewish leaders for questioning, then to the roman governor. The Jews wanted Jesus to be executed, for claiming he was God's Son. So Jesus was whipped & led out of the city, to the hill where people were executed. There, they crucified him. The soldiers came up and poked fun at him. Hung over Jesus was a sign: this is the king of the Jews. It was several hours before Jesus cried out & died. It seemed like the whole world had gone dark.

Jesus's friends asked the Romans if they could take his body away for burial. They wrapped it up in cotton sheets and left it in a tomb dug out of the rocky cliffs. They rolled a huge stone over the entrance, so nothing could disturb the body. The next day was a Holy Day, but none of Jesus' friends felt like celebrating. They waited sadly until dawn on the Sunday, when some of them returned to the tomb. They found the entrance stone rolled back and couldn't find the body of their Master. Then, suddenly it seemed like two men appeared from nowhere, with light all around them. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a place for the dead? He is not here. Don't you remember how, when you back home in Galilee, Jesus told you that he had to be handed over to be killed on a cross, and in three days live again?" Then they remembered - yes, that was what Jesus had said. They left the tomb and broke the news of all this to Jesus' friends."

"Now I'd like you to sit quietly & think about what you've heard.

Which part do you think was happiest? Which part is the saddest?

Which one do you think is most important?

While you're thinking, we'll ask each group to leave quietly, to go to their workshop.



Palm Sunday - hopes & dreams

Tableau: roadway - roll stone-effect wallpaper
Potted palms
Medium-sized cross at end, on an "open" cairn

Activity: Exemplars crosses with hopes drawn/written
350 palm crosses
20 felt tips

Gathering:

Invite children to sit at the end of the road, facing the cross

Explain that we will be thinking about hopes & dreams.

"When Jesus was alive, the country where he lived was occupied by roman soldiers. The people were hoping for a king to come & free them from their enemies. This is the story of the welcome they gave Jesus"

"Jesus' friends led a donkey out, put some of their clothes on it to make a saddle, and Jesus got on. The people in the crowd gave him a royal welcome. Some threw their clothes down on the road, & others cut branches from the trees and threw them down as a welcome mat. Crowds ran ahead and crowds followed, all of them shouting "Hosanna to King David's heir!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name!" "Hosanna in highest heaven!"

Follow-up:

"Did the people get the sort of king they were expecting?"

Sometimes we have dreams that don't work out, but better things happen instead".

Hand out palm crosses & pens

"Try & think of something you'd like to happen" - show examples

Draw or write something on your cross that symbolises your hope. Take it with you, or leave it at the end of the road."



Servant King - helping each other & Jesus

Tableau: Jug, bowl, with water & towel
12 Carpet samples to sit on, arranged around the basin & jug

Activity: Water in jug
Dry hand-towel for each group (20/day)

Introduction:

Act as host might, welcoming the children and inviting them to sit on the cushions

"Jesus lived in a hot, dry country, where people walked from place to place in open sandals, or even with bare feet. When guests came to your house, you made them welcome by washing their feet. If you were someone important, your servant did it for you.

Listen to the story & see if you can work out why Jesus' friends were so surprised at what He did."

"It was suppertime. Jesus got up from the meal-table, set aside his coat, and put on an apron. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with his apron.

After he had finished washing their feet, he took his coat, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table. Then he said, "Do you understand what I have done? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and that is what I am. So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. I've given you an example. No-one is better than anyone else. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it—and live as God wants."

Follow up:

"What was Jesus telling his followers?

How can we serve each other?"

Pour some water into the bowl. Give the second child round a towel.

"We're going to dip our hands into the water & then dry each other's hands, to show we want to help people.

"Sometimes when we pray, we give God a long list of things we want Him to do, instead of trying to do things ourselves. We're going to end by listening to a poem which was written over 400 years ago, to remind us that we are God's servants.

Christ has no body now but yours.

Yours are the only hands with which he can do his work

Yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world"



The Last Supper - remembering Jesus

- Tableau:** A low table, covered with a cloth
2 long cushions & cushion at table head
13 place settings (plates at least)
Jug of ribena
Bread roll on a small earthenware plate
Seder plate - romaine lettuce, parsley, lamb, boiled egg, sweet mincemeat
- Activity:** 40 bread rolls
A few gluten-free rolls

Introduction:

Ask the children to sit on the long cushions

" To start, I'd like you to imagine you're at a special celebration meal, like Christmas dinner or a birthday tea.

Every Springtime, the Jews remember how they escaped from slavery by celebrating a special Passover meal like this" (show Sedar plate*)*

Jesus & his friends met for this meal just before he was arrested."

"Jesus sat down with all his friends and said, "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you, before I enter my time of suffering. It's the last meal I'll eat until we all eat together in Heaven."

Slowly lift jug & break bread into small pieces as you speak

Taking the cup, he blessed it, then said, "Take this and pass it around. As for me, I'll not drink wine again until the kingdom of God arrives."

Then Jesus picked up the bread, thanked God, broke it up, and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body*, given for you. Do this in my memory."

"Christians remember Jesus in a special service, where we share bread & wine. We call it Holy Communion.

I'm going to pass the bread around now. Think of something you remember about Jesus. If you'd like to, take a piece of bread as it comes round & eat it, to help you remember Jesus."

* *Before they escaped from Egypt, there was a plague, but the Jews survived. They believed that Death has passed over their homes without harming them.*

**The seder plate contains foods that remind Jews of their escape from slavery (The Exodus)*

Bitter herbs (lettuce) - slavery

Parsley dipped into salt water to signify tears & pain as slaves

Mincemeat - the sweetness & plenty of the Promised Land they were heading for

Lamb - a sacrifice in the Temple

Egg - to the Jews, this represented sadness (a tomb)

* *This links to "I am the Bread of Life" - Jesus is a basic need that supports & nourishes us like food*



Gethsemane - being afraid

Tableau: large pot plants
Scattered stones
Dark drapery with moon & stars

Activity: Seed trays filled with earth & a few flowers
Plasticine

Introduction:

Ask the children to sit down in front of the garden.

"We all feel afraid sometimes - maybe when you're lonely & on your own, or maybe on dark nights, when everything's quiet. This story tells you Jesus felt like that, too:"

"Jesus and his friends walked up the hill they called The Mount of Olives. When they arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there and pray."

He walked on a little bit, knelt down, and prayed "Father, if there is any way, please get me out of this. But it's not what I want that counts. I'm ready to do whatever you want."

When he came back, he again found them sound asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open."

Follow-up:

Hand each child a piece of plasticine. Ask them to hold it & think about a time when they've been lonely or afraid*.

"Imagine you could roll up all your horrid feelings into the plasticine."

"Jesus says "Remember all the things I have told you. Don't be upset or afraid. My parting gift is a feeling of peace deep inside you."

"Jesus knew God was with him when He was frightened in the Garden."

"If we work at it, the plasticine gets easier to manage and we can turn the horrible feelings into something better. "

Now ask the children to turn their plasticine into something nice - a flower or animal to go in the garden.

** Anyone getting upset at this point should go, with their accompanying adult, to the vestry*



Good Friday - suffering

Tableau: Large bare wooden cross, with thorn crown
Purple cloth & dice
Twelve red ribbons hung from the cross
Miniature hill with palm crosses

Introduction:

Children are asked to sit in a semi-circle round the cross.

"I wonder what your thoughts are, as you look at this scene?"

- accept answers passively

"One of the most dreaded punishments that the Roman generals thought up was crucifixion, where people were hung up on a big wooden cross & left to die. That's how they dealt with Jesus. Listen carefully to the story".

"When they got to the place called Skull Hill, they crucified him, along with two criminals, one on his right, and the other on his left. Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing." The soldiers divided up his clothes, & gambled for them. The people stood there staring at Jesus, and the ringleaders made faces, taunting, "He saved others. Let's see him save himself! The soldiers also came up and poked fun at him, making a game of it. They toasted him with sour wine: "So you're King of the Jews! Save yourself!" Over him was a sign: this is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals hanging alongside cursed him: "Some Messiah you are! Save yourself! Save us!" But the other one made him shut up: "Have you no fear of God? You're getting the same punishment as him but we deserve it. He did nothing to deserve this."

"For Christians, the cross is a sign of Jesus' love and forgiveness.

I'd like you to think of someone who is suffering. It might be someone you know who is ill, or having problems, or it might be people far away, like the people in Haiti. Take hold of one of the ribbons & we'll say a prayer for them"

"Jesus, you know what suffering is like. Show us how to help people & to let them know they are loved. Amen"



Easter Day - new life

- Tableau:** Empty tomb from table & brown paper
Spot lamp inside/behind
White cloth folded inside
Pot plants/flowers around
- Activity:** 350 post-it notes
20 glo-pens

Introduction:

Ask the children to sit in front of the tomb.

"What is this?(check children know the meaning of a tomb)*

Maybe you've had a pet die. If so, you can guess how very sad Jesus' friends felt, after he was executed. Then things changed."

"At the crack of dawn on Sunday, the women came to the tomb. They found the entrance stone rolled back from the tomb, so they walked in. But once inside, they couldn't find the body of their Master, Jesus. They were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, suddenly it seemed like two men appeared from nowhere, with light all around them. The women were frightened and looked away. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? He is not here. Remember how, when you were still back in Galilee, he told you that he had to be handed over to be killed on a cross, and in three days live again?" Then they remembered Jesus' words. They left the tomb and broke the news of all this to Jesus' friends."

Hand out pens & post-its

Invite the children to write words in highlighter on a post-it to show how Jesus' friends felt after that & to stick them onto the outside of the tomb.

Conclusion:

"The Easter story isn't just about death - it's also about new life. Christians believe that death isn't the end of everything. They also believe that Jesus is still alive* & with them everyday."

- * Rich people put their dead into caves (a bit like the underground crypts we have in some old churches)
They used big stones to keep out wild animals & grave-robbers.
- * It's hard to explain this without using picture language.
We believe that Jesus is with God. If God is with us, then Jesus is too.

(We have omitted "risen" from the text. This appears as Jews believed in an underworld of the dead, earth & heaven above. Nowadays, we believe these things exist, even though we're not sure where, or what they're like.)



Conclusion:

Invite children to gather in the centre.

“ Have you had a good time?

Do you think the story you have heard is sad or happy?

Which part of the story did you like best?

We’re going to end now by learning a song about Easter.”

- joyful chorus.

