

A Kids Friendly
Lent & Easter



 Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand

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INTRODUCTION:

Lent and Easter is central to our and our children's faith. Too often we omit the cruel and violent parts of the story when we teach children, believing it to be inappropriate. But if we do this we deny them the whole Christian story. Children can and do respond to traditional Lenten spiritual disciplines in meaningful ways. So this Lent and Easter consider sharing the whole story of Jesus death and resurrection. I hope this resource will equip you in your ministry to children and families.

And remember, if you have resources to help others minister to children, send them to Kids Friendly – jill@kidsfriendly.org.nz.

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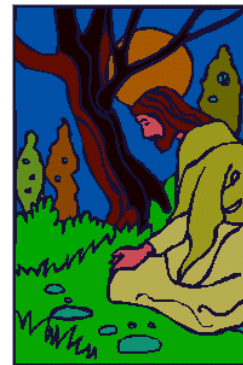


GIVING UP FOR LENT

Encouraging children to give up something for Lent can be a good way to help them focus on what Jesus gave up for us – his life.

My little guy Blake has given up juice and my husband and I have given up sugar. Many times a day we miss these things and we all keep each other on the straight and narrow and remind each other of what Jesus did for us when we feel tempted.

- Explain to them that when we stop filling up our lives with stuff like junk food, TV etc it can help us make room for God.
- Explain to children that giving up something is meant to be hard, remind them of how hard it was for Jesus to fast for 40 days and 40 nights – so homework is not an option.
- Explain that they will be tempted and remind them of how much Jesus was tempted in the desert.
- If it's too hard to give up one thing for 40 days then encourage your children and their families to give up a different thing each week of Lent. Eg a dessert-free week or a TV-free week?
- Invite them to donate the money they would have spent on the thing they have given up to a good cause. Our church has handed out lent boxes for the children to collect their families' "savings" during Lent to be donated to our mission project in Thailand. Each Sunday during Lent we talk about what we have given up and encourage and praise our children or their commitment (our minister gives up coffee and puts the money normally spent in cafes into her lent box).
- Encourage children and families to fill up with something good: Spend some time learning about the days before Jesus died. **Read in your Bible** about how Jesus was arrested and crucified. Talk about it - what would it have been like to be with him at that time.
- Do family devotions during this Lent period (see the Lent Calendar and Family Devotions in this resource).
- Invite them to participate in your church's Lent and Holy Week activities.



PALM SUNDAY ACTIVITIES

Palm Sunday lends itself to a great dramatic re-enactment of the story. Bring the story alive for children and adults by organising a procession where people throw (old) coats onto the floor and others wave palms as Jesus enters.

Palm-Leaf Biscuits – Bake palm-leaf-shaped biscuits in "Sunday School" and let children ice the biscuits with green icing, or give each child a piece of sweet readymade sweet short pastry and let them make one leaf to add to the stem on the baking tray. This only takes 10 minutes to cook so can be ready for morning tea. Sing the song "Hosanna" as you and children "parade" the biscuits out of the kitchen to the morning tea area.

Dave the Donkey PowerPoint Story www.lostsheep.com.au

Jerusalem. A lone rider approaches. The cheering crowd swarm to greet him. The King has come, mounted upon his mighty steed Dave the Donkey! Join Dave, his Grandpa and Jesus in this Easter tale of power, courage, death and resurrection.

This delightful **Palm Sunday** PowerPoint story can be downloaded from the website above for \$10. It comes with a pdf booklet/script for the storytellers.

Palm Sunday Finger Play for young children

Lead children in the following fun finger play. Repeat the rhyme several times so children can learn the words and motions.

One little child by the side of the road (*hold up one finger*)

Waited for Jesus to pass. (*shield your eyes as if looking down the road.*)

He waved his palm branch in the air (*wave your arms up and down*),

'Cause Jesus had come at last. (*Clap your hands.*)

Repeat the rhyme, holding up two, three, four, and five fingers each time. (For extra fun, say the rhyme as many times as there are children in your class. You might want to have a child step forward each time a new number is introduced.) End the finger play with this verse:

Crowds of people by the side of the road (*flash ten fingers several times*)

Waited for Jesus to pass. (*Shield your eyes as if looking down the road.*)

They knew Jesus was the promised king. (*Point to heaven.*)

They knew he had come at last! (*Clap your hands.*)

SHARING THE EASTER STORY

MULTI-SENSORY STORIES

My friend Rich Melheim (www.faithinkubators.org) says the most effective way of getting a message into long term memory is to teach it using all five senses. This is something that guides all my lesson planning. And Easter really lends itself to multi-sensory teaching.

Easter Symbols Story

One year I created an Easter box filled with symbols telling the story. Children were invited to sit quietly in a circle. We passed the box around while playing the song "Wondrous Cross". Each child took a symbol and held it tightly in his/her hand while thinking about what it meant. At the end of the song children joined a group that had the same symbol and talked about the meaning and then shared it with the larger group. (see sample Sunday School "Godzone" lesson in this resource.)

Eggsploratory Easter

Filled plastic Easter eggs are a great way to tell the Easter story. These can be used in a:

Treasure Hunt - put children in pairs to hunt for plastic eggs with a symbol of Easter inside them. Give them time to discuss what their symbol means together before sharing with the large group. Or these can be used in a....

Pass the Parcel Easter Game - When the music stops the child takes an egg, opens it and tells the large group what she think the symbol represents. If she doesn't know, one of the others in the group can be invited to share. Give each child contributing a little chocolate egg for their efforts (make sure everyone gets a chocolate by the end of the game.)

Here are some ideas for symbols to help us share the story:

- A tiny donkey to represent the donkey borrowed by Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem (Matthew 21:2-5).
- Palm branch or a doll's coat to represent the reaction of the crowd in Jerusalem (Matthew 21:8-11).
- Silver coins to represent Judas' payment for his betrayal (Matthew 26:14-15).
- A miniature cup to represent the Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-29).
- Miniature praying hands to represent the praying hands of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42).
- A rooster figure or a feather to represent Peter's denials (Luke 22:61).
- A small piece of soap to represent Pilate washing his hands of Jesus' sentencing (Matthew 27:20-24).
- Thorns or a piece of a rose bush to represent the crown of thorns Jesus wore (Matthew 27:29).
- A cross or two sticks to represent the cross Jesus carried and was crucified on (John 19:16-22).
- Nails to represent how Jesus was nailed to the cross (John 19:16-22).
- A piece of sponge to represent the vinegar soaked sponge offered to Jesus (John 19:28-30).
- Purple cloth to represent the torn curtain in the temple (Matthew 27:51).
- Cinnamon stick or a tiny bottle of perfume to represent the burial spices the women prepared (Luke 23:55-56).
- Empty egg to represent the empty tomb (Matthew 28:5-8).
- A chicken to represent the new life we can have in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

E.A.S.T.E.R. Eggs Interactive Easter Lesson

NEED: Six plastic eggs, each labelled with the letters of the word EASTER. Each candy should be filled with lollies except one of the E's. It is ideal if the eggs can be clear, although it is not necessary. This presentation is done with a puppet, although that too is an optional presentation method.

SET-UP: Hide all of the eggs that have lollies in them around the room: E, A, S, T, and R. The 2nd empty E egg should be in the puppet's possession, or another leader who can say the same line as the puppet below. Write the word EASTER on the white board or have displayed somehow.

LESSON INTRO: Begin by talking about Easter. "Guess what holiday is coming?" "What do you like about Easter?" "Have you ever been on an Easter egg hunt?" etc. Eventually say, "Today we are going to learn about the meaning of Easter, and to do so I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine." Get out puppet and introduce. Ask the puppet if he got the lesson ready for you? After he says, 'yes', have him tell the kids what he did. He will say he hid some eggs! But just a few - some eggs with letters on them that spell Easter. Explain that when you say 'go', they can look for them, and if they find one to come back to their seat the hold it above their head so you can see it.

LESSON: After the kids hunt and find the eggs, have them all sit down. Ask them if they know how to spell the word EASTER. (Point to where you wrote it.) Say that you are going to use the letters of the word EASTER to explain what it means. Your puppet is going to help. Ask what each letter is and then talk about what that letter means. (See chart below) On the 2nd E notice it is missing. Before the kids start to look again (they may jump up to look) have the puppet admit that he has it. Ask why. Because he thought something was wrong with it. "What's wrong with it?" you ask. He replied, "It is empty." But you go on to explain that it is empty for a reason. Because the Tomb was empty too.

E	EVERYBODY - Easter is for E verybody. E verybody does wrong things but Jesus still loves E very body and he died for E verybody so that E verybody can be forgiven when they do wrong.
A	AGAPE - BUT A is for the word Agape - it is the word for LOVE - God loved us so much He sent Jesus to die for us so that we could always be forgiven!
S	SINS - Jesus had to die because of our SINS. Sin is anything we do that God does not want us to do, and we all sin sometimes.
T	TOMB - After Jesus died he was buried in a tomb. That is where they would put dead people. Dead people don't come back, their life on earth is over.
E	EMPTY (see note above about the missing egg) The 2nd E egg is empty because three days later the Tomb was EMPTY because Jesus DID come back to life!
R	RESURRECTION - a big word that means to rise again from the dead. Jesus was raised from the dead. That means he came alive again and that is how we know that He is God.

The puppet can add commentary or ask questions or say silly things to keep the children engaged during the talk. At the end, review the meaning of each letter with the kids and then let the kids who found the eggs keep them as a reminder of what Jesus did for them. If you have a small group, you could have a lolly-filled egg for each child to take home.

I Love You This Much www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk

This story is ideal for an Easter lesson or for an all-age worship service.

Bible link: Luke 23:32-4

On your marks: introduction

When God made people, he breathed into them the breath of his life. There was no death in the beginning; creation bubbled and sparkled with life. But people chose to disobey God's life-giving instructions and death came into the world. Death brought an ending; it hurt and it destroyed. But God is a God of life and again and again in the stories of the Bible we read how God brought life out of death for those who trusted in him. Finally, God sent Jesus to bring us life in all its fullness. He raised people to life from death and he gave them a new beginning. On the cross Jesus chose death so that death itself could be turned upside down. Now, for all who follow Jesus, death is not the end.

You might find it helpful to read the stories about Good Friday and Easter Sunday before the session to get an overall picture of his context. You can find these in stories 308 to 311 on pages 270 to 273 of [The Barnabas Children's Bible](#).

Get Set: You'll need:

- two pieces of card/ paper (A3 is best but A4 will work, too), each with a red X that's as large as possible.
- one piece of card/paper the same size as the other with a + (a proper church cross), again as large as possible.
- Packet of heart-shaped Post-it notes or paper cut out in heart-shapes, enough for each person to have two.
- Some Blu-tack

Go!

1. Place the first picture of the red X on the floor. Ask the children what this sign means if they see it on their Maths work at school. It means they have done it wrong.

Can anyone remember a time when they tried their best at something & got it wrong? How did it feel? Explain that we all do things wrong – adults as well as children.

2. Place the 2nd red X on the floor. Ask the children what this sign means if you see it underneath someone's name on birthday card. It means love –that person loves you.

Can you remember a time when someone really special said that they loved you or sent you a card with that sign on? Explain that deep inside we all need to know and love to know that we are loved by others.

3. **Introduce the story**. Jesus had done nothing wrong yet some people wanted him to be put to death. He was captured and taken through the streets to a place called Golgotha or The Place of the Skull. As he walked through the streets, some people were very unkind and shouted unkind things. Others cried as he walked by because it made them so sad. Jesus was nailed to a cross. On either side of him was a thief. They, too, were to be put to death but Jesus was the one who had done nothing wrong.

Again, some people shouted unkind things at Jesus when he was on the cross. Some cried because they were so sad. At around three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus called out, 'It is finished,' and he died.

4. **Hot seat**

Ask a child or adult to take the place of the thief who was kind to Jesus. How do they feel knowing they have done wrong but Jesus has done nothing wrong and is going to die?

Ask a child/adult to take the place of someone in the crowd who didn't want Jesus to die. How do they feel watching Jesus being put to death? Do they think they should stand up for Jesus and shout out to save him? Why might they not want to do that?

Ask a child/adult to be Pilate. How does he feel to have made the decision to put Jesus to death when he couldn't find anything that Jesus had done wrong? How does he feel as Jesus dies?

5. **Continue with the story.** Explain that Jesus' body was taken from the cross, wrapped in strips of linen and placed in a tomb which was sealed by a large, very heavy stone. Read from The Barnabas Children's Bible, story 311 'The empty tomb', page 272.

6. Place the + (a proper cross sign) on the floor in between the two X ones. Explain this is the cross that says 'You have done wrong' (and point to one X) but it also says 'I love you' (point to the other X).

Point to the + (cross) and say, 'We all do things wrong but Jesus died on a cross so that we can be forgiven. He did that because he loves you so much.'

7. Sum up what you have discovered together about God from this story.

8. To pray, give each person two heart-shaped Post-it notes or two paper hearts cut out with a small piece of Blu-tack. Each person takes them away somewhere on their own in the room. Put some quiet music on. On one heart they write or draw something they have done wrong or something they want to say sorry for. Then they stick the other heart over the top so no one can see what they have written. Then each person comes back to the + card and sticks their hearts onto the + card with a piece of Blu-tack and quietly says, 'Please forgive me' or 'Thank you that you died for me' or 'Thank you that you love me' or something similar.

WHAT IS EASTER ALL ABOUT? Puppet Show

Adapted from story by Maurice Sweetsur

- PUPPET 1: *(Enters excited)* Oh boy! Oh boy! Easter is here. I can hardly wait to eat all those Easter eggs.
- PUPPET 2: *(Enters)* Hi! What are you so excited about?
- PUPPET 1: I was just thinking about Easter. I can't wait for it to come!
- PUPPET 2: It's not that exciting! I'm not even sure what Easter's all about, anyway?
- PUPPET 1: *(Shocked)* Don't you know? It's all about getting Easter eggs and chocolate bunnies with marshmallow centres or caramel inside, or maybe those ones with smarties, or have you seen those giant ones at the Warehouse. I wish I could one like that!
- PUPPET 2: Yeah, sure, but what's that got to do with Easter? Why do we get Easter eggs?
- PUPPET 1: Why? Why? Because they taste good, silly. *(sings: I love Easter eggs, yummy yummy easter eggs)*
- PUPPET 2: But that still doesn't tell me what Easter is about. Sure eggs are yummy but there's got to be more to it than that.
- PUPPET 1: *(Thinks)* Well, let me see. Easter? Hm...I know! It's a holiday from school!
- PUPPET 2: Yeah, but *why*?
- PUPPET 1: I don't know. *(Thinks some more)* I know, let's ask somebody.
- PUPPET 2: Good idea. Who should we ask?
- PUPPET 1: Ah... *(Looking around, spots person in audience)* What about that person over there, I bet he/she know lots of stuff.
- PUPPET 2: *(Looking at audience)* Which one?
- PUPPET 1: *(Pointing)* The one sitting over there!
- PUPPET 2: *(Looking hard, doubtfully)* Are you sure he/she knows lots of stuff?
- PUPPET 1: Well, he/she *might* know. Let's ask. *(Calls out)* Hey you!
- PERSON: Who, me?
- PUPPET 1: Yes, you! We've got an important question for you.
- PERSON: *(Stands)* What's that?
- PUPPET 1: Well, we want to know what Easter is all about. Some people say it's for getting Easter eggs and we know that we always have a holiday, but there must be something more to it than that.
- PERSON: *(Going to puppets)* Well, you're right there. There's a lot more to Easter than just eggs.
- PUPPET 2: *(Smugly to puppet 1)* See, I told you!

PERSON: Easter is when we remember how God sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross for us.

PUPPET 1: You mean Jesus is DEAD!

PERSON: No, not any more! Three days after he died he came alive again.

PUPPET 1: He came alive! That's amazing.

PERSON: It sure is. It amazed his friends too when it happened. They were so amazed and impressed that they wrote down the whole story in the Bible. They told us about how he had died and had been buried in a rock cave with a huge rock in front of it. That was on Friday, but then on Sunday morning there he was walking around alive.

PUPPET 2: Wow!

PERSON: But the best part was that Jesus promised that, because he had died and risen again, anyone who believed in him would also share in his new life.

PUPPET 1: Anyone? Even people like us?

PERSON: Especially people like you.

PUPPET 2: I still don't get something. If Easter is all about Jesus, why do we have Easter eggs?

PERSON: That's easy. What comes out of an egg?

PUPPET 2: Scrambled eggs?

PUPPET 1: No, a chicken.

PERSON: Right, a chicken, a brand new baby chicken, a new life!

PUPPET 1: Or a duck, or a goose, or a turkey!

PERSON: That's right too.

PUPPET 2: Or a sparrow, or an eagle!

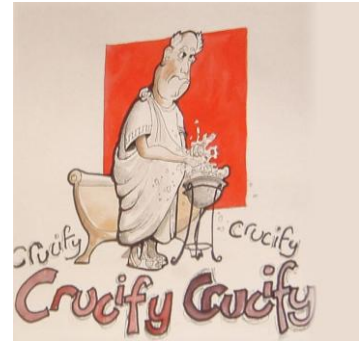
PERSON: *(Rolling eyes at audience)* OK, we get the idea! The point is that they're all a new life. Easter eggs are a reminder that we can have new life too if we believe in Jesus.

PUPPET 1: Oh, I get it. They help us remember what Easter is really all about.

PERSON: So let's all remember when we eat all those eggs on Easter Sunday that Jesus lives on in our hearts for ever.

Henry Martin PowerPoint Easter Story

Henry Martin is an Anglican vicar in England who does the most wonderful cartoon watercolours and creates PowerPoints of bible stories that he very generously shares with us. Go to www.sermons4kids.com. Choose "Art by Henry Martin" from the side menu and then scroll right to the bottom of his page to find a list of PowerPoints. Right click on the one you want and save it into your computer.



Easter Object Lesson - The Good News

Begin the talk by holding up a newspaper and talking about some news items. In the paper we find both good news and some bad news. Which kind of news do you like to hear about most?

Hold up just one sheet of newspaper. I'd like to share with you one news story which is good news for everybody. Fold the sheet as per photo on right. God sent his son Jesus from heaven (hold top corner and run fingers or other hand down the side to the bottom corner) to earth to show us just how much he loves us. This is the good news of Christmas when we remember about Jesus being born.



Fold again to form the "house shape". Jesus grew up in a family (Mary & Joseph...) and when he became older he healed people, helped people, and taught people about how to know and love God.

Begin to tear the paper downwards in a straight line. Talk about how some people believed in that Jesus is God's Son but there were others who wanted to kill him. Talk briefly about Jesus capture and trial. Tear the other side slowly while talking. Jesus was nailed to a cross. Jesus friends were very sad. This



seemed like bad news to them and good news to those who wanted Jesus dead. With the torn off bits of paper, crumple them in your hand and hold them up as you talk about getting rid of Jesus and how his body was placed in a tomb and sealed in the tomb.

Now open the centre piece of paper to reveal the paper cross. Though Jesus suffered and died on the cross he was prepared to do that so that we could be forgiven for the wrong things we do (sins). Place your palm over the cross. Jesus wants us to be friends with God and to follow him today. On "Good Friday" we remember all that Jesus did for us. The Good News is that Jesus came back to life again and he promises those who believe in him eternal life-life forever with God. That's good news (show the newspaper in one hand and the cross in the other) that's certainly worth sharing with everyone.



"Read all about it! Jesus is alive!"

STATIONS OF THE CROSS is a powerful multi-sensory way for children to experience the full Easter story. St Columba at Botany in Auckland transformed their church buildings into different stations and invited families to experience the story at set times during holy week. "The children will never forget the dark and chilled tomb we created in a room at the bottom of the building," says Sue Ellis, children's minister.



DEPICTING THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Another powerful way to bring the story alive is to invite children to paint the stations over the Lent season. Share the account of Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion from Mark's gospel and look at illustrations in children's bibles and picture books. Talk about the cruelty Jesus endured and pray for understanding of what it means for us. Prepare line drawings on card or material and surround each scene with geometric patterns to resemble a stained glass window. Invite the older children to paint the scenes and the younger to paint the geometric sections. The example below has pictures and words for the stations. What could be even

more powerful is to get the children to write the description for what is happening in each scene.

The Stations of the Cross

www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/20020301/FRIDGE/stations.htm

Go to this website for all the Stations of the Cross line drawings (examples below) and a simple series of meditations. Click on a picture, to get a full page image of two stations, suitable for coloring.

First Station:

Jesus is Condemned to Death

Jesus is brought to stand in front of Pontius Pilate, the judge. He is innocent but Pontius Pilate condemns him anyway and sentences Him to death.





The Second Station: Jesus Takes His Cross

Jesus has been beaten by the soldiers. He has been laughed at and spat upon. Now he must pick up the heavy cross and carry it while the crowd yells. He is so tired and sad, but no one cares.

Third Station: Jesus Falls The First Time

The cross is too heavy. It is so heavy that Jesus falls down under its weight. The blood from the crown of thorns is running into His eyes and His back aches from the scourging. People are still screaming and throwing things at Him. His heart must be as heavy as the cross He carries.



Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother

Suddenly, Jesus sees His Mother. She is standing at the side of the road surrounded by the crowd. Her eyes fill with tears when she sees Jesus. She wants to help Him but she can not. Both their hearts ache at the other's pain.

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus Carry the Cross

The soldiers are in a hurry. They grab Simon of Cyrene out of the crowd to carry the cross and make Jesus go faster. Jesus was grateful to Simon for his help.



HOLY WEEK

With children we are often tempted to hop from the joyous Hosannas of Palm Sunday to the celebratory Alleluias of Easter Day. We think that trying to explain the cruelty of the cross to our children is just too hard or maybe even inappropriate. But we do our young people a disservice when we deny them the whole Christian story. The resurrection means so much more if we invite them to **“walk the way of the cross”** in holy week.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Maundy Thursday can be inclusive of children. The name Maundy is Latin for "command," and it refers to the new commandment Jesus gave his disciples to love one another. You can celebrate this day with a foot washing service, or communion. Our church has an all-age Passover or Seder Meal to remind us of the last supper Jesus had with his disciples on this night.

A Seder Meal adapted from children’s ministry magazine.

Lead children in a traditional Seder Meal to help them understand the role of Passover and its connection to the Lamb of God at Easter.

Throughout the world each year, Passover is celebrated by Jewish families as a remembrance of how God freed their ancestors from slavery. This gathering is the most significant home event of the year. The Seder meal is an important part of this celebration.

- Special Foods—You’ll need roasted lamb on the bone; unleavened bread or matzo crackers; a pitcher of grape juice; maror or bitter herbs, such as horseradish, onions, and radish; charoseth—a mixture of ground apples, raisins, nuts, figs, and honey; baked eggs; parsley; lettuce; celery; and salt water.

You’ll also need a large Seder plate in the center of the table and cups. The plate contains the foods used during the service to represent the life of the Hebrews in Egypt.

- The Seder Ceremony—The Seder meal itself contains several parts. This service is based on a Messianic Jewish order of service called a Haggada. Adjust the service and include the prayers that are special or important to you. Follow this order:

1. Light a candle. Say, "Blessed are you, oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctified us by the blood of the Messiah and commanded us to be a light for the nations and gave us Jesus, our Messiah, the light of the world."

2. Bless the first cup of juice. "We take up the Kiddush cup and proclaim the holiness of this Day of Deliverance!" Everyone drinks the juice.

3. The green vegetables represent the hyssop that was used to place the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts. As you say the following, everyone takes a green vegetable and dips it into the salt water.

Say, "Blessed are You, oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruits of the earth."

4. Next, everyone takes a matzo, holds it up, and says together, "This is the bread of affliction, the poor bread, which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want share the hope of Passover."

Everyone places the matzo back on the plate.

5. Pour a second glass of juice as you tell the story of the Hebrews' deliverance in Exodus 12. Everyone drinks.

6. Show the roasted bone and say, "Our ancestors in Egypt were spared by the blood of a lamb. This reminds us that God delivered his people from Pharaoh's judgment against them."

7. Hold up the maror and say, "The Egyptians made the lives of our forefathers bitter. The bitter herb speaks of sorrow." Hold up the charoseth and say, "This represents the mortar the Hebrews were forced to use building the Egyptian cities."

Mix the maror and charoseth. Place them between two pieces of matzo, and everyone eats.

8. Pour a third cup of juice. Say, "Blessed are you, oh Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine." Everyone drinks.

9. Point out the egg on the plate. Say, "The egg is not touched because it symbolizes sacrifice. Jesus was sacrificed for our sins."

10. Pour a fourth cup of juice and say, "The redemption is not yet complete. The fourth cup recalls us to our covenant with the Eternal One, to the tasks that still await us as people called to the service of God, to a great purpose for which the people of Israel live: the preservation and affirmation of hope."

11. Lead children in singing praise songs. Then close by saying, "The Lord has remembered us. He will bless us. He will bless the house of Israel. He will bless those who revere the Lord, the small as well as the great."

This meal could be followed by an interactive story. I still remember participating in such a Maundy Thursday service where we moved around the church building to hear the story up to Jesus' arrest. Peter's denial was enacted around a real fire in the carpark. These sensory experiences bring the story alive and live on.

GOOD FRIDAY

My beliefs about the inappropriateness of including children in a Good Friday service were challenged and transformed a few years ago when our minister Rev Pauline Stewart organised an all-age Good Friday service. We joined with the Anglican Church down the road and held the first part of the service of readings, poems and music at St Heliers Presbyterian and then all the children carried an enormous wooden cross down the road to the Anglican Church. Every person was asked to take a thorn or nail as they entered and hold it tightly in their hand with eyes closed while the story of Jesus trial and crucifixion was read. My son Blake still has the thorn and has never forgotten the experience.

Why Good Friday? It is primarily an English term. In Germany the day is known as Karfreitag or "Mourning Friday". It is suggested that "good" is a corruption of "God" as in "God's Friday". Goodbye is said to have evolved from "God be with you". Others speculate that "good" was used to denote "holy". Others believe that calling such a dark day "good" reflects the hope of the resurrection that would not have been possible without Jesus' death.

EASTER ALL AGE WORSHIP

Easter lends itself to all-age worship. For many excellent all-age services see the Uniting Church of South Australia site at www.mrn.sa.uca.org.au/childrens-ministry/all-age-worship.html.

EASTER DAY ACTIVITIES

Some creative activities for during the sermon could be...

The Jelly Bean Prayer

Make a special Easter gift of coloured jelly beans in a ziplock bag. Attach a card to it with this poem printed on it. Get the kids to colour the card in the colours of the jelly beans.

Green is for the grass God made.

Blue is for the gift of shade.

Yellow is for the sun so bright.

Black is for the dark of night.

Purple for the hours of sorrow.

Pink is for our new tomorrow.

Orange is for our Easter sun.

White is for our Lord God's Son.

A bag of jelly beans, so sweet

A prayer, a promise and a treat.

May the risen Lord bless you

This Easter and always!



Banner Celebration

Get the children to make an Easter banner with appropriate symbols and words. Kids may write "He is risen!" with a sunburst or an empty tomb. Or they may write "Jesus lives!" with a large lily.

At an appropriate time in your worship service, have children march into the service and line up at the front. The kids shout "He is risen!" and the church members shout back "He is risen indeed!"

A Living Cross

Construct a 6- to 8-foot cross from wood. Then cover it with chicken wire. Mount the cross on your church lawn. Fill the chicken wire with palm fronds for Palm Sunday. Invite your children and adults to bring fresh flowers on Easter morning to place on the cross. During the service or children's lesson have a ceremony to go and put flowers on the cross for all the passers by to see.

Chocolate Egg Hunt

Hide hollow chocolate eggs instead of plastic or real eggs. Make sure there are enough eggs for each child to have one, and limit the hunt to one egg each. Gather the children and tell them that before they unwrap or eat their eggs, they need to know that each egg holds a special message just for them. Count to three and have children each bite or break their egg at the same time. As the children discover that the eggs are hollow, remind them of Christ's empty tomb. Have children each tell what Jesus' resurrection means to them.

EASTER@HOME

Encourage your families to share their faith at home during this special holy week.

Print out the **Lent@Home Calendar** (attached) for each of your children, get them to decorate it and take it home for use by the family or send home the suggested family devotions below:

Holy Week Family Devotions adapted from Children's Ministry Magazine

Photocopy and give this Easter Week devotion plan to the families in your church.

•**Palm Sunday**—Read aloud Mark 11:1-11. Make palm-leaf biscuits together. (see earlier suggestions) Crush green lollies in a bag with a hammer, and sprinkle onto the dough. Contrast the sweetness of the cookies with the harshness of breaking the lollies with a hammer. Tell your children that this was a sweet day for Jesus, but he knew that soon he would be broken—or would die—for our sins.

•**Monday**—Read aloud Mark 11:15-18. Tell your children that this area of the temple was the place non-Jews could come to pray, but it had become a dirty, noisy, un-worshipful place. Together, decorate a worshipful space in your home for Easter Week. Include a Bible, candles, and an area to display the items you'll use this week. You can review these items at the beginning of each devotion. A small, bare tree branch laced with white Christmas lights makes a nice backdrop. Light the candles or turn on the lights only during devotions to keep it special and meaningful.

•**Tuesday**—Read aloud Mark 14:3-9. This woman gave Jesus a gift that was very precious. We can give gifts that come from our heart, too. As each child shares something he or she can do to honour Jesus, spray perfume into the air or on the child. Leave the perfume on display at your family worship space.

•**Wednesday**—Read aloud Matthew 26:14-16. You'll need 30 silver coins. Tell kids that Judas betrayed Jesus for about 120 days wages. Let the kids count the coins and place them at your family worship space. Ask, "Was Jesus' life on earth worth more than 30 pieces of silver? Why or why not? What was the true value of Jesus' life to our family?"

•**Thursday**—Read aloud John 13:1-5. Jesus washed feet to show his love. Have a bowl, a bar of soap, and paper towels ready. Take turns washing each other's hands and drying them as you express love to each other. Display the soap at your family worship space.

•**Friday**—Read aloud Mark 15:21-39. You'll need two large nails, and light gauge wire. Help children lay their nails across each other like a cross, then start wrapping the wire around the point where the nails intersect to bind the nails into a cross. Crisscross the wire in the center. Have the kids recall an event of the Crucifixion with each wrap.

•**Saturday**—Read aloud Mark 15:42-47. Take turns wrapping each other in toilet paper just as Jesus may've looked when prepared for burial. Talk about how the disciples might've felt when all their hopes seemed destroyed when Jesus died. Ask, "How would you have felt if you had been there when Jesus died? What would you have done?"

Talk about how the burial isn't the end of the story, but that it was a very sad day for Jesus' friends.

•**Sunday**—Read aloud Luke 24:1-9. You'll need cupcakes and a trick re-lighting candle. Light it and talk about how Jesus came to be the light of the world. On Saturday, it looked like the light had been blown out. Blow out the candle and wait in silence while the flame is gone. When the flame comes back, celebrate! Point out that nothing can ever snuff out Jesus, the light of the world.

Service of the Shadows



Our family is often away at the "bach" for Easter so we have developed a "**Service of the Shadows**" for Good Friday night. We try to invite another family to join us as it lends itself to about 10 readers. The two youngest boys find driftwood on the beach and make us a cross during the afternoon. We start the service by playing the song "*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*" while the boys proceed in with the

cross and place it in our worship space. We all sit around the table in front of a candle. The first reader starts and at the end of her reading we respond with the words "*The shadow of ...*" The reader then hammers a nail into a large piece of wood with two blows, blows out her candle and passes the hammer and wood to the next person who starts to read. This is a powerful all-age home service that the children never forget. If you would like a copy of it email me at jill@kidsfriendly.org.nz

Easter at the beach

On Easter morning we gather on a rocky island on our beach which is how we imagine the Garden of Gethsamane to look, and read the story starting with the Last Supper. When we get to the resurrection we move along the beach to a cave that has a large rock in front of the entrance and continue the story. Then it's a race back to the bach to see what the Easter bunny has hidden.





SAMPLE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Godzone Term 1, 08

Lesson Plan

Week 5, 16 March

Theme: Palm Sunday/Easter

IN CHURCH:

Godzone Worship Assistant: Blake Kayser

Scripture/story: Dave the donkey (a Palm Sunday story –Jill and Paul Kayser)

IN GODZONE:

Leaders: Jill and Vikas

Lesson Objective: To share the meaning of Palm Sunday and Easter (before children leave to go on holiday)

Set up: Week 5 – 16 March – Jill and Vikas

- ☺ Arrive at 8.30 or do day before.
- ☺ Turn on lights to create warm atmosphere and lay out room as you need it. If you are doing crafts set up the tables at the back of the room and cordon them off until craft time to create anticipation.
- ☺ Prepare children's altar table (at front) with world globe, cloth, candle, prayer wheel etc according to what you need.
- ☺ Check room is tidy and boards are looking good.
- ☺ Check Godzone assistant is setting up (with rolls, stickers, prize box, enrolment forms for welcome table).

9.30 am – child worship assistant leads kids out of church to Godzone rooms. Invite all children and leaders to sit on carpet in a circle.

Kids Friendly Ritual

- ☺ Ask Worship Assistant to bring bible up and place on special table. Invite a child to light Christ candle. Try to include someone who doesn't do it in church because they are too shy or new etc. Always ask and if necessary explain why we light the Christ candle ie because Jesus shows us the way to live. He is like a light guiding us. Sometimes I give out a spot prize when a child responds to this question – prizes in box in cupboard.

Welcome

- ☺ Ask if any child is new and if so buddy them with a regular attendee and welcome them.
- ☺ Check if they received welcome pack and if not give one to them.
- ☺ Introduce leaders.
- ☺ Ask if anyone has had birthday the week before, sing happy birthday and present bookmark.
- ☺ Notices – announce forthcoming children's events, find out who would like to help with worship and how (to pass on the minister).

Getting to Know you game: A quick "God loves you" game. Start: "I'm Jill and God loves me, pass it on (tap next person who responds in the same way until everyone in the circle has had a turn).

Introducing the theme for the day:

Puppet Show: What's Easter all about? (Vikas, Jill and Alina - in audience)

Reinforcing the lesson of the day:

Sensory activity: Focus on Easter

Have a box with cross on the lid (I made mine out of tin foil on a dark blue box). Place the box in the middle of circle with symbols of Easter inside it. Play song: wondrous cross. Each person in the circle goes to the box and takes out one symbol and then returns to place until everyone has something. When song is finished people with the same symbol sit together and talk about what their symbol reminds them of in the Easter story and then shares it with the rest of the group.

Symbols/items in box: thorns, hot cross buns, hollow plastic egg, candle, communion cup, silver coins.

Craft: Palm Sunday biscuits. Cut frozen sweet short pastry into 1/2-inch strips. Give each child one to mould a leaf of the palm. Make a stem down a tray covered with baking paper or sprayed. Get each child to join his leaf onto it. Bake at 160 degrees (fan bake) for about eight minutes. Enjoy for morning tea after praying to thank God for sending his Son to earth to show us the way and die for us. See below.

Resources needed for this week: Puppets and puppet script, Computer with song, box with symbols, ready made dough, baking trays.

Prayer Time: Pray with the children on this theme and thank Jesus for coming to our world to show us how to live and love.

Closing Prayer: (invite children to volunteer to lead us in prayer)

Child 1: Thank you God for sending your son Jesus to show us how to live and love in this world.
All: Thank you God
Child 2: Thank you for holidays and Easter eggs and the good time we will have with our family this Easter.
All: Thank you God
Child 3: Help us remember what Jesus taught us as we celebrate Easter.
All: Thank you God. Amen.

Weekly challenge: Take time to remember what Jesus did for us as we celebrate Easter.

Closing

- ☺ Invite children to lead us in the grace or teach us a new grace or teach children how to bless each other. For "**Graces and Blessings**" see below
- ☺ Release for morning tea.

(I had to pack Palm Sunday and Easter into one lesson that year because so many children were going to be away for Easter, but it would be better to divide it into two by adding some of the other activities in this resource.)

Recommended Easter Resources

Books:

Easter Cracked – plays, crafts, events, stories service outlines and more.
\$29.95 available from Scripture Union Online Bookstore
www.scriptureunion.org.nz or Christian book shops

Tiddlywinks Yellow Book for preschool age teaching– \$39.95 available
from Scripture Union Online Bookstore or Christian book shops.

Websites:

For crafts, stories, games, lessons etc

www.dltk-holidays.com/easter/index.html

www.dltk-bible.com/guides/easter-index.htm

www.barnabasinchurch.org.uk/pages/483s.htm#ChristianYear

For all age worship services:

www.sa.uca.org.au

For lent and giving resources:

www.lentevent.com/

Children's talks for Lent and Easter

www.childrensministerblog.com

www.barnabasinchurch.org.uk/pages/483s.htm#ChristianYear

www.sermons4kids.org/martin

www.lostsheep.org.au