



He Is Risen!

Goal: To find joy in the surprises of Easter and share that joy with others.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 24:1-12

They didn't expect it. Jesus' disciples and followers were heartbroken by his death on the cross. Now, just hours later, the women who came to Jesus' tomb were met by two men in "gleaming bright clothing" (v. 4, CEB) who delivered the astonishing news: "He isn't here, but has been raised" (v. 6, CEB).

This proclamation and its truth surprised all who heard it and shared it (vv. 6-8). That Jesus had risen from the dead was a message unlike anything else. It became the core foundation of the Christian faith. It reached the first followers with unexpected power!

That same surprise, joy, and wonder at Jesus' resurrection still come to us. Though we have heard the message proclaimed in churches, it can still affect our lives with amazing power. God's grace raised Jesus from the dead. He is alive, forever. He can be with us in our lives, forever. This makes us grateful beyond all imagining!

No wonder we share the Easter message. Jesus has defeated death; the victorious power of God's love and grace in Christ calls forth our praise and gratitude, forever.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children's concrete experiences of changes in the seasons can lay a foundation for their understanding of the Easter story. Trees lose their leaves in the fall, only to grow new ones in the spring. Plants that die down in the fall sprout and blossom in the spring. Baby animals are born in the spring. As children experience the cycles of nature, they can begin to grasp the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

Each year, we tell the story of Easter with a new group of children who can hear it and imagine it through the lens of the women who came to the tomb, the women who were witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. Children can understand the experience of seeing something happen, of being a witness and then telling about what happened. As they tell about an incident, they become interpreters of that event.

In hearing this story again with children, we can be witnesses, saying with others, "He is risen." Moreover, we can be interpreters, sharing with others the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

The story for today concludes with wonder. Peter wondered what the empty tomb and risen Christ meant. He wondered what would happen next. Children's natural curiosity can be engaged with questions such as these or this one: Can you imagine what it must have been like to have been Mary, Joanna, or Mary Magdalene when they went to the empty tomb? Invite children to share their own wonderings and questions about this story.

*Holy God, thank you for the miracle of Easter.
Help me live out the joy of this day. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 7, 22, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

tablecloth

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: puzzle made
with **SCM 7a**

choice 2: plastic eggs
(at least one for each
child), one basket

Exploring

choice 1: **SCM 7b**

choice 2: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1-2

choice 3: plastic eggs,
Easter stickers, small
wrapped candy, **GN 3**

choice 4: copies of **GN 4**

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i-ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii-iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, glue **SCM 7a** onto a piece of light cardboard, such as a cereal box. If possible, laminate the picture. Cut along the lines, and put the pieces of the puzzle in an envelope or box for “Guided Play” choice 1.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children as they arrive and say, “Christ is risen!” Prompt them to respond, “He is risen indeed!” Share with them that this is an ancient Easter greeting that is said around the world on Easter morning.

Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers who you do not know personally. Explain to them that their children will hear a story about what happened to Jesus on the very first Easter long ago.

Introduce the children to your helper or helpers. Invite children to look at the guided play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Puzzling**—Invite the children to put together the puzzle that you prepared and discover what the women are looking at. As the puzzle work proceeds, wonder together what the women are doing and how they may be feeling.
- 2. Searching for eggs**—Hide empty plastic Easter eggs around your meeting space. Encourage the children to find the eggs and put them in the basket. When all the eggs have been found, put the basket aside until “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3.
- 3. Singing**—Play the Easter songs “Hallelujah!” and “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today.” Ask the children how the songs make them feel. Note the happy, joyful quality of the songs. Sing parts of one or two songs that are easy for the children to pick up. Gather in an open space large enough for the children to move around to music.

- T** Many children function better with the sense of security and order that routine provides. Remember to use the Visual Schedule to reinforce the routine.

Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Hallelujah”—**SCM 22**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

We Went to Jerusalem

L B MS

Stand in a circle with the children. Choose one child to go first. That child walks around the outside of the circle and says, “I went to Jerusalem and saw my friend (*Name*).” The child then taps the person named, and the two trade places. The first child is in the circle again, and the second child walks around, saying, “I went to Jerusalem and saw my friend (*Name*).”

Help the children remember who has and has not been chosen, and encourage them to give everyone a turn.

At the end of the game, say, “We all went to Jerusalem, and we saw our friend Jesus.” Invite the children to say the sentence with you several times.

Easter Action Rhyme

L T

Lead the children in the action rhyme, inviting them to repeat your words and motions. Do it a couple of times and get really excited at the end.

The sun came up on Easter. (*arms opened overhead*) /
 The sky was clear and bright. (*spread arms wider*) /
 Some women went to Jesus’ tomb, (*move arms at sides like walking*) /
 and there they saw a sight. (*hand on mouth*) /
 Someone moved the stone away; (*pushing movement with hands*) /
 Jesus was not there. (*hands over eyes as if looking*) /
 “Why are you looking here?” the two men said. (*place palms up in questioning motion*) /
 “He said he would arise.” (*lift hands to the sky*) /
 The women quickly ran away. (*move arms like running*) /
 They told all Jesus’ friends, “Jesus is alive! Hooray!” (*hands on heart, then lift them overhead*) /



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story

Open the Bible to Luke 24 so that the children know that the story comes from the Bible.

Read **SCM 7**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Talk about the different emotions that the women and Peter must have had. Practice making faces or posing bodies to show these emotions.

Read the story again and invite the children to use their faces and/or bodies to show the emotions of the women and Peter in the story. When you have finished reading, ask the children to choose a face or body position that expresses how they feel hearing the news that Jesus is alive!

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Easter Sunday Sanctuary Visit MS B

If the sanctuary is available during the session, take the children to visit the worship space to search for Easter symbols, such as the bread and cup on the Communion Table, and decorations, such as lilies.

Guide the children to move about the sanctuary in wonder; invite them to use all of their senses to touch, smell, and see the beauty. If the choir is practicing Easter music, listen for a moment or two.

Encourage the children to ask questions and to wonder how the symbols and decorations help people tell the Easter story. For many young children who may be in the nursery during the worship service, this may be the only opportunity to experience the special preparations for the Easter celebration.

If the sanctuary is not available during the session, show the children images and symbols of Easter on **SCM 7b**, using the symbols to retell the Easter story. Consider taking the children as a group into the sanctuary for a portion of the worship service, allowing the children to experience the movement and wonder of Easter worship with the faith community.

2. Easter Symbols C FM

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Invite the children to identify each symbol. Briefly mention their relationship to Easter: eggs (a sign of new life), cross (the place Jesus died), tomb (empty because Jesus is alive), donkey (Jesus rode one into Jerusalem), bread and cup (from the special meal Jesus shared with his friends), and lily (looks like a trumpet announcing the Good News).

Invite the children to choose one or two Easter symbols to color and help them cut out the symbols. Have children glue the symbols onto a piece of drawing paper. Invite them to draw a picture around the symbols they have chosen.

Provide suggestions if the children need them, but don't stifle their creativity. For example, if they choose an Easter egg and lily, they might draw a scene of an Easter worship service or an Easter egg hunt. If they choose the tomb and the cross, they could draw the women coming to the tomb to discover the good news.

While the children are working, engage them in conversation about the symbols they have chosen and their activities of the day.



Option: Invite the children to make extra eggs to place in the pews before worship begins or to leave in the pews for next week's worship, allowing the worshipers to find an Easter surprise.

Use "wonder" questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

3. Resurrection Eggs FA

Invite the children to decorate the plastic eggs using the stickers. Cut out notes from **GN 3** to add to each egg. Show the children how to open the eggs. Ask them to put small pieces of candy and a slip of paper in each egg.

Tell the children what is written on the paper. Ask them what they think it means. Ask how the words remind them of the story.

Give the children a decorated plastic egg to take home. Ask the children to give the egg to other children or adults as an Easter remembrance.

4. Color Page C

Hand out copies of **GN 4** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, "How did the stone get moved?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Where is Jesus?"
- ▼ I wonder, "What would you have thought if you'd been there?"

B *Children with behavioral issues (and even some without) may struggle with a long list of complicated rules. Keep guidelines broad and simple, such as: Try your best. Respect others. Be polite.*



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite the children to sit around a table or on the floor.

Sing “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today”—**SCM 23**—together while you serve the snack. Ask the children how they will share the joy of Easter with others this week.

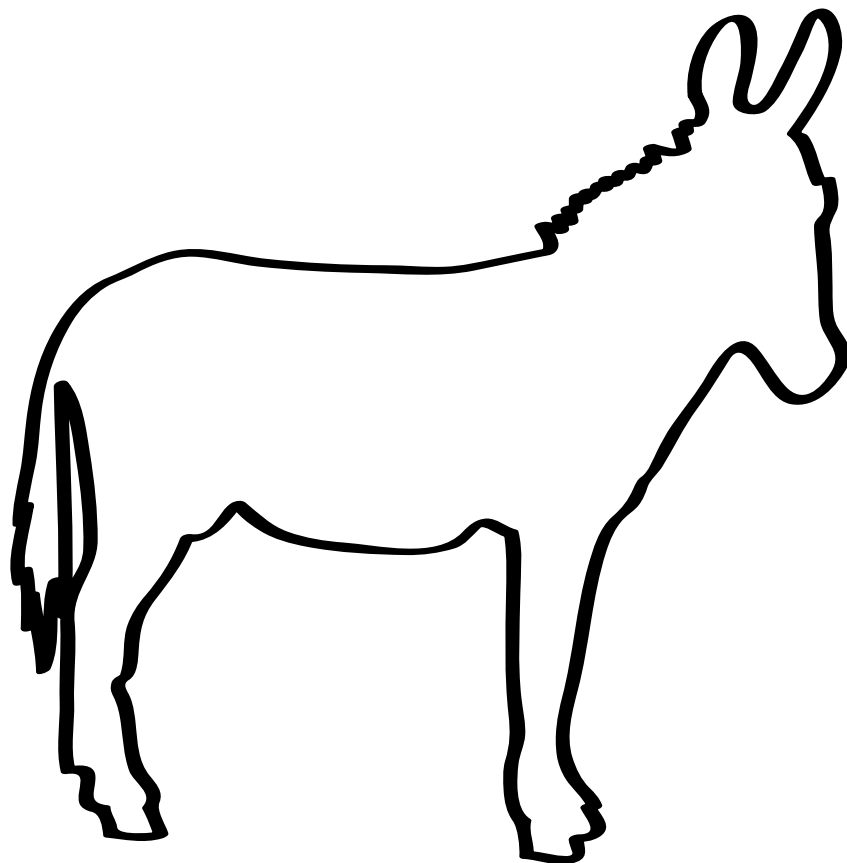
Close with an echo prayer:

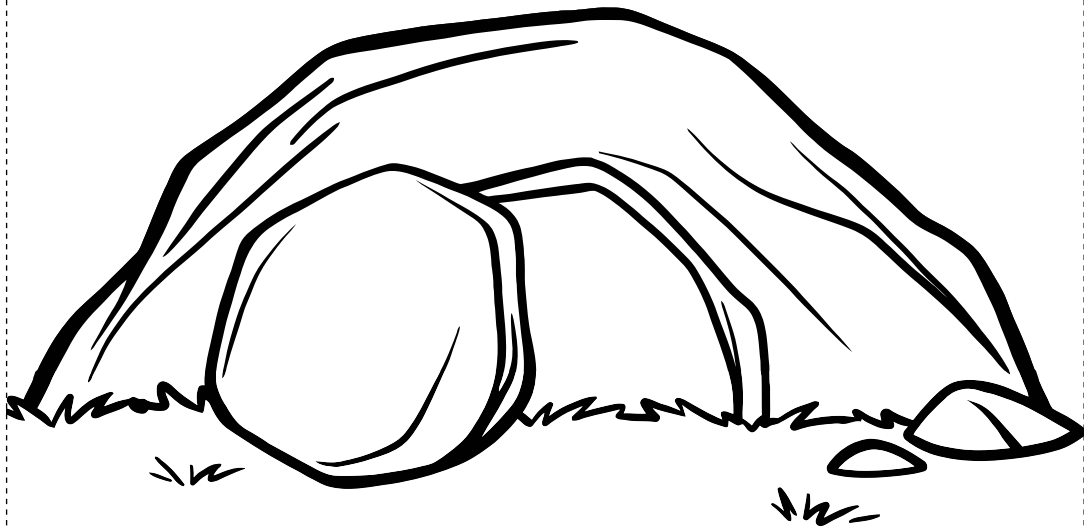
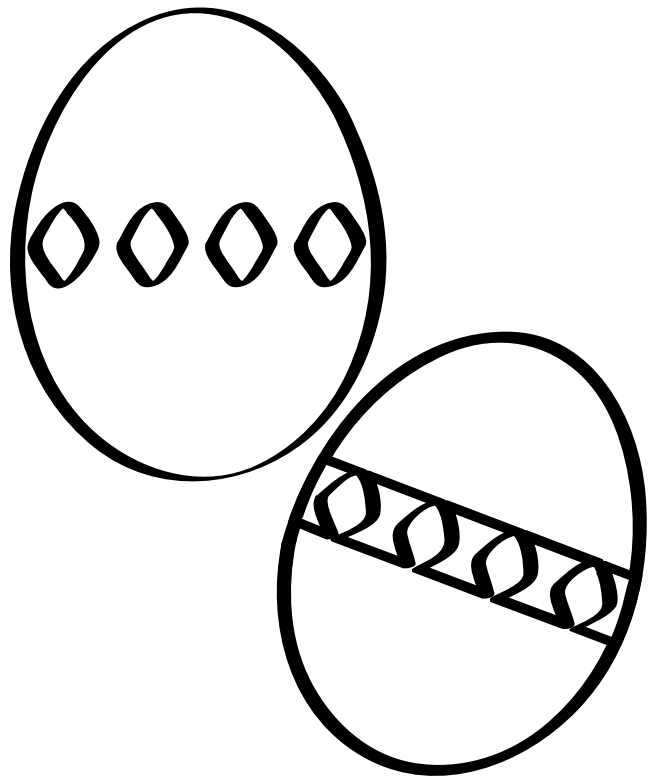
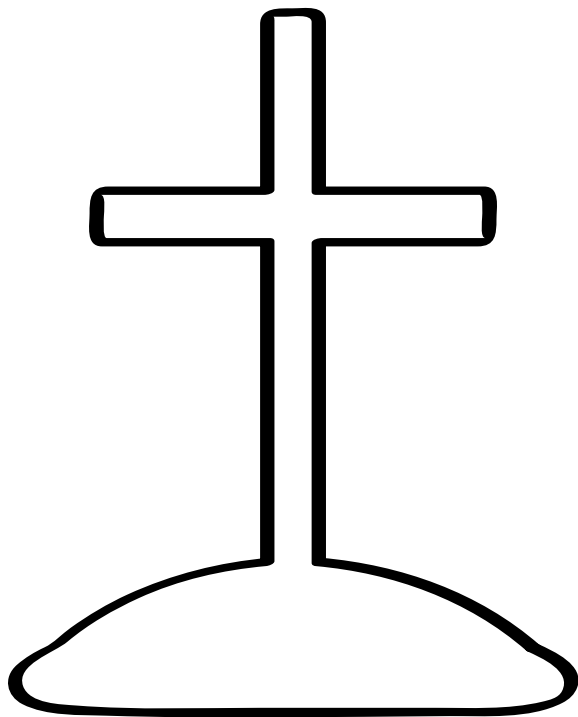
Welcome Jesus! /
Alleluia! /
You are risen! /
Alleluia! /
Praise to God! /
Alleluia! /
Jesus lives! /
Alleluia! /
Amen. /

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), share the Easter joy with others! The grace of God is with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).





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