



He Is Risen!

Goal: To celebrate and give thanks for Jesus' resurrection.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 28:1-10

The news on that first Easter morning was almost too good to be true!

Women who had been to the tomb of Jesus breathlessly announced to his disciples that an angel of the Lord told them, "I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised." He is risen! The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!

This message is the backbone of Christian faith. Jesus' resurrection by the power of God is the spine on which our whole faith depends. Jesus' resurrection assures us that his death has the power to save us, because he conquered the power of death and humanity's sin that put him on the cross. On the third day after his crucifixion and burial, "he rose again from the dead" (Apostles' Creed). This is the greatest message ever proclaimed! Because Christ is raised, we too shall be raised from death. Death is not the last word for us. Our eternal life, which begins now with Jesus Christ as our Lord—continues after death, into eternity, in the presence of God and all the saints!

Great grace is given in the risen Christ. Our gratitude lasts . . . forever!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

The words we say to each other in worship, "The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed," are a greeting that communicates the reality of the end of Holy Week. If children ask about Jesus' death, be prepared to help them understand that, although he died, it was not the end for him. On Easter, we celebrate Jesus' life and all the goodness of God's love. And children can appreciate the story of the women who went to the tomb and discovered he was not there. In meeting Jesus on the road, they were so happy to share the good news with others, just as we are today.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be ready to greet the children with "Jesus is risen." As you welcome the children on this Easter Sunday, be attuned to what stories and questions they bring with them. Some may be very excited about eggs and baskets and the Easter Bunny. Others may share their own observations and curiosities about this day of celebrating the risen Christ. The story provides an opportunity to engage the children in thinking about what it would have been like for those two women to have discovered that the one whom they thought was dead was now alive. It will help children know that they too can spread the good news of Jesus' life and love.

*O God, I thank you for raising Jesus Christ from the dead
and promising new life in him for all who believe. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 7, 16

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: plastic Easter eggs, small pebbles or pony beads

choice 2: fresh flowers, blossoms from trees or shrubs, a bare branch, plastic vases or jars

choice 3: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Exploring

choice 1: shakers or coloring pages

choice 3: shakers

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**





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.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

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

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

Welcoming and Guided Play


Greet the children and parents/caregivers by name and with the words “Jesus is alive.” Prompt the children to respond with “Jesus is alive.”

Option: Use the traditional greeting, “Christ is risen,” with the response, “He is risen indeed. Alleluia!”

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers that you do not know. Explain that the children will hear that Jesus was raised to life on the first Easter day.

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

- 1. Making Shakers**—Have the children add a few small pebbles or pony beads to the Easter eggs and close them. Place a plastic spoon on opposite sides of the egg and tape several times around the spoons and egg. Pinch the ends of the spoons together and wrap tape around several times. See the sidebar illustration. Allow the children to decorate them in any way. Set aside for “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 and choice 3.
- 2. Spring Changes**—Encourage the children to look at, touch, and smell the flowers. Invite the children to talk about how trees and other plants looked in winter. Help the children make observances about how things change in the spring. Invite the children to arrange the flowers in the vases. Thank God for the flowers.
- 3. Coloring**—Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Read the letter and words on the coloring page for the children. While the children color, encourage them to talk about Easter. If the conversation strays too much toward the Easter bunny and candy, gently steer the conversations back to Jesus. Set aside for “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1.

 *Some children with sensory issues have difficulties with sound. Common sounds may be painful or overwhelming. Help these children feel more comfortable by providing advance warning.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready, call them to the story corner, singing “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 16**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

We Praise God

M MS

Play a game like “Follow the Leader,” except all the sounds and actions are ways of praising God. Encourage the children to think of other ways to praise God. Allow the children to take turns leading the group:

We praise God when we walk! (*walk around the room in a line*)

We praise God with our hands! (*clap your hands*)

We praise God when we bounce! (*jump up and down*)

We praise God with our voices! (*shout “Praise God!”*)

We praise God when we spin! (*spin around*)

We praise God with our feet! (*stomp your feet*)

We praise God when we skip! (*skip around the room*)

We praise God with our arms! (*give hugs*)

We praise God when we dance! (*dance with your whole body*)

Christ Is Risen!

L

Tell the children that there is something many people around the world do on Easter. They celebrate Jesus being alive by saying, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!” (You may need to explain that *Christ* is another name for Jesus.)

Explain that one person or group will say the first part and a second person or group will say the second. Practice a few times, with you saying, “Christ is risen!” and the children replying, “He is risen indeed!” Then form two groups. Have one group say, “Christ is risen!” and the second group respond, “He is risen indeed.” Then have the groups switch the part they are saying. End with a loud “Alleluia!”



Luke’s version of 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

C L

Open the Bible to Matthew 28. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God’s people. Tell the children they will hear a story about something surprising and something wonderful that happened to Jesus and his friends.

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.”

Read the story again, challenging the children to say, “He is alive!” each time they hear Jesus’ name.



Say that God sent Jesus to show us what God is like. Jesus died on the cross, and God gave him new life by raising him from death three days later. Jesus shows us that God loves us. Wonder aloud what the children think and feel about the good news of Easter.

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Alleluia Dancing

MS SD

Read aloud and explain the meaning of the words to the song “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord” found on **SCM 16**. Tell the children that “Hallelujah” (or “Alleluia”) is a special praise word, one we hear in the service of worship today in hymns. It means “Praise the Lord.”

Gather the shakers that children made in “Guided Play” choice 1. Invite the children to move about the room to the music, sing the “hallelu” and “hallelujahs,” and shake the shakers or wave the coloring pages that they made in “Guided Play” choice 1 and choice 3. When “Praise ye the Lord” is sung, have the children freeze and sing loudly. You may want to act as a leader when you begin and lead them around the room. Then let the children take turns being the leader. Play “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord.”

MS *Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities. Find ways to adapt activities to ensure all are able to fully participate, such as instead of dancing and moving around the room, suggest that all children sit and raise arms up and down or tilt head from left to right.*

2. Taking an Easter Field Trip

B M MS A

Visit your sanctuary or worship space to see Easter decorations, such as flowers, banners, and other special decorations, that may be there.

If the choir is practicing Easter music, listen for a moment or two. For many young children who will be in childcare during the service of worship, this may be the only opportunity to experience the special preparations for the celebration of Easter.

B *Providing opportunities for children to explore the church helps them understand their surroundings during worship. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as being disrespectful in a holy place. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*



3. Acting It Out

L M MS

Hand out the shakers the children made in “Guided Play” choice 1. Invite them to pretend to be the two Marys who first discovered Jesus was alive. Read the poem and have the children follow your actions.

Two Marys went out walking, walking, walking. (*walk in place slowly, with head down*)

Oh, they were sadly walking, (*continue walking, looking sad*)

So early in the day, (*yawn noisily*)

And then the earth was shaking, shaking, shaking. (*shake your shaker*)

The ground was rocking, quaking. (*continue shaking and rock back and forth*)

They knew not what to say. (*shake head from side to side*)

An angel then was speaking, speaking, speaking, (*spread both arms out to the sides; stand in open stance*)

“The One whom you are seeking—He is alive today!” (*raise arms above head*)

Two Marys then were running, running, running. (*run in place*)

Oh, they were gladly running, (*continue running in place, looking happy*)

The happy news to tell. (*raise hands, cupping the mouth*)

Then Jesus came to meet them, to meet them, to meet them.

He stepped right up to greet them,

And on their knees they fell. (*kneel down*)

“Greetings!” then said Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

“Don’t be afraid,” said Jesus.

“The others go and tell.”

Two Marys then were running, running, running. (*run in place*)

Oh, they were gladly running, (*continue running in place, looking happy*)

The happy news to tell. (*raise hands cupping the mouth*)

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

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture and tell you about the story. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What did the women think when they saw the stone rolled away?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Were the women afraid when they saw the angel?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did the women say when they saw Jesus?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Have the children help clean up the space by putting away a toy or more.

Listen to “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 16**—while the children eat the snack. Invite them to join in singing when they have finished their snack.

Pray the following prayer, with the children joining on the response: “Jesus is alive!”

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus into the world.

We are happy because . . .

Jesus is alive!

We were sad that Jesus died on the cross, but we are happy because . . .

Jesus is alive!

We know that Jesus loves us and will always care for us because . . .

Jesus is alive!

It is a happy Easter Day because . . .

Jesus is alive!

Thank you, God, that . . .

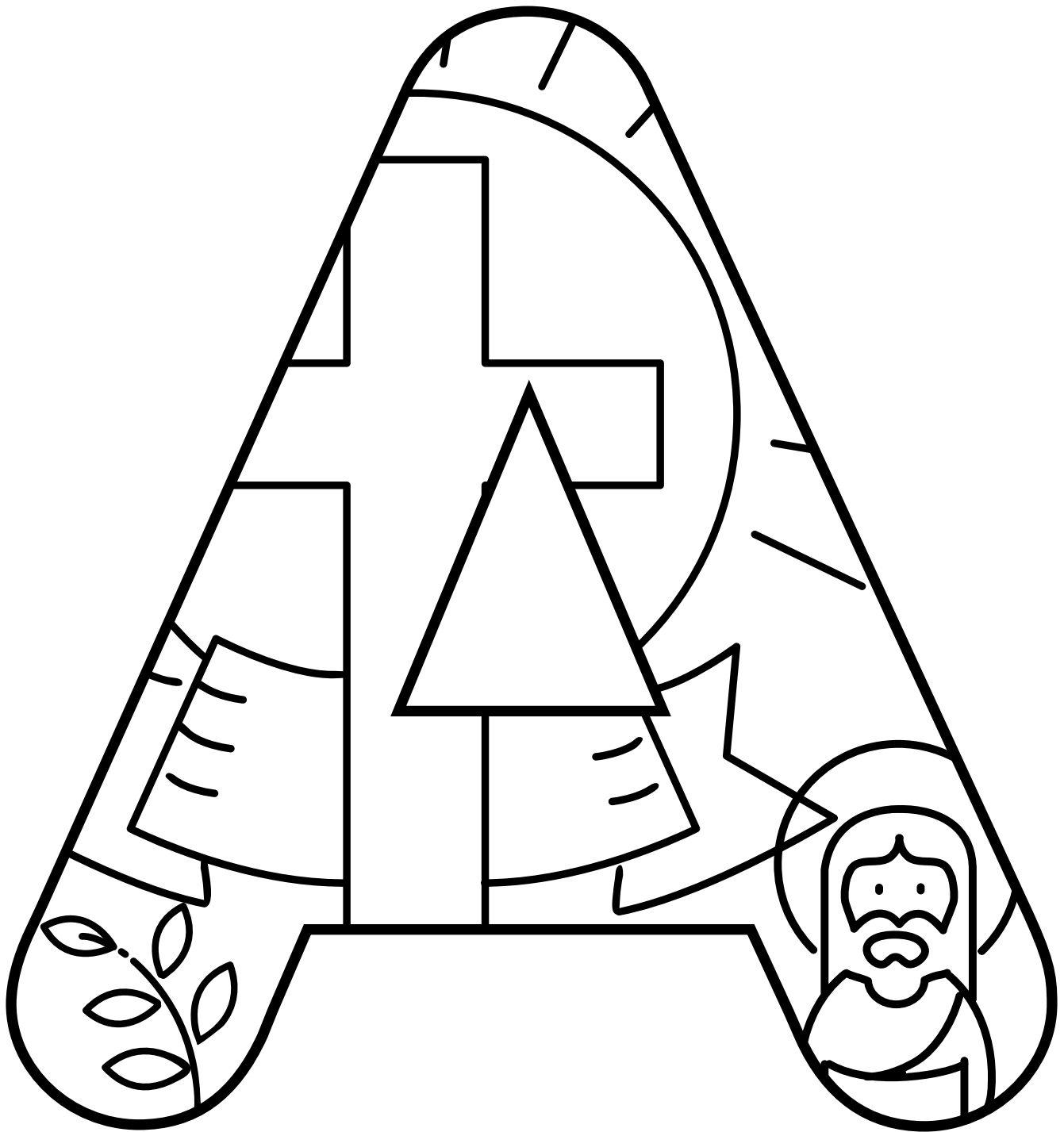
Jesus is alive!

All: Amen.

As the children leave, bless each one, saying, “(Name), share the good news that Jesus is alive! Go in the grace of God.”



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).



is for Alleluia

He Is Risen!



Jesus is not in the tomb. He is alive!

