



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, 25, 26

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

white candle

white cloth

blanket or sheet

small bowl

sweet-smelling natural
items; spices such as
cinnamon, nutmeg, and
so forth

Responding

Claiming

SCM 7a, 7b, 7c
(optional)

Celebrating

small ball or soft object

Offering

copies of **Grace Notes**
(**GN 1**), plastic Easter
eggs, Easter stickers

Extra

For each child: copy
of **GN 2**, 4 spring
clothespins, 4 ziplock
plastic bags, 4 pipe
cleaners, 8 wiggle eyes,
2 cups jellybeans; for
the group: large bowl,
half-cup measuring
cups

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

“Offering God’s Grace” and “Extra Activity” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing MS TD FA

Play “Hallelujah!” as children arrive. Greet the children with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt them to say, “He is risen indeed.”

Invite the children to prepare the space for Easter worship. Wonder what the group could add to the worship table to signify Easter. Ask them to include a Bible and a white cloth, the color for Easter. Place a white candle, representing the light of Christ, on the table.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Invite the children to help you create a cave by spreading a blanket or sheet over chairs or a table. Leave one end open to create the entrance to the cave. You may need to anchor the blanket or sheet to help hold it in place. Wonder who has been in a cave and what it’s like in a cave. Explain that many years ago, people placed bodies in caves after a person died. They called the cave a tomb.

Invite a child or two to fill a small bowl with sweet-smelling natural items and spices such as flower petals, cinnamon sticks, cloves, or lemon, orange, or grapefruit peels.

T *Provide nonverbal and verbal cues before transitions. Using the visual schedule, point to it and note, “It’s three minutes until story time.”*

Singing T

Listen to “Hallelujah!”—**CM 25**. Review the words and ask the children to sing along.

Praying

Turn on the candle on the worship table. Remind the children that the candles were extinguished throughout Lent. Explain that now a candle is lit to remind us that Jesus lives and is with us always. Pray:

Thank you for this day, O God. Thank you for Jesus, for his life and for his love. And thank you for . . . (*say group members’ names*). Let us feel your Spirit close to us. Help us show your love. Amen.

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.



Preparing to Hear the Story T M L

Invite the children to tell you about Easter in their homes; they will be eager to do so. Find out who has visitors, who is going somewhere for Easter dinner, and whether they hunt Easter eggs or find Easter baskets.

Ask a volunteer to retell what happened in last week's story. Or remind the group that last week you talked about Holy Week, from Palm Sunday to Jesus' crucifixion and death on Good Friday. Explain that while Jesus' friends and family were sad about his death, this was not the end of the story. This week we hear the good news of Jesus living on—of his resurrection and eternal life with God. If the children attended any Holy Week services, invite them to talk about them.

Hearing the Story M L

Invite a child to find Luke 24 in the Bible and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 7** or use the story audio. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Invite the children to enter the story with their bodies. Gather near the cave or tomb and encourage children to act out the story as you read it again or listen to the story audio. Pass around the bowl of sweet-smelling items and spices when you get to the part about the spices the women carried.

C Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.

Reflecting on God's Grace C

Invite children to share their thoughts and questions about today's story. Be sensitive to children who may have experienced the death of a person or pet. Take time to listen to anything they may wish to share about their experience.

Recall that *grace* can mean "gift." Wonder what gift God gives to the world through the Easter story. If the children don't mention it, offer with conviction the gift of Jesus' resurrection, which is a gracious gift and promised to all people through Jesus. Help the children understand that the resurrection means that good things can come out of bad, that new beginnings can come from endings, and so forth. For children, Jesus' resurrection is about God's love and power.

Singing M

Sing "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"—**SCM 26**. Encourage the children to move with the music.

Turn off the candle.



If you have children that are affected by seasonal allergies, consider using pictures.

Look at **SCM 7a, 7b, 7c** for illustrations if you can't take the children on an outdoor walking tour.

Acclamation means loud and enthusiastic approval, typically to welcome or honor someone or something.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace



Children's concrete experiences of changes in the seasons can lay a foundation for their understanding of the Easter story. Take children on a walking tour through your church and outside the building. If your church uses a flower cross, Easter lilies, or other symbols of Easter, point them out to children and wonder together why the church is decorated in this way.

As you go outside, ask children to watch for signs of new life in the spring. Point out such things as new green shoots of grass or other plants, buds on trees, birds building nests, early blooming flowers, caterpillars, and larval forms of insects. Remind children that during the winter, all these things were gone, but now they are coming back.

Invite the children to name ways God gives life to nature. Wonder together why these ways are examples of God's grace. Wonder how the children can show gratitude to God for all living things.

Celebrating God's Grace



Recall that the women passed the word of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples, and many others since then have followed their example. Children can practice passing on the joyous word that Jesus is risen.

Stand in a circle and toss a small ball or other soft object to a child across from you. As you do, shout, "Christ is risen!" Instruct the child catching the object to shout, "He is risen indeed!" Cross your arms over your chest to show that you have had a turn. Continue until everyone has had a turn. Tell the children that those words are called the "Easter Acclamation" and are an ancient greeting that is still used in churches around the world today.

Play the game again, saying a different Easter saying ("The tomb is empty!" with the response, "Come and see!" or "Go and tell!" with the response, "Jesus is raised from the dead!"). At the end of the game, ask each child to select one Easter greeting that she or he will say to others in church and family members at home.



Offering God's Grace

Help the children pass on the good news of Easter with good news eggs. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and ask for volunteers to read the Easter greetings on the strips. Encourage the children to color and decorate the strips. Have the children cut the strips apart. Give each child at least three plastic eggs. Provide Easter stickers for the children to decorate the eggs. Encourage the children to pass on the Easter message by giving the good news eggs to people they meet.



Extra Activity

F LG A B FA

Before the session, put 2 cups of jellybeans for each child in a large bowl.

Tell the children that one of the things that can remind us of Jesus' new life at Easter is the butterfly. As a caterpillar, it forms a cocoon and appears like it is in a tomb. Then the butterfly emerges and flies free. Invite the children to make sweet, colorful butterflies to share with others.

Give each child 4 spring clothespins, 4 ziplock plastic bags, 4 pipe cleaners, 8 wiggle eyes, and a copy of **GN 2**. Use the following directions to make the jellybean butterflies.

- ▼ Decorate the banners on **GN 2** and the clothespins.
- ▼ Cut out the banners.
- ▼ Fill each plastic bag with a half-cup of jellybeans and close them.
- ▼ Pinch the bags in the middle, separating the jellybeans into two sides. Place the clothespin across the pinched section of the bag.
- ▼ Glue two wiggle eyes on the broad side of the closed end of the clothespin to make butterfly eyes.
- ▼ Bend the pipe cleaner in half and curl each end.
- ▼ Grab the pipe cleaner and banner in the clothespin.

Encourage the children to make four butterflies: one to keep and three to give to friends reminding them that Christ is risen!

LG *It's important to help children understand the need to share, act generously, and give freely. They learn that they are responsible for their part in creating a caring community. Kindness and generosity are contagious.*



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Sing "Hallelujah!"—**SCM 25**. This time around, invite the children to come up with movements for the song or to simply dance and move to express the joy of Easter.

Invite the children to join in a special farewell shout together to celebrate Easter. Tell children that when you say, "Christ is risen!" they are to respond loudly, "He is risen indeed!" Encourage children to respond with joy; end by saying, "Alleluia!"

Invite the children to think about things they can do to commit to living the grace and gratitude of resurrection.

As the children leave, bless each one: "(Name), go and share the good news: Jesus is alive! God's grace be with you."

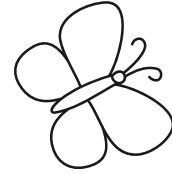
Christ is risen!

Jesus is alive!

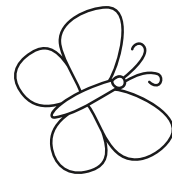
Celebrate new life!

Go and tell, Jesus is alive!

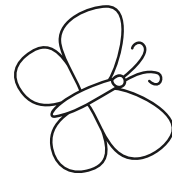
He is not here. Jesus has risen!



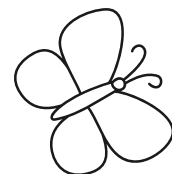
New life! Christ is risen!



New life! Christ is risen!



New life! Christ is risen!



New life! Christ is risen!



