

Foreword by the Bishop of London

“The London Diocese is committed 'to telling the story of Jesus Christ afresh for this generation and especially for the young' and I am glad to commend these resources to you for use in schools and parishes. The good news of Easter is at the heart of our Christian Faith and I am grateful to those who have produced these materials for telling the Easter story afresh in London. New life constantly flows from the empty tomb. I hope this pack will prove to be an effective channel”.

With all good wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Chartres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

The Rt Revd & Rt Hon Richard Chartres DD FSA

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EASTER – CELEBRATING THE NEW LIFE OF JESUS

Introduction

In this pack you will find assembly outlines, instructions for how to run a half-day of workshops in your church and artefacts to use to bring the Easter story alive.

These resources will equip you to:

- lead an assembly in your local primary school in the fortnight before Easter
- welcome classes of pupils into your church for a half-day of workshops on the Easter story during Holy Week
- return to the school for an assembly on the resurrection after Easter.

There are of course lots of ways to use these resources. You don't have to do all three of these suggestions. Some churches might just do one assembly as the first contact with a local school. Some who have regular input into a school might choose to use the workshop ideas over the course of the spring term. You may want to run half the workshops on one day in the church, and half on another day in the school.

But we hope that hundreds of churches in the London Diocese will capitalise on this fantastic opportunity and communicate the real story of Easter to the children in their parish. Read on to find out how to use these resources, and then decide what's most appropriate for your church.

What's in your box?

- A manual that includes:
 - four outlines for an assembly to deliver before Easter
 - instructions for a half-day of workshops to tell the Easter story in the church during Holy Week
 - six outlines for an assembly to deliver after Easter.
- Six posters to use during the workshops, to create continuity and provoke thought
- A set of the poster images, size A4
- Artefacts to use during the retelling of the story
 - A purple pashmina for Jesus' robe
 - A 'crown of thorns'
 - Two dice, used to cast lots for Jesus' clothing
 - Nails
 - Sponge

You can add other appropriate resources to this box. It can be kept for years to come, to use again each Easter.

Making contact

Some churches have good links with their local primary school. You may already do assemblies on a regular basis and invite pupils to visit your church. If so, we hope that these Easter materials will enhance your relationship with the school and help you to provide a valuable learning experience for pupils.

If on the other hand, you don't currently have links with your local school, then Easter 2008 is a fantastic opportunity to make contact and hopefully build relationships that last.

If you have teachers from the school in your congregation, ask them to introduce you to the Headteacher. Or write a letter to the Head, and follow it up a week or so later with a phone call. Ask if there are any ways that your church could contribute to the spiritual and educational life of the school. Talk about the Easter 2008 resources and suggest ways in which you might use them in the school.

Talking about the Christian faith to school pupils

Community schools are required by law to have an act of Collective Worship every day that is broadly or mainly of a Christian character. In Church of England schools there is an expectation that all worship is Christian. All schools have to teach Religious Education that enables children to learn about the Christian faith and to learn from it. So using these Easter materials can enable you to make a significant contribution to pupils' educational and spiritual development.

Talking about the Christian faith in schools and in churches are two very different things. In church you are on home territory. You can assume that most people have some form of Christian belief, and those that don't are there because they want to be, and are interested to find out more. In school, however, you will meet pupils of all faiths and none. You can't assume that pupils share your Christian beliefs or have any knowledge of the Christian faith. You need to invite pupils to participate in worship, not assume that they will want to pray when you do. You need to own your personal beliefs and the tenets of the Christian faith.

In the assemblies/Collective Worship outlines, you will find sections that begin 'Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe'. These sections highlight the areas where you need to be most explicit about the Christian application of biblical stories. Use whichever term comes most naturally to you to make your faith personal and real without making statements to your audience that are not authentic. Make sure your team do the same in the workshops.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about the content or delivery of the material in this pack, please contact Sam Donoghue, the Children's Ministry Adviser for the Diocese of London (020 7932 1255 or samuel.donoghue@london.anglican.org).

USING THE IMAGES

This pack contains six poster images, one for each of the events in Holy Week that are covered in the workshops: Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, Gethsemane, the Trial, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. In addition to the posters, an A4 set of the images are included in the pack

The photographs have been taken by Dennis Morris, a celebrated photographer best known for his iconic images of Bob Marley and of other rock groups in the 1970s. He worked with young people from Islington to produce these images which translate the stories in the Bible into a contemporary context for young people

Research with young people has shown that images like these can be a wonderful stimulus for open-ended discussion on themes of spirituality and meaning. Images appeal to the imagination of children and young people as well as to their thinking and feeling selves. Images provide space to wonder and to explore, without the tyranny of being expected to come up with the right answer.

Using the images in the workshops

Primary school children will tend to think more in concrete than in abstract terms and therefore the discussion will need clear direction from you. Suggestions for how to do this are made on the back of each A4 image. These suggestions include:

- The Bible account outlining the events represented in each image.
- Questions that will make the children think about how to relate the story from the Bible with the images in front of them.
- The story behind the creation of each image.

First you should read or retell the story from the Bible. This sets the children a clear task to connect the story they have heard with the image they are being shown. Then you should read the questions to help their thinking. Finally you should read the story behind the creation of each image. This gives the children an illustrative example of how to connect the story with the image. You need to start by telling the story from the Bible because there is not time to leave the discussion open-ended. The point of the exercise is to enable children to re-engage with the Christian narrative. You cannot assume that they will know the Easter story and therefore you will need to read it to them from the Bible.

Suggestions for how to use the images

- **As an alternative to the suggested content of the workshops**
Instead of running the workshops as outlined in this pack, you may prefer to shape the workshop around the images using the directions above. This would be most suitable with KS2 children (aged 7 to 11).
- **During each workshop**
Draw children's attention to the image at an appropriate place. Using the hints on the back of the A4 version, find out what they think is happening in it, what feelings the image provokes in them, what questions they have about it. Weave

this exchange into the content of each workshop.

- **To set the scene for the stations**

Even if the posters are not explicitly referred to, they will cause children to think and to make connections. Displaying the posters at all the stations will provide continuity.

ORGANISING THE HALF-DAY OF WORKSHOPS

Briefing notes for churches

The half-day starts with an introductory session for all the children where the workshops are introduced. In groups of five, the children then take part in three workshops which help them to explore parts of the Easter story. Finally the children gather together again for a presentation session where the whole of the Easter story is told.

Six workshops are suggested, two involve drama exercises, two are craft-based and two use artefacts to tell part of the Easter story.

- **Palm Sunday – craft**
Pupils hear how Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and make palm leaves out of newspaper and green paper.
- **The Last Supper – artefacts**
Pupils hear how Jesus did something new at the Passover supper and they eat bread and drink grape juice. They then learn about how communion is celebrated by Christians.
- **Gethsemane and Peter – drama**
Pupils pose to form 'photos', or tableaux, to represent times when they have been let down by friends. They hear how Jesus was let down by his friends in the garden of Gethsemane, by Judas who betrayed him and by Peter who denied him.
- **The Trial – drama**
Pupils take part in a drama exercise about false accusation. They learn why Jesus stayed silent during his trial even though he was falsely accused.
- **The Crucifixion – artefacts**
Pupils hear the story of the crucifixion, handling a robe, crown of thorns and some nails to make the story come alive.
- **Resurrection – craft**
Pupils consider the life cycle of a flower. They learn how Jesus appeared to his disciples after he rose from the dead until they had no doubt that Jesus was alive again.

Finding helpers

You will need four to six people to help run this event for schools – four if you use helpers from schools in the craft sessions. These are the tasks that you need to allocate to people:

- One person needs to do the opening and closing sessions when pupils are all together, but this person can also lead one of the workshops. This person needs to be confident talking to a class group of thirty children at a time.
- Two people to run the craft workshops. They will need to do some story telling, but the main part of these workshops involves cutting and sticking. If you are using helpers from schools, these craft workshops are the ones that are easiest to lead.
- Two people to run the drama workshops. They need to do some story telling and it will help if they have some experience of doing drama with children.

- Two people to run the artefacts workshop. These people need to be experienced in telling stories and encouraging children to talk and ask questions.

If schools bring two classes at a time, the number of helpers will need to be doubled. All helpers that the church provides should have a CRB check in line with Diocesan policy for volunteers working with children. For more information, please contact Sam Donoghue, the Children's Ministry Adviser for the Diocese of London (020 7932 1255 or samuel.donoghue@london.anglican.org).

You must meet as a group in advance of the day to go through the workshop material in detail, to decide who is going to gather the materials, to organise where the workshops and plenary sessions will be held, and to decide how to set up each workshop. Ensure workshop leaders rehearse the story-telling element of their workshop until they feel confident telling the story in their own words. Putting on high-quality workshops sends a strong message to schools about the value you place on the pupils and on the schools themselves; it's not good enough to just muddle through.

It will also be very helpful to have an adult attached to each group as they rotate round the workshops. When you discuss the workshop arrangements with the school, find out how many adults they will be bringing. They may well need to enlist the help of parents to get children to the church. These parents and the teachers could then accompany and support the children as they rotate round the workshops.

Timings and numbers

It's best to arrange for one class of pupils at a time to visit the church for two hours. You will have around thirty pupils, five in each workshop. You could run the workshops twice – once in the morning and once in the afternoon – to cater for more children, or even run the workshops over the course of several days to cater for a whole school.

Ask the school to put the children into six groups for the workshops before they arrive at the church. If each group has a number – Group one, Group two, etc. – and the pupils know which group they are in, it will make organisation at the church much easier.

Each small group of children will rotate round three of the workshops, and each will experience one craft workshop, one drama and one with artefacts. Three groups will take it in turns to do Palm Sunday, the Last Supper and Gethsemane. The other three groups will take it in turns to do the Trial, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Pupils will only cover half the story during the workshops but will hear the whole Easter story during the presentation session at the end.

Choose which groups will do which workshops and arrange the workshops in the church or church hall so that it's easy for groups to find their way to their next workshop. If you follow the format we have suggested, three groups will do each workshop during the two hours. We suggest that the third group to do each workshop participates in that section of the presentation session at the end, as that

part of the story will still be fresh in their minds. The exception is when you talk about Gethsemane and the trial, when all three groups will need to be involved.

So for example, the organisation might look like this:

	1st workshop	2nd workshop	3rd workshop
Group one	Palm Sunday	Last Supper	Gethsemane
Group two	Gethsemane	Palm Sunday	Last Supper
Group three	Last Supper	Gethsemane	Palm Sunday
Group four	Trial	Crucifixion	Resurrection
Group five	Resurrection	Trial	Crucifixion
Group six	Crucifixion	Resurrection	Trial

The details of how to involve each group in the presentation session are given on pages 29-31, but in brief:

- when you talk about Palm Sunday, invite **group three** to wave their branches.
- when you talk about the Last Supper, ask **group two** to feedback on what they learned.
- when you talk about Gethsemane and Peter, ask **groups one, two and three** to recreate their 'photo', or project these photos onto a screen.
- when you talk about the Trial, get **group six** to act out their sketch.
- when you talk about the Crucifixion, ask **group five** about the artefacts.
- when you talk about the Resurrection, ask **group four** to show their pictures.

Drinking water will need to be provided for the children. Check with the school first if you want to provide a snack and take their advice, because of the prevalence of food allergies. Inform schools of the toilet facilities that are available at the church.

The workshops have been planned for KS2 pupils (aged 7 to 11), but can be adapted for KS1 pupils (aged 5 to 7). Ask advice for how the workshops should be altered for younger children from a KS1 teacher in your church, or a parent with children of that age.

Structure of the two hours – a suggestion

- 0:00 Pupils arrive and take off coats. Make sure accompanying staff and helpers know where the toilets are.
- 0:10 Pupils gather for opening session. Get children to sit in their groups right from the start. Give an explanation of who Jesus is, and explain the theme and structure of the workshops. Make sure the adult helpers know which workshop their group should attend and in which order.
- 0:25 Pupils go to first workshop.

- 0:30 Pupils start first workshop.
- 0:45 Give a quiet verbal warning that the first workshop should be coming to an end and pupils should move on.
- 0:50 Pupils start second workshop.
- 1:05 Give a quiet verbal warning that the second workshop should be coming to an end and pupils should move on.
- 1:10 Pupils start third workshop.
- 1:25 Give a warning that the third workshop should be coming to an end and pupils should gather back together for the final session. They will need to collect their craft items on the way. Make sure that each group knows which part of the presentation they will be contributing to.
- 1:35 Begin presentation session, telling the whole Easter story with feedback from the children.
- 1:55 End presentation session. Thank children and staff for participating and hand back to the teacher in charge to organise them getting ready to go back to school.

HALF-DAY OF WORKSHOPS - CONTENT

Some guidelines for talking to children

- When the children arrive at each workshop, get them to sit down, to settle themselves and to be quiet before you begin.
- If children are distracted, use a phrase like 'all look at me' to get their attention. Wait until they are focused before moving on.
- Ask open-ended questions and pause to give them a chance to reply. For example, 'How do people welcome the Queen?' instead of 'Do people give flowers to the Queen?'
- Don't ever embarrass children by putting them on the spot, or by joking about a mistake they made.
- We suggest that you pray at the end of the presentation session. Ask the school what routine they have with respect to prayer; you may like to use this so that it's familiar to children. For example, in some schools a candle will be lit at the beginning of a prayer and extinguished at the end. A good phrase to use to prepare children for prayer is 'Let's be still on the inside and still on the outside.' Don't use the traditional and outdated 'Hands together and eyes closed!' You can't assume that all children will want to join in the prayer. You can explain that you are going to pray and invite those that want to join you to say 'Amen' at the end.

OPENING SESSION

The aim of this opening session is to introduce the theme of the workshops and to set the scene. This part doesn't need to be long, but is a good opportunity to introduce the workshop leaders. Get the children to sit down in their pre-arranged groups with their adult helper so that it's easy for them to move off to the workshops.

Introduce the workshops using words like these:

What do we celebrate on 25th December? Christmas! It's the time that we remember that Jesus was born into our world as a baby in a manger.

Why am I talking about Christmas when it's Easter in a few days' time? Because Easter tells us about what happened when Jesus grew up, and it helps to explain why he came to earth in the first place. Like all of us, Jesus got older. He was a toddler, then a child, then a teenager and then a man. When he was around 30 years old, he started teaching people about God and how they could be close to God. He healed people and did other miracles that we can read about in the Bible.

At Christmas we celebrate the beginning of Jesus' life here on earth. At Easter, we remember the end of Jesus' life and what happened next. You're going to take part in some workshops that will explain the main events in the Easter story. You may not do the events in the right order, but when we come together at the end you're going to hear the whole Easter story from start to finish.

Explain the organisation of the morning and make sure helpers know which workshops their group should visit and in what order.

You may like to use this prayer before the children start the workshops. We have also suggested elsewhere in this pack that this is used at the beginning of each assembly so if you are going into schools as well, it will help to provide continuity.

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if the children want to join in, they can say Amen at the end.

Dear God

Open our ears to listen carefully to the story of Easter.

Open our minds to understand what it means for us.

Open our hearts to receive your love and to share that love with others.

Amen.

WORKSHOP ONE - PALM SUNDAY

Bible passage: Mark 11:1-11

Type of workshop: CRAFT

Structure of workshop – 15 minutes

2 mins get children settled, talk about welcoming and greeting
3 mins tell the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem
10 mins demonstrate and make palm branches

If children finish early, get them to decorate their palm branches with the word 'Hosanna!' or anything else that they might shout at Jesus. You could get the children to practice waving the branches and shouting 'Hosanna!'

You will need:

- thin black marker pen.
- template for palm leaves (see page 60)
- newspapers – around eight sheets for each child. Count these out before the session, so you can easily hand the right amount to each child.
- green paper or card – the equivalent of an A4 sheet for each child. Choose paper or card that has some weight to it, but is not too stiff.
- appropriate scissors for children to cut the green paper – 10 pairs.
- sticky tape – four or five rolls. Tape in dispensers will be easiest for children to use.
- felt pens.

To make a palm branch:

- Take eight sheets of newspaper and roll up along the longest side so you have a long stem for your palm branch. Fasten this with tape several times around the stem.
- Cut round the leaf template. Place this on the green paper and draw round it. Copy the lines from the template onto the green paper.
- Cut round the green leaf, and cut along the lines so that your leaf is in seven parts. Assemble these on the floor in front of you in the shape of the leaf.
- Take the top section of the leaf and tape it to the top of your newspaper stem so that it sticks out beyond the newspaper.
- Take the next section of the leaf, and place it below the top one, leaving a 1cm gap – about the width of a child's finger. Tape it to the newspaper stem.
- Continue with the remaining sections of leaves in order, leaving a small gap between each section.

Preparation

- Practice the introduction and the story until you are comfortable telling it.
- Make one or two palm branches to show children what they look like. Making one yourself will also help you to explain what to do!

- Use the leaf template and black marker pen to create one large green leaf with black lines drawn on it for each child. Prepare a few extras in case some get spoilt or damaged while being cut up.
- Have a set of materials that you can use to demonstrate making a leaf – eight sheets of newspaper, sticky tape, one large green leaf with markings, a pair of scissors.
- Have the materials ready to distribute to the children.
- Display the poster for this workshop in a prominent position.

Introduction

Invite children to sit on the floor facing you. Ask who has been to a football match – was it noisy or quiet? How did people cheer on their team? What kinds of things were people shouting? (Hopefully you won't get the swear words and rude phrases that you often hear at football matches!) Did anyone wave anything at the team? They might have seen banners and scarves.

Has anyone ever seen the Queen? Or perhaps you've seen the Queen visiting somewhere on the TV? How do people welcome the Queen? Do they shout things at her? Do they wave anything? Or give her things? Meeting the Queen is usually much quieter – people don't shout slogans at her, but they might wave flags, or give her flowers. They'll take lots of photos and try to shake her hand.

So we have different ways of welcoming and cheering on important people depending on who they are. We're going to find out how people cheered for Jesus when he entered the city of Jerusalem.

Telling the story

Tell the story in your own words. You might say something like this:

Jesus knew that he needed to go to Jerusalem towards the end of his life. To show that he was the king of the Jews, he wanted to enter Jerusalem in a special way. So he got a couple of his friends to go and borrow a young donkey that he could ride into the city.

Jesus' friends put their cloaks over the donkey and Jesus sat on top. Then Jesus rode on the donkey into the city of Jerusalem. All the people were very excited to see him. They spread their cloaks onto the floor in front of the donkey. They wanted something to wave, like people at football matches, so they cut down palm branches from the trees around. Some people spread those on the floor too, and others waved them. They shouted 'Hosanna!', a Hebrew word that means 'Save!' because they knew that Jesus had come to save them. It was a fantastic, loud, joyful celebration that welcomed Jesus into the city and showed that he was someone special.

Making the palm branches

Explain that the children are going to make palm branches, a bit like the ones that people would have waved at Jesus.

Demonstrate how to make a palm branch, using the materials that you have set aside for the purpose. Then give each child some newspaper, a green leaf and some scissors. Spread the sticky tape out between them and get them making their branches.

If children finish early, get them to decorate their palm branches with the word 'Hosanna!' or anything else that they might shout at Jesus. You could get the children to practice waving the branches and shouting 'Hosanna!'

A couple of minutes before the end, get children to write their names on the back of their leaves so they can collect them later. Store these to one side and get them ready to move on to the next workshop.

WORKSHOP TWO - LAST SUPPER

Bible passage: Matthew 26:17-30

Type of workshop: USING ARTEFACTS

Structure of workshop – 15 minutes

2 mins get children settled, talk about special meals

13 mins retell the story of the Last Supper

If there is any time left over, invite children to ask questions.

You will need:

- some unleavened bread on a plate
- some grape juice in a glass or beaker
- the utensils used in your church for communion – a plate and chalice
- bread and wine – the type that you use for communion in your church
- purificator

Preparation

- In this workshop, you will tell the story of the Last Supper and pass round unleavened bread and grape juice for the children to eat and drink. You will then explain how Christians have a special ceremony called Communion, or the Eucharist, where they eat bread and drink wine to remember Jesus because that's what he told us to do at the Last Supper. You'll talk about how you celebrate communion in your church. You must make a distinction between the enactment of the Last Supper that they will be involved in, and a proper communion service. They must not think that they have taken communion by eating and drinking, so make sure that you explain that they are not taking part in a communion service.
- Rehearse the story until you feel confident in retelling it.
- You may like to set up this workshop near the communion rail so that you can explain how people take communion in your church.
- Place the materials on a low table next to where you will be sitting so that you can pick them up and show them round while you tell the story.
- Display the poster for this workshop in a prominent position.

Introduction

Ask children to think about the festivals that they celebrate during the year. Are there any special meals that we eat during these festivals? They might think of roast turkey at Christmas, or birthday cake on their birthdays. Their families might have special meals that they eat on significant occasions, or children of other faiths could talk about their special meals.

Telling the story

Tell the story in your own words. You might say something like this:

Many hundreds of years ago, the Jews were living in Egypt where they were slaves. They were made to work very hard and were treated very badly. They cried out to God to set them free from slavery. And God heard their cry.

God told a man called Moses that he was to lead the Jews to freedom. Moses was to go to Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, and to say to Pharaoh that he must let the people go. Moses was very scared and with God's help he did go and talk to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh didn't want to let the Jews go. After all they were working very hard for him for no pay!

Moses had to keep asking, and he had to show that God was very powerful before Pharaoh would let the people go. God told Moses that he would show Pharaoh how powerful he was one last time, and this time Pharaoh would let the people go. Moses told all the Jews to get ready to leave and they were to eat a special meal before they left. This meal included bread made without yeast and wine. It was called the Passover Meal. After the Jews ate it, Pharaoh did finally say that they could go and so they left Egypt and journeyed to the Promised Land.

The Jews were so happy to be set free that every year after that, they celebrated the Passover and ate the same meal they had eaten the night that they left Egypt. So when Jesus was growing up, he would have eaten the Passover meal every year with his family and friends.

But this year, Jesus knew that he was going to die soon, and he wanted to give his friends a way of remembering him. So he celebrated the Passover meal with them as always, but he did it a bit differently.

In those days, people didn't sit up to table on chairs. They reclined around a low table, so let's pretend there's a long rectangular table here and let's all recline around it.

Get children lying on their sides, propped up on their elbows.

As you tell this part of the story, enact the part of Jesus, breaking bread and handing it round; taking the cup and passing it round.

During the meal, Jesus took some bread, gave thanks to God [*hold the bread up in front of you*] and he broke it. He passed it to his friends on either side of him and said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'

Hand the bread round and invite children to take and eat a little piece, but remind them that if they don't want to they can pass it on to the next person.

Then he picked up the cup of wine and said, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'

Pass the cup round and invite everyone to take a sip and then wipe the cup, again reminding them that if they don't want any they can pass it on to the next person]

That was the last time that Jesus ate with his friends before he died and so we call it The Last Supper.

Get children sitting up and facing the front again.

When Jesus' friends shared the Last Supper with him, they would have remembered what Jesus said because he took a familiar meal and did something new with it. After Jesus died and rose again, they regularly ate bread and wine together to remember Jesus and Christians have been doing that ever since.

Christians want to remember Jesus' death and resurrection and so they eat bread and drink wine together regularly in a special ceremony called communion [or the Eucharist – use the term that is used in your church.] It's a bit different to what Jesus did with his friends, and to what we have just done.

Explain how communion takes place in your church. You may want to include:

- the fact that liturgy and prayers are said first. People have a chance to tell God what they have done wrong and to ask for his forgiveness.
- the plate and cup that is used. Show these to the children – you could even pass them round (empty) for them to carefully handle.
- the type of bread or wafers that are used. Contrast/compare this with the unleavened bread that Jesus and his friends used.
- how people actually take communion. You could show how people stand or kneel at the communion rail for example, and hold their hands out. Let some of the children try this.
- the words that are said when the bread and wine are given.
- Make sure the children know that they haven't taken part in a communion service during this workshop.

You could break bread and pour out wine during this section.

When Christians see the bread being broken and when they eat some of it, they remember that Jesus' body was broken on the cross, and they give thanks. When they see the wine being poured out and they drink some of it, they remember that Jesus blood was shed on the cross, and they give thanks.

If there is any time left over, invite children to ask questions.

WORKSHOP THREE - GETHSEMANE AND PETER

Bible passage: Matthew 26:31-56 and 69-75

Type of workshop: DRAMA

Structure of workshop – 15 minutes

9 mins drama exercise 1

4 mins telling the story

2 mins drama exercise 2

You will need:

- optional – you could use a digital camera or an instant camera to take photos of the children in their poses. If you have the equipment, these could then be projected onto a screen during the presentation session, or even printed for the children to take away.

Preparation

- Display the poster for this workshop in a prominent position.
- If the first drama exercise takes longer than expected, you may not have time to allow children to create 'photos' of the biblical story that you tell them – but that's fine. It's better to tell the story well rather than rushing through it to get to the final drama exercise.

Drama exercise 1

Briefly talk about a time in your life when you were let down by a friend. Talk about how you felt. Ask the children if they have ever had a similar experience, when a friend let them down. Get them to share how they felt, rather than all the details of what happened.

Ask the children to think of a scenario when someone is let down by their friend. They should then create a 'photo' of that incident by striking a pose together – a still tableau of the event. If you have a digital or instant camera, take a photo of the group and show it to them on the back of the camera or when the picture has dried.

Get each small group to show their tableau to the others. Get the other groups to guess what is going on and then listen to the story behind the 'photo'.

Telling the story

There are three examples of Jesus being let down by his friends just before his arrest – when Peter, James and John fell asleep while he prayed in Gethsemane; when Judas betrayed him; and when Peter denied him. Tell just one of these stories to each group as there is not time to go into the detail of each incident. In the plenary session, one group from each workshop can display their tableau while the three stories are briefly told.

Tell the story in your own words. You might say something like this:

Group one – Gethsemane

Jesus knew that he was going to die soon. He ate a special meal with his friends and tried to prepare them for what was going to happen. But after the meal, he wanted to spend time with God, praying and asking for the strength to face his death. So he took his three closest friends, Peter, James and John and went to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus asked his friends to stay with him and support him because he felt so sad. He went on a bit further by himself and prayed, pouring out his heart to God. Then he went back to his friends and found them all fast asleep!

Jesus woke them up. 'Couldn't you stay awake with me just for one hour?' he asked. He went back and prayed to God some more, asking for God's strength. When he came back a second time, his friends were asleep again. When Jesus needed their support and friendship, all they could do was sleep. So Jesus turned to God again and prayed some more.

Group two – Judas

When Jesus started telling people about God, he chose twelve men to be his disciples. These men were his friends and he taught them about God. They spent three years with him, listening to his teaching, watching him heal people and learning about God. One of these men was called Judas Iscariot. He was in charge of the group's money, a very responsible position.

But when Jesus started talking about the fact that he was going to die, something changed inside Judas. We don't know exactly why he changed, but Judas decided that he would hand Jesus over to the Temple leaders who wanted to get rid of Jesus. Judas was paid 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus.

After Jesus had eaten his last meal with his friends, he went to a nearby garden to pray. Judas brought a large crowd with him, armed with swords and clubs. He had said to the Temple leaders, 'I will greet a man in the garden with a kiss on the cheek. He is the man you need to arrest.' So that's what Judas did. He went up to Jesus and kissed him on the cheek. Then the temple guards arrested Jesus and took him off to face a trial.

Group three – Peter

Towards the end of his life, Jesus started talking to his friends about the fact that he was going to die and that everyone would leave him on his own. Peter said that he would never, ever leave Jesus. But Jesus said to him that before the cock crew the next morning, Peter would say three times that he didn't know Jesus. Peter insisted that he wouldn't do that. He would stick up for Jesus whatever happened.

Later that night, Jesus was arrested in the garden and taken to the house of the High Priest. All his friends had run away because they were afraid of what was happening. But Peter followed behind Jesus and sat down in the courtyard outside the priest's house to see what would happen.

While he was there, a servant girl came up to him and said, "Weren't you with that Jesus of Nazareth?" But Peter said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

Then another girl saw him and said to her friends, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth!' But Peter said, 'No I wasn't. I don't know the man!'

Then some other people came up to Peter and said, 'You must be one of Jesus' friends. You've got the same accent as them'. But Peter said, 'Look, I don't know the man!'

Immediately the cock crowed and Peter realised what he had done. He had let Jesus down when Jesus most needed him. And Peter went outside and cried.

Drama exercise 2

Ask the group to create a 'photo' of the story they have just heard. Again, if you have a digital or instant camera take a photo and show it to the children. Ask the children to be ready to recreate these tableaux in the session at the end, or use a projector to show the photos on a screen.

WORKSHOP FOUR - THE TRIAL

Bible passage: Matthew 27:11-26

Type of workshop: DRAMA

Structure of workshop – 15 minutes

10 mins drama exercise

5 mins telling the story

You will need:

- no additional materials

Preparation

- Display the poster for this workshop in a prominent position.

Drama exercise – False accusations...

Ask the children: What would you do if someone says you did something that you didn't do? For example:

- Someone has eaten the cake that your Mum was saving for tea and your brother says it was you!
- Or someone has kicked a ball through a window at school, and someone says you did it!

Talk about how they would feel and what they would do. How could they prove their innocence? They might want to get a friend to speak up for them, or to prove that they were somewhere else when it happened.

Ask the children to think of a situation where someone is accused of something they didn't do. It could be one of the examples given, or a story that the children come up with. Get them to act out the accusation and the way they would defend themselves.

Invite the children to come out of the roles that they have played.

Telling the story

Tell the story in your own words. You might say something like this:

Jesus was arrested even though he hadn't done anything wrong. The Temple leaders were angry at what Jesus was saying about God and the way that people were following him. They got people to make false accusations against Jesus - they made up bad things that Jesus was supposed to have said or done. None of them were true, but Jesus chose to stay silent rather than defend himself. He acted very differently to the way we have just acted out.

Then the Temple leaders took Jesus to Pilate for his trial. Pilate was the Roman leader and he had the power to put Jesus to death. Pilate asked Jesus, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' and Jesus said, 'Yes.' Again, the Temple leaders made false accusations against Jesus in front of Pilate. And again Jesus chose to stay silent.

Pilate couldn't find anything that Jesus had done wrong. He knew that Jesus didn't deserve to be put to death. But it was his custom to release a prisoner at that time of year. There was a man in prison called Barabbas who was a well-known criminal. Pilate decided that he would let the crowd who were waiting outside decide who should go free. He said to them, 'Which prisoner should I release - Jesus or Barabbas?'

The Temple leaders persuaded the crowd to shout for Barabbas, so they all chanted his name. 'What shall I do with Jesus, then?' asked Pilate. And the crowd shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' So Pilate handed Jesus over to be put to death.

What happened to Jesus was unjust and unfair, but Jesus knew that keeping quiet was the right thing to do. We want to fight back in situations like this; Jesus chose not to. Jesus went through with it even though he knew what was to come. He was treated badly but he let it happen because he knew it was the right thing to do.

WORKSHOP FIVE – CRUCIFIXION

Bible passage: Mark 15:16-41

Type of workshop: USING ARTEFACTS

Structure of workshop – 15 minutes

2 mins get children settled

13 mins telling the story of the crucifixion with artefacts

You will need:

- the 'crown of thorns'
- purple pashmina
- dice
- nails
- sponge

Preparation

- Rehearse the telling of the story so you are able to deliver it with confidence. All four gospels have accounts of the crucifixion and there are lots more details that you could include. This telling centres around the artefacts to help children appropriately imagine what happened.
- This workshop needs to be quiet, thoughtful and reflective.
- Put all the artefacts into the box so you can pull them out at the correct point in the story.
- Display the poster for this workshop in a prominent position.

Introduction

Start the workshop with Circle Time. Pass the artefacts one at a time around the group allowing children to feel them. Ask questions to stimulate their curiosity: What does this feel like? I wonder what this is used for? When the artefacts have travelled round the circle, put them in the centre of the group as a focal point and indicate to them at the appropriate points in the story.

Telling the story

Tell the story in your own words. You might say something like this:

Jesus was sentenced to death and was handed over to the Roman soldiers so that they could crucify him.

But first the Roman soldiers decided to make fun of Jesus. They knew that Jesus had been called the King of the Jews. What do Kings wear? Draw out the answers 'robe' and 'crown'. So they put a purple robe around him. And they put a crown of thorns on his head, pressing the thorns into his skin. The crown we passed round hasn't got any thorns so it's safe for us to try on, but imagine it's got big spiky thorns on it. They also gave Jesus a stick to hold, as an imitation sceptre.

Then the soldiers made Jesus stand on his own, and they all crowded round, mocking him. Some of them spat on him. Others got on their knees and pretended to honour him. Some of them hit him with a staff and with their hands.

In those days, people were crucified just outside the city wall of Jerusalem at a place called Golgotha, which means the Place of the Skull. They made Jesus walk to this place, carrying the cross that he was going to be crucified on. It was very large – taller than a man and very heavy. The soldiers got a man called Simon to help Jesus carry his cross.

When they arrived at Golgotha, the soldiers took off Jesus' clothes and then they cast lots for them. They threw dice and the person with the highest score won the clothes.

Jesus was nailed to the cross, probably through his wrists and feet. Two robbers were crucified next to Jesus, one on his left and one on his right. Lots of people walked past and shouted insults at them.

Then the whole land grew dark, even though it was the middle of the day. And Jesus shouted out in a loud voice 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Someone dipped a sponge into vinegar, put it on a stick and held it up for Jesus to drink.

And then Jesus cried out and died. There was a centurion standing by the cross, guarding it. When he heard Jesus' cry and saw how he died, he said, 'Surely this man was the Son of God.'

If there is time to spare, ask if the children have any questions. Let them handle the artefacts again.

WORKSHOP SIX – RESURRECTION

Bible passage: John 19:38 - 20:18

Type of workshop: CRAFT

Structure of workshop – 15 minutes

3 mins get children to settle and discuss bulbs
4 mins tell the story of the resurrection
8 mins get children to create artwork

You will need:

- a daffodil bulb, a flowering daffodil in a pot and a dead daffodil, perhaps one from the garden
- A4 paper
- template for daffodils (see p28)
- paper and felt tip pens or pencils
- yellow and orange tissue paper to scrunch up to make daffodil flowers
- appropriate scissors for children to cut out daffodil crown – 10 pairs
- glue – use PVA glue in pots with spreaders
- old newspaper to cover the floor

Preparation

- Cover the area where children will create their flowers with newspaper to avoid mess. Place the craft materials nearby.
- Display the poster for this workshop in a prominent position.

Introduction

Show the children the bulb. Ask if anyone has planted bulbs. What did they grow into? What do they think this bulb will grow into? It looks dry and dead, but if you plant it something amazing happens.

Show the daffodil and talk about how it grew from a bulb just like the one you have shown them. Then show the dead daffodil. Talk about the cycle of life and death that happens each year for a daffodil. In the spring, the bulb puts down roots and puts up shoots; it produces leaves and a flower; the flower blooms and is beautiful but then it starts to wither and die. Once the flower has died, the bulb stores up goodness for next year and the dead leaves are removed. The next spring the cycle happens all over again.

Telling the story

Tell the story in your own words. You might say something like this:

This is what the Bible tells us happened after Jesus had died. His friends were all very, very sad and disappointed. Jesus died on a Friday. The next day was Saturday, the Sabbath, which is the Jews' special day when they worship God and do no work. A man called Joseph asked if he could bury Jesus on the Friday evening so that he wouldn't be on the cross on the Sabbath. He wrapped Jesus' body in a linen cloth and laid it in a tomb cut out of rock. He rolled a large stone in front of the tomb.

Jesus' friends all went home and spent the Sabbath day mourning his death. Then early on the Sunday, Jesus' friend Mary went to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away so she ran to find Peter and another of Jesus' friends. She told them what had happened and they ran to the tomb. They went inside and the tomb was empty! They saw the strips of linen that had been wrapped round Jesus' body and the cloth that had been put around his head. But there was no body there. They went back home, wondering what had happened.

But Mary was really upset so she stayed by the tomb crying. She saw someone that she thought was the gardener, but she couldn't see properly because she had tears in her eyes. He asked her, 'Why are you crying?' She said, 'If you've taken the body somewhere, tell me where.'

Then the man said, 'Mary', and she realised that it was Jesus! It was amazing! Jesus told her to go back and tell the others what had happened. She went and found Jesus' other friends and told them that she had seen him.

Later on, Jesus appeared to all his friends several times. After a while, they didn't have any doubt that he was alive. And they discovered that because Jesus was alive, that he could help them with their own lives too. Because Jesus had died, he was able to give life to everyone else.

Creating artwork

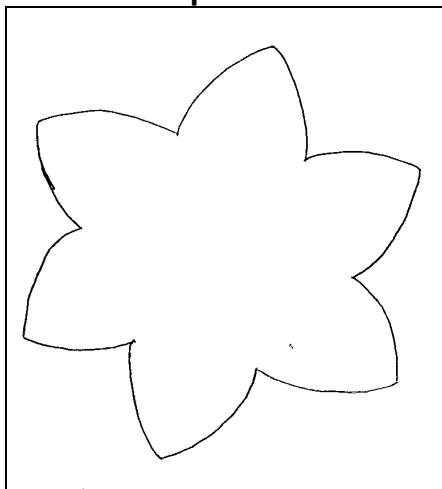
Tell the children that they are going to create artwork to remind them of Jesus' resurrection, that he came back to life.

Invite the children to draw three pictures of the stages in a daffodils life, all on one piece of paper (see example below):

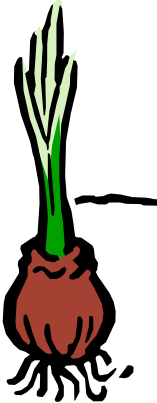
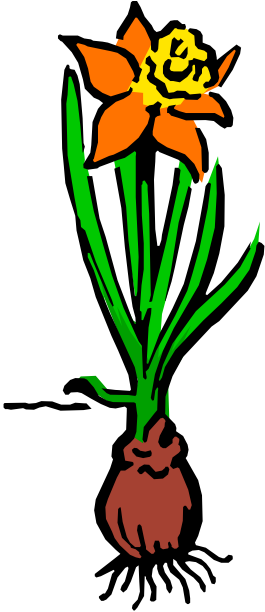
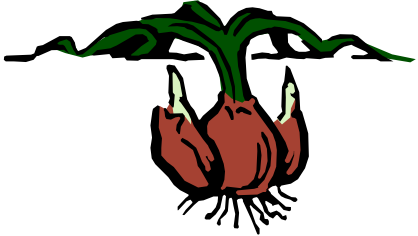
- 1) a picture of the bulb
- 2) a flowering daffodil. They can draw the basic structure of the plant and then stick scrunched up tissue paper on to create the flowers
- 3) a dying daffodil.

Children can take these pictures away with them.

Daffodil template:



Example of how children should divide their page:

1) Bulb	2) Daffodil	3) Dying daffodil
		

PRESENTATION - Telling the whole Easter story

In this final session, you will gather all the children together and tell the Easter story from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection in order. Children will have done three of the workshops each, so will know half the story but might not have done them in the right order. You want to include enough detail for them to understand the complete story, but not so much that they phase out because they have heard it all before.

Aim to include the children in the retelling, asking them what they have learned and getting them to show what they did at the workshops. Get the leaders of the two artefacts workshops to bring over the items that they used. Get all the children to collect either their palm branch or their picture from their craft workshop and bring it to the plenary session.

These are the key points to cover:

Palm Sunday

Ask the children who made palm branches to line up either side of a central aisle. Get them to cheer and to wave their branches. You could get all the children to join in with the cheering, although if they're overexcited it may be difficult to get them to stop!

- Explain that Jesus wanted to enter the city of Jerusalem in a special way to show that he was the King of the Jews.
- His friends borrowed a young donkey and put their coats on its back. Jesus sat on top and rode into the city.
- Lots of people laid their coats on the floor for the donkey to walk over, and waved palm branches as they shouted 'Hosanna'. They were really excited to see Jesus and to hear what he had to say about God.
- Get the children to do one last shout of 'Hosanna!' then ask them to sit down.

Just after Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, it was time for a special Jewish festival called the Passover. Jesus made arrangements to celebrate this with his closest friends.

The Last Supper

Ask children what they did in this workshop and from their feedback cover the following points. Show the communion items to the whole group.

- Jesus celebrated the Passover Feast with his friends. This was a special meal that they had every year when they remembered their ancestors' escape from Egypt led by Moses.
- Jesus did something new at the meal. He handed round bread and said 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he picked up the cup of wine and said, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood.'
- Christians eat bread and drink wine at a special act of worship called communion, when they remember Jesus' death and resurrection.

After Jesus ate the Last Supper with his friends, he went outside to pray because he felt so sad. And over the next few hours, all his friends let him down badly.

Gethsemane and Peter

- Jesus took Peter, James and John to a garden called Gethsemane and asked them to support him while he prayed. But they all fell asleep and left him on his own. Ask the group who heard this story to create or show their 'photo'.
- Judas was one of Jesus' friends who had spent the last three years with him, travelling around and listening to his teaching. But Judas decided to betray Jesus and he handed him over to the Temple leaders. He was paid 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus with a kiss. Ask the group who heard this story to create or show their 'photo'.
- Peter had promised Jesus that he would stick up for Jesus no matter what happened. But when Jesus was arrested, Peter was very afraid. He said three times that he didn't know Jesus. And when he realised how badly he had let Jesus down, he cried and cried. Ask the group who heard this story to create or show their 'photo'.

Jesus was arrested and he was then taken to be tried. The people accusing him wanted to prove that he had done something wrong and that he should be punished.

The Trial

Ask the group who did this activity to talk about what happened in their workshop. What do they do when they are falsely accused?

- The Temple leaders got people to say all kinds of untrue things about Jesus, even though Jesus hadn't done anything wrong. Jesus chose to keep quiet instead of sticking up for himself.
- Jesus was taken to be tried by Pilate, the Roman leader. Pilate couldn't find anything that Jesus had done wrong, but again Jesus kept quiet.
- The crowd shouted for Jesus to be crucified and for a criminal called Barabbas to be set free. Pilate did what they had asked.
- Jesus chose to keep quiet because he knew that he had to die so that God could put right all that was wrong with the world. He knew that he would face a horrible death but he was willing to do that because he loves us so much.

And so Jesus was sentenced to death.

The Crucifixion

Ask children about some of the artefacts to draw out the elements of the story.

- The purple shawl and crown of thorns – the soldiers mocked Jesus and were rude to him.
- The dice – they cast lots for his clothing.
- The nails – Jesus hands and feet were nailed to the cross and he was left to die.
- The sponge - someone offered a drink to Jesus on a sponge. Then Jesus cried out again and died. His friends were very shocked and sad.

But the story doesn't end there. Jesus' friends thought it was the end, but they were about to have a big surprise.

The Resurrection

Ask children to show the group their pictures. Talk about what needs to happen to a seed or bulb before it can grow – it needs to die. But when it does die, it's not the end. It produces a new plant that provides fruit or flowers or vegetables.

- Jesus' friends were very sad when he died. But when they went to visit the tomb, they found it empty. Jesus' death was not the end.
- Mary met Jesus in the garden – he had come back to life.
- Jesus appeared to lots of his friends. After a while they had no doubts that it was really him and that he was alive again.
- Christians believe that because Jesus came back to life, he is able to give new life to everyone that wants to follow him. This is what we celebrate at Easter.

Ask children to think about the story that they have heard this morning. Explain that you are going to pray and that if they want to join in they can say Amen at the end. If they don't want to pray they can think their own thoughts about what they have heard and done.

Invite children to make themselves comfortable, to be still on the inside and the outside. You may want to use the school's pattern for preparing children for prayer.

Dear God

We thank you for the story of Easter, and for all that we have done this morning.

Open our minds to understand what the Easter story means for us.

Open our hearts to receive your love and to share that love with others.

Amen.

Thank children for taking part so well. Invite them to think about the story over the Easter weekend.

ASSEMBLIES/COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Guidelines

School assemblies are usually short, sweet and to the point. You are likely to be given 10 or 15 minutes out of a total of 20 minutes allocated to the assembly. Adjust the material given in these assembly outlines to the necessary length. Make sure you stick to the time allocated to you; you will win no friends if you eat into the curriculum time.

Ask the school if they usually sing songs or hymns in assembly and if so, get them to suggest one that the children know well and that fits the theme.

Don't ever embarrass children by putting them on the spot, showing them up in front of their friends or by joking about a mistake they made. Several of these assemblies ask you to get children out to the front to participate. You will probably have plenty of volunteers, but once they stand up they may suddenly realise that all eyes are on them. You can do a lot to affirm them and encourage them to participate.

Always thank the children for participating and get them to sit down once their contribution has ended. You don't want to leave them up there feeling awkward while you explain the point of the assembly.

Ask the school what routine they have with respect to prayer; you may like to use this so that it's familiar to children. For example, in some schools a candle will be lit at the beginning of a prayer and extinguished at the end. A good phrase to use to prepare children for prayer is 'Let's be still on the inside and still on the outside.' Don't use the traditional and outdated 'Hands together and eyes closed!' You can't assume that all children will want to join in the prayer. You can explain that you are going to pray and invite those that want to join you to say 'Amen' at the end.

Opening prayer

You may like to say this prayer at the beginning of each assembly, particularly if you are going into the school more than once. Children love repetition and it will help to frame what you are doing in the school.

Dear God

Open our ears to listen carefully to the story of Easter.

Open our minds to understand what it means for us.

Open our hearts to receive your love and to share that love with others.

Amen.

ASSEMBLIES TO USE BEFORE EASTER

Four assembly outlines are given to use before Easter. They introduce the themes of the Easter story and are a good introduction to the workshops that will be held in the church.

The Greatest Love	pages 34-35
Forgiveness	pages 36-37
Forfeits and prizes	pages 38-40
Bridging the gap	pages 41-43

THE GREATEST LOVE

Aim: to consider how God showed his love for the world through what Jesus did at Easter

You will need:

- a chocolate bar, a football shirt or football, a DVD of a popular children's TV programme or recent film, a baby doll or a large picture of a baby
- two large bags
- signs saying 'eat it'; 'cheer and shout at it'; 'watch it'; 'look after it'

Preparation:

- Create the signs by printing or writing the words onto A4 sheets of card. Use large lower-case letters so that children will be able to read them from the back of the hall. To make these more durable, you could laminate them.
- Put the objects in one bag, and the signs in the other.

Introduction

Ask children if they know what festival is celebrated at the end of the week/late in the term - it's Easter. But what is Easter all about? You can probably think of things that you do at Easter – maybe you eat chocolate, or see friends and family, and you'll have some days off school. But what are we celebrating at Easter? That's what this assembly is about.

Content

Explain that in the bag are some of your favourite things in the world. You love these things, and you wonder if any of the children love them too.

Invite a child up to pick something out of the bag and then comment on it. For example, if it's the chocolate, talk about how much you love chocolate. Invite children to put up their hands if they love chocolate too. Say that we know we mustn't eat too much chocolate but a little bit every now and then is fantastic and very delicious. Ask the child to hold the chocolate so everyone can see it.

Invite three more children, one at a time, to pick out the other items and comment on each of them. The football shirt could get some friendly rivalry going – you may want to end up asking who loves the game of football rather than that particular team! You could talk about your own baby daughter/nephew/godchild; ask the children who has a baby brother or sister that they love. Make sure you pick a film or TV programme that you genuinely love as well as it being one that children will like. You could talk briefly about a favourite scene/episode. You'll end up with four children standing in a line holding their items.

Then ask what we do to show our love for these things? Say that you have some suggestions in your other bag. Deal out the cards, or fan them out and get the children to pick one and read it out.

Then say that you wonder which item should go with which action, and deliberately mix them up. For example, give the card saying 'eat it' to the child with the baby; the card saying 'watch it' to the child with the chocolate; the card saying 'cheer and shout at it' to the child with the DVD; and the card saying 'look after it' to the child with the football. Ask the children if that's the right way round. Follow their suggestions for a better match of actions and items! Baby – look after it; chocolate – eat it; football – cheer and shout at it; DVD – watch it.

Summarise so far: We show our love for these things by the way that we treat them and the things we do with them or for them. Our actions show how much we love these things. Thank the children for their participation and ask them to sit down.

Explain that at Easter, we celebrate the fact that God loves us and we remember what God did to show that love. Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- God showed his great love for the world through what Jesus did at Easter.
- Jesus was God's son who came to earth to live as a man and to tell people and show people what God is like.
- Jesus died and came back to life so that we can know God and have a future with God. That's what we celebrate at Easter.
- So this Easter Sunday, you might like to stop and think: Easter is the way that God shows how much he loves me.

If the children will be coming to the church to take part in the workshops, talk about that briefly here and explain that they will hear the whole Easter story on that day.

Reflection and prayer

Invite children to think quietly for a moment about the people that they love and how they show that love. How can they show their love to others? What could they do for their mum or dad, or brother or sister, to show how much they love them?

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

Thank you for your love for us and for all the world.

Thank you that you sent Jesus to live here on earth, to die and to come back to life.

Help us to remember this Easter just how much you love us; help us to show that love to other people.

Amen

FORGIVENESS

Aim: to talk about the forgiveness that Jesus offers us through his death and resurrection

You'll need:

- a story from your own childhood about a time when you got into trouble and had to face a punishment.
- if appropriate, some props to illustrate the story – see below for an example

Preparation

- rehearse your story so that it flows well and will engage the children
- gather and/or make your props

Introduction

Ask children if they know what festival is celebrated at the end of the week/later in the term – it's Easter. But what is Easter all about? You can probably think of things that you do at Easter – maybe you eat chocolate, or see friends and family, and you'll have some days off school. But what are we celebrating at Easter? We're going to think about one very important thing that Easter is all about.

Content

Tell a story from your own childhood about a time when you got into trouble and had to face a punishment, and what it is like to be forgiven. This is a very simple idea, but children love to hear stories about when adults were naughty! They will probably be able to identify with the reasons why you did it, the feeling of dread when something went wrong, and the expectation of punishment or being told off.

You'll use the story to talk about forgiveness. Maybe you have a story where you were actually forgiven and didn't have to face the consequences of what you had done. If not, you could talk about what actually happened, but then ask them to imagine that the story ended in forgiveness – 'What if my Dad had said, "I forgive you. Let's start again. It's as if this never happened." What would that be like?' Explain that forgiveness means that you don't have to face the consequences of what you have done wrong.

It's important to be honest when telling stories – if something didn't happen to you, then don't pretend that it did. You could however tell a story about someone else's misdemeanour. 'I want to tell you about a boy called Martin...'

You may like to get children to act out some of the story, using some props. For example, a school worker who has used this idea tells the story of when he and his brother were playing football in his Aunt's garden. They promised their Dad they would be careful, but ended up smashing her greenhouse! The school worker made a mock greenhouse from a plastic sheet with black tape on the top to represent the panes of glass; two helpers held this up. He built up the tension by explaining the lengths he and his brother had gone to, to persuade their Dad to let them play football. He got a couple of children out to gently kick a football to each other, and

then on his signal one of them kicked it at the greenhouse which the helpers then let collapse.

Having told your story, talk about the forgiveness that Jesus offers us. Explain that Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- God created a beautiful world and gave it to people to enjoy and to look after. But we haven't done a very good job. We can see lots of things that are wrong with the world – war, poverty and suffering. And we know that we do lots of things that are wrong – we hurt people, we tell lies, we're selfish. The Bible calls this sin, and it stops us being close to God.
- But instead of us having to stay like that, Jesus came to earth to enable us to be close to God again. At Easter we remember that Jesus offers us forgiveness for everything that we have done wrong. He wipes it all away and enables us to be close to God.

If the children will be coming to the church to take part in the workshops, talk about that briefly here and explain that they will hear the whole Easter story on that day.

Prayer

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

We are sorry for all the wrong things that we do.

Thank you that you sent Jesus so that we can be forgiven.

Thank you that we can be close to you again.

Amen.

FORFEITS AND PRIZES

Aim: to explain that Jesus has paid the price for our wrongdoing, to enable us to be in relationship with God.

You'll need:

- prizes – in the current healthy-eating climate of schools it's best not to hand out sweets or chocolate. You could give a small bottle of fruit smoothie, or a fairtrade healthy snack bar.
- a forfeit - chocolate, a packet of lemon jelly and a clean empty tin of dog food with the label still attached; or a tin of beef stew and a tin of dog food.
- a fork
- a tin opener if you choose the second option for the forfeit
- flour, bowl, plate, jelly babies, table knife if you choose to play the flour cake game

Preparation:

- The forfeit involves eating 'dog food' and you will be doing this, rather than the children! One option is to fill the clean empty dog food tin with chopped up chocolate. Make up the lemon jelly according to the instructions on the packet and pour it into the tin, leaving it to set. Or carefully take the labels off both of the cans, and put the dog food label onto the can of stew. When you open the can and show the contents to pupils, it will look like dog food, but only you will know that it's not. Keep the 'dog food' and fork hidden from view at the start of the assembly.
- Choose one of these four games that you will get the children to play. Each of them is fun and has a clear winner and loser.
 - **Game one - Word association.** (If you're over a certain age, you may remember this as Mallett's Mallet!) Get two children to sit facing each other at the front. Give a word to start the game. Each child has to say another word that's related to the previous one in some way. They are not allowed to repeat a word that has already been said, hesitate or say a random word. Give each child three lives – if they lose all those they have to pay a forfeit. Words to try:

water	dog	chocolate	football
party	Easter	music	sausages
 - **Game two - Simon says.** Get a few children out the front to play in front of the school. Issue instructions such as 'Simon says hop on one leg', 'Simon says stick your tongue out', 'sit down!'. If the instruction begins 'Simon says...' they have to do it; if it doesn't they should stay as they are. Anyone moving when they shouldn't has to pay a forfeit. Give them a trial run to get into the game.
 - **Game three - Tongue twisters.** Get two or three children out and see who can say a tongue twister the most times clearly. Start with simple ones and progress from there.

Unique New York
Selfish shellfish
Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry
Mrs Smith's Fish Sauce Shop

- **Game four - The flour cake game.** Please note, this is not the game to choose if you have never done an assembly before! Fill a bowl with flour and press it down. Place a large plate over the top and invert the bowl so that you end up with a cake of flour on the plate. (You will need to turn out the cake at the school.) Put a jelly baby in the centre. Get two or three children out to take part. Contestants take it in turn to cut a slice from the cake; the one who makes the jelly baby fall down has to do the forfeit which is to pick it up with their mouth from the flour. You won't need to prepare the 'dog food' forfeit for this assembly. Encourage children to cut big slices at the start.
- **Important** Talk to the head teacher about what you are planning to do and ask him or her to choose children to take part who will be able to cope with losing in front of everybody, and with the thought of eating dog food. (Remember they don't have to eat it – you do!) You don't want a sensitive child bursting into tears because they have lost!

Introduction

Ask children if they know what festival is celebrated at the end of the week/later in the term - it's Easter. But what is Easter all about? You can probably think of things that you do at Easter – maybe you eat chocolate, or see friends and family, and you'll have some days off school. But what are we celebrating at Easter? We're going to think about one very important thing that Easter is all about.

Content

Explain that you're going to play a game and invite your pre-selected volunteers to the front. Explain the rules of the game and that they have the chance to win some great prizes, but that if they lose they will have to do a forfeit. Get them to agree that they are happy to do the forfeit without revealing what it is. Play the game until you have a loser.

Congratulate the person who has to do the forfeit on their effort and on how close the game was. Then bring out the can of 'dog food' with a flourish and explain the forfeit. Show them the open can of 'dog food', produce the fork and say that they need to eat it all up. Allow some time for some reaction – ask how they feel? Have they ever eaten dog food before? Are they hungry? Let them 'enjoy' the moment.

Then say, 'You lost the game, so really you should have to do the forfeit. But what if I do this forfeit for you, and give you a prize instead? Would you like that? How do you feel about that?' Hand over the prize, and eat some of the 'dog food'.

Explain that this is an illustration of what Easter is all about. Explain that Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- God created a beautiful world and gave it to people to enjoy and to look after. But we haven't done a very good job. We can see lots of things that are wrong with the world – war, poverty and suffering. And we know that we do lots of things that are wrong – we hurt people, we tell lies, we're selfish. The Bible calls this sin, and it stops us being close to God.
- Because we have all sinned we deserve to be separated from God when we die – that's our forfeit if you like. But Jesus stepped in and said that he would pay the forfeit instead of us. Jesus died on the cross even though he hadn't done anything wrong, so that we could be close to God again. He came back to life to show us that God loves and accepts us. We don't have to pay the forfeit because Jesus has done it for us.

If the children will be coming to the church to take part in the workshops, talk about that briefly here and explain that they will hear the whole Easter story on that day.

Prayer

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

We know that the wrong things we have done come between you and us.

We thank you that Jesus died so that we could be close to you again.

Help us to remember that this Easter.

Amen

BRIDGING THE GAP

Aim: to explain that Jesus 'bridges the gap' between God and people, enabling us to be in a relationship with God again.

You'll need:

- a banana skin
- some old children's magazines
- lots of 'rubbish' - screwed up newspapers, cardboard cereal boxes, larger cardboard boxes. You need to create a large volume of rubbish that is fairly quick to clear up so go for a few big items rather than lots of little items
- some toys - a football, small foam ball, some cards, a book

Preparation:

- This can be used as a straight story; invite the children to imagine what's happening. Or enlist the help of a couple of children to act it out who will need to respond to what you are saying. You can suggest actions that they should do during the story.

Introduction

Ask children if they know what festival is celebrated at the end of the week/later in the term - it's Easter. But what is Easter all about? You can probably think of things that you do at Easter – maybe you eat chocolate, or see friends and family, and you'll have some days off school. But what are we celebrating at Easter? We're going to think about one very important thing that Easter is all about.

Content

Read the following story which illustrates the barrier between God and people that is caused by our sin. Two children could act out the parts of Katie and Simon while you read. Their actions will be obvious from the script. Katie should start with the smaller pieces of rubbish, and then put the bigger ones on top. While Katie is adding rubbish, Simon should be playing with the toys rather than just standing there. You may need to extend the description of Simon clearing up the stream so that it ties in with his actions - add in more descriptions of working hard and clearing up!

The story

Katie and Simon were friends. They lived next door to each other and saw each other every day. In between their gardens there was a beautiful, shallow stream. They used to splash across the stream to each other's gardens and have fun together. Sometimes, they used to play in the water together. Each night they slept in their own beds, but every morning before school they went to the bottom of the garden to say 'hello' to each other.

One day Katie woke up feeling rather grumpy. She ate a banana for her breakfast and went down to the stream to say hello to Simon. But when she left to go to school, she threw the banana skin over her shoulder and it landed in the stream.

After school, Katie's Mum asked her to tidy up her room which made her even more cross. She collected up a load of old magazines and went outside. She could see that Simon was playing and she felt envious that she couldn't play too. Simon waved to her, but instead of waving back, she threw the magazines into the stream.

The next morning Katie went out to see Simon as usual. Simon said to her 'Why have you made such a mess of our stream? Don't you think you should clear it up?' She felt annoyed that he was telling her what to do, so she threw some more rubbish in the stream.

And so it went on. Katie got into the habit of throwing rubbish in the stream. She forgot that Simon was her friend. She forgot the fun she used to have playing in the stream with him. She forgot how beautiful the stream used to be. She threw so much rubbish in the stream that she could hardly see Simon any more.

One day Simon came down to the garden as usual, to try to wave to Katie. He saw the huge mound of rubbish and he felt very sad. He could remember the fun and the beauty and the games, and he wanted to be friends with Katie again. And so he started to clear up.

He moved the boxes, and the paper, and the rubbish. He worked hard all day clearing and tidying and making the stream beautiful. He fished out all the magazines that Katie had dropped in the stream, and even the banana skin that she had thrown in at the beginning.

That evening Katie came out to the garden with some rubbish to throw in the stream. But she stopped in amazement. She could see the beautiful stream; she could see space to play; and she could see Simon again smiling and waving to her. She waved back, and called out, 'I'm sorry that I made all that mess. Thank you for clearing it up.' And Simon splashed across the stream to her with his football, and they had lots of fun playing again.

And if ever Katie was tempted to throw some rubbish in the stream again, she remembered all the work that Simon had done to clear things up and she put it in the bin instead.

Invite the children to give a round of applause to your actors, and get them to sit down. Explain that Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- this story is a picture of our relationship with God. God created us to be friends with him. He loves us and wants to spend time with us.
- but there are lots of things that come between God and us. The rubbish in the story represents some of the things we do wrong that spoil our relationship with God - when we hurt other people, or tell lies, or we're selfish it's like the rubbish piling up in the stream. The Bible calls this 'sin'. These things come between God and us so that we forget that God loves us and is our friend.
- but the good news is that God has done something to clear up all the rubbish and that's what we celebrate at Easter. Even though Jesus didn't make the mess between us and God, like Simon, he has cleared it all away. Christians believe that God sent Jesus to live here on earth to tell us all about God and to remind us that God loves us. And then Jesus died on the cross and came back to life to get rid of all the sin between God and us. Now we can be close to God again.

If the children will be coming to the church to take part in the workshops, talk about that briefly here and explain that they will hear the whole Easter story on that day.

Reflection and prayer

Invite children to reflect on their friendships. Can they remember a time when they fell out with someone - maybe they had an argument or they upset each other? How did they feel? And what was it like when they made friends again? How did that feel?

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

We are sorry for all the wrong things we do that stop us being close to you.

Thank you that Jesus came so that we can be close to you again.

Amen.

ASSEMBLIES TO DO AFTER EASTER

These assemblies explore the resurrection story and its implications for the world.

The proof of the pudding	pages 45-46
A big surprise	pages 47-49
Escape!	pages 50-51
The Road to Emmaus	pages 52-54
Peter – a very special breakfast	pages 55-57
The horrible tie	pages 58-59

THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING

Aim: to explain that Jesus proved that he was the Son of God by rising from the dead.

You'll need:

- a tin of food - It can be anything edible!
- a tin opener
- plate and forks

Preparation:

- Remove the label from the food. You could get a friend to choose a tin and remove the label for you so that you genuinely don't know what's inside at the start of the assembly.

Introduction

Ask children what festival they celebrated at the weekend (or recently). Ask them what they remember about the Easter story. Explain that Christians believe that Easter isn't just about remembering the events of the past. What happened at Easter can make a difference to our lives today.

Content

Show the tin without a label to the children. Explain that a friend gave you this tin without a label and you don't know what's inside it. Ask for some guesses as to what's inside. Could it be something you eat for breakfast - baked beans maybe? Or something sweet - tinned peaches, or sticky toffee pudding? Or maybe it's tinned tomatoes, or kidney beans, or a tin of soup? Invite lots of guesses. You could take the tin out to the audience and get one or two to shake the tin to see if they can hear anything sloshing around. What would they hope is in the tin? What's their favourite food that comes out of a tin?

When he was on earth, Jesus said that he was God's son. People that met him had to decide whether that was true or not. Some people maybe thought he was a good man who helped others. Some people maybe thought he was a bit mad. Lots of people had opinions about him. Could they believe what he said about himself? How could they know if it was true? What was the proof that he was the Son of God? So Jesus was a bit like this tin - people were trying to work out who Jesus was. They were looking for evidence to see if he was God's son. But they wanted him to prove it.

Then ask how we can find out what's in the tin? The only way to find out is to open it. We can guess all we like. We can talk about what we hope is in there, or what we would like to be in there. But the only way to prove what is in the tin is to open it. Open the tin, pour the contents onto a plate and show it to the children. If appropriate, give one or two of them a taste (using a clean fork for each child).

Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- the way Jesus proved that he was God's son was by coming back to life again. You've heard the story of Easter and how he was killed on the cross. All of Jesus' followers were very sad at that and scared. But two days later, a woman called Mary went to the tomb where Jesus' body had been put, and she found it empty. She saw someone who she thought was the gardener, and asked him what had happened. But as soon as the man spoke, she knew that it was Jesus! Jesus had come back from the dead and was alive again. That was the proof that Jesus was who he said he was, that he was the Son of God.

Prayer

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

We thank you for all that Jesus said and did while he was here on earth.

We praise you that his actions show that what he said was true – when he rose from the dead he proved that he is your son.

We thank you that we can know Jesus with us today. Help us to share his love with people around us.

Amen.

A BIG SURPRISE

Aim: to explore how the disciples' sadness turned to joy when they discovered that Jesus was alive.

You'll need:

- (optional) a present and lots of wrapping paper

Preparation:

- Rehearse the story so that you are confident in telling it - make it your own
- For the finale of the story - see below - you could have a wrapped present that you get one of the children to open. If you decide to do this, keep the present hidden behind the curtains on stage, or behind a screen. This is by no means essential - children will be able to identify with the feelings in the story.

Introduction

Ask children what festival they celebrated at the weekend (or recently). Ask them what they remember about the Easter story. Explain that Christians believe that Easter isn't just about remembering the events of the past. What happened at Easter can make a difference to our lives today.

Content

This assembly is a simple retelling of a true story. You could get children out to mime the story while you tell it. You will need five children to play the parts of Sam, his mum and dad, his brother and his sister. Get Sam to stand one side of you, and the rest on the other side of you. You may want to get the children to imagine a huge Christmas tree next to the parents and children that has a massive pile of presents underneath it.

'I want to tell you a story about a boy called Sam. Sam lived with his mum and dad and his brother and sister. Sam loved all the things that boys usually love - football, baked beans on toast, playing with his friends. But the thing that he loved the most was Christmas. Sam looked forward to Christmas all year. He loved seeing all the decorations in the shops. He loved the carol concert that they did at school. He liked opening Christmas cards and wrapping presents. But of course, the best thing of all was Christmas Day.

So Sam woke up very early on Christmas Day. He was really looking forward to opening his presents. He woke everyone else up and they all went downstairs to open their presents. The Christmas tree had been up for a few days, but during the night Sam's mum and dad had brought down all the presents and there was a huge pile. It was so exciting to see all the presents under the tree.

And then Sam's mum and dad started handing out the presents. They gave presents from Sam's grandparents to his brother and sister, but they said to Sam, 'Sorry Sam, there's nothing for you from Grandma and Grandpa.' Sam's brother and sister opened the presents and were very happy at what they got. How do you think Sam felt?

Then Sam's mum handed out the presents from their aunts and uncles - she gave three presents to Sam's sister and three presents to Sam's brother. But when it came to Sam she said, 'Sorry Sam, there isn't anything for you.' How do you think Sam felt?

Then Sam's dad handed out the presents from Sam's mum and dad. He gave five presents to Sam's sister and five presents to Sam's brother. They ripped the wrapping paper off and shouted about what they had been given, and waved their presents around. But Sam's dad said to Sam, 'Sorry Sam, there doesn't seem to be anything here for you.' How do you think Sam felt?

Sam looked at his brother and sister surrounded by wrapping paper, and toys, and books and games. He looked at his mum and dad opening their presents. He looked at the empty space around him. And he felt very sad, and very disappointed.

We've just celebrated Easter and you've heard all about the Easter story. And you know that Jesus had lots of friends who were excited about the things he taught them about God. But then Jesus was arrested even though he hadn't done anything wrong. And he was put to death on the cross in front of them. How do you think Jesus' friends felt? They were very, very sad and very, very disappointed - even worse than Sam felt when he didn't get any Christmas presents. They were scared and felt very alone. They didn't understand why Jesus had to die.

But how do these stories end?

Well Sam sat there feeling very sad and very disappointed. But then he saw that his mum and dad both had massive smiles on their faces, as if they were enjoying a secret joke. And they said to him, 'Sam, come and see what's in the dining room.' So Sam followed his mum and dad into the dining room.

Now's the time to reveal your big present if you have one!

And there was the biggest present that Sam had ever seen. It had a big label on it that said 'To Sam, Happy Christmas, from Mum, Dad, Grandma and Grandpa and all your aunts and uncles.' Sam ripped off the wrapping paper, and there was.... a table football game. It was the one thing that Sam had really wanted for Christmas, but he hadn't really been expecting because it was such a big thing. But all his aunts and uncles, his mum and dad, his grandma and grandpa had put their money together to buy it for him. So he went from being very sad and disappointed to very happy and excited in the space of three seconds!

And what about the Easter story - how does that end? The Bible tells us that Jesus' friends felt very, very sad and very, very disappointed, and scared and alone. They got together in a room to talk about what had happened - and suddenly Jesus was there with him! He was alive. They could touch him, and talk to him and ask him all kinds of questions. They went from being very, very sad and very, very disappointed to very, very happy and amazed and excited and shocked and surprised and overjoyed! They saw Jesus several times over the next few days so they didn't have any doubt that it was him.

Christians believe that because Jesus came back from the dead, he lives now. And we can get to know him now - so we can feel happy and amazed and excited and surprised and overjoyed that Jesus is alive!

Prayer

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say the response **Thank you Lord** and join in with 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

At Easter you turned disappointment into delight

Thank you Lord

You turned sadness into joy

Thank you Lord

You turned confusion into amazement

Thank you Lord

This Easter you give us forgiveness and love

Thank you Lord

You give us the chance to be your friends

Thank you Lord

Amen

ESCAPE!

Aim: to explain that Jesus is stronger than death and he proved it by coming back to life

You'll need:

- rolls of cheap kitchen roll
- large bag
- rope, padlock, and/or chains

Preparation:

- In the assembly, you'll wrap cheap kitchen roll round a child and then get them to break out of it. It would be a good idea to practice this in advance with a boy or girl of the same age as those in the assembly, so you know how much paper you should use!
- Put the kitchen rolls and other materials inside the bag.

Introduction

Ask children what festival they celebrated at the weekend (or recently). Ask them what they remember about the Easter story. Explain that Christians believe that Easter isn't just about remembering the events of the past. What happened at Easter can make a difference to our lives today.

Content

Explain that you need someone to help you in the assembly and choose a volunteer. (It doesn't need to be anyone particularly strong and can be a boy or a girl.) Interview your volunteer and find out a bit about him or her.

- What's your name?
- What did you have for breakfast this morning?
- What colour are your bedroom walls?
- Are you any good at escapology?

Explain that escapology is the art of escaping from handcuffs or ropes tied round you or other restraints. Harry Houdini is one of the most famous escapologists in history. He used to be handcuffed, put into a big container full of water and then the lid would be sealed on top. The audience would hold their breath while they waited for him to escape. But somehow he would do it and reappear to lots of applause. Ask your volunteer if they fancy trying that one?!

Explain that the escape you're going to ask them to do is easier than that and doesn't involve any water. You are going to tie up your volunteer and then they have to try to escape. Pull the rope, chains and padlocks out of the bag one by one and put them to one side, making suitable comments to build the tension!

Then produce the kitchen rolls and explain to your volunteer that this is what they have to escape from. Get your volunteer to stand with their hands by their side and wrap the kitchen roll around them. Then get all the children in the audience to do a gentle drum roll, patting their hands on their knees. Give your volunteer a count

down – “3, 2, 1, Escape!” Encourage pupils to give them a round of applause and get them to sit down.

Explain that we have just celebrated Easter – the time when we remember that Jesus died. When Jesus’ friends watched him die, they were convinced that that was the end for him. They knew that he was definitely dead, and they were very sad about it. But it wasn’t the end. Christians believe that/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- During his life Jesus had shown that he was more powerful than illness by healing people; he had shown that he was more powerful than the weather by calming a storm when he was out in a boat with his friends. And Jesus showed that he was more powerful than death by coming back to life again.
- The Bible says that it was impossible for death to keep hold of Jesus. Death just wasn’t strong enough. Jesus conquered death as easily as your volunteer broke through his or her restraints.
- Jesus came back to life, and Christians believe that he is still alive today. We can get to know Jesus and experience his love and power in our lives today. Jesus can help us deal with the things that hold us back – things like fear or anger or prejudice.

Reflection

Invite children to reflect on the assembly:

Like a knife slicing through butter,
like a spoon scooping up ice-cream,
like a child tearing paper,
Jesus broke out of the hold of death.

Like night turning to day,
Like winter becoming spring,
Like ice melting to water,
Jesus came back to life.

Prayer

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say ‘Amen’ at the end.

Dear God
We thank you that Jesus’ death was not the end,
that he came back to life and still lives today.
We thank you that we can know Jesus’ love and power in our lives today.
Help us to share that love with others.
Amen

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Aim: to tell the story of the road to Emmaus and how Jesus walks with us today

You'll need:

- a small loaf of bread
- a plate
- table and three chairs

Preparation:

- Set up the table and three chairs at the front. Put the bread on a plate on the table.

Introduction

Ask children what festival they celebrated at the weekend (or recently). Ask them what they remember about the Easter story. Explain that Christians believe that Easter isn't just about remembering the events of the past. What happened at Easter can make a difference to our lives today.

Content

Explain that you want to tell them the story of something else that happened at Easter:

After Jesus died, his friends were very upset and confused about what had happened. They had thought that Jesus was going to be a great leader, but he had ended up being killed.

Two of Jesus' friends decided to go to a village called Emmaus which was about seven miles away from Jerusalem, the city where Jesus had been put to death. It would have taken them about two hours to walk that distance.

Ask for two volunteers to play the part of the two friends. Take them on a walk around the hall, up and down the aisles, in between rows if there is room, round the back of the hall. You will keep walking with the two friends during most of the assembly, while you explain the story.

Ask pupils 'What do you think these two friends were talking about as they walked?' Explain that they were talking about Jesus – about what had happened in the last few days that had led to his death.

Ask if anyone can remember anything in the Easter story that they might have been talking about. Hopefully they will remember the elements that they covered in the Easter workshops and mention those: Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, Peter letting Jesus down, the trial, and the crucifixion. Pick up on one or two of these.

Try to mention the Last Supper so that pupils might pick up on the connection with Jesus breaking bread at the end of the story. What questions might the two friends have had about these events?

Then explain that while the two friends were walking along, another person came and joined them. Get another volunteer to join the group. This man asked them what they were talking about. (You could get your new volunteer to say, 'What are you two talking about?')

One of the two friends asks him where he'd been for the last few days.

Get one of them to say 'haven't you heard what has been going on in Jerusalem?'

So the two friends explained to the mystery man all about Jesus and what had happened. And the mystery man started explaining to them what it all meant. He talked to them about stories from the Bible. He seemed to know an awful lot about it. And he seemed to know an awful lot about Jesus.

I wonder how he knew so much? I wonder who this mystery person was?

You could invite pupils to give suggestions for other elements of the Easter story that they might have discussed on the journey – this could be a good way to review the story although don't draw it out too much.

So the three of them walked and talked and talked and walked all the way to Emmaus.

Aim to arrive back at the front of the hall at this stage.

The two friends invited the mystery man to stay and have a meal with them. So they all sat down together.

Get the three to sit down at the table and the 'mystery man' to break the bread as you explain the next bit.

The mystery man picked up the bread, prayed to God and broke it. The two friends looked at him amazed. They both realised where they had seen someone do that exact same thing before. And they both realised who the mystery man was. Ask the audience and the two friends who they think the mystery man is. It was Jesus! Wow – how amazing!

But then Jesus disappeared from their sight.

Get the mystery man to sit back in the audience

The two friends thought back to the walk, and all they had talked about and realised that they had known deep down that something special was happening and that God was with them. They were so excited to think that Jesus was alive that they got up, even though it was late, and went all the way back to Jerusalem again, all seven miles, so they could tell Jesus' other friends what had happened.

Lead the two friends once round the hall quickly and get them to sit back down in their seats.

Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- Jesus' death wasn't the end of the story. On the third day Jesus came back to life and appeared to his friends several times. He explained everything that had happened to these two friends, cooked breakfast for some others, ate with them, showed them the wounds in his hands and feet and let them touch him. Jesus' friends were convinced that Jesus had come back to life.
- Jesus is still alive today. Although we can't see Jesus, Christians believe that we can get to know him and that Jesus helps us in our lives today. Jesus walks with us through all our experiences, happy or sad, good or bad.

Prayer and reflection

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

You walked with your friends on the road to Emmaus,
answering their questions and showing how much you cared .
Please walk with us through our lives.

Make us aware of your love and show us how to live.

Amen

PETER – A VERY SPECIAL BREAKFAST

Aim: to tell the story of Peter's restoration and how God forgives us

You'll need:

- a small barbecue

Preparation:

- In this assembly you will get pupils to use their imagination and to enter into the story, to imagine what Jesus and Peter would have felt like. Make it clear that you don't expect pupils to answer the questions that you pose – they are just for them to wonder about.

Introduction

Ask children what festival they celebrated at the weekend (or recently). Ask them what they remember about the Easter story. Explain that Christians believe that Easter isn't just about remembering the events of the past. What happened at Easter can make a difference to our lives today. Explain that you want to pick up on one of the stories that they explored in the Easter experience when they visited the church (if appropriate.)

Content

Explain that Jesus and Peter were very good friends. Peter had spent three years following Jesus around, listening to Jesus' teaching and being involved in his life. Peter had told Jesus that he would never leave him, that he was prepared to go to prison or even to die for Jesus.

But when Jesus was arrested, Peter was very afraid. And when someone asked Peter if he knew Jesus, Peter said that he didn't. Three times Peter pretended that he didn't know Jesus. When Jesus needed his friends most, Peter let him down.

So when Peter heard that Jesus had come back to life, he had mixed feelings. He was excited to think that he could see Jesus again. But he knew that he had let Jesus down badly.

Explain to the children that you are going to tell the story of what happened when Jesus and Peter met after Jesus had risen from the dead. You want them to imagine what it would be like to be part of the story, to imagine what Jesus and Peter would have felt. You're going to ask them questions to think about in their minds – you don't want them to answer out loud.

Ask for two volunteers to play the parts of Jesus and Peter. Get Peter to stand one side of the stage and pretend to be fishing. Explain that Peter would be in a boat, throwing out the nets and pulling them back in. Get Jesus to sit on the other side of the stage, cooking fish on the barbecue.

Tell the story:

Before he met Jesus, Peter used to be a fisherman. After Jesus died, Peter decided that he would go fishing again and he persuaded some of his friends to go with him. They fished all night but they didn't catch anything. They were feeling really fed up when they saw a stranger on the shore. He told them to try fishing on the other side of the boat and when they pulled the nets up, they were full of fish! Peter realised that the stranger on the shore was Jesus. How do you think you would feel if you were Peter? What would you do? How do you think Jesus feels about you?

(Leave a short pause.)

Peter might have been tempted to run away, but he didn't. He was so keen to see Jesus that he jumped into the water and started swimming towards him. (Get 'Peter' to mime swimming towards Jesus for a few strokes – you don't want this to distract people from the wondering aspect of the story.) Imagine that you are Jesus and you see Peter swimming towards you. How would you feel? What would you want to do?

(Leave a short pause.)

Peter arrived at the shore, and the other friends followed in the boat. They brought some fish to Jesus and he cooked it over the fire. They ate breakfast together and then Jesus leaned over towards Peter and asked him a question. He said to Peter, 'Do you care about me?' Imagine that you're Jesus. A few days ago Peter let you down when you needed friends around you. How do you feel as you ask this question? How do you think he's going to answer?

(Leave a short pause.)

Peter looked at Jesus. And he realised that Jesus wasn't angry with him. Jesus forgave him for having let him down. Peter was really sorry that he had let Jesus down and he said, 'I do care about you.' Imagine you're Peter. How do you feel as you say that? What do you think Jesus will do next?

And then Jesus asked the question again: 'Do you care about me?'

And Peter said, 'Yes Lord, I do care about you.'

Jesus asked the question for the third time. 'Do you care about me?'

And Peter answered for the third time. 'Yes, Jesus, I do care about you.'

Jesus then said to Peter that he wanted him to carry on the work of teaching and caring for people that Jesus had been doing. Jesus forgave Peter and gave him the chance to have a fresh start. Imagine that you're Peter. How do you feel as you hear those words from Jesus?

Thank the pupils for listening so well and using their imaginations. Explain that in the story, often something very different to what you might expect happens. You might have expected Peter to keep his distance when he saw Jesus, but he jumped in the water to get closer to him. You might have thought that Jesus would be upset with Peter or angry with him, but Jesus forgave Peter. And you might have thought that Jesus wouldn't trust Peter again because Peter had let him down. But Jesus gave Peter a job to do in the future, to care for people like Jesus did.

Christians believe/the Bible teaches/I believe that:

- Jesus is willing to forgive all of us when we do things wrong. He wants us to be close to him and to care for people like he did.

Prayer and reflection

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

We thank you that your love and forgiveness are so big that you still love us even when we let you down.

We thank you that you can forgive us for everything that we have done wrong.

We thank you that you always give us another chance to be your friend and to work with you.

Amen.

THE HORRIBLE TIE

Aim: to explain that lots of people saw Jesus after he had risen from the dead

You'll need:

- An old tie or woman's scarf – the more garish and horrible the better
- A pair of strong scissors

Preparation:

- Ask the head teacher or a senior member of staff to wear the tie or scarf to the assembly. Explain the format of the assembly - that you will cut the tie or scarf in two, and what you plan to say before doing so.
- Think through what you'll say in the assembly. You don't want to undermine the staff member by appearing to be rude to them!
- Put the scissors in your pocket.
- Find out how many children will be in the assembly so that you can compare the figure with the 500 people that saw Jesus at the same time after he came back to life. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

Introduction

Ask children what festival they celebrated at the weekend (or recently). Ask them what they remember about the Easter story. Explain that Christians believe that Easter isn't just about remembering the events of the past. What happened at Easter can make a difference to our lives today.

Content

Pause after the introduction and explain that you're finding it very hard to concentrate this morning because you're being distracted by Mr X's tie or Miss X's scarf. Say something like:

'I don't mean to be rude but that is the most horrible tie/scarf I've ever seen. The colours don't go with what you're wearing. And the pattern is so loud I think I need sunglasses. It's very difficult to lead this assembly looking at that tie/scarf. In fact, I just can't go on any more. Either that tie/scarf has to go, or I do. And as I don't want to go, I think I'll do this....'

Then cut the tie or scarf in two and hold up the bit you have cut off.

Allow the reaction to die down!

Then ask pupils to think about what would happen if they went home and told their mum or dad or carer what had happened in the assembly. 'Today we had a visitor in assembly and she cut Mr X's tie in half!' Your mum might be very surprised and find it hard to believe you, because that sort of thing doesn't happen very often. How could you convince your Mum that you were telling the truth?

Well, maybe you could take three or four of your friends home and you could all say 'Today we had a visitor in assembly and she cut Mr X's tie in half!' That might make it more believable but your mum might think that you had all got together to play a joke on her. She might not be convinced that it had happened.

But if you took everybody here home, and they all lined up outside your house and one by one they gave their version of events, it would be very difficult for your mum to argue that it hadn't happened. If that many people all said that they had seen it, your mum would be convinced that it was true.

At Easter, we celebrate the fact that Jesus died and then came back to life again. But that's quite a difficult thing to believe isn't it, because it seems so amazing. We don't see things like that happening every day. The Bible tells us though that Jesus appeared to his friends several times over a period of 40 days. He cooked breakfast for them, ate with them, showed them the wounds in his hands and feet and side, let them touch him and so on.

And the Bible says that Jesus appeared to 500 people at the same time. All those 500 people saw him – that's as many people as there are in this assembly (or whatever the comparable figures are.) And when that bit of the Bible was written, most of the people who had been in the crowd of 500 were still alive and so people could have gone and talked to them about it.

Although it sounds amazing to say that Jesus came back to life, Christians believe that that is what happened and that Jesus is still alive today. Christians believe that we can get to know Jesus and that he can help us in our lives today.

Prayer and reflection

Invite pupils to reflect for a moment. What do you think about Jesus and the Easter story? Do you think that Jesus came back to life? What would convince you that it was true?

Explain that you are going to say a prayer and if they want to join in, they can say 'Amen' at the end.

Dear God

We thank you for all we have learned about Easter over the last few weeks.

Please help us as we think about it, to understand what it means for us.

We thank you that Jesus died and rose to life again.

We thank you that we can get to know Jesus and that he can help us in our lives today.

Amen

Palm Leaf Template
(to be used in Workshop one)

