**Easter Morning: Children’s Time and Lesson Suggestions**

The liturgical calendar (the calendar of the church year) is centered around Easter which is the “heart and soul” of our faith story. This makes Easter an especially sacred time and, to mark it as special, the calendar includes six weeks of spiritual preparation (Lent) before Easter, Easter Sunday and then Easter is celebrated for 50 days following Easter Sunday.

Easter is also important because it is one of the two major holidays where people who might never go to church, do. It is a day when our church members bring their extended families, and where people who value, but do not attend church, visit.

Celebrating Easter well on Easter Sunday, for our children, is important. It is THE major story of God’s unending love and it is a story they need to hear. In addition, for many children, what happens on Easter, while they visit, might be the only church experience they ever receive. It might be the only time they ever hear and experience the love of God. Putting extra care and thought into Easter is worth it!

Below are five ideas you might want to use this Easter either as the children’s time during worship or in classrooms. I hope they are helpful. Feel free to use them, change them or let them inspire to create your own!

**Idea #1: Nothing Can Ever Stop God’s Love!**

Supplies:

Cupcakes or cake (or if you don’t want to feed the kids, use clay and make a cross).

Magic “relighting” Birthday candles and matches

Say: Children, today is Easter and I want to begin our time together by telling you the story of the life of Jesus. The world was very dark and needed God’s light and love and so, God decided to come to earth and show people how beautiful God’s light and love were. God became incarnate as the baby Jesus and was born on Christmas morning. The light of Love, God, was born to us as a baby.

(Light the candles and let them burn while you continue. They have to burn for a little while or they won’t relight.)

(While the candles are burning, say): God’s light of love shined so brightly everywhere Jesus went. He healed people, taught people, loved people. His light of Love was so bright and he promised the people that this light of love could never and would never be put out. I mean, after all, it is God’s light!

But, (and I hate to tell you this part because it is sad) not everyone saw the light and some people did not love Jesus and did not want his light and so… (pause dramatically), they hung him on the cross. They killed him and when he died they took his body and laid it in the tomb. I am sorry kids, but they killed Jesus and the light of God’s love was put out.

(Blow out the candles)

Say: So this is the end of our story. I am sorry it was such a sad story.

(Shake your head in sadness and shut your eyes. As the candles come back on, the kids will tell you. Act surprised and then blow them out again reiterating that the light of God’s love was killed on the cross. Do this a few times.)

Then say: Jesus told the truth. He is the light of God’s love; the light of the world! And today we celebrate that nothing, not even being hung on the cross, could stop God’s love from shining in our lives! He was killed on the cross, but God raised him… nothing can ever kill God’s love… it will always be with you! Happy Easter!

**Please note:** This is fun! But as you can tell, you need to make sure there is lots of supervision so that no one gets too close to the candles. I have always had a small fire extinguisher near, juts in case but have never had to use it! ;-) And you will need a way to get the burning candles out of the sanctuary after it is over. The candles will burn down and go out, but it takes a few minutes.

Plus… you need to practice a few times to get the timing right. Sounds like a lot of work, but I really think it is worth it for the effect!

**Idea #2: Ancient Candle Blessing**

This idea is similar to the one above but it is quieter and includes a blessing.

Supplies: A Regular Candle and matches.

Say: Children, today is Easter and I want to begin our time together by telling you the story of the life of Jesus. The world was very dark and needed God’s light and love and so, God decided to come to earth and show people how beautiful God’s light and love were. God became incarnate as the baby, Jesus and he was born on Christmas morning. The light of Love, God, was born to us as a baby.

(Light the candle and let it burn while you continue the story).

Say: God’s light of love shined so brightly everywhere Jesus went. He healed people, taught people, loved people. His light of Love was so bright and he promised the people that this light of love could never and would never be put out. I mean, after all, it is God’s light!

But, (and I hate to tell you this part because it is sad) not everyone understand the light of God’s love and some people did not love Jesus and did not want his light and so… (pause dramatically), they hung him on the cross. They killed him and when he died they took his body and laid it in the tomb. I am sorry kids, but they killed Jesus and the light of God’s love was put out.

(Blow out the candle)

Say: This was the saddest day ever! But God promised… nothing could ever stop the light of God’s love from shining on us. And so, for three days, Jesus laid in the tomb and everyone thought the story had ended but, on Easter morning, there was a surprise. Jesus rose from the grave and everyone knew that the light of God was still with them.

(Relight the candle).

And guess what, the light of God still shines today. There is an ancient blessing in the earliest church worship services. They used a candle like this one and blessed each person by making a cross (Make a cross in front of you using the candle) and then a circle (make a circle). I would like to bless you today with this Easter Candle. (You can bless all of the children at once or individually.)

As you bless them say: The cross (make a cross with the candle) proves to us that God’s love always surrounds us (make the circle). Don’t ever forget that the light always shines and nothing can ever put it out! God’s light of love will always surround you. Happy Easter!!

**Idea #3: Hot Cross Buns**

Supplies: A prebaked big biscuit or bread, a small biscuit (wrapped in plastic or in a baggie) for each child each marked with a cross. (If you have gluten free kids, be sure to have gluten free options for them).

Say: There is a very old tradition where right before Easter, monks and bakers would make “Hot Cross Buns.” These were bread with a cross cut into the top of them and people would share them with others as a symbolic way of saying, “Christ is risen.” They would share them with their friends, and neighbors and remember that Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.

I have made a hot crossed bun for us to enjoy together today. See how it has a cross on the top of it? I am going to let each of you have a piece but don’t eat it… we will eat it all together.

(Give each child a piece of the hot crossed bun.)

Say: Remember that the cross reminds us of Easter… that Jesus rose from the dead and still loves us today! Now eat your bread and taste how wonderful the love of Jesus tastes.

(Eat bread)

Say: I have made a little bun for each of you to take home. I mean this love of Jesus, that we celebrate today, it is meant to be shared. So take a hot crossed bun home and share the love of Jesus with someone special today!

(As you give each child a Hot Crossed Bun, wish them a very love-filled happy Easter!)

**Idea #4: An Empty Easter Egg**

Supplies: Have on empty Easter Egg for each child. You might want to put a very pretty sticker of a cross or heart on it.

Say: Did the Easter Bunny come to any of you this morning? What did you get?

(Let them share and then get out a basket with the Easter Eggs in it. This will quiet them down.)

Say: Well, it sounds wonderful… isn’t Easter great? I mean, eggs with candy and toys inside… Easter is great! I wanted to give you another egg to take home and put in your Easter baskets. But these eggs are very holy Easter Eggs. They do not have candy inside. They do not have toys inside. They hold the best gift ever given to anyone ever on Easter!!!! Do you want to see what is inside each of these eggs?

(Open one egg and show them that there is nothing inside.)

Say: Isn’t that great? (They will be disappointed.) No, it is great! It is better than candy, better than toys! It is the emptiness of the tomb. You see, after Jesus died, everyone thought that God would not be with us anymore… that God’s love died with Jesus on the cross. It was over. But then God did something surprising. God raised Jesus from the dead and proved that nothing, not even death on the cross, could ever stop God from loving us! This empty egg that I am about to give you, holds the most wonderful gift ever… the empty tomb!

(Give each child their egg and as you do say): May this empty Easter Egg, the symbol of the empty tomb, always remind you that nothing, not even death, can ever stop God from loving you! Happy Easter!

**Idea #5: Playing Easter Joy!**

Supplies: You will need a drum or one homemade made out of a coffee can.

Something for each child that makes noise. Rhythm instruments are great… but so are homemade things like two spoons to hit together and baby rattles to shake.

Say: I am going to beat my drum and as I do, I want you to guess what I am feeling.

(Play it happily and quickly and smile)

Say: What feeling did you hear? (They will say happy.)

(Play it slowly and frown.)

Say: What feeling did you hear? (They will say, sad.)

Say: You are good at this. I am going to tell you the story of Easter now and I want you to hear it in the music I make.

(Begin to hit the drum happily and continue it while you speak.)

Say: The day Jesus was born was a happy day, a very happy day. Hear the happiness? (Play a bit so they can hear the joy.)

Jesus was the light of the world, God’s love walking with people, teaching them, healing them… it was wonderful time! (Keep playing happy).

Say: But then, (start playing slowly and sad), some people did not love Jesus and they were afraid of his great love and they decided to kill him. So they arrested him (one beat) and they beat him (one beat), and they made him wear a crown of thorns (one beat) and carry his cross (one beat) and they hung him on the cross (and he died).

(Silence.)

Say: Jesus was killed and it was the saddest day ever. And the people were so sad. (Silence).

Say: One the third day, after Jesus had been taken from the cross and laid in the tomb, they went there to take care of his body and (start beating slowly and get faster and faster as you talk) when they got there, they found our the best news ever! (Beat faster.) Jesus was alive again… he was raised and his love was still with them!!! And that was the happiest day ever!!! (Beat harder and faster!)

(Silence.)

Say: You know, that is our happy Easter story… but it just had one problem… I mean, I only had one drum and there is no way I could play the happiness of that first Easter by myself on that one drum. I mean it was happy (Start playing the drum and have someone begin to hand the children something to make noise with. The noise will get louder and louder and they will laugh and you will have to shout):

Say: Oh yes… that is how happiness sounds… Easter is the happiest day ever!!! HAPPY EASTER!

(Good luck collecting all the instruments. This is loud, fun and chaotic… but brings Easter joy alive! I think it is worth it!)