

EASTERTIDE WEEK

By Dorothy Nickel Friesen

Sunday, April 12, 2020

Eastertide Day #1

1. Read Matthew 28:1-20
2. Read commentary by Dorothy Nickel Friesen – “Rocks that talk” (attached)
3. Pre-school activity: Use plastic eggs and decorate with colors/markers (designs, smiley-face, etc.). Have adult write “hope”, “love”, “joy”, “Jesus” on eggs. Have child carry egg in spoon as far as they can! Clap!
4. Children activity: Use plastic eggs and decorate with markers. Fill half of eggs with notes like “difficulties” like “hate”, “bully”, “war”, “starvation” and fill other half with notes of joy like “hope”, “helpfulness”, “happiness”. Hide eggs. Hunt eggs. Children sit around table and open eggs. Talk about feelings with difficulties and joy. Pray: “Thank you Jesus for helping me when I have difficulties because you are always ready to give me joy. Amen.”
5. Youth activity: Do some research about traditional Easter breads: paska from Ukraine, hot cross buns from England, the festival loaf from Greece, and babka from Poland. If possible, make some bread from recipe in cookbook or online. Talk about family traditions. What special food does your family eat at Easter? Describe. Pray: “Thank you God for good food. Help us to share the love that happens when we eat together and know that you always love us. Amen.”
6. Adult activity: After reading the commentary about “Rocks that talk”, what do you notice about the risen Jesus? What did the women do? Have you ever been surprised about a health recovery? How would your neighbors hear the good news that Jesus is alive?
7. HYMN/SONG options: Hymnal Worship Book (HWB) #273 “Low in the grave he lay”, “HWB #269: “Thine is the glory”. Sing the Journey (STJ) #19: “I will call upon the Lord”, STJ #18: “Over my head”. Sing the Story (STS) #87: “Alleluia”, STS: #89 “Christ is alive”.

Monday, April 13, 2020

Eastertide Day #2

1. Read Matthew 28:1-7 only
2. Pre-school activity: Have one adult/older youth in one room; have a second adult/older youth in another place (upstairs, basement, etc.). Have one adult whisper this message to the child: “I

have good news. Jesus is alive.” Direct the child to run quickly with the message, find the adult/youth and shout the good news. Repeat several times.

3. Children activity: Pretend that children are TV reporters. Using only verses 1-7, write the words that the angel said. End the report with “Don’t be afraid.” Have children improvise microphone, hat, and give the news report. Have “audience” listen to the news. Talk about this remarkable event.
4. Youth activity: Card with Easter lily stencil. You will need: construction paper, spray paint, x-acto knife or razor blade, newspapers. Lilies and other flowers that grow from bulbs are symbols of the resurrection. The bulb stands for the tomb of Jesus, the blossom for his life after death. Find a stencil of an Easter lily (on internet, art book). Put stencil on strong paper/cardboard. Carefully cut out dark areas. Take piece of construction paper and fold in half. Put down newspaper for protection. Put the folded card down and stencil on top of it. Now spray paint it. Wait a minute. Slowly remove stencil. Inside write your Easter message and sign the card. Send/give away.
5. Adult activity: Based on verses 1-7, what was strange? Dangerous? Surprising? What truth does the angel tell? Imagine you were the two women. How would you react? Discuss the reality of natural disaster (tornado, flood, blizzard). How do people react? How do people cope? Pray together that very difficult situations (like the pandemic) will be helped by citizen actions of helpfulness. Ask God for courage, compassion, and hope in this difficult time.
6. HYMN/SONG options: HWB #614 “In the bulb there is a flower”, HWB #627 “There is a balm in Gilead”. STJ #16 “Praise with joy the world’s Creator”, STJ #17 “Halle, halle, hallelujah!”. STS #92 “Song with all the saints in glory”, STS #95 “Jesus has done so much for me”.

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

Eastertide Day #3

1. Read Matthew 28:8-10 only
2. Pre-school Activity: Fashion a simple cross using sticks from outside, or glue popsicle sticks together to make a cross. Gather small twigs to lay around cross. Put in center of table on a purple construction paper—or color purple on paper. After reading the story, take away the purple cloth/paper and twigs; replace with white cloth under cross and surround with flowers or green twigs/grasses. Say, “Jesus is alive!”
3. Children’s activity: Develop a litany of praise. What do you thank God for? What do you thank God for Easter? Record answers on a poster board. Between each answer leave enough space to print, “We thank you, O God” and/or “The Lord is Risen”. Read the litany together.
4. Youth activity: In-Jesus’-Steps Map. Find a map of Jerusalem area. Draw and outline map on a large piece of construction paper/newsprint. Include Garden of Gethsemane, Pilate’s Palace, Temple, Golgotha, Upper Room, Mount of Olives. Draw footsteps of Jesus’ journey of Holy Week. Use Bible, Bible storybooks, other reference books, or internet resources. Label tomb. Show stone rolled away. Write “Jesus is Risen” there. Talk about each place on the map. What happened to Jesus?

5. Adult activity: Discuss verse 8-10. Why did the women obey the angel? Imagine their haste. Do you do things quickly? Would you want to meet Jesus? How did they worship Jesus? How important are the words "Do not be afraid?" to them and to you?
6. HYMNS/SONGS: HWB #263 "The strife is o'er", HWB #264 "Come, ye faithful, raise the strain". STJ #42 "Listen, God is calling", STJ #108 "Give thanks for life". STS #89 "Christ is alive", STS #94 "Sithi bonga (We sing praise)", STS #101 "The risen Christ".

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

Eastertide Day #4

1. Read Matthew 28:11-15 only
2. Pre-school activity: Use plastic eggs; Styrofoam/rubber eggs. Decorate eggs with small scraps of fabric with glue. Or: add embroidery floss or yarn by wrapping it around the egg. Glue. Or: ribbon and trims can be glued lengthwise. If glitter is available, spread glue and add glitter, colored sugar or sunflower seeds or round oats. Put decorated eggs in egg carton.
3. Children's activity: Collect coins from around the house/purses/billfolds (with permission) and design a card with an Easter message. "Jesus is alive! Do not be afraid." Decide to give the money to a place that cares for sick people. (In this pandemic time, be sure to follow all safety guidelines.) Do research on how people can help each other during this time. Pray for those who give care. If there is a doctor, nurse, first responder, fire fighter, in your family or church, send them a card with an Easter message.
4. Youth activity: Act out this scene. Have all family members have a part: guard(s), women, elder(s) or priest(s), soldier(s). Discuss: What were the guards afraid of? What did the money mean to the soldiers? Why were the officials afraid?
5. Adult activity: These few verses add drama to the resurrection story. The women are running to find the disciples. However, the guards who fainted from fright in verse 3, are now cooking up a plan. Why? How did the plan work? Do you see any modern parallels where officials cover up the truth? What purpose do these verses serve in this biblical chapter? How does the resurrection story impact the community? How does Easter impact your community today?
6. HYMNS/SONGS: HWB #266 "They crucified my Savior", HWB #269 "Thine is the glory". STJ #13 "My soul is filled with joy", STJ #97 "The Lord is my light". STS #101 "The risen Christ", STS #99 "The Lord's my Shepherd".

Thursday, April 16, 2020

Eastertide Day #5

1. Read Matthew 28:16-20 only

2. Pre-school activity: Use sidewalk chalk and draw pictures of flowers, hearts, smiley faces. Print “Joy” or “Love”. With permission, go to a neighbor’s driveway and draw a friendly message.
3. Children’s activity: It’s springtime. Plant some seeds in small paper cups which can be later planted in garden spaces. If obtaining seeds and soil are not possible, try this Bible search. Here are names in the Holy Week story. What did they do? Use your Bible! Caiaphas, James, Barabbas, a criminal, John, an angel, Peter, Joseph of Arimathea, Pilate, Simon of Cyrene, Thomas, Judas, Mary Magdalene. Be sure to write down which Gospel (search the last chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) chapter and verse to document your search!
4. Youth activity: These verses tell the news from Jesus’s own mouth! Jesus instructs the disciples to baptize others—and promises to be with them forever! Do some research about baptism. What do Mennonites believe about baptism? How does your congregation practice baptism? When and why did the name “Anabaptists” happen? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus? Write your faith commitment and put a date on it and keep it in your Bible. At Pentecost (less than 50 days from now), look at your faith commitment. Talk with a friend, pastor, parent about what baptism means to you.
5. Adult activity: These verses mark a joyful ending of the Passion story with the resurrection of Jesus and the commissioning of the disciples. Note that some disciples worshiped Jesus, “but some doubted”. Why? What caused doubt? What are your doubts about the resurrection? Jesus claimed authority and instructed the disciples to baptize new disciples. This great commission has led to thousands of evangelists going all over the world. What do you think about evangelism? How do Jesus’s words inspire you? Finally, there is a promise from Jesus of his eternal presence. Describe times when you have experienced the presence of Jesus. How are modern disciples sharing the good news? Pray together with your family that the life of Jesus and the living presence of Jesus will give both peace and energy to serve others.
6. HYMNS/SONGS: HWB #274 “O sons and daughters, let us sing!”, HWB #276 “This joyful Eastertide”. STJ #10 “Spirit, working in creation”, STJ #32 “If you believe and I believe”. STS #92 “Sing with all the saints in glory”, STS #124 “My soul cries out”.

Friday, April 17, 2020

Eastertide Day #6

1. Read Mark 16: 1-8
2. Pre-school activity: Create a tent with blankets over tables/chairs. At the opening, put a large pillow. When the adult reads the verse 3, “Who’s going to roll the stone away?”, have the child punch the pillow out of the way! Say: “Jesus is risen!”
3. Children’s activity: If weather permits, play running games where one is “it” and tries to catch everyone. Be sure everyone participates! If inside, play board games where “blocking” is part of the strategy. Also, ask children to write down “obstacles” such as bullying, hard math problems, braces/glasses, chores which sometimes hurt feelings or are no fun. How do you manage “obstacles”? What helps you? Who gives you good advice? Post “good advice” on a colorful chart on the refrigerator!
4. Youth activity: Bible study. Compare the Mark story to the Matthew 28 story. What are contrasts? What is similar? Make a list on poster board. Note that Mark 16:9-20 is considered

“added later” by scholars. What is new information there? What surprises you? What does Jesus ask his disciples to do? What risks might arise for the disciples? Do you have “obstacles” to sharing your faith today? What happens? How do you cope? What words of Jesus are important to you?

5. Adult activity: Compare and contrast the Mark version of the resurrection to the Matthew version. List similarities; differences. (If possible, read/include Luke 24:1-12.) Discuss the obstacles that prevent disciples from believing. Reflect on today’s world. What obstacles are there to faith? How does Jesus give hope to the disciples? What gives you hope?
6. HYMNS/SONGS: HWB #280 “Christ the Lord is risen today”, HWB #438 “I sing with exultation”. STJ #31 “He came down”, STJ #61 “How can we be silent”. STS #100 “O blessed spring”, STS #101 “The risen Christ”.

Saturday, April 18, 2020

Eastertide Day #7

1. Family faith formation: Re-read Matthew 28 aloud with different voices. Assign “narrator”, “angel”, “Jesus”, “Guards”.
2. This is the final look at this text. Ask the following questions:
 - a. What part of the story do you like?
 - b. What part of the story is scary?
 - c. What part of the story is important?
3. Decide a group activity.
 - a. Go outside and draw a mural on the sidewalk with chalk.
 - b. Walk around the block or in your yard. Pick up trash (wear gloves; carry a trash bag).
 - c. Sit at your table and cover with newsprint. Draw pictures, color them showing the resurrection story.
 - d. Finally, celebrate the Easter story with a special meal. Plan the menu. Eggs? Bread? Take turns making/baking/serving. Hold hands before you eat together and say together, “God loves the world and Jesus is always with us. This is Good News!”
4. HYMNS/SONGS: HWB #614 “In the bulb there is a flower”, HWB #341 “Jesus loves me. STJ #17 “Halle, halle, hallelujah!”, STJ #73 “The Lord lift you up”. STS #16 “Peace before us”, STS #40 “Som’landela (We will follow)”.