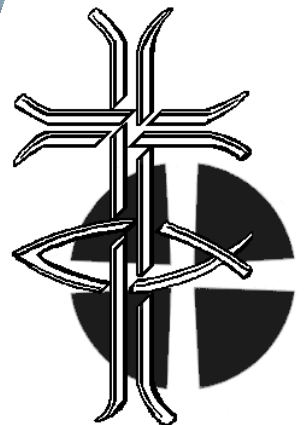


EXPERIENCE EASTER

A series of
REFLECTIVE WORKSHOPS



The Easter story

"Welcome to Experience Easter. Later on, you're going to divide up into groups to think about different parts of the Easter Story. But before that, you're going to hear an account of the first Easter week. Listen very carefully."

" We are going on a journey to a place far away & long ago.

To prepare for your journey, shut your eyes.....

and listen to all the noises around you.....

Imagine you are travelling far away, leaving all those noises behind

Now listen to all the noises inside you - your breathing, your heart beating.....

Quietly take a deep breath.....

Let it out very slowly. As you let it out, imagine you're travelling on, leaving everything behind.

You've arrived. You can hear people talking in a strange language - everything is new & exciting. Now quietly open your eyes."

New voice:

"Jerusalem was busy with people, who had come for the Passover festival. Jesus & his friends were going there, too. When they reached the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his followers on ahead, to find a donkey for him to ride. They put some of their clothes on the donkey to make a saddle, and Jesus got on. The people in the crowd gave him a royal welcome. Crowds ran ahead and crowds followed, all of them shouting "Hosanna to King David's heir!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name!"

All this fuss made the Jewish leaders angry. Jesus was far too popular for their liking and his wise words made Jesus a threat to their authority. So they hatched a plot to have Jesus killed. Jesus just went on doing the work he felt God had given him - telling people about God's love and the way they could live. One mealtime, Jesus got up from the table before he & his friends started eating and began to wash their feet, drying them with his apron. "I have given you an example" he said. "Live as God wants".

Their Passover meal together was very special "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this with you", Jesus said, "before I enter my time of suffering.". "It's the last meal I'll eat until we all eat together in Heaven." Then, taking the cup, he said a prayer over it. "Take this and pass it around." Then Jesus picked up the bread, thanked God, broke it up, and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in my memory."



After Supper, Jesus and his friends walked to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus told his disciples, "Stay here while I go over there and pray." He prayed for himself, for his followers & for the whole world. Meanwhile, his friends were fast asleep. As he was waking them up, Judas arrived with a group of Roman soldiers, all fully armed. The disciples tried to stop them arresting Jesus, but he insisted on handing himself over peacefully.

Jesus was sent to the Jewish leaders for questioning, then to the Roman Governor. The Jews wanted Jesus to be executed, for claiming he was God's Son. So Jesus was whipped & led out of the city, to the hill where people were executed. There, they crucified him. The soldiers came up and poked fun at him. They hung a sign over his head: this is the king of the Jews. It was several hours before Jesus cried out in agony & died. It seemed to his friends that the whole world had gone dark.

Jesus's friends asked the Romans if they could take his body away for burial. They wrapped it up in cotton sheets and left it in a tomb dug out of the rocky cliffs. They rolled a huge stone over the entrance, so nothing could disturb the body.

The next day was the Passover Festival, but none of Jesus' friends felt like celebrating. They waited sadly until sunrise on the Sunday, when some of them returned to the tomb. They found the entrance stone rolled back and couldn't find the body of their Master. Then, suddenly it seemed like two men appeared from nowhere, with light all around them. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a place for the dead? He is not here. Don't you remember how, when you back home in Galilee, Jesus told you that he had to be handed over to be killed on a cross, and in three days live again?" Then they remembered - yes, that was what Jesus had said.

"Now I'd like you to sit quietly & think about what you've heard.

Which part do you think was happiest? Which part is the saddest?

Which one do you think is most important?

While you're thinking, we'll ask each group to leave quietly, to go to their workshop.



Palm Sunday - hopes & dreams

Tableau: roadway - roll stone-effect wallpaper
Potted palms
Medium-sized cross at end, on an "open" cairn

Activity: Exemplars crosses with hopes drawn/written
palm crosses
felt tips

Gathering:

Invite children to sit at the end of the road, facing the cross

Explain that we will be thinking about hopes & dreams.

"When Jesus was alive, the country where he lived was occupied by roman soldiers. The people were hoping for a king to come & free them from their enemies. This is the story of the welcome they gave Jesus"

"Jesus' friends led a donkey out, put some of their clothes on it to make a saddle, and Jesus got on. The people in the crowd gave him a royal welcome. Some threw their clothes down on the road, & others cut branches from the trees and threw them down as a welcome mat. Crowds ran ahead and crowds followed, all of them shouting "Hosanna* to King David's heir!" "Blessed is he who comes in God's name!" "Hosanna in highest heaven!"

Follow-up:

"Did the people get the sort of king they were expecting?"

Our hopes don't always come true.

Sometimes we have dreams that don't work out.

It can feel awful at the time, but things work out OK in the end."

Hand out palm crosses & pens

"Try & think of something you'd like to happen - something really important for you, your family, or the world." - show examples

Draw or write something on your cross that symbolises your hope.

Take it with you, or leave it at the end of the road*."

** Hosanna is Hebrew for "please save us now"*

**Crosses left will be used in worship at Trinity on Palm Sunday*



Servant King – helping each other & Jesus

Tableau: Jug, bowl, with water & towel
Stool for storyteller
12 Carpet samples to sit on, arranged around the basin & jug

Activity: Water in jug
Dry hand-towels for each group

Introduction:

Act as host might, welcoming the children and inviting them to sit on the cushions

"Jesus lived in a hot, dry country, where people walked from place to place in open sandals, or even with bare feet. When guests came to your house, you made them welcome by washing their feet. If you were someone important, your servant did it for you. Listen to the story & see if you can work out why Jesus' friends were so surprised at what He did."

"It was suppertime. Jesus got up from the meal-table, set aside his coat, and put on an apron. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, drying them with his apron.

After he had finished washing their feet, he took his coat, put it back on, and went back to his place at the table. Then he said, "Do you understand what I have done? You call me 'Teacher' and 'Master,' and that is what I am. I've given you an example. If I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other's feet. No-one is better than anyone else. If you understand what I'm telling you, act like it—and live as God wants."

Follow up:

"What was Jesus telling his followers?"

Pour some water into the bowl. Give the second child round a towel.

"We're going to dip our hands into the water & then dry each other's hands, to show we want to help each other."

As you go round, ask the children to think of ways they can help others.

"Sometimes when we pray, we give God a long list of things we want Him to do, instead of trying to do things ourselves. We're going to end by listening to a poem which was written over 400 years ago, to remind us that we are God's servants."

Christ has no body now but yours.

Yours are the only hands with which he can do his work

Yours are the only feet with which he can go about the world"



The Last Supper - remembering Jesus

- Tableau:** A low table, covered with a cloth
2 long cushions & cushion at table head
13 place settings (plates at least)
Jug of Ribena
Bread roll on a small earthenware plate
Seder plate - watercress, parsley, lamb, boiled egg, sweet mincemeat
- Activity:** bread rolls
A few gluten-free rolls

Introduction:

Ask the children to sit on the long cushions

"To start, I'd like you to imagine you're at a special celebration meal, like Christmas dinner or a birthday tea. Every Springtime, right through to the now, the Jews remember how they escaped from slavery in Egypt at the festival they call The Passover. As part of the festival, they eat a special meal called the Sedar plate. All the foodstuffs on the Sedar plate remind Jewish people of how good it was to escape from slavery (demonstrate). Jesus & his friends met for this meal just before he was arrested."*

"Jesus sat down with all his friends and said, "You've no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you, before I enter my time of suffering. It's the last meal I'll eat until we all eat together in Heaven."

Slowly lift jug & break bread into two pieces as you speak

Taking the cup, he said a prayer over it, then said, "Take this and pass it around. As for me, I'll not drink wine again until the kingdom of God arrives."

Then Jesus picked up the bread, thanked God, broke it up, and gave it to his friends, saying, "This is my body*, given for you. Do this in my memory."

"Christians remember Jesus in a special service, where we share bread & wine. We call it Holy Communion. I'm going to pass the bread around now. Think of something you remember about Jesus. If you'd like to, take a piece of bread as it comes round & eat it, to help you remember Jesus."

"Would anyone like to share what they remember when they think about Jesus?"

- this will need encouraging prompts - perhaps via bible stories?

* Before they escaped from Egypt, there was a plague, but the Jews survived. They believed that Death has passed over their homes without harming them.

* The seder plate contains foods that remind Jews of their escape from slavery (The Exodus)
Bitter herbs - slavery
Parsley dipped into salt water to signify tears & pain as slaves
Mincemeat - the sweetness & plenty of the Promised Land they were heading for
Lamb - a sacrifice in the Temple
Egg - to the Jews, this represented sadness (a tomb)

* This links to "I am the Bread of Life" - Jesus is a basic need that supports & nourishes us like food



Gethsemane - being afraid

Tableau: large pot plants
Scattered stones & logs
Dark drapery with moon & stars
Activity: Modelling clay

Introduction:

Ask the children to sit down in front of the garden.

"We all feel afraid sometimes - maybe when you know something's going to happen that you're not looking forward to. This story tells you Jesus felt like that, too:"

"After supper, Jesus and his friends walked up the hill they called The Mount of Olives. When they reached the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told his disciples, "Stay here & pray. I'm going over there - I really need to talk with God." He walked on a little bit, knelt down, and prayed "Father, if there is any way, please get me out of this. But it's not what I want that counts. I'm ready to do whatever you want." He felt a bit better after that & went back to his friends. He found them all fast asleep. They simply couldn't keep their eyes open."

Follow-up:

As you distribute the clay:

"Now I'm going to give you all a piece of clay. When you get it, hold it & think how it feels. You may even want to close your eyes, so you can concentrate on the feel." Ask for words : hard; cold; rough; - difficult to manage

"Life can feel like that at times, can't it? - and then we get all sorts of horrid feelings - fear; anger; jealousy. Now I'd like you to think of all the horrid feelings you've had at times like that & imagine they're in this clay. Give 'em what for - squeeze them & squash them. Work that clay!"

"What's happening to the clay?" - softer; smooth; warm; easier to manage

"Sometimes we have to work our way through difficult times - maybe with the help of friends. Sometimes problems are easier to manage than we thought. "

Now ask the children to turn their clay into something nice - a flower or animal to go in the garden. (Collectable on Saturday am)

"Now you've left all your horrid feelings with Jesus in the garden, listen to this: "Jesus says "Remember all the things I have told you. Don't be upset or afraid. My parting gift is a feeling of peace deep inside you."

* Anyone getting upset at this point should go, with their accompanying adult, to the vestry



Good Friday - suffering

Tableau:	Large bare wooden cross, with thorn crown Purple cloth & dice Red ribbons hung from the cross Miniature hill with 2 palm crosses
Activity:	Plain wooden beads tied to waxed cord - one/child Three baskets of beads - plain; fancy; large

Introduction:

Children are asked to sit in a semi-circle round the cross.

"I wonder what your thoughts are, as you look at this scene?"

- accept answers passively

"One of the most dreaded punishments that the Roman generals thought up was crucifixion, where people were hung up on a big wooden cross & left to die. That's how they dealt with Jesus. Listen carefully to the story".

"When they got to the place called Skull Hill, they crucified him, along with two criminals, one on his right, and the other on his left (indicate two small crosses). Jesus prayed "Father, forgive them - they don't realise what they're doing". As Jesus was dying, the soldiers threw dice. The soldier with the highest score got Jesus' clothes. The people stood there staring at Jesus, and the ringleaders made faces, taunting, "He saved others. Let's see him save himself! Over him was a sign: this is the king of the Jews. The soldiers also came up and poked fun at him. "So you're King of the Jews! Save yourself!" One of the criminals hanging alongside cursed him: "Some Messiah you are! Save yourself! Save us!" But the other one made him shut up: "Have you no fear of God? You're getting the same punishment as him but we deserve it. He did nothing to deserve this."

Hand out pieces of cord: *"I'd like you now to see if you can think of anyone in your family who is suffering. They may be ill, or lonely - perhaps getting bullied."*

Remove cover from beads: *"Choose a bead to represent that person. As you slide the bead onto the cord, imagine you're giving them a hug."*

"Now think of someone else you know who has problems - a friend or neighbour, perhaps. Pick a bead, give them a hug, then slide them onto the cord."

"Finally, think of someone far away, perhaps people you've seen in the news - soldiers in Afghanistan or people who are starving in Africa. This time, use a big bead to represent them. (demonstrate as you read this) Give them a hug, slide them onto the cord, then loop the cord round & thread it through the bead again. As it comes out, pull the thread through the loop & it will keep your beads safely on the string."

"You can take your beads home & use them to help you remember people who need our help. Before you go, let's just stop and think of them again, now. I'm going to say a quick prayer. If you'd like to make it your prayer, join in with the Amen at the end:

Jesus, you know what suffering is like.

Help us not to forget the needs of other people.

Show us how to help them & let them know they are loved. Amen"



Easter Day - new life

- Tableau:** Empty tomb from table & brown paper
Spot lamp inside/behind
White cloth folded inside
Pot plants/flowers around
- Activity:** post-it notes
glo-pens

Introduction:

Ask the children to sit in front of the tomb.

"What is this?(check children know the meaning of a tomb)*

Maybe you've had a pet die. If so, you can guess how very sad Jesus' friends felt, after he was executed. Then things changed."

"Early on Sunday morning, as soon as the sun started rising into the sky, the women came to the tomb. They found the entrance stone rolled back, so they walked in. But once inside, they couldn't find the body of their Master, Jesus. They were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, suddenly it seemed like two men appeared from nowhere, with light all around them. The women were frightened and looked away. The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? He is not here. Remember how, when you were still back in Galilee, he told you that he had to be handed over to be killed on a cross, and in three days live again?" Then they remembered Jesus' words. They left the tomb and broke the news of all this to Jesus' friends."

Hand out pens & post-its. Invite the children to write words in highlighter on a post-it to show how Jesus' friends felt after that & to stick them onto the outside of the tomb.

Conclusion:

"The Easter story isn't just about death - it's also about new life. Christians believe that death isn't the end of everything. Christians believe that Jesus is still alive* & with them every day. If you remember someone after they have died, they live on in your heart."

* Rich people put their dead into caves (a bit like the underground crypts we have in some old churches)
They used big stones to keep out wild animals & grave-robbers.

Jesus & his friends weren't rich, but a friend let them use his tomb.

* It's hard to explain this without using picture language.

We believe that Jesus is with God. If God is with us, then Jesus is too.

(We have omitted "risen" from the text. This appears as Jews believed in an underworld of the dead, earth & heaven above. Nowadays, we believe these things exist, even though we're not sure where, or what they're like.)



Conclusion:

Invite children to gather in the centre.

Think of words to describe the story you've heard
Do you think the story you have heard is sad or happy?

We're going to end now by learning a song .

Did you notice how peaceful it has been at Trinity?
Jesus used the word peace a lot
He didn;t mean "peace & quiet" - he meant peace in peoples' hearts.
When Jesus said "Peace" he said it in Hebrew - "shalom"
Teach "Shalom...." song

Stewards give staff resources - parties leave



The tableaux

