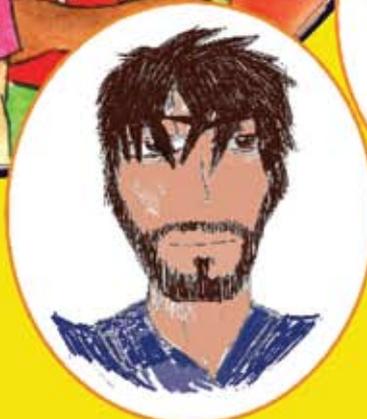
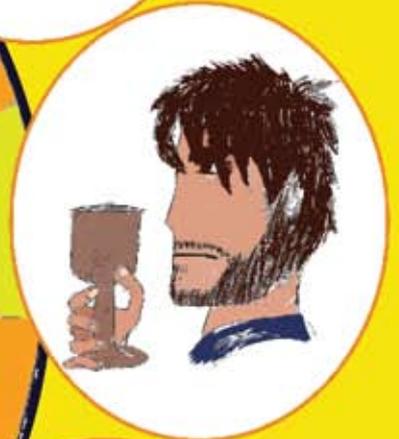


# OPENING UP EASTER

Editor Fiona Moss

## learning from religion

Primary RE



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# Opening up Easter

**Opening up Easter** has been written in response to requests from teachers who found our publication *Christmas: A Year by Year Approach* supportive when planning a progression of learning in this key Christian festival. This book aims to support children and teachers in learning about and from the beliefs, events, customs and experience which make up the most significant festival in the Christian calendar, Easter.

This publication provides practical suggestions for helping children develop their knowledge and understanding of the events of Easter, the key beliefs and concepts underpinning the festival and the experience of Easter for Christians. Each of the units uses a variety of engaging pedagogies and practical learning activities to allow children to learn about and from the experience of Easter, enabling them to draw meaning from the festival for themselves.

Teachers often express concern about addressing some of the key ideas and events of Easter such as crucifixion, resurrection, sacrifice and salvation. The year-by-year approach allows these events and beliefs to be addressed in a progressive manner using engaging and thought-provoking activities.

For the subject leader we have provided a series of pages that can be shared with staff who are unsure about teaching Easter every year. These pages support subject leaders in teaching the festival accurately and appropriately, ensuring a progression of concepts through the primary school.

**Fiona Moss**  
Editor



## Web links: RE Today website

The RE Today website offers subscribers some free additional resources and classroom-ready materials related to this publication. Look out for the 'RE Today on the web' logo at the end of selected articles.



To access resources:

- go to the RE Today website [www.retoday.org.uk](http://www.retoday.org.uk)
- click on the **download login** button and use the password from this term's issue of *REtoday* magazine
- click on **Primary curriculum publication – web supplement**
- click on the title of the publication and scroll down the page to find what you are looking for.

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# TEACHING EASTER ACROSS THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## planning for progression

### For the teacher

Easter is the most important festival for all Christians. Many schools teach about Easter annually. This approach provides a good opportunity to look at this important festival in depth but requires careful planning to ensure children are provided with opportunities to build on earlier learning.

This book provides activities which support progression in learning about key concepts that are integral to understanding the festival and its importance to Christians. The grid below provides an overview of these learning opportunities.

An additional progression grid is offered on pages 30–1. This grid suggests additional learning opportunities and activities to those offered in detail in this publication.

Short television clips of the celebration of Easter in different traditions and the key parts of Easter week can be found in the BBC Learning Zone class clips library.

**See:** [www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips)



### The Easter story in the Bible

Event	Location in the Bible
Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem	Luke 19:28-40
Throwing the moneychangers out of the temple	Luke 19:45-48
Sharing the bread and wine at the last supper	Luke 22:1-23
Judas betrays Jesus and Jesus is arrested	Luke 22:39-54
Peter denies Jesus	Luke 22:54-62
Jesus' trial	Luke 23:1-23
Crucifixion of Jesus	Luke 23:26-54
The empty tomb	Luke 24:1-12



Paige, aged 8, created this image for the NATRE Spirited Arts competition.

Year	Theme	Learning about Easter	Learning from Easter	Pages
R/1	Remembering Jesus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hearing and recreating elements of the Easter story</li> <li>Listening to what Christians do to celebrate Easter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about times when they remember sad and happy times in their lives</li> </ul>	3–7
1/2	Sorrow and joy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify how music can reflect emotions and tell the story of Easter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about the positive and negative emotions that they experience</li> </ul>	8–11
3	Hope from despair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of the idea of life after death for Christians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask and answer some of their own questions about life after death</li> </ul>	12–15
4	Sacrifice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding Christian beliefs about the crucifixion of Jesus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making links between the sacrifice of Jesus and Christian attitudes to serving others</li> </ul>	16–19
5	An Easter experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating an Easter experience that shows what the Easter story means to Christians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect on why Easter matters to Christians and what matters to them</li> </ul>	20–25
6	Resurrection and salvation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The concepts at the heart of the Easter story: incarnation, forgiveness, hope, redemption, resurrection and salvation</li> <li>The impact of Easter on the everyday life of practising Christians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflect on the beliefs that are important and significant to them</li> </ul>	26–29

# OPENING UP EASTER WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN

## Remembering Jesus

In this section, Marilyn Bowles, an Early Years specialist from Leicester, shares nine strategies for introducing younger children to the Easter story and how this is remembered by Christians today.

Using art, role play, visitors and artefacts, these activities allow young children to begin to understand this most significant of Christian celebrations.

### For the teacher



To appreciate the story of Easter, young children need to understand who the 'person' of Jesus is and to know that he: surrounded himself with friends, listened to people and was moved by their illnesses to heal them, both in body and mind. They need to know some of the stories he told – at this stage not necessarily what they meant as parables but the 'story-ness' of them which attracted the crowds when he spoke.

We need to avoid the situation where children know in great detail (because of countless Nativity rehearsals) much more about the story of Jesus' birth than they ever know about his life and teachings and the importance of his death and resurrection for Christians.

The Easter story has many complex parts to it – understanding a basic 'framework' of key events is the most appropriate strategy for young children. This information will eventually become extended and absorbed by children studying Christianity over several years: the Early Years is the beginning of this process – too much information, too soon is not necessarily helpful.

The key events of the story for young children are:

- Palm Sunday
- The Last Supper
- Jesus' arrest
- Good Friday
- The empty tomb on Easter Sunday.

There should be planned opportunities built in for children to ask their own questions about these events. This will reveal what they are thinking and whether they have an appreciation of what Christians might believe.

### What can children do as a result of this unit?

These pupil-friendly 'I can . . .' statements describe what pupils working at levels 1 and 2 may achieve through this work.

#### Level Description of achievement: I can . . .

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>1</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• talk about something Christians do at Easter</li><li>• respond to questions arising from the events of Easter</li><li>• <i>talk about special days in my family.</i></li></ul>  |
| <b>2</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• think of some questions to ask a Christian</li><li>• retell the story of Easter and say how Christians today celebrate Easter</li><li>• <i>respond, with thoughts of my own, to ideas of new life in the story of Easter.</i></li></ul> |

#### See also

**The Easter Story**, Brian Wildsmith, OUP Oxford, ISBN 978-1-19272-377-2

This book retells the Easter story through the eyes of the donkey that carried Jesus to Jerusalem.

**The Lion First Bible**, Pat Alexander, Lion Hudson plc, ISBN 978-0-74596-103-3

More than 60 Bible stories are presented for young children, with bright illustrations and simple, clearly laid out text.

#### Festivals 2: Easter, Vaisakhi, Wesak and Christmas

This DVD by Child's Eye Media for 3–6 year olds follows young children and their families as they celebrate four festivals.

**See:** <http://shop.retoday.org.uk>

#### Telling the Easter Story

A PowerPoint supporting a simple telling of the Easter story, with well-drawn and provocative illustrations. The site provides many other images illustrating aspects of the life of Jesus.

**See:** [www.sermons4kids.com/hmartin.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/hmartin.htm)

### Cross-curricular links

- **Creative development:** drawing, working with small-world play and modelling materials
- **Literacy:** speaking; listening and responding; group discussion and interaction; drama (role play)
- **PSHCE:** working with others, discussing beliefs, values and practices, collaborating with others and developing respect and sensitivity.



# Buns and bunnies? A talkative learning activity for 4–5 year olds

## What really matters at Holy Week and Easter?

### For the teacher

Sometimes RE with the youngest children doesn't get far beyond listening to a story. Here's a simple way of helping 4–5s think about 'what matters'. The activity is for after the children have heard the story of Jesus' last days, which can be from a book, a video or – best of all – told dramatically by a teacher.

Tell the story from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, including the Last Supper, and the crucifixion and resurrection.

You can do these activities with a whole class, but focus will be better if you do the tasks in small groups of 6–8 with an adult to talk to the children.

### Early Learning Goals

The Early Learning Goals (ELGs) for creative development are practised through this activity, and its aims include developing problem solving and reasoning through talk (a part of the ELG for numeracy, which doesn't usually feature in RE).

As the creativity ELGs require, pupils will:

- **respond** in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch and feel
- **express and communicate** their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of methods.



### Activity 4

#### What really matters at Holy Week and Easter?

These activities are to use once the story of Easter has been shared with the children.

#### Remember ten

- **Set up** a table or tray with ten items that are associated with Holy Week and Easter on it. My examples are: a hot cross bun, a chocolate egg, a cuddly toy rabbit, a daffodil, a palm cross, a crucifix and an empty cross, an Easter card, a glass of wine (or a small bottle) and a toy plastic donkey. Variations on this are possible.

#### Count and learn

- **Play** 'Kim's game': ask the children to look at the tray, then cover it and ask them if they can remember all ten things on the tray.

#### What links . . . ?

- **Ask** one child to suggest two of the objects that belong together, and say why: 'rabbit and donkey are both animals' / 'these two are both crosses' / 'bun and egg can both be eaten'. Give several children the chance to do this, and accept all answers – none is wrong here!

#### In the story . . .

- **Ask** if the children can say what each object has to do with the stories of Jesus that they have heard. If no one can connect one of the objects, then fill in the detail. Use the talk-time to reinforce details of the story and remind the group of key points.

#### Take away one by one

- **Discuss** with the children whether you can have Easter without these things. Talk about the different answers. It's probably true that without the cross, there is no Easter, so is the cross the most important thing?

#### Three reminders

- **Invite** children to choose three of the objects that they think are the best reminders of the story.

#### Most important?

- **Invite** them to say which of the objects might matter most to a Christian person, or might help them to remember Jesus' story.
- **Ask** pupils to use a paper template – a big circle divided into three is good – and make three drawings of the things that matter most at Easter. Give time to make this a beautiful piece of work. In small groups, children speak and listen about these pieces of work.

#### Links

- **Make some links** between the things that matter to Christians at Holy Week and Easter and the things, people and questions that matter most to them.



W

A simple PowerPoint supporting this work for the classroom is available to RE Today subscribers.

See: [www.retoday.org.uk](http://www.retoday.org.uk)

## Activity 5

### Timeline

It is important that the children understand that Jesus was not born and then died four months later.

- **Choose** some key stories from the life of Jesus that children will have heard and choose or create pictures of them.
- **Choose** at least five to share, such as a Nativity scene, Jesus as a boy at the temple, Jesus telling a parable, Jesus performing a healing and the death of Jesus.



- **Ask** children to place these in order on a timeline on the wall.
- **Alternatively** children could work in small groups discussing what the pictures show and then putting them in order.

Using the artwork can begin to put some order into the complexity of the plot!

## Activity 6

### Role play

Embedding and exploring the story of Jesus through **role play** can be very effective. Unearthing the Nativity wardrobe (minus kings' crowns and angels' wings!) can give the children opportunities to act out the stories they learn.

Clapping and singing for Palm Sunday – how would Jesus' friends have felt on:

- Palm Sunday
- Good Friday
- Easter morning
- When they saw Jesus again?



## Activity 7

### Retelling the story

#### Storytelling

Stories from different faiths need to be a regular part of the diet of stories (five-a-day!) that young children hear. Telling stories about Jesus (and other special people) from a wide variety of sources means that they are constantly being given opportunities to think and discuss new ideas. These opportunities need to be pounced on!

*Any* mention of chocolate, bunnies, bonnets or gardens dilutes the religious message and should be avoided in this context!

**Small-world play / creative storytelling** of aspects of the Easter story can embed the facts and raise questions for discussion.

Use figures and props to retell part of the story on a small scale. Different groups could use different props and materials to create three or four key parts of the story. For example:

- Small plastic figures showing Palm Sunday
- The Last Supper in plastic building bricks
- Playdough figures and scenery for the garden of Gethsemane
- Good Friday painted and the story retold
- The empty tomb created under a table

Each group could act as storytellers, as the class perform their own mystery play.

## Activity 8

### New life

A **spring 'walk of awareness'** is a lovely way to think about the new beginnings which Easter suggests: seeing how things are growing from seemingly dead earth.

Take the children to a local green space. It doesn't need to be a beautiful park – just an area where signs of new life in nature can be found. Then:

- **share** what each child found that is a sign of new life in nature
- **share** photos of other signs of new life in nature
- **ask**: did they find signs of bulbs, buds, leaves, flowers, baby animals, eggs and chicks?
- **give** each child a green leaf outline and ask them to choose what signs of new life they want to put on the leaf
- **make** a 'tree of new life' and hang on it all the leaves the children have made.