

OBSERVING LENT WITH CHILDREN



Easter is arguably the most important season in the church year; it can also be one of the most difficult to teach to children. As adults, we tend to connect Easter with life after death and new life through the spirit of Christ. These are abstract, complicated concepts for children, however. Children are quite concrete, and (hopefully) have had very little experience with the finality of death. Similarly, *all* of life is new for children. Each day is a journey of discovery, so asking them to celebrate Jesus' new life may not seem particularly interesting to our youngest learners. This does not mean that we as teachers cannot share the Good News of Easter with our children in varying degrees of complexity and detail.

While it is impossible to have the Good News of Jesus' resurrection without first understanding that he died, FUMC strives to take a conservative approach in exposing children to the details of his death. We understand that every child is an individual and will respond to every story in a unique way. Similarly, children grow and mature in their faith on their own individual timetables. Within this variety, however, there are some patterns that help us know what to expect. For example, with the youngest Sunday school children we will simply acknowledge Jesus' death and focus more intently on the joy we all feel knowing Christ is risen and with us always; while the oldest learners are ready for more details about the significance of his death. The following chart outlines our basic philosophy regarding the level of detail for each class grouping. If you would like more specific information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Hopefully, this will serve as a very basic guide to the stories that your children will experience in Sunday school. While specific story wording may change a bit, the focus with all but the oldest children is that Jesus' death and resurrection are told during one class so that we don't leave children in a "Good Friday" mood, but let them experience the joy of Easter morning before they leave the lesson.

Sincerely,

Lara Greene

lara@fumcaustin.org

512-478-5684

From *Sharing the Easter Faith with Children*, Carolyn Brown

Age/Grade	Heart of the Message	Biblical Stories	Easter Words to learn and use	Activities
Birth – 12 mos	Happy Easter, new life in nature	Easter music and stories of new life	Happy Easter	Look at pictures of Easter flowers, play with eggs
Toddlers – 2yrs	Happy Easter Jesus Lives and loves us	Stories about Jesus healing and loving us all	Happy Easter, Jesus Is Alive, Hosanna, Alleluia	Look at pictures of Jesus, Easter flowers, eggs. Draw/color similar pictures
3 & 4 yr olds	Jesus is Alive and with us, Jesus loves us, God has an Easter Surprise	Bartamaus, Jesus and the children, the Last Supper, Symbols of Easter, Palm Sunday, Jesus' appearance to Mary at tomb	Easter, Hosanna, Alleluia, Palm Sunday, Lent (as a time of getting ready), cave tomb	Working with story figures, drawing, working with play-doh or clay to process stories
Kindergarten	Jesus is Alive, loves us, and is with us, God has an Easter Surprise	Bartemaus, Jesus and the children, the Last Supper, Palm Sunday, Symbols of Easter, Jesus' appearance to Mary at tomb	Easter, Hosanna, Alleluia, Palm Sunday, Lent (as a time of getting ready), cave tomb	Working with story figures, drawing, working with clay or paints to process stories, picture books
1 st – 2 nd grade	Jesus is Alive, God loves us and is with us always	Those for kinder. with the introduction of Jesus' death on the cross. Crucifixion and resurrection always told in the same lesson.	Those above, and crucifixion, resurrection	As above with added journaling time as a Lenten discipline
3 rd grade	Jesus is Risen. God's love is always with us	Samuel, Saul, the prophets, Esther, Crucifixion and resurrection, appearance to Mary at the tomb	As above and Passover	Lent/Easter puzzles, games and diorama of Easter scenes
4 th and 5 th grade	God is with us even in our pain, Jesus is Risen	Study of Jesus' activities leading to his death and resurrection (in the temple, as a healer, etc.)	As above with a focus on Lenten disciplines, anoint, Seder	Creation of Lent tree, making and eating foods associated with Passover
6 th grade	Jesus is Risen. God's love is always with us	Numbers - 40 days in the wilderness; 12 apostles; 12 tribes	History of Ash Wednesday, resurrection	Positive actions added for Lent; daily bible reading
7 th and 8 th grade	Christ's love for us, self-examination, repentance, justifying grace	Study of Jesus' activities leading to his death and resurrection	Easter, Hosanna, Alleluia, Palm Sunday, Lent (as a time of getting ready), crucifixion, resurrection	Consequences – ripple out; Sackcloth bracelet; weekly scripture reading
9 th and 10 th	Following Jesus, Faithfulness, Devotion, Sacrifice	Genesis 12:1-5 and Mark 8:31-9:1; Exodus 17:1-7 and Luke 13:1-9; John 12:1-8; Matthew 27:11-16	Easter, Palm Sunday, Lent (as a time of getting ready), crucifixion, resurrection	Sacrifice/give up a luxury or add a positive activity; weekly scripture reading
11 th and 12 th	God is with us even in our pain, Jesus is Risen ;Mardi Gras – religious significance and historical perspectives	Study of Jesus' ministry; activities leading to his death and resurrection	Easter, Hosanna, Alleluia, Palm Sunday, Lent (as a time of getting ready), crucifixion, resurrection	Lent and Easter symbols; wonder and anticipation; Sacrifice/give up a luxury or add a positive activity; weekly scripture reading