



Joy Comes Alive

When everything feels lost, we find that joy surprises us and invites us to look anew at the world and ourselves.

This week...

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav, Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia

As listed in *Pilgrim Prayer: The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle*, edited by Ester Pudjo Widiastih and Karen L. Bloomquist. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2018). <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/prayer-cycle> offers valuable aids for intercessory prayers, prayer on behalf of and in solidarity with others.

Special day ([commentary](#) on p. 104)

April 14 – Vaisakhi (*Sikhism*)

Personal reflection

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Much like Mary Magdalene at the tomb, we marvel at the Resurrection. The despair of only a few days ago has disappeared. Jesus' body is gone. Has he risen from the grave? Yes, he has. And the joy of this moment is contagious! Mary Magdalene shares the news of the resurrected Jesus with the disciples. We, too, must share the news of resurrection, the joy of a living and loving God.

This week, look for the joy of the Resurrection that's around you. Find, read, and then share at least three joy-filled news stories with three people.

The planning page is provided in text format for copying, adapting, and adding to your bulletin or online worship resources or website or social media (see Text folder, Worship Outline).

Online Resources

Lection Connection

Essays and discussion prompts linking current events with this week's scriptures. Use for sermon preparation, Bible studies, and small groups or share on social media at <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/10/>.

Nurturing Faith and Spirituality at Home

An easy-to-share, weekly online resource supports the spiritual lives and faith formation of individuals and families at home. It is provided in the [Nurturing Faith and Spirituality at Home](#) folder.

April 9, 2023

Easter Sunday

Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

Acts 10: 34–43 or Jeremiah 31:1–6

Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24

Colossians 3:1–4 or Acts 10:34–43

John 20:1–18 or Matthew 28:1–10

Liturgical colour white or gold

Looking ahead

Each week during the Season of Easter, there is an invitation to use our senses (see "[Worship Comes Alive](#)" on p. 105 and "[Deep Down and All Around](#)" on p. 14).

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter, April 30, you are encouraged to consider a "[Community Love Project](#)" (p. 141).

Decide if you will celebrate "[Ascension Day](#)" on May 14 and how you might celebrate (see pp. 159–170).

On May 21, you are invited to consider an "[Easter Sensory Affirmation](#)" (p. 177) that encompasses all senses. You might use this resource earlier and add affirmations of faith to weekly worship.





Acts 10: 34–43 or Jeremiah 31:1–6

Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24

Colossians 3:1–4 or Acts 10:34–43

John 20:1–18

the focus in age-level materials
or **Matthew 28:1–10**

God of grace, open our eyes to see you. Open our hearts to let our vision change our lives. Amen.

Joy Comes Alive

If we pay attention to the news, even on a semi-regular basis, it can be easy enough for us to live as though every day were Good Friday. Living our call as Christians to be an Easter people can seem foolish, if not impossible. Today's readings remind us that we are not the first generation to face this hurdle and that we can learn (as so many before us) to see the presence of the living God right before us.

We are a curious species, then and now, trying to understand the world in which we live. We often try to fit our understandings into the framework of our human senses and collective memories. The scriptures call us to broader views, setting our human experience into the larger relationship of the people with God.

Jeremiah 31:1–6 recounts the Israelites' return from exile in Babylon in terms that those who participated in the journey would not have experienced. These are not people who remember the times of peace and joy and growth in Israel; their lives have, for generations, included political machinations, occupation, and deportation. They experienced death: of their homeland, practices of faith, and identity.

And all humans know that death is final. Or do we? We are continually surrounded with endings that are beginnings. In our quest for learning, the evidence that we have the hardest time seeing is that our senses are not reliable sources. As the writer of **Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24** reminds us, the evidence points to us being pounded down, but we are lifted up. The stone that humans would discard is the one that God considers most crucial. The meaning we make of events in this world is not the only meaning. God is bigger, more creative, more grace-filled than we are. Death is not final. For this we should rejoice.

We can live in death, as Paul reminds us in **Colossians 3:1–4**. In choosing to live by faith, certain possibilities for our lives die. However positive such a choice might be, major choices and changes in our lives will necessarily involve

grief. Death and life are deeply intertwined; resurrection is with us each day if we can learn to see it.

It is this learning to see that forms such a crucial component of John's Easter narrative in **John 20:1–18**. As Karoline Lewis notes in her commentary on this gospel (*John*. Fortress Press 2014), John does not tell us about God's grace but invites us to use all our senses to experience it. In John, grace tastes like the best wine; smells like a broad expanse of a grassy field when Jesus fed 5000, or like the very-dead stench of Lazarus giving way to the pound of perfume poured upon Jesus by Mary. Here, at the beginning of the 20th chapter, grace is the scent of a springtime garden at dawn; the sound of a beloved voice speaking our name; the leaping, uncontainable joy that propels Mary back into town, crying out that she has seen the Lord!

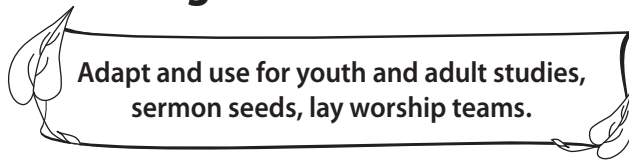
It is important to note that Mary alone stays until the morning light breaks. In John's gospel, light is a symbol of belief and understanding. So, while Peter and the Beloved Disciple see the empty tomb and the discarded cloths, they remain in the dark of human perception and understanding. Mary's stillness, her willingness to remain present in a space of grief, allows the light to shine around her. Like the light of dawn, her understanding and her vision grow until she can experience the fullness of the Resurrection; until it is the joy of God's presence rather than the fear of God's absence that compels her to proclaim what she has experienced: grace upon grace.

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The scripture passages for this Easter Day pull us out of narrow human viewpoints to remind us of the boundary-breaking presence of the living God. The task then is not merely to read the words but to experience these stories in our lives – for if we can taste and see God's grace, how do we not cry out in joy that we have seen our God?



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

- **When have you experienced unexpected joy, life, or abundance that feels like the presence of God?**

Scripture

Jeremiah 31:1–6 was written at a time when the people had experienced death: of their homeland, practices of faith, and identity.

- **What are the signs of rejuvenation and life returning?**
- **Where do you see signs of life returning today?**

Easter is more than just a point of theological debate: it is a way of living, encapsulated in Mary's cry of joy. Mary isn't trying to figure out how the Resurrection came about, what kind of body Jesus now has, or whether his wounds are healed. Mary is filled with the joy of seeing the thing she most wanted when she least expected it.

- **Where in your own life could you experience the risen Christ with you?**
- **How would you describe the experience?**
- **How might this story of the risen Christ renew our lives and bring hope and joy to the world?**

Often, what we see depends on what we expect to see. The biases of our culture play a role, but we also rely on previous experience to inform our expectations. The child for whom learning comes easily will approach a test with confidence, while the child who has struggled with learning or with anxiety will approach the same test with trepidation. Even Mary, at first, sees only what she expects – what makes sense to her. She sees a gardener. How easily might she have missed the very thing she longed for!

- **What does Easter's power mean to you?**
- **Where and in what ways might the energy that was at work in a sealed tomb bring life to your faith community? ...to your wider community?**

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

Most of us are more acquainted with the finality of death; as much as we may wish for those we have buried to be raised bodily and walk among us again, we know that is not possible. It is hard not to watch the recently bereaved bristle as they hear Mary's response to the thing they couldn't have: one more moment, one more hug, one more experience of their name in a beloved voice. It is a moment that many of us who have experienced loss have imagined in great detail.

Acts 10:34–43

Whereas the gospel readings tell us what happened that first Easter morning, this passage has sometimes been described as explaining what it all means. Read the passage, then re-read verses 34–35 and 43.

- **What does it mean to "believe in Jesus"?**
- **Thinking about the story of the Resurrection morning and how people responded differently, what do you think people need to believe about that story? Which elements are vital, and which are less important?**

John 20:1–18

Mary's joy in the moments of seeing Jesus invites us to imagine the unexpected places where the presence of God – and God's grace and God's love – might exist, unnoticed, in our own lives.

- **Where might we see resurrection instead of death; joy instead of grief?**

John's gospel is filled with very human, embodied ways of seeing, tasting, and smelling God around us. Wine in Cana, a grassy hillside near the Sea of Galilee, fish roasting on a beach. We experience God in moments of unexpected abundance and nurture, whether or not we recognize God's presence as such. These are the moments that this story calls us to see and to recognize as moments of resurrection, as moments when we, like Mary, have seen our God.

- **As you reflect on this story, what are the moments when you have experienced grief like Mary's when it seemed like the whole world should stop and grieve with you?**
- **What are the moments in which joy has made you unable to be still?**

Connecting scripture and life

What does resurrection life mean for you today? Imagine you have gone to the tomb, found Jesus missing, and been caught up in despair, anger, and hopelessness. You hear your name and the challenge to go out and proclaim the risen Christ.

- **What would you proclaim? To whom would you proclaim it?**
- **How will you, individually and as a church, do that?**

And yet, the very familiarity of this story to our human imaginations is a huge part of what makes the climax of the gospel so compelling. We know what it is to love and grieve, to be paralyzed by a world that doesn't stop and mourn with us. We can feel, instinctively, what it would feel like to have the dead be raised, to have the one we lost return to us. We understand Mary, as she runs back to the disciples, the cry bursting from her, "I have seen the Lord!"



Joy Comes Alive

Prepare

NOTE: The following suggestions are mere starting points. You are invited to adapt, delete, add according to your local needs and context. If a community is gathered in person, they may speak the **bolded** lines. If worshippers are not physically present, consider having a different individual say the bolded responses. Instructions are *italicized*.

- ❑ Recruit volunteers needed for worship: several for the processional.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing John 20:1–18. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present “**I Have Seen the Lord**” on p. 106. Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present “**Jesus Is Alive**” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the reading with our senses, have several prepare in advance. Some sounds could be pre-recorded.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space: two lengths of black fabric to cover the Communion table, Christ candle, Bible, Easter flowers, and other symbols for the processional.
- ❑ Bring tissue paper squares, pipe cleaners, and pens for prayers of the people. Practice making the flowers prior to worship to demonstrate and aid.
- ❑ You might print *Alleluia* on or in your bulletin (in the Images to Project and Images for Printing folders). See “**Connecting with the Art**” on p. 8 for background to the art and artist.
- ❑ Bring song such as “Sing Alleluia!” (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 3, #18 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 3. at https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order_products/*).
- ❑ Set **stations** as described on pp. 107-108.



Music Suggestions

Alleluia

Traditional Uruguay; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 9*

Easter People

David Light; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 6*

Sing Alleluia!

Monica Brown; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 3*

Singing Hallelujah!

Linnea Good; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 3*

I Have Seen the Lord

Robin Mann; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 1*

Christ Is Alive, and the Universe Must Celebrate

Shirley Erena Murray



A chart that shows the licence holder(s) for each song in each of the 9 *Seasons of the Spirit* Music Volumes can be found at www.seasonsonline.ca. Click on Library; Seasons Music Information. Please contact a licence holder for permission to duplicate.

Gather

Cover the Communion table with two black cloths, with the seam between them in the middle. These cloths will be pulled back slowly during the call to worship. If you have a parament on the table for the Easter season, place the parament on the table and cover it with the black cloths.

Dim the lights in the worship space as people gather, if possible. The worship space will be slowly lit during the processional. The Christ candle, Bible, and other symbols for the worship space will be processed at the beginning of the service.

Opening Words

Speak these words from a place where you can be heard but not seen.

Before new life springs from the ground

there is a seed... (*silence*).

Before the sun shines on a new day

there is the setting of the moon... (*silence*).

Before we know the joy of community

there is aloneness... (*silence*).

Before music is heard

there is stillness... (*silence*).

Before Easter alleluias are shouted

there is a time to remember... (*silence*).

Processional

*Sing an “Alleluia” song as flowers, Bible, candle, and other symbols are processed into the worship space. Begin with a single voice, add more voices, then invite all to sing. Increase the lighting in the worship space until it is fully lit. Streamers, like those in *Exploring Our Faith* on page 109, might be added at the end of the processional. Invite children and adults to wave and dance with joy.*

Call to worship

Inspired by Psalm 118:19–24

Have the two people slowly fold back the cloths from the Communion table and remove following this call to worship.

Open wide the way to renewed life that all may enter and give thanks to God.



Worship Outline • April 9, 2023

Our prayers have been answered, and God has become our salvation.

Christ has risen!

Christ has risen indeed! Alleluia!

This is Love's doing; it is awesome in our eyes.

This is the day that God has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Christ has risen!

Christ has risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening prayer

O God, we come as Easter people

to open our eyes to new sights and sounds.

We come to find resurrection even when Good Friday hangs so heavily in our world.

We come to be changed by songs of birds and angels and find new signs of life all around us.

We come to find that we can be different when we open our eyes and ears to joy.

We come to touch and smell the good news and find that you, O God, make all things new again.

We come to praise you with all of our whole bodies. Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Prayer of confession

With each alleluia, we protest the Good Friday world. We imagine something else, and still that word catches in our throats, and we are uncertain of that joy.

Forgive us for the hesitant alleluias, the certainty that there must be a catch, the unwillingness to believe wholeheartedly in the power of love.

Forgive us our silence in the face of miracles.

Forgive us when we turn away from your presence.

Risen Christ, roll away the stones that entomb our hearts.

Shine your resurrection light into the shadows of our beings.

Drive out from our minds all that keeps us from the abundant life you offer.

Holy One, open us to the power of love. Amen.

Words of affirmation

God knows our hurts and frustrations. God understands every sorrow and loss and still invites us to find hope in things above,

like forgiveness, grace and love.

Set your mind on these things, and God will never be hidden from you.

Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Amen.

Engage

Opening the Word

Jeremiah 31:1–6

Include a sung response such as "Alleluia" (Seasons Songbook, vol. 9).

Read: verses 1–3

Sing: "Alleluia"

Read: verses 4, 5

Sing: "Alleluia"

Read: verse 6

Sing: "Alleluia"

John 20:1–18 *the focus scripture for age-level materials in ENCORE*

Choose from the following.

Bible story Have a storyteller present the story "[I Have Seen the Lord](#)" (p. 106).

Reading with our senses *Have several people prepare in advance. Some sounds could be pre-recorded.*

Before the whole gospel is read, share this good news using all of your senses. Omit the narration and begin with the sounds of the night. Perhaps the next thing that is heard is running feet before a voice exclaims with Mary's exclamation in verse 2. Then more running feet are heard, two sets of feet together. There might be sounds of confusion and the smell of earth. Music could be used to heighten the confusion. Perhaps a stone is passed through the congregation to touch. Maybe water drips like inside a cave before more feet are heard on their way home. Then a woman is heard weeping and the angels' questions. We hear Mary's joy in responding to Jesus. Might we see him too? Perhaps add a piece of art or some other visual. There might be other sensory ways to share this good news. You might brainstorm ideas with youth or children and invite them to help create this experience in storytelling.

If gathering in person, invite children, young people, and all who wish to move to the stations. Others will remain seated for proclaiming the word. For those participating at home, you might encourage them to use materials that have been sent.



Respond

Sing or listen to a song such as “Sing Alleluia!” (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 3, #18 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 3. at https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order_products/*).

Affirmation of faith

We believe in an Easter God who creates and re-creates, gives abundant life and is with us through all that life may bring.

We believe in the Christ of the Resurrection who appeared to his disciples and became present in a new way to those who follow him.

We believe in the Spirit foretold by Jesus, who came with power and wonders, gives strength and consolation, and empowers us. Amen.

Prayers of the people

Provide squares of coloured tissue paper (15 cm / 6 in) and pipe cleaners and invite those gathered to make simple flowers. Have people choose two or three pieces of tissue paper and put their prayers into the flowers as they make them silently or by writing words, names, and symbols on the petals. Invite prayers for places

in need of newness of life. To make flowers, stack the squares of tissue paper alternating the corners. Gently push your finger into the middle of the squares to create a tube. Wrap the pipe cleaner around the bottom of the tube and fluff the petals. Invite those gathered to bring the flowers forward and place them in the vases at the front of the worship space.

Our prayers are like seeds
planted within the heart of this community.
We gather these prayers as a sign of our trust that in God,
and through our loving actions,
goodness and beauty do come into bloom.

Prayer of dedication

As the women drew near to the tomb on Easter morning,
ready to give care to a loved one,
may we reach out with actions of care and justice, and
compassion.
As the women left the empty tomb and shared the amazing
news of resurrection,
may we witness to the life rising up within and all around us.

Bless

Beyond death is abundant life.

We will live it.

Beyond the shadows of hatred and isolation is the light that
draws us into community.

We will follow it.

Beyond the stone-covered tomb is a dance called
resurrection.

We will move with it.

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Live in the resurrected Spirit of Christ.

Special Day Commentary

April 14 – Vaisakhi (Sikhism)

Sometimes spelled Baisakhi, this day marks the anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa (the army of the Pure Ones) in 1699. In populous Sikh centres, the day is celebrated with colourful processions through the streets, starting and finishing at the *gurdwara*, or place of worship. During the procession, the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book, is carried on a brightly decorated float, with Sikh believers following behind, singing verses from the holy Granth. Traditional sweets and other foods are shared with onlookers. Other activities to celebrate Vaisakhi include exhibitions of Sikh martial arts and sports and activities at which funds are collected for local, national, and international charities.



Worship Comes Alive with All Our Senses

Our senses are heightened as we step out of the wilderness into the full wonder of resurrection. That is our hope. We hope that we make our way out of Lent and into Easter with a sense of anticipation and delight. It is our hope that the world feels new.

From week to week in the Easter season, our senses are engaged with new wonder. We are invited to hear something new or taste something that will change how we see. We don't always trust our senses, though.

1 Corinthians 2 says that we shouldn't trust them at all, but when it comes to something as improbable and wonder-full as resurrection, we rely on what we can see and hear, taste and smell. Like Thomas, we want to take hold of this promise so that we can more fully understand it.

Each week, there is a new invitation to use your senses in a new way to discover something new and amazing about resurrection. Worship stations engage more child-like curiosity with lots of sensory experiences. There is a contemplative question repeated in those stations, though the words change, wondering how we know that resurrection is real.

As the new wonder of Easter begins, create space for leadership and teachers, parents and elders to read "[Deep Down and All Around](#)" on p. 14. Come alive in exploring this essay together in these discussion questions.

- **How might you define the term multi-sensory?**
- **When is it important to "nurture biblical literacy"? When is it not important?**
- **Have you had a "wellspring moment," as Cynthia Bourgeault describes?**
- **How are your senses engaged in worship? What's missing?**
- **What are the sensory experiences of the unsighted, poor in hearing, or differently-abled in our weekly worship?**
- **Where do you find spaces for imagination in the shared life of this church?**

As the conversation concludes, ask the group to share one small change they would like to make to invite a multi-sensory awareness of the Risen Christ in your life together. Give thanks for all that has been shared, and seek to realize these small changes during this season.



I Have Seen the Lord

Based on John 20:1–18

Mary couldn't sleep. She couldn't stop thinking about the terrible thing that had happened. She decided to get up. It was very early in the morning, but she wanted to go to the cave. They had hurried to put Jesus' body in there before the start of the Sabbath. Mary wanted to check that everything was in order and to spend some time there. Maybe then, Jesus' death would sink in.

She walked sadly to the cave. When she got close, she saw that someone had rolled away the large round stone used to cover the opening. Perhaps some of the other disciples couldn't sleep either. But when Mary looked in, no one was there. Then, as she peered through the darkness, she realized that Jesus' body wasn't there. Mary was heartbroken. The Romans had killed Jesus, and now someone had taken his body. Now they couldn't even mourn him properly.

Not knowing what else to do, Mary ran to find the other disciples and give them the bad news. They ran at once to the tomb to see for themselves. Simon Peter went in to make sure that the body was really missing. He found the cloth that Jesus' body had been wrapped in, but no body. The disciples went sadly home, but Mary stayed by the cave tomb and cried. She had loved Jesus so much it

was hard to imagine life without him. As she wiped away her tears, a flash of bright white from the dim depths of the cave caught her eye. She looked in. To her surprise, she saw two people wearing dazzlingly white clothes sitting in the tomb. They asked why she was crying, and she said, "Because someone has taken Jesus away, and I don't know where he is."

Then Mary felt as though someone was standing behind her. She thought one of the disciples must have come back and turned around. The tears in her eyes made it hard to see, but the man standing there wasn't a disciple. Perhaps he was a gardener. Perhaps he had taken the body. The man asked Mary why she was crying. Mary said, "If you have taken Jesus away, please tell me where he is."

The man said her name – "Mary" – and all at once, Mary knew in her heart that it was Jesus. She had no more questions about where and how; she was just overjoyed to know that Jesus was with her. She longed to throw her arms about him and give him a big hug, but Jesus told her to go and tell the others.

Happily, she raced off and told the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"

A recording of this story is available in MP3 format in the Audio Stories folder.



Bible story

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper or drawing pads
- Recording of today's story "[I Have Seen the Lord.](#)"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story

The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Listen to the story "I Have Seen the Lord."
2. Imagine how Mary might have felt when Jesus spoke her name and she recognized who he was.
3. Use the materials provided to write or draw some of the feelings Mary might have experienced.



Living, Learning, Growing as Disciples

The following stations might be set up around your worship space, or in other places around the church, in your home, or outdoors. Choose one or more practices, depending on your space and numbers. Display the directions for all to see onscreen or in person. Adapt stations for use when physically distancing and above all, follow the safe practices of your congregation and local health officials.

For your convenience, directions are formatted for printing and available in the Stations folder.

Health and Safety Practices

Basic supplies pens, pencils, markers, crayons, white glue/glue sticks, scissors, hand sanitizer, wipes placed in a basket or bin, two containers marked “clean” and “used”

Setting the space Utilize large spaces where people can maintain a safe physical distance. Spread out chairs around a large table or use tape to mark off the space around stand alone chairs.

Keep it clean Wipe down and disinfect places used for stations. Provide enough arts and crafts supplies to reduce sharing and mark containers “clean” and “used.” Remind people to use hand sanitizer as they begin and as they end stations.

Resurrection garden

Materials

- Trays
- Soil
- Grass seeds, flower seeds, or moss
- Small stones or pebbles
- Large stones
- Small flowerpots
- Sticks
- Twine or string
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



**Suitable for all ages
working together**

The practice of cultivation

Directions

A Mexican proverb goes like this: “They try to bury us, but they don’t know we are seeds.” See what might grow in this garden that tells the Easter story.

1. Begin by covering half of your tray with soil. Heap some of it into a mound, so it looks like a hill on half of the tray.
2. On the other half of the tray, fill with small stones or pebbles.
3. Nestle a flower pot on its side into the hillside of soil you’ve made.
4. Plant grass seeds, flower seeds, or moss into the soil surrounding the tomb.
5. Fashion a cross with two sticks and some twine and plant them in the hill.
6. Place a large stone in front of the opening to the flower pot.
7. Watch it grow and change through the Easter season.

Painting

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Variety of art supplies



**Suitable for
all ages**

The practice of expression

Directions

Mary recognized Jesus and was filled with joy. How might you visualize joy?

1. Use the art materials provided to create a picture that expresses the joy you know.



Resurrection sensory play

Materials

- Plastic eggs
- Small rocks
- Large seeds
- Fake flowers, craft butterflies, other symbols of resurrection
- Easter basket filler such as sand or shredded paper
- Small shovels
- Kitchen tongs
- Laundry tubs or basins (3 litre/25 quarts size is ideal)
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



Suitable for
all ages

The practice of contemplation

Directions

1. Half fill the tubs with sand or shredded paper. Add rocks, seeds, and plastic eggs on top with any other desired items. You might give the objects a good stir, so there is some surprise in the discovery. Place shovels and tongs on the table to the side of the box.

Younger children thrive in their fine motor skills with sensory bins. You might choose to place a second tub on a low table just for littles to engage in – but don't limit the adults' fun! Please do note the size of the objects so that nothing is a choking hazard.

2. Using your hands, tongs or shovels, explore the contents inside this box.

3. As you explore, contemplate:

- **What feels like resurrection?**
- **What does resurrection sound like?**
- **How do you know when resurrection is real?**

Shapes of joy

Materials

- Basic supplies
- A collection of wilderness objects (see page 27)
- Glue or tape
- String

The practice of wonder

Directions

Joy comes on Easter with the great surprise of the empty tomb.

1. Scientists have demonstrated that people worldwide find some joy in certain shapes. Examine the shapes of the objects on the table. Pick up those that bring you joy and reflect on these questions:

- **What does this shape bring to mind – a place, person, or a time in your life?**
- **Where else do you find this shape in your everyday life?**

3. Arrange these joy-filled objects together in a garland or banner to decorate your home with joy.



Suitable for
all ages

Story stones

Materials

- Rocks
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Basic supplies



Suitable for all ages
working together

The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Select stones for each of the characters in the story today: Mary, Jesus, and the angels. Maybe there were also some animals in the garden you want to include or perhaps even the other women that came with Mary. Choose stones for the Easter story you want to tell.

2. Decorate each stone to represent each character.

3. Let stones dry and use these stones to share this good news over and over again.

Story stones and resurrection gardens work well together. Use these stones to bring your garden to life.

The article "Connecting with the Art" on page 8 provides background to this season's posters and art engagement ideas for individuals and groups. You might add an Art station and select one of the art engagement ideas.



Story and activities for the very young to use in church or at home.

Jesus Is Alive!

A story based on John 20:1–18

Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' friends. She had stood and watched on that terrible day when Jesus died. Mary felt as if she would never smile again.

Early on Sunday morning, Mary went to the place where they had put Jesus' body. When Mary reached the tomb, the sun was just starting to come up. The sunrise turned the sky into a jumble of orange, yellow, and purple.

Mary looked at the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away, and Jesus' body was gone. What a horrible shock. Mary ran to call some of Jesus' disciples.

They came running to the tomb as fast as they could. They, too, saw that the tomb was empty. Where was Jesus? The disciples didn't know what to do, so they went back home. Everyone was very puzzled.

But Mary stayed by the tomb. She was feeling really sad. First, Jesus had died, and now Jesus' body had gone. Could things get any worse?

Then Mary turned around and saw someone standing there. Mary was crying so hard that the tears made it difficult to see.

"Why are you crying?" the figure asked. "Who are you looking for?"

Mary thought she was talking to the gardener. "Sir," Mary sobbed, "if you have taken Jesus away, please tell me where the body is."

"Mary," the figure said.

As soon as Mary heard her name, she knew who the figure was. It wasn't the gardener; it was Jesus! Mary couldn't believe her eyes. Jesus had been dead, but now he was alive! Mary's tears disappeared in a flash. In their place was the biggest smile!

"Go and tell the other disciples what has happened," said Jesus.

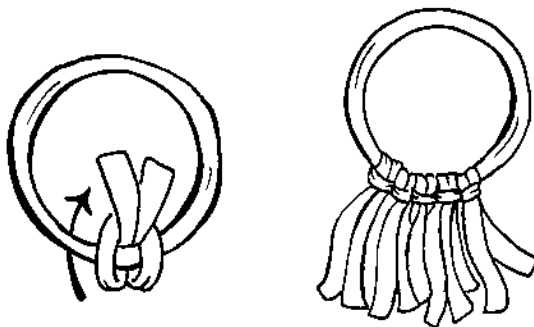
"Tell them that I am going to be with God."

Mary ran as fast as she could to tell the disciples. She was laughing and jumping and dancing with joy. Mary had a wonderful message to deliver. "I have seen Jesus. Jesus is alive."

Easter Streamers

Mary was laughing, and jumping, and dancing with joy; Mary had a wonderful message to deliver. Celebrate the joy of Easter by waving streamers.

You will need a plastic lid from container, variety of ribbons or crepe paper strips (90 cm/3 ft lengths).



Directions

1. Have a grownup cut out the middle of the plastic lid to create a plastic ring.
2. Loop the ribbon or crepe paper around the ring (see illustration).
3. Wave your streamers as you sing to the tune of "London Bridge."

Alleluia, shout hooray!
Shout hooray! Shout hooray!
Alleluia, shout hooray!
Jesus is alive!



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It was very early in the morning when Mary went to the tomb. Choose some people from the Easter story and put them in the picture. Draw some plants, trees,

animals, and birds that might have been in the garden. What might have been in the sky to celebrate on that first Easter morning? Add that to your picture.

