

# Easter Day

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed. This ancient Easter greeting heralds the defining story of our faith. God's love in action is evident in our readings this week. Women proclaim the risen Christ. The Hebrew scriptures speak of God's promises, and Acts and 1 Corinthians proclaim the good news that is available to us all.

## Focus scripture: John 20:1–18

Some of the disciples cannot believe that Jesus is alive again! Indeed, people have wildly different reactions to Jesus' resurrection: Mary weeps, Peter runs away, and many of the disciples are full of disbelief. In sharing about the Resurrection today, people will have a wide range of reactions and responses – from disbelief to being overwhelmed to fleeing from the experience and the emotions.

The story in John 20 begins with Mary looking for Jesus; she had gone alone to visit Jesus' tomb. The reading continues with her sadness and weeping and empty tomb. It ends with Mary's joy and her telling the good news. After she sees Jesus, Mary is encouraged to go and tell others what she has seen and heard. According to this story, Mary is the first to witness and proclaim the risen Christ. The reading offers hope amid a seemingly bleak situation and reminds us that Jesus Christ can deliver beyond our wildest expectations.

**Acts 10:34–43** Peter, a Jew, speaks to Cornelius, a Gentile. Earlier in his life, Peter would never have gone to the home of a Gentile. However, a vision from God convinces Peter that God has no restrictions. God's love and God's welcome is for Jews and Gentiles alike. The good news of the Resurrection is for all!

**Isaiah 25:6–9** is a celebration of God, who has created and gathered a feast for all. It notes that God is bigger than death and offers a vision or prophecy of the future.

**Psalms 118:1–2, 14–24** gives praise and thanks for God's blessings, and celebrates God's steadfast love, mercy and welcome. Christians have used this psalm, with its messianic images of the opening of the temple gate, to give thanks for our salvation in Christ, the chief cornerstone. While it is possible to read back in the scriptures and make links

between the rejected "cornerstone" and the rejection of Jesus, it is not necessarily the intent of the psalm.

**1 Corinthians 15:1–11** is, however, directly about Jesus. Paul did not witness the Resurrection; it came to him by God's grace. In all of the gospel stories of the Resurrection, Jesus' first appearance is to women (Matthew 28:1–10, Mark 16:1–8, Luke 24:1–12, John 20:11–18). However, in a retelling of the events of the Resurrection, Paul writes that Jesus "appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve" (v. 5), then 500 others. Paul goes on to say that it does not matter who proclaims the good news; it is more important that others come to believe.

In **Mark 16:1–8**, Jesus does what is unexpected! Mary and Salome visit Jesus' tomb and discover the large stone, which had been laid against the tomb, is rolled away! Jesus is not in the tomb as expected; instead, he is out and doing other things. The women are instructed to go and tell what they have seen.

The gospel of Mark has two different endings. In the shorter version, the women encounter an empty tomb, a stranger, a rolled stone, and silence. The women flee the tomb in "terror and amazement" and do not tell anyone. In the longer version of Mark (vv. 9–19), Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, who goes and tells others. She is not believed. This longer version was likely written much later and perhaps by a different author.

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The astonishing news of the Resurrection transformed Jesus' followers into courageous preachers of the good news of Jesus Christ. What is the good news for you in this? What would you go and tell others about what had happened?



## Focus scripture

**John 20:1–18**

## Additional scriptures

**Acts 10:34–43 or**

**Isaiah 25:6–9**

**Psalms 118:1–2, 14–24**

**1 Corinthians 15:1–11**

**or Acts 10:34–43**

**Mark 16:1–8**

**Christ is risen!  
Hope is alive and  
moves among  
us! Help us to  
proclaim this,  
Holy One. May we  
remember that  
despair is not the  
end of your story.  
Help us to live as  
an Easter people,  
who believe that  
God's love has  
no restrictions.  
Amen.**

## Lectio Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) and click on the link.

## The Focus for All Ages



This session is designed for all ages to come together for approximately one hour to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. If, for reasons of space or numbers, you choose to meet in age-specific groups, the session offers ways to customize the materials for different age groups.

Few participants will be unaware that this is Easter given the commercialization of this day in the secular world, but some may not realize that Easter Sunday is one of the most important Christian festivals. The session will continue the story begun last week on Palm/Passion Sunday, using the symbols from telling the Holy Week stories as a review of the events which led to Jesus' arrest, trial, death, and burial. The resources are designed to help participants recognize that this was not the end of Jesus' story and to celebrate the wonder of the Resurrection.

Recognize that the youngest members of the group may not have heard the Easter story

before, while older children, youth, and adults will probably know a composite version from the various gospel accounts. This year we focus on the story from John's gospel and Mary of Magdala, as the first witness to the Jesus' resurrection. Pray that the participants will experience the wonder and joy of this sacred story.

**Leadership:** Consider having a group of leaders (preferably a team other than those who offer weekly leadership) to plan and lead this session. Invite one of the female youth or adult participants to be the storyteller for the engagement with the focus passage. Choose a variety of Respond activity zones to meet the needs of the age range of the group.

## Prepare

### Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24, Isaiah 25:6–9, John 20:1–18, Acts 10:34–43, 1 Corinthians 15:1–11, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 49).
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).
- ❑ Prepare a worship space with gold or white fabric, Bible with a bookmark placed in the gospel of John, candle, matches, and offering basket.

### Gather

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song "Alleluia, Praise to God/*Aleluya Y'in Oluwa*" (p. 5 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #20 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).
- ❑ Bring self-adhesive name tags.

### Engage

- ❑ Bring a copy of last week's resource sheet "[Holy Week Stories](#)" (p. 37) and the symbols used to tell the stories.
- ❑ Bring resource sheet "[Jesus Is Alive!](#)" and,

if possible, recruit a young woman from the congregation to read the story or tell it in her own words.

### Respond

Choose from the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Art zone:** mural paper, finger paints or tempera paints, paintbrushes, paint smocks
- ❑ **Craft zone:** stones (some smooth), self-adhesive stickers (butterflies, chicks, flowers), fine-tipped permanent markers, acrylic paints and fine-tipped brushes, glitter
- ❑ **Writing zone:** white paper cut into shapes (egg, butterfly, flower; see patterns in *Virtual Resource Book* in the Library on the [Seasons website](#)), wide variety of coloured markers or pencil crayons
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "[Butterfly Message](#)," construction paper, different colours of tissue paper (cut into small squares), clothes pegs/pins, wooden chopsticks
- ❑ **Bible zone:** copies of [biblical background](#) material (p. 49)



# Easter Day

## Scripture

John 20:1–18

**FOCUS** To celebrate the good news of Jesus' resurrection

## Gather

**Welcome** participants as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers. Distribute name tags and invite group members to print their first names and decorate their tags. Help younger children as needed.

### Opening ritual

**Call to gather** Invite participants to gather in the worship space. Point out the gold or white fabric and explain that this colour marks this as a special day, Easter Sunday. Ask a volunteer to light the candle and receive an offering.

**Sing** "Alleluia, Praise to God" (p. 5 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #20 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

**Pray** O God, we ask you to be with us as we

Extinguish the candle to signify the end of the gathering worship.

### Connecting with the focus

Invite the group to imagine that they are waiting for something. Invite participants to talk about what it is like to wait.

#### ■ How does it feel?

#### ■ Do you like to be surprised or would you rather know what is going to happen? Why?

Explain that today's story is full of surprises for Jesus' friends and followers.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

**Holy Week stories review** Invite participants to review the events of Holy Week, from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to his death and burial, using the symbols from last week's session. Invite volunteers to take turns holding the symbols and relating each part of the story (use the resource sheet "[Holy Week Stories](#)" to help recall the events).

### The Bible story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship space and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of John. Explain that today's story takes place the morning after Jesus was buried. Invite the chosen storyteller, or a female volunteer from the group, to tell the story on the resource sheet "[Jesus Is Alive!](#)" based on **John 20:1–18**. Share initial responses to the story as a whole group. If some participants remember details from another gospel account of the Resurrection, explain that each gospel writer included different details about the story.

#### ■ What surprises did you hear in this story?

#### ■ What helped Mary to know that it was Jesus?

#### ■ Do you think it was easy or hard for the disciples to believe Mary's message? Why?

### The Bible story and us

After the Resurrection, the disciples realized that Jesus was alive in a new way. On Easter Sunday, Christians in churches everywhere today greet each other with words that have been used for hundreds of years. Invite participants to repeat the Easter greeting: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

#### ■ What does it mean that Jesus is alive in a new way?

Invite participants to name some symbols that we use at Easter to describe new life (such as an egg that can hold a baby bird, bulbs that can become flowers, caterpillars that can become butterflies).

## Respond

Review the choices of activities and invite the group to choose one or more zones in which to participate. Encourage older group members to help younger group members in each zone.

- ❑ **Art zone: Painting joy** Invite participants to celebrate the joy of Easter by using the art supplies and working together to create a large group mural. If desired, add a title such as, “Jesus is alive!” by printing one on a strip of paper and stapling onto the mural. Consider displaying the mural in the sanctuary or hall during the Easter season.
- ❑ **Craft zone: Stone messages** Invite participants to create Easter messages on stones to share with others. Distribute stones and art supplies. Younger children can decorate their stones with Easter stickers. Older children, youth, and adults can use markers or paints to write messages, such as “Alleluia!” or decorate their stones with Easter symbols (sun, butterfly, egg shapes). Talk together about who might be the recipients of these stone messages.
- ❑ **Writing zone: Easter news** Invite participants to share the joy of the Easter news that Jesus is alive again in a new way. Distribute shaped paper pieces and markers or pencil crayons. Younger children can decorate the shapes by colouring, with a helper to write the phrase “Jesus is alive!” and older children, youth, and adults can use different colours of markers or pencil crayons to write poems about the joy of Easter around the edges of their paper shapes. 
- ❑ **Outreach zone: Easter messages** Many congregations take Easter plants to older members or others. Invite participants to make decorations to put in the potted plants. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Butterfly Message](#)” and follow the instructions for making butterfly planter decorations. Older participants can help younger children trace, cut out, and print messages on their butterfly shapes. Make arrangements for distribution with the pastoral care team.
- ❑ **Bible zone: Easter readings** This zone is particularly for older youth and adults who would like to explore all the lections for this day. Distribute Bibles and copies of the [biblical background](#) material. Invite a volunteer to read the commentary on the focus passage. Discuss: What new thoughts come to you? What is surprising in this commentary? Then invite other volunteers to take turns reading **Psalm 118:1–2, 14–24, Isaiah 25:6–9, Acts 10:34–43, and 1 Corinthians 15:1–11** and the commentary for each passage. Discuss: What themes are present in these passages that connect with the good news of Jesus’ resurrection? 

## Bless

**Gather** again in the worship space and light the candle. Explain that the light of the candle reminds us that Jesus the Christ is with us in a new way after the Resurrection.

**Pray** a prayer of your own or invite a volunteer to read the prayer on the [biblical background](#) page.

**Sing or listen to again** “Alleluia, Praise to God” (p. 5 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #20 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

**Send** participants out with the following blessing: “Be full of joy as you go out into this week! Christ has risen! Alleluia!”

## Reflect

What were the joyous moments in this session? What questions were raised? Consider how the joy of Easter might be extended throughout the next 50 days of the Easter season.



# Jesus Is Alive!

based on John 20:1-18

**M**ary of Magdala, one of Jesus' disciples for a long time, was so sad about Jesus' death. She got up early, so early it was still dark, on the first day of the week after Jesus died. She woke up early, thinking about Jesus, and decided to go to the tomb where Jesus was buried.

The moon gave some light to the path and when she got to the tomb, she was surprised. The huge stone that sealed the tomb had been rolled to the side. Tomb stones were really big and they were not easy to move.

Mary of Magdala hurried to tell Simon Peter and the others what she had seen. "They have taken Jesus from the tomb. I don't know where his body is."

Immediately Simon Peter and another disciple, who is not named in John, ran to the tomb. The other disciple got there first. He looked inside, but all he saw were the cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus' body. When Simon Peter got to the tomb, he went inside. But all he saw were the cloths too. Knowing of nothing else to do, the two disciples went home.

Mary of Magdala had followed Simon Peter and the other disciple. However, she did not leave the tomb when they did. She stood

near it weeping. Then something caught her attention. She looked inside the tomb. Two men in white clothes were sitting where Jesus' body had been.

"Woman, why are you weeping?" they asked.

"Someone has taken Jesus. I don't know where," said Mary.

Behind her, someone who looked like a gardener, said, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"

"Oh, please, if you know where they have taken his body, please, please tell me," said Mary, tears running down her face.

"Mary," said the man. At the sound of her name, Mary recognized that this was Jesus. Her eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Teacher!" she said joyously.

"Tell everyone that I am going to be with God, my God and your God."

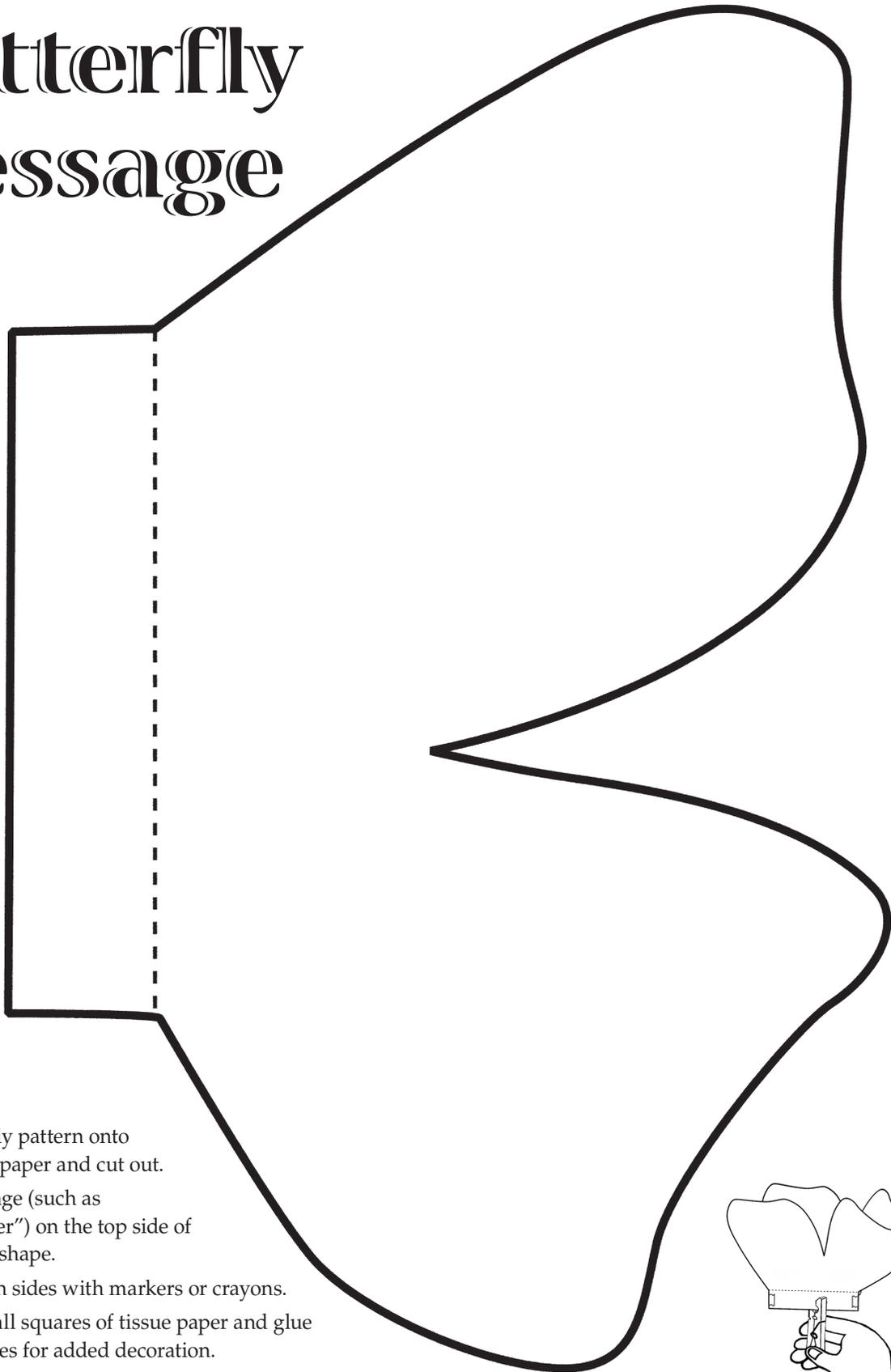
Excited, Mary of Magdala ran off to find the disciples. When she found them, she said, "I have seen Jesus! Jesus is alive and is going to be with God."

The disciples looked at Mary, amazed at her words.



# Butterfly Message

Place along fold of construction paper.



## Instructions

1. Trace butterfly pattern onto construction paper and cut out.
2. Print a message (such as "Happy Easter") on the top side of the butterfly shape.
3. Decorate both sides with markers or crayons.
4. Crumple small squares of tissue paper and glue onto both sides for added decoration.
5. Fold back wings and attach the butterfly to one end of a chopstick using the clothes pegs/pins.

