

SUNDAY APRIL 4TH

EASTER DAY



**Jesus Appears to
Mary in the Garden**

John 20:1-18

THE LORD IS RISEN
HE IS RISEN INDEED
ALLELUIA ALLELUIA

This familiar passage recounts the joy and mystery of the first Easter morning. It happens at a time of great uncertainty for the followers of Jesus, with their teacher dead the disciples must have felt adrift. In their grief, three visit Jesus' tomb and find him gone. Two leave, believing the body has been taken, but Mary remains, perhaps looking for something to hold onto in this time of upheaval, and Jesus is revealed to her. She runs to tell the other disciples that Jesus is alive.

Easter is one of the times during the year when, through our church communities, we have an opportunity to reach out to many people. It is a touching point between the secular (social, commercial) and sacred worlds. It offers a chance to step into the Easter story, and to explore the truth of this wonderful mystery that is at the very heart of the Christian story.

This week we enter the mystery of Easter.

Stop and share

- Ensure everybody knows who Mary, Peter and John were.
- Ask the children what sort of things had happened before this story.
- Explain that Peter and John may have thought someone had taken Jesus' body away.

Gospel Reading John 20:1-18

The Resurrection of Jesus

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look^[a] into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you

weeping? Who are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew,^[b] "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

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Read the above Gospel reading from John's Gospel and imagine how Mary felt. How do you think the disciples would feel when Mary told them she had seen Jesus?

Imagine you are at the empty tomb and Jesus appears - how do you think you would feel?

BIBLE NOTES

The centrality of a woman in this account is not something that anyone would invent in a world that undervalued the role of women as witnesses. John locates his narrative in real time, during the early hours of 'the first day of the week'. Mary's grief is strong enough to draw her to the place where she can be as close as possible to Jesus' body. She is shocked by what she finds: an obviously disturbed tomb, the body missing, presumed stolen. Two of Jesus' disciples – both men – believe her anxious report and confirm her story by visiting the tomb for themselves. As yet, its emptiness can only mean that the body has been 'taken away'.

Mary's double loss – the companionship of her beloved rabbi, and now his body – is made visible in her inconsolable weeping. Unlike Peter and the other disciple, she stays by the tomb long enough to experience something she hardly expects. She only recognises the figure behind her when he calls her by name, like the good shepherd calling one of his flock (10.14). Jesus is within touching distance, but he resists. 'Do not hold on to me' suggests a new kind of relationship. 'Ascending to the Father' through his passion (14.1ff) is the counterpart of the descent of the heavenly 'Word' (1.1-18). This movement of grace will open up Jesus' relationship with the God he calls 'Father'. John's readers know what this means: the coming of the Spirit to friends who live by the 'new commandment' that makes the love of Jesus visible (13.34ff; 14.15ff; 15.12ff; 20.19ff). The foundation of this transforming vision is the astonishing witness of a woman.

A version of the story for very young children

Practise together different expressions to use in the story.

Mary was **sad**. Jesus had died on the cross and was buried in a tomb.

Mary was **shocked**. When she got to the tomb the stone had been moved and Jesus was gone.

Mary was **frightened** and ran to tell Peter.

Peter and John, another of Jesus' friends, ran to the tomb and they were **puzzled**.

Peter and John went away but Mary stayed.

A man spoke to Mary. She thought it was the gardener.

'Where is Jesus?' she said.

Mary was **surprised**. It was Jesus. He was alive!

Mary was **excited**. She ran quickly to tell Jesus' friends.

ACTIVITIES

Imagine how it would have felt to find the risen Jesus

You will need: pictures of risen Jesus ([template](#)), coloured crayons/pencils.

- Hide pictures of Jesus around the room. Ask each person to find one and then colour in their picture.
- As they do this, read the final paragraph of the story. Ask: How did it feel when you found your picture of the risen Jesus? Discuss how those who had heard the news that Jesus was risen would have felt.

Experience the story

Imagine what it might have been like for the characters in the story

You will need: a tent, dressing-up clothes.

- children to act out the story using the equipment. Allow them to use their own words and interpretation of the story.
- what was it like to play the different characters in the story and how they felt as the characters.

Greek Easter biscuits

Make and eat something new and surprising

You will need: ingredients; (225g butter, 150g caster sugar, vanilla extract, almond extract, 275g plain flour, 2 eggs); mixing bowl, wooden spoon, pastry brush, baking tray, an oven.

- Make some koulourakia biscuits. Preheat the oven to 200°C and prepare your baking tray.
- Mix together the butter, sugar and one egg, and then add the vanilla and almond extracts. Blend in the flour to form the dough.
- Take a teaspoon of dough at a time and form into 's' shapes. Place on the baking tray and brush with beaten egg. Bake for 10 minutes until lightly brown and firm.
- These biscuits might be different from what we usually eat at Easter. Ask: Do you like this new experience? What do you find different and surprising about the Easter story?

Talk to God: Rock painting - Pass on the mystery of Jesus' resurrection

You will need: a selection of flat rocks, paint or pens (e.g. Sharpies), spray varnish (optional).

- Ask the children to paint or write the words 'Jesus is alive', or paint an Easter picture, on the rocks. Help them to finish their rocks with spray varnish (if using).
- Build the rocks into a cairn and pray:
Thank you, Jesus, that you didn't just die,
but that the stone was removed from the tomb
so we can see that Jesus is alive.
Amen.
- hide your stones somewhere locally for someone else to find.

Folding the cloth Use the symbolism for ritual prayer

You will need: rectangular pieces of fabric (one per person), instructions (see below or [PDF](#)).

- Recall the sight of the folded grave clothes inside the tomb, as you give out the pieces of fabric.
- Invite everyone to fold their fabric into a triangle following the instructions, one step at a time.
- Invite the young people to take turns to read a line of the prayer as you fold.

The words of the prayer are in **bold**; the other words are instructions for folding the cloth.



Lay cloth flat

God of mystery



Fold cloth in half lengthways,
wrong side of fabric together.

In times of pain, envelop us



Make a triangle by folding the
bottom
left-hand side of the fabric
up to the top.

In times of joy enfold us



Make another triangle by
folding straight over.

**In times of despair embrace
us**



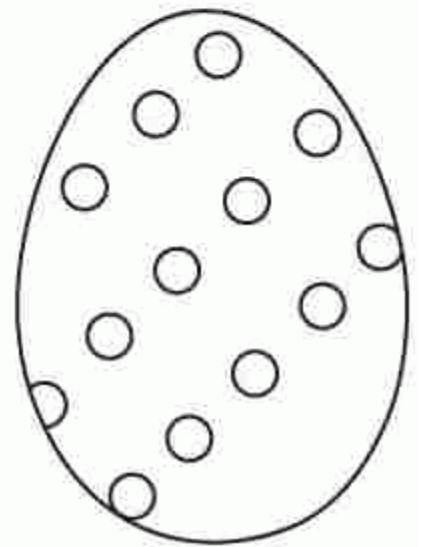
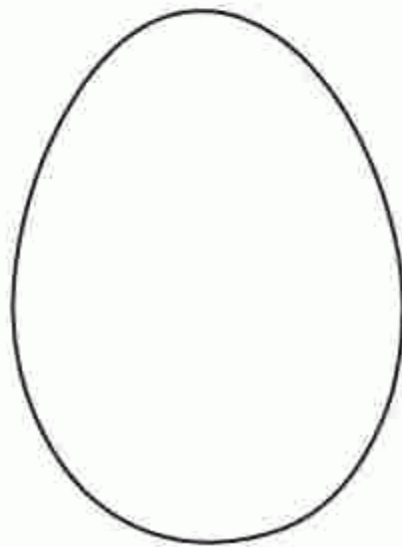
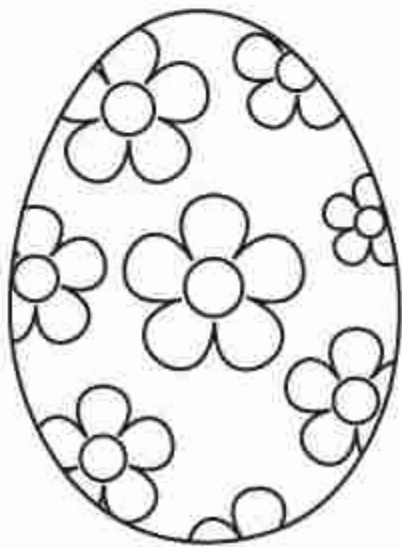
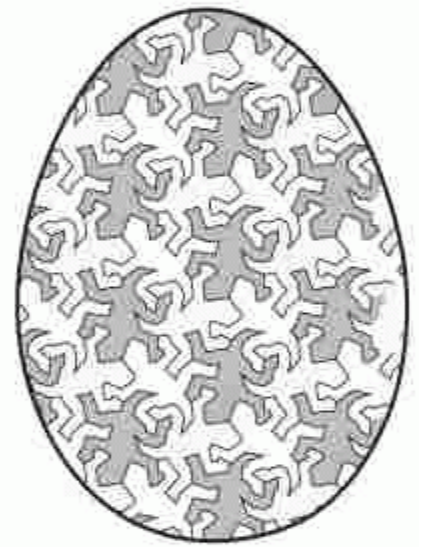
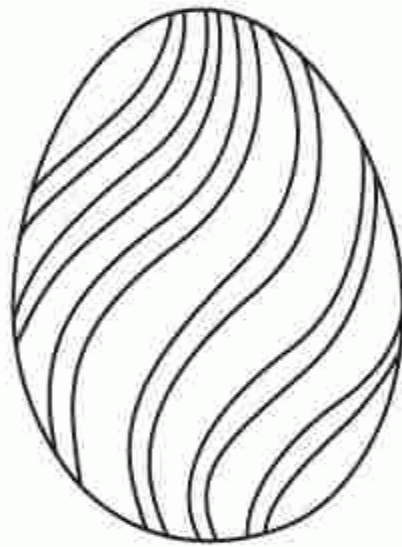
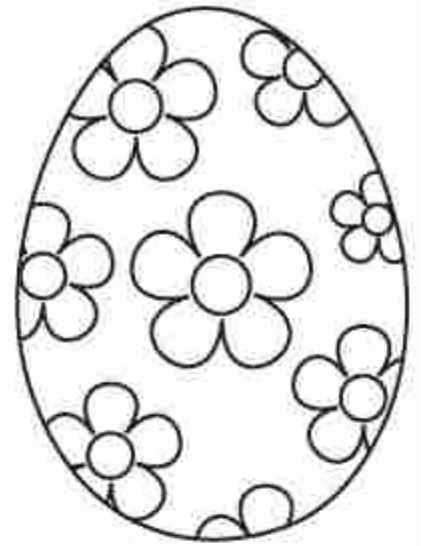
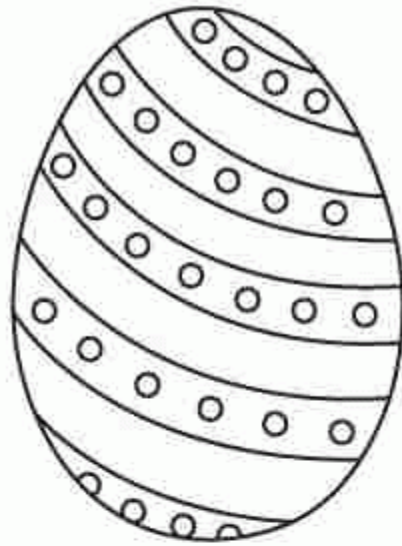
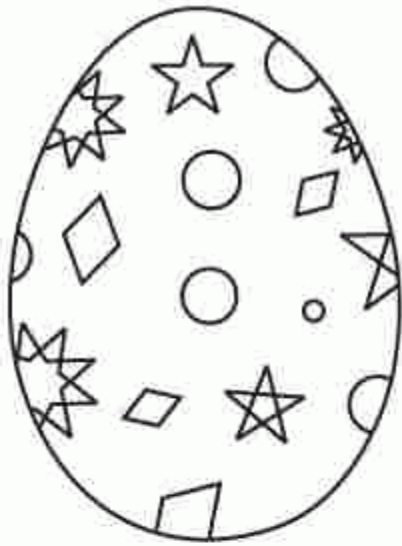
Make another triangle by
folding it down to the right.

**In times of hope encompass
us**



Neaten the triangle by tucking
loose fabric into the fold.

**In all times and seasons, may
we know the love, joy and hope
that we celebrate at Easter.
Amen.**



DECORATE THESE EGGS, CUT THEM OUT AND HIDE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS TO FIND

Colour this picture and hang in your bedroom

