

Easter...



- 'But his friends did not stay sad; something wonderful happened after three days. Jesus did not stay dead: he came back alive and it was such a happy, happy day for Jesus, his family and everyone who loved him. It was a very, very, happy day. Let's jump up and down and celebrate this happy day and sing...'
- One of the important things to stress is that with young children we never leave the story with Jesus dead; it is really important that we do not break up the story (i.e. from one week's lesson to the next) but rather tell the whole story in its entirety. So if you are having something on Good Friday then you would still tell the whole story and the same goes on Easter Sunday; the children need the whole picture and can not hold that dramatic tension from one session to the next like adults can.
- At this age group, we tell the truth that Jesus dies on a cross but it is not important that they know all the details (whipping, crown of thorns, nails in hands etc.). We do not want to scare them with lots of detail at this age. For preschoolers, they need to walk away knowing this really is a happy story because Jesus came back to life and it shows us how much God loves us.

Introduction

LEADERS NOTES: Easter is a great time of celebration but can be a difficult topic theologically to explore fully with preschoolers. It is important that our activities, language, stories and the way that we engage children with the topic is age appropriate. Remember that preschoolers will find it difficult to think about concepts in an abstract way and will need something concrete to link their thinking to. Even many adults find it difficult to fully grasp the concept of what Jesus has done for them by dying on the cross, so while we want to give our children a clear picture and understanding of what Jesus has done, it needs to be age appropriate. Below is some language you may find helpful in your preparation and the object lesson also has some helpful wording for you.



Wording for Easter for preschoolers

- When you get to when Jesus dies on the cross (and even before that) it is important to use consistent language that explains 'a lot of bad people wanted to hurt Jesus', 'when they hurt him, he died', 'it was a very, very, very sad day for so many people'.





Activity Spot

Kitchen corner: set this dramatic play area up for the children to think about creating something special for someone they care about. For example, you might like to encourage them to think about the people they care about and what sorts of treats that they could make for them. I wonder what is their favourite food or special treat.

Cooking: For this activity you will need some milk arrowroot biscuits (oval shaped), some icing that is pre-made or purchased and a range of decorations (mini marshmallows, sprinkles, mini M&Ms etc.). 'Today we are going to make our own marvellous creation, an Easter egg cookie. We are going to ice our biscuits and then choose some decorations to make it our marvellous creation.'

Egg find: For this activity you will need a tray full of shredded paper and some plastic eggs. Place the tray on a table along with an empty egg carton with the same amount of egg cups as the eggs that are hidden in the shredded paper. Encourage the children to see if they can find all the eggs that are hidden, you may even like to have someone at the table to time the children and see how many eggs they can find in one minute. You could even encourage the children to have a turn with their eyes closed and see if they can still find all the eggs.



Egg bunting: For this activity you will need to collect a range of paint sample cards (pastel colours would work great for Easter). Cut the cards into egg shapes (you might like to get some parents to help with this in preparation for the session) and punch two holes next to each other at the top of the egg. You will also need some string or wool to thread through (in and out on each egg) so that the egg sits flat when you hang them. You might like to add the letters of the child's name to the egg bunting or an Easter message.

Easter hats (bonnets): For this activity you will need to provide a range of craft materials for the children to create an Easter hat. You might like to cover some ice-cream containers with foil and pretty papers or make some cardboard cone party hats to decorate with tissue paper, pom poms or mini patty cases. You could also provide a range of boxes that could be joined together and decorated and then add some ribbon or elastic to hold it in position on the child's head.

Note: the Easter bonnet comes from the tradition of new clothing and new fashion being given at Easter time. Easter is at a time of changing seasons and so the fashions are changing. Because, in the past, people had so few items of clothing, fashions were often given at Easter including a new hat or bonnet.



Game Spot

Easter egg hunt: You might like to include an Easter egg hunt as part of the 'Game Spot' time or you could include it as an extra if you have a special Easter morning tea or hat parade. You will need a variety of mini and small Easter eggs that can be hidden for the children to find. You might like to give them a little card with a picture of how many eggs of which sizes they can find and encourage them to help others once they have found all of their eggs.

Easter egg roll: For this activity you will need some small Easter eggs in a container for each team (enough for each person in the team). Divide the group into at least two teams, more if you have a large number. Line the teams up one end of the room and place a strip of masking tape at the finish line. Each member of the team will need to get on their hands and knees and then roll the egg along the floor with their nose.



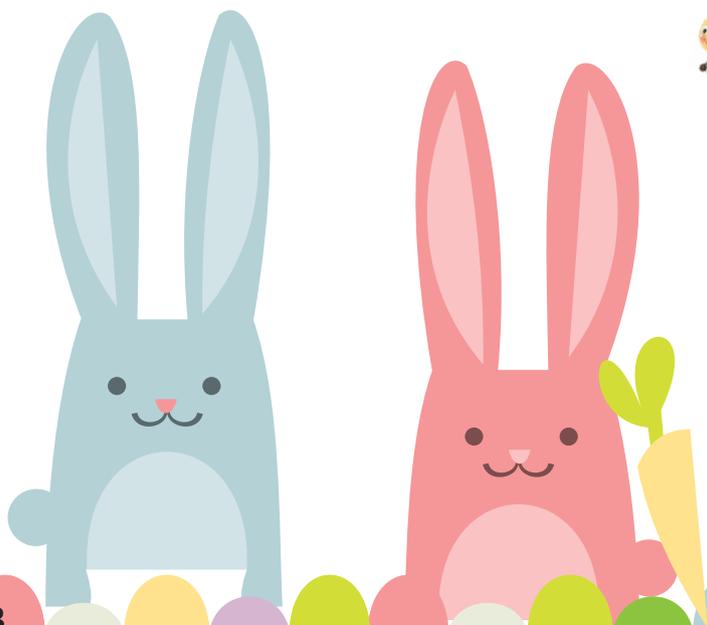
Egg and spoon race: Egg and spoon races are great for balance, encourage the children to take their time and balance the egg on the spoon the whole way rather than running and having it fall off. Each team member will need a plastic spoon and a medium sized Easter egg (the ones you can buy in egg cartons). Divide your group into teams and line them up at one end of the room and have a line of masking tape at the finish line. Have the children walk with their egg to the finish line, if they drop the egg they need to stop pick it up, place it back on the spoon and keep going till they get to the finish line.



Creating Spot

Paper towel eggs: For this activity you will need some sheets of paper towel, enough for everyone, with an egg shape drawn on them with black marker. Using textas, encourage the children to decorate their egg shape. When they have finished adding their decorations help them to brush over the egg with wet paper towel or a paint brush and a small amount of water (a small amount of water will help the texta colour to spread but you do not want too much water or the paper towel will become soaked and tear. You might prefer to give the children a small paint brush and a splash of water in a plastic cup and add more water if needed rather than having too much).

Egg carton crosses: For this activity you will need plenty of egg cartons cut up into individual cups, enough for approximately 7–10 per child. This creating spot will be used with the families in their 'Take Home Spot' throughout the week and in the lead up to Easter. You will need some sheets of cardboard cut out into crosses that will hold at least seven of the little cups from the egg cartons (enough for each day of the week leading up to Easter). Encourage the children to stick their seven cups onto their cardboard cross and fill each cup with some shredded cellophane or streamer confetti and place a mini egg into each cup when ready to take home.



Story Spot

There are a range of books that help us to celebrate Easter, both secular and Christian. Below are some suggestions of books you might like to use over the two weeks or have available for a reading corner or borrowing.

It is important, when choosing the books, to make sure they are not too commercial or that those from a Christian perspective appropriately share the Easter story in language and concepts that are appropriate for preschoolers.

Guess How Much I Love You? – 'Guess how much I love you,' says Little Nutbrown Hare. Little Nutbrown Hare shows his daddy how much he loves him: as wide as he can reach and as far as he can hop. But Big Nutbrown Hare, who can reach farther and hop higher, loves him back just as much. This is a great book of a father and son telling and showing how much they love each other. It is a great story to use at Easter time when we are reminding our children not only how much we love them but also the God that created them and loves them way more than anyone else does.

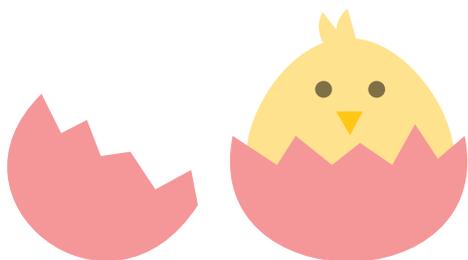
The Very Hungry Caterpillar – One Sunny day a caterpillar pops out of an egg and begins his journey. This is a fabulous book to look at and explore new life and how things can change as they grow. It is great for the children to be able to explore how the caterpillar eats and eats and grows and then changes. At Easter as we think about Jesus and how we can be friends with him forever, it is a great opportunity to think about how we can change and grow with Jesus, too.



The Egg Is Quiet – This is a great informative book about eggs—from tiny hummingbird eggs to giant ostrich eggs, oval ladybug eggs to tubular dogfish eggs, gooey frog eggs to fossilized dinosaur eggs. It magnificently captures the incredible variety of eggs and celebrates their beauty and wonder. The information should inspire some great questions and observations. Reading a book about eggs at Easter is a great way to explore why we have Easter eggs at this time of year. Encourage the children to think about the new life that comes from an egg and how at Easter eggs help to remind us of the new life we can have being friends with Jesus who loves us very much.



Object Lesson: For this story you will need a range of eggs (as many as you can get, real eggs, plastic eggs and Easter eggs) make sure that you have one plastic egg that you can take apart. Inside the plastic egg place a small wooden cross or if you do not have one, make one out of cardboard.



- ‘What do we do when we are really happy? Shout, cheer, smile, jump up and down or perhaps sing. Let’s sing ‘If you’re happy and you know it’ together, because Jesus is alive!’
- SING
- ‘Jesus is alive and can be friends with us; when we have a friend like Jesus it is like starting a new life—a fantastic, happy life that makes us want to shout HOORAY! So when you see an egg or a cross this Easter remember that Jesus is alive and, if we are friends with him, we can feel like we have a new life. HOORAY!’



- ‘I wonder what sorts of animals are born from an egg.’ (Allow some time to wonder and explore this question together.)
- ‘I wonder if you were going to create an animal to be born from an egg, what it would be like.’ (Again allow some time for the children to wonder and explore this question.)
- ‘When we see an egg it tells us that a new life is going to be born. At Easter time we have lots of eggs around and this can help us think about new life or things starting out, just like a newborn baby chick or crocodile.
- Inside the plastic egg have a small wooden cross. Open the egg and show the children the cross. At Easter it is not only eggs that can remind us of new life but it is the cross—the cross is something that helps us to think about Easter and the story of Jesus.
- ‘Jesus was a fantastic man that taught lots of wonderful things to all the people around him. There were lots of people who loved Jesus and loved listening to what he had to say. BUT there were also some people who did not like Jesus, some bad people who wanted to hurt Jesus. When they hurt him: he died. This was a very, very, very, very sad day for so many people... BUT his friends did not stay sad. Something wonderful happened after three days—can you count to three: one two three! Jesus did not stay dead—he came ALIVE again and it was such a happy, happy, happy day for Jesus, his family and everyone who loved him.’



Language

Gift of new life

We are made by God

We are loved by God

We can be friends with God always

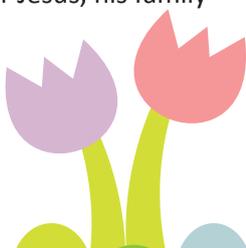
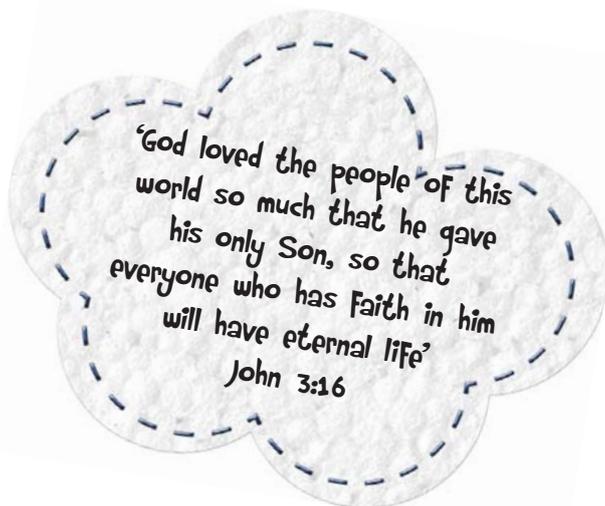
The cross reminds us about God’s love

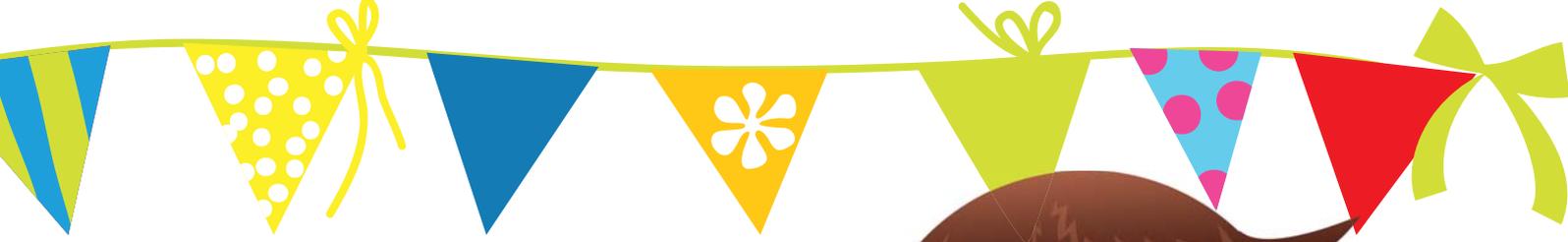
Jesus loves us

Jesus died

Jesus did not stay dead

(refer to the introduction notes for helpful wording of the Easter story for preschoolers)





Mat Time Spot

Skidamarink (I love you)

If you're happy and you know it

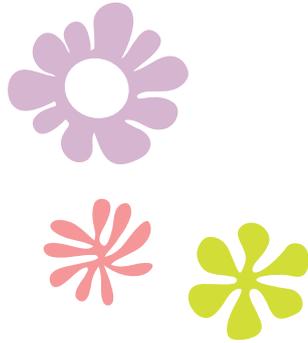
Little caterpillar

The butterfly song

Jesus loves me

God made the chickens

Hot cross buns



Prayer Spot

God loves: For this prayer activity you will need a large sheet of butchers paper with a large heart shape drawn on it; inside the heart write in large words, 'God loves'. In preparation for this prayer activity you will need to take some photos of the children, leaders and parents that are present (if you do not have a photo of everyone then have some paper available for that person to be drawn on). Place all the photos into a basket and during the prayer time have the kids come and find their photo and stick it into the heart shape; after each person has placed their photo inside the heart have everyone say, 'God loves...thank you for making them. Amen.'

If you are using this material over two weeks, for the second 'Prayer Spot' reinforce the prayer activity that you did the first week. Add any photos of children/adults that were not there and thank God for them. Ask the children who God loves: 'Does he love...(choose a name)? Yes, I can see their picture; I know God loves them.' Continue this, reinforcing that God loves each of them.



Take Home Spot

Egg crosses: Each child will have their crosses that they made with their mini Easter eggs in the eggcups. Each day in the lead up to Easter, after dinner choose an egg from the cross and:

- Thank God for Jesus
- Thank God for creating you
- Thank God for loving you
- Thank God that you can be friends with Jesus forever



Extra Spots

As an extra spot you may like to have an **EASTER HAT PARADE**. The children and adults can come and join together for a special morning tea of hot cross buns and have a special parade to show off their hats that they have made. You may even like to make this an opportunity outside the normal operating time so as siblings, parents that work or other extended family can attend.

It is a great opportunity at Easter to invite your families to other activities and events that might be being held over the Easter weekend. It would be great to prepare a flyer so that they can have all the information regarding what is on.



Appendix/Resources



Books

'Children are made readers on
the laps of their parents.'

Emilie Buchwald

Guess How Much I Love You?

Sam McBratney
Candlewick, 2008

The Egg is Quiet

Diane Ashton
Chronicle Books, 2006

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Eric Carle
Penguin Books Ltd., 2012



'Real love isn't our love for
God, but his love for us.
God sent his Son to be the
sacrifice by which our sins are
forgiven.'
1 John 4:10



God Made the Chickens

Snack Music
Snack Music Productions, 2007

Hot Cross Buns

Traditional, 1798

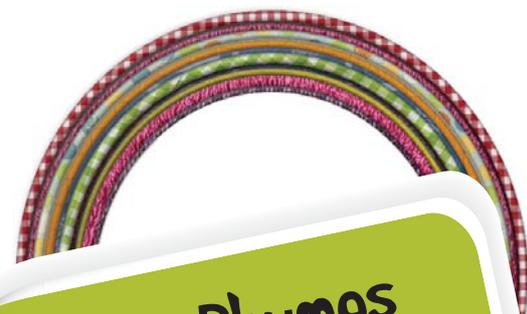
'If You're Happy and You Know It'

If You're Happy and You Know It Sing Along
Various Artists
ABC Music 2005



Music & Rhymes

'Kids: they dance before they learn there
is anything that isn't music.'
William Stafford



Week 1

Egg crosses

Each child will have their crosses that they made with their mini Easter eggs in the eggcups. Each day in the lead up to Easter, after dinner choose an egg from the cross and:

- Thank God for Jesus
- Thank God for creating you
- Thank God for loving you
- Thank God that you can be friends with Jesus forever



Come And Join Us
at
the Following
Easter
Celebrations

(see attached
information sheet)



Week 2

