



Christian Formation
Episcopal Diocese of Texas

THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

2009

What is this curriculum?

Goals

- " To have this curriculum available online.
- " To provide faith formation activities that can be used in the home.
- " To provide something that could be used as a weeknight program.
- " If you have the supporting materials available you can use the online curriculum. The children's literature selections can be found in your local or school libraries or ordered from Amazon, etc.
- " To provide a curriculum for our "Little Churches".

How to use the curriculum

- " The curriculum is designed to be used in a 45 minute session on Sunday morning.
- " The curriculum could also be used as a one hour weeknight session, either in age groups or as an intergenerational event. Please refer to the next page for specific intergenerational lesson planning.
- " The curriculum can also be used in the homes during the week with the Bible study continuing during the week. The children's literature selection could also be read at home during the week. Some families may have some of these books at home, or can check them out of the local library or school library.
- " The curriculum is designed for children K-5th Grade, Youth 6-12th grade and Adults. Younger children can listen to the Bible story and do a simpler art response.

Preparing for the lesson

- " Read the Bible passage.
- " Read the children's literature selection.
- " Make preparations for the art response
- " Be prepared ahead of time and be early so that your classroom is ready when the learners arrive.

Using this curriculum in an intergenerational setting.

- " The time together can begin with the Collect found on the second page of the curriculum.
- " You may tell the Bible story to the whole group.
- " Or, you may break into adult and youth group and then the children's group separately.
- " Adults and youth can read and participate in the Bible study while the children hear the story on their own level.
- " Then all gather for the art response - adults and youth can assist children or make a more sophisticated response or continue in discussion.
- " The entire group could then convene for the reading of the children's literature selection and have conversation following that story. How do the biblical story and the children's literature piece compliment one another, shed new insight or make the story alive in another direction?

Suggested time schedule

45 minute session

Gathering.....	5 minutes
Bible Story.....	5 minutes
Wondering/discovery.....	5 minutes
Children's Story.....	10 minutes
Response.....	15 minutes
Closing.....	5 minutes

If you have more or less time, adjust accordingly.

Creating a Sacred Space for the Lesson with the Children

Greet each child as they enter and invite them to sit in a circle on the floor – no chairs are needed. Ask how they are doing.

Begin the class time with prayer.

Read or tell the Bible story. Remember that you are the curriculum from which they will learn the most – so practice and let the Story be your story. Don't rush. It is better to do fewer things and do them well and with purpose than to rush through the agenda.

If you don't have the children's books and can't get them through your community library, school library or from people in your church, please contact Janie Stevens at the Diocesan Center.

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Bibliography

Growing Together, Celebrations for your Entire Church Family, Volume 2. Living the Good News.
The Inviting Word Curriculum, United Church Press
The Hymnal 1982, Church Publishing
The Book of Common Prayer, Church Publishing
The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education, Joe Russell
Butler's Lives of the Saints, edited by Michael Walsh
We Sing of God, A Hymnal for Children, Nancy Roth
The Discovery Series: A Christian Journey, The Episcopal Diocese of Texas
Luke for Everyone, Tom Wright
John for Everyone, Tom Wright
Revised Common Lectionary, Episcopal Edition, St. Mark's Press
The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams
Chicken Sunday, Patricia Polacco
Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge, Mem Fox
Rechenka's Eggs, Patricia Polacco
The Easter Story, Brian Wildsmith
Jesus, Brian Wildsmith
Read Aloud Bible Stories, Volume 2, Ella Kay Lindvall
Fifty Ways for Fifty Days, Phyllis Wezeman and Jude Dennis Fournier

Activities

Please refer to the individual lessons for activities and crafts for each age group for each lesson. Directions are provided in most instances but for more detailed instructions, please see below.

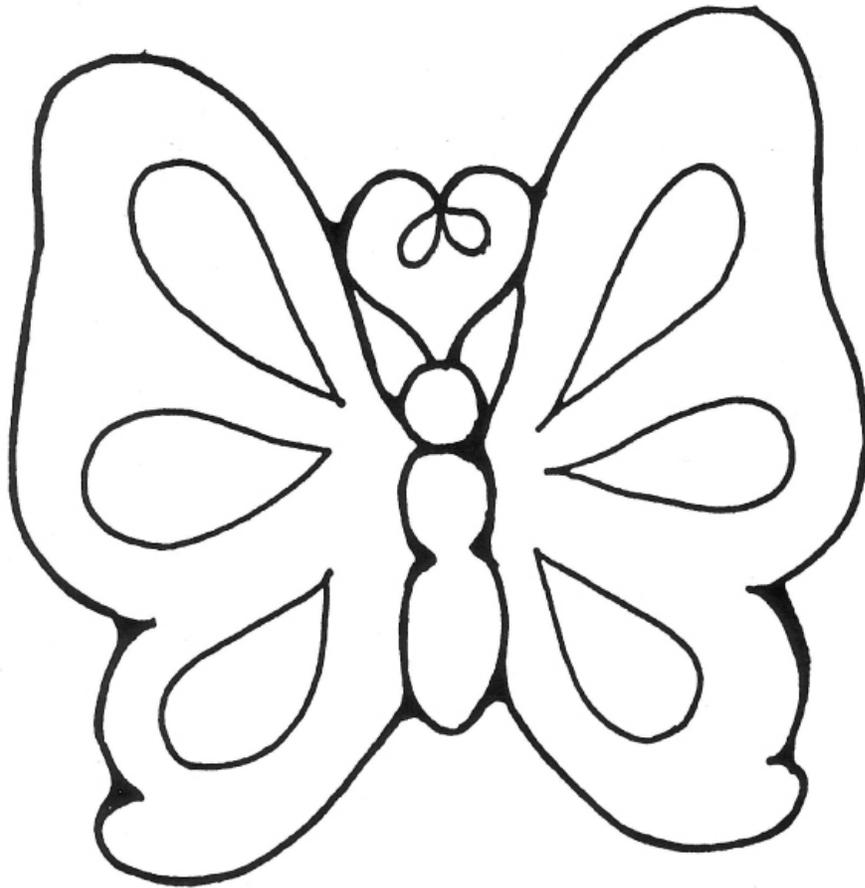
Pysanka Eggs

(for lesson for Easter Day)

Pysanka Eggs are beautifully decorated eggs - visit this website <http://www.learnpysanky.com/>.

A butterfly pattern is attached to this resource section for the tissue paper butterflies. Enlarge as you wish.

Crafts



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THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

2009

Easter Day, Year B



Focus

The Resurrection of Jesus is proclaimed.

Scripture

Acts 10: 34-43 or Isaiah 25: 6-9

Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24

1 Cor. 15: 1-11 or Acts 10:34-43

John 20: 1-18 or Mark 16: 1-8

Other Resources

Jesus, Brian Wildsmith

The Easter Story, Brian Wildsmith

Rechenka's Eggs, Patricio Polacco

Read Aloud Bible Stories, Volume 2, Ella Kay Lindvall

Activities

Tissue paper butterflies

Pysanka eggs

Eggshell mosaics

Flowering the cross

Easter Themes

Easter Day is the principal feast of the Church Year. The season of Easter (or the Great Fifty Days) begins after sundown on Holy Saturday and continues until Pentecost.

The word “Easter” comes from *Eostre*, a Teutonic fertility goddess. In most languages, though, *pascha* in some form or another is used for this day, the root being Passover.

During the Great Fifty Days, we hear stories of Jesus’ resurrection and appearing before his disciples and friends. These events help us know how we are supposed to live today as followers of Christ.

At our baptism we receive new life in Christ and so during this season we think about what baptism means in our lives. We need to pay attention how we keep those promises made at our own baptisms and by us at every baptism we attend.

We begin using “Alleluia” again today, after its time of non-use during Lent.

The Collects used during the Easter season ask Jesus to open new life to all. We ask for reconciliation. We pray for healing. We pray that no one may be excluded from the church.

The liturgical color for Easter is white. The paschal candle is lit at the Easter Vigil or on Easter morning and remains in front of the church for the whole 50 days, reminding us that Christ is the Light of the World and that at our baptisms we receive that light too.

Butterflies are a great symbol of the Resurrection. The seemingly dead-looking cocoon bursts open and a beautiful butterfly comes out. Easter eggs remind us of new life as well. The pomegranate, another Easter symbol, looks rather uninviting on the outside, but when cut open, the beautiful red liquid and seeds promise new life and abundance. Easter lilies are a symbol of purity and beautiful new life. The lily is a symbol also for Mary, Jesus’ mother.

Easter Day Readings

The Collect for Easter Day

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord’s resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit: through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
(BCP p. 222)

Theme for the readings

Acts 10:34-43 - The Centurion Cornelius had been told in a vision that he should ask Peter to come tell him and his family about Jesus. Peter’s answer is the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles.

Isaiah 25: 6-9 - Justice comes when God overcomes the power of death itself.

Psalms 118: 1-2, 14-24 - A song of thanksgiving, rejoicing in the wonderful acts of God; and praising God that the stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

1 Cor. 15: 1-11 - an early summary of the teachings of the passion story; Jesus died, was buried, was raised, and appeared all according to the scriptures.

John 20: 1-18 - Mary Magdalene finds the empty tomb and runs to tell Simon Peter and another disciple that Jesus’ body had been taken from the tomb. They all return to the empty tomb. Mary then sees the Risen Lord.

(or) Mark 16: 1-8 - Three women friends of Jesus came to the tomb early on Sunday and discovered that the huge stone was rolled away, the tomb was empty except for an angel sitting there. The angel told them that Jesus had risen and they ran away scared.

(These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

For Children

Choose either the John or Mark reading for the children. You may wish to dramatize the reading, covering chairs with a blanket to represent the tomb and using a bean bag for the “stone.” Characters could include the angel, Mary Magdalene, Peter, other women or other disciples and of course, Jesus.

If your church buried the Alleluias for Lent, retrieve them and make a banner or in some fashion bring them into the worship for the day.

You may wish to read *Rechenka's Eggs* and then make Pysanka eggs. Directions for making the eggs can be found in the Resource Section of this curriculum.

A butterfly pattern is included in the Resource Section of this curriculum. Photocopy the butterfly pattern and then cut out the white spaces in the wings. Taking small scraps of different colored tissue paper, glue together to fill in the space. Place the completed butterfly on a sheet of clear contact paper and cover with another sheet of clear contact paper. Leaving a 1/4” border all around the butterfly, cut away the excess contact paper. Punch a hole in the head of the butterfly and attach dental floss or string or yarn and hang your butterfly.

Eggshell mosaics are fun to make as well. Blow out the raw eggs and wash the eggs very well. On cardstock, draw an Easter symbol and then fill it in with the crushed eggshells. The piece can either be painted or the eggs can be dyed prior to crushing them and glueing them on the design.

For Youth

Choose the Gospel reading and have the group take turns reading the various parts. They may wish to rewrite the story.

Then using magazines and newspapers, find stories of death and resurrection today. Make a collage. You may want to find words in the printed material that speak to the picture or message of resurrection.

You may like to do one of the activities in the “For Children” as well. The pysanka eggs are an excellent choice.

For Adults

Compare and contrast the accounts of Jesus' resurrection in the four gospels. Which story is most familiar? Why do you think they are different? Is one more appealing to you than the others? In the Season of Easter, a reading from the Acts of the Apostles replaces the Old Testament reading each Sunday.

Each Sunday in the Easter Season we hear stories of people who encounter the Risen Christ. Some immediately believed, others were skeptical. Some had not believed in him prior to his death and resurrection. All had significant life changes. How did they go forth and spread the Good News? How do you?

During the Easter season we are reminded of our baptisms, the promises made on our behalf and the promises that we make at every baptism we attend. Reflect on your baptism and how you live out those five promises.

The Baptismal Covenant (BCP p. 304-305)

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

I will with God's help.

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

I will with God's help.

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

I will with God's help.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

I will with God's help.

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

I will with God's help.



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THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

2009

Second Sunday of Easter, Year B



Doubt no longer, but believe

Focus

We know the risen Christ through faith.

Scripture

Acts 4:32-35

Psalm 133

1 John 1: 1- 2:2

John 20: 19-31

Other Resources

Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge, Mem Fox

The Easter Story, Brian Wildsmith

Jesus, Brian Wildsmith

Fifty Ways for The Fifty Days, Phyllis Vos Wezeman and Jude Dennis Fournier

John for Everyone, Tom Wright

Activities

Handprint banner

Cinquain Poetry

Meditation Piece

The Readings (taken from NRSV)

The Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Readings

Acts 4: 32-35 - The community of the resurrection shares in common with the group.

Psalm 133 - a Song of Ascent, with images of family, Zion and blessings for God's people.

1 John 1: 1-2:2 - walking in God's light, we share with the Father and the Son. If we claim to be part of the Light yet live in darkness, our lives are a lie.

John 20: 19-31 - the story of Jesus appearing to Thomas.

(These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

Thomas

Doubting Thomas, James the Greater, James the Lesser - what names we have given to Jesus' disciples over the years!

The Gospel on the second Sunday of Easter is always the story of Thomas' and Jesus' encounter after the resurrection. We know that Thomas was a Jew and probably a Galilean, but he is never described as a fisherman. He is referred to as "The Twin" and his name in Greek is Didymus.

As with the other apostles there are are great traditions and stories about Thomas' missionary work after Pentecost. Some are undoubtedly true and others are up for conjecture.

We are fairly sure though that Thomas travelled to India, spreading the good news there and building churches across the country. He is a much-venerated saint in the Christian church in India. There is a group of Christians in India who call themselves "The Christians of St. Thomas."

We can identify with Thomas' questions, his needing proof. Thomas' attitude has caused him to be blamed for his lack of faith and thanked for his scepticism which has reassured future generations of believers by his confession.

Thomas is the first person in the Gospels to call Jesus "God."

For Children

The story of “doubting Thomas” is read the second Sunday of Easter each year. Thomas was not with the other disciples when they first met Jesus and he couldn’t believe what they were saying. Jesus appeared again with Thomas present and asked Thomas to feel the marks in his hand, feet and side. Thomas then believed.

Talk about how children recognize Jesus in others and how others recognize Jesus in them - when we are joyful, compassionate, use our special gifts and talents to help others

Make a banner out of felt folded over a dowel rod. At the top of the banner write with permanent marker or cut out felt letters “My Lord and My God.” Provide different colors of felt for children to trace around their hand and then cut it out. Write their name in the palm of the hand. On each finger write a way people see Jesus in them. Glue the hands on the banner and hang in a prominent spot.
(Fifty Ways for Fifty Days)

For Youth

Read the Gospel reading. Ask the group to brainstorm words and phrases in the reading that speak to them.

Write cinquain poems on this story. Cinquain poetry consists of five lines as follows:

- Line One a one word noun
- Line Two two adjectives that describe the noun
- Line Three Three “-ing” words that describe the noun
- Line Four Four words that describe a feeling about the noun
- Line Five One word that is a synonym for the noun.

Example: Jesus
 Arisen, Alive
 Loving, forgiving, willing
 Our God and Lord
 Savior.

You may wish to begin writing one as the whole class and then form smaller groups to write other poems.

For Adults

Read the Gospel for today. What key words or phrases stand out for you?

Tom Wright in *John for Everyone Part 2* writes the following:

John begins his gospel with “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...”. With the story of Thomas later in the Gospel John comes around full circle. Some interesting folks have been met during the course of the gospel. Some believed in Jesus, others had to be persuaded, others had been downright hostile. Thomas is the first person in this book to look directly at Jesus of Nazareth and address the word “God” directly to him. A muddled, dogged disciple, determined not to be taken in, standing on his rights not to believe anything until he’s got solid evidence, confronted by a smiling Jesus who has just walked through a locked door. Of course Thomas is baffled. So are we. The dour, dogged disciple who suggested they might as well go with Jesus if only to die with him, who complained that Jesus hadn’t made things clear enough, just happened to be the one who was somewhere else on the first Easter day, sees the others excited, elated, unable to contain their joy. He’s not going to be taken in. Jesus’ gentle rebuke for Thomas needing to see before he would believe is really more an encouragement to those of us who come later. We are all “blessed” when, without having seen the risen Lord for ourselves, we nevertheless believe in him.

Now read the passage again. Do you see anything in a different light based on the above words from Tom Wright?



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THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

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Easter 3, Year B



Focus

We know Christ in sacramental life.

Scripture

Acts 3: 12-19

Psalm 4

1 John 3: 1-7

Luke 24: 36b-48

Other Resources

Jesus, Brian Wildsmith

Luke for Everyone, Tom Wright

The Discovery Series: A Christian Journey; published by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, Course 4

Activities

Continuing ongoing projects or begin a project from previous lessons.

Scripture (taken from NRSV)

The Collect

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP p. 224)

The Readings

Acts 3: 12-19 - A prophetic speech to the Jews by Peter shares how Jesus is the fulfillment of the scriptures.

Psalm 4 - A profession of faith.

1 John 3: 1-7 - The love that the Father has shown for us in Jesus makes us all children of God; what we become is a mystery.

Luke 24:36b-48 - The risen Lord comes to his disciples; they cannot believe what they see. He invites them to touch him, he eats a piece of fish they had cooked, he explains that what happened is God's intention for him and they are witnesses.

(These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

Easter and the World

The Collects for Easter petition the living power of Jesus to open up new life to all. Our prayers and action can reflect God's desire of reconciliation for all. The Collect today reminds us that the actions of the church and of individual Christians must be judged as to whether they are redeeming or demeaning works and that the healing ministry of the church involves the healing of society as well as of individuals.

(The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

For Children

The gospel reading today gives us another account of Jesus' appearing to his disciples. In other years we would read "The Road to Emmaus" gospel today or Jesus telling the disciples to throw their nets on the other side of the boat to find the nets were so full of fish that they couldn't bring them all in.

In all three stories, Jesus visits with the people about scripture and then eats with them. Today when we celebrate the Eucharist, we remember Jesus and he is with us, just as he had promised at the Last Supper. These people were witnesses.

1. What does it mean to be a witness? God wants us to know these stories, but God also wants us to tell these stories to others. That is being a witness. Sometimes it helps to tell a story with a picture. Draw some pictures of Jesus' appearance to his disciples after his resurrection and use them to tell the story.

For Youth

See the first paragraph in the "For Children."

1. What kinds of witnessing do you encounter on television programs, in the news?
2. Discuss what it means to be a witness.
2. Imagine that you are one of the disciples. How would you tell this story to your friends who were not there?

For Adults

(Taken from *The Inviting Word* Curriculum)

“Witness” can be a scary word for many people - what does it mean? Do I have to stand in front of some people and tell what happened? What if I forget? In studying scripture it is always a good idea to read before and behind the passage in question. If you do that for today’s gospel, you will find that Jesus encountered the men on the road to Emmaus and then found the disciples fishing, catching nothing until he told them to throw the nets on the other side of the boat.

A most effective witness is when someone is themselves, meeting people where they are, telling their own stories. These stories about the impact God’s love has had on them, how they have struggled, how they have experienced hope - that is the Good News.

Watch the segments in Course 4 of the *Discovery Series*. How can we learn to tell our Story? Following Christ means stepping out of our own boundaries and sharing our stories to help transform the lives of others. Our lives today need to reflect God’s action in our lives. God’s story continues to live today in the lives of the faithful and so the story continues. Our stories make the biblical story real.

Think of some of the stories you have heard that have helped shape your faith. What is a most memorable one?

What is a story that you have told that may have helped shape someone else’s faith?



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THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

2009

Easter 4, Year B



Focus

The Risen Christ is known through the ministry of the church modeled by Jesus, the Good Shepherd who loves His sheep and knows them by name.

Scripture

Acts 4: 5-12

Psalm 23

1 John 3: 16-24

John 10: 11-18

Other Resources

Godly Play Good Shepherd and World Communion set

Papa, Do You Love Me?, Barbara Jooose

The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams

Activities

Care bags

I Show My Love banners

Scripture (taken from NRSV)

The Collect

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP p. 224)

The Readings

Acts 4: 5-12 - Peter confronts the Jewish rulers and elders about the authority of the Holy Spirit and Jesus' role as messiah and savior.

Psalm 23 - The shepherd psalm of our pilgrimage of earthly life. The Lord will be our guide and host, and his unfailing love will be with us always.

1 John 3: 16-24 - Love must be genuine and must show itself in action. God has commanded us to believe in his Son Jesus Christ and to love one another as Jesus commanded.

John 10: 11-18 - Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. The Good Shepherd has other sheep (non-Jews) whom he must bring to the Father, and these sheep will also listen to his voice. The Good Shepherd lays down his life of his own free will in obedience to the Father, and he will receive it again.

(These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

MDG's and Easter

During the Season of Easter, our Collects petition the living power of Jesus to open up new life to all. Our prayers and action can reflect God's desire of reconciliation for all.

We particularly can pray for reconciliation in the world and for relief from extreme poverty. A curriculum for children is available through the Diocese of Texas (can be downloaded from www.epicenter.org. Click on Christian Formation and then on Curriculum.) that addresses the specific goals and offers activities and stories to help children (and adults) understand the critical needs of the world. The curriculum would be a useful addition to this Easter curriculum.

We will place particular emphasis on the reading from 1 John for this lesson. In particular, with regards to Millennium Development Goals, 1 John 3: 17 is most appropriate:

"How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's good and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?"

Love is action. How do we connect our actions to love and sacrifice? How may we help others?

For Children

Read the story *Papa Do You Love Me?*. (There are other equally good books - *Mama, Do You Love Me?* or *The Runaway Bunny* to name a few). Then read 1 John 3:16-18.

Provide each child with a large sheet of construction paper. Either label it for them or provide markers for them to label the page "I Love By". Provide a good supply of stickers, markers and magazines. The children may then decorate their banner to show ways they can be loving to others. Younger children may use stickers or pictures to put on their banners.

You may choose to make a gift bag. Provide brown grocery bags, construction paper and magazine pictures of people helping. Make a bag to take home in which you will place items you would like to give to other, such as socks, blankets, toys, toiletries, etc. that can be taken to a shelter or food bank, etc. The bag can be decorated as the child desires. You may like to coordinate a collection of these bags at the church and then take them to a designated shelter, etc.

Please refer to the Millennium Development Goals curriculum for other ideas of helping others in need and showing our love.

For Youth

Read the 1 John 3:16-24 passage. Discuss what love means to you. Is your definition of love different from that described in the passage? What is love? How should I love? I love pizza. How is that love different from love as described in 1 John?

Read *The Velveteen Rabbit* to the group.

Provide magazines, newspapers and large sheets of construction paper. Make collages from photos, articles, words cut from the magazines and papers that depict love. Discuss your collage. How does your image of love correspond with the Velveteen Rabbit? "When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real." says the Skin Horse to the little rabbit.

For Adults

Read the 1 John passage. If you have different versions, read from as many as possible. What key words or phrases stand out for you?

Although the writer of 1 John seems to have been referring to the members of the church in the words about the outward sharing of God's love, we must look at scripture in the social context as well - and in our present-day setting.

Who are the brothers or sisters of the world who are in need because of oppression, deprivation and injustice?

Who is crying out today for the prophetic voice of the Church to speak?

Who in our world today is crying out for the church to act in solidarity and witness?

Close with this quote from Oscar Romero, a bishop of El Salvador who was assassinated in 1980 while saying Mass in the Cathedral. He was an outspoken advocate for the poor and oppressed of the nation and sided with the people against the power structures.

How I would like to engrave this
great idea on each one's heart:
Christianity is not a collection of
truths to be believed,
of laws to be obeyed, of
prohibitions.
That makes is very distasteful.
Christianity is a person,
One who loved us so much,
One who calls for our love.
Christianity is Christ.
(Oscar Romero)



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Easter 5, Year B



*I am the vine—
you are the branches*

Focus

A new community is formed out of the resurrection.

Scripture

Acts 8: 26-40

Psalm 22: 24-30

1 John 4: 7-21

John 15: 1-8

Other Resources

The Carrot Seed, Barbara Krause

Activities

Ivies

green construction paper, green pipecleaners, scissors

Map activity

Scripture (taken from NRSV)

The Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP 225)

The Readings

Acts 8: 26:40 - Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch and proclaims the good news beyond Jerusalem.

Psalm 22: 24-30 - All will participate in the saving grace of God.

1 John 4: 7-21 - The command has come to us from Christ, that if we love God we must also love one another. "God is love" is not a way of defining God; it describes God's redeeming action through Christ.

John 15: 1-8 - Jesus tells his disciples that he is the true vine, those who believe in him are its branches, and his Father is the gardener who prunes and tends the vine. The union of vine and branches speaks powerfully of Christians being part of Jesus and of one another.

(These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

Vines, branches, roots

Think about your roots. Think about roots in general. What purpose do roots have? There are many images in the Bible about roots, plants, pruning, vines. If you know a botanist or someone who is a master gardener or someone who has a vineyard, talk about the effectiveness of roots. We have all watched a cutting being rooted in a jar of water. The roots grow longer and longer and finally the plant has enough ability to sustain itself in the dirt and we put it there. We can no longer see the roots, but we know they are there. We have seen damage to trees and shrubs whose roots have been cut by construction crews, roads. The shrub suffers from the loss of roots. The leaves on the vine's branches and the branches themselves make the plant. All are connected.

We talk about our own roots - our families, our values - those things that root us in our lives - or not. Sometimes these roots can be seen as baggage, and need to be pruned. Trees with strong root systems withstood the ravages of Hurricane Ike better than those with no root system.

We are stronger together than we are alone. Today it is easy to feel alone. Feeling connected is a solution to this alone-ness.

For Children

Read *The Carrot Seed*. Talk about how the roots grow out of the seed and a carrot is formed.

Have some carrot seeds for them to plant in small pots to take home. If you can, some weeks before this lesson, root a carrot in a jar of water so that the children can see the roots forming.

You may rather have a small potted ivy and talk about the stems, the leaves all being connected and how they need one another. You could take the plant out of the pot, wash off the soil so that they could see the roots and then repot it.

Pot a small ivy to take home. Decorate the pot with stickers and hearts.

Close by reading the John 15:1

For Youth

Ask someone to draw a plant with roots, branches, vine. How is the whole connected? What part can you leave out and still have a plant? How does the plant feed itself? How does it withstand wind? No water? Too much water?

Read the John passage one verse at a time (different readers for each verse). Look at the vine that was drawn above. Now have one person read the passage all the way through - very smoothly.

Who is the vine in John?

Who are the branches?

What is the fruit?

Have the class cut out leaves from green construction paper. Affix a long length of green yarn or green pipecleaners to the bulletin board or wall space and then tape the leaves on the vine. Write each person's name on each leaf. Then have class cut out 2 fruit shapes each from colored construction paper and write on the first one one loving thing that they will do this week and on the other "by being rooted in Christ, I gain...". Affix the fruits to the vine.

For Adults

If you have an icon or picture of Jesus and the Vine and the Branches, use this for this lesson.

Get a large map of the world and put on the wall. Have dots and markers so that people can write their name on a dot. Ask them to place their dot on the map where they grew up.

Ask people from the same geographic area to answer these questions and then share with the whole group.

How did this place shape your sense of being rooted today?

What factors in the geographic area, the people, the history help form your identity as a person?

Then ask people to move as directed to areas in the room:

Everyone raised as an Episcopalian stand here.

Everyone raised as other faiths stand there.

Everyone who was not raised in a faith community stand in the middle of the room.

Then discuss

How does our background in or out of a particular faith community shape our sense of being rooted and give us identity today?

Now read John 15: 1-8. Jesus' assertion that "I am the true vine" is one of seven (a biblical number for completeness) "I am" sayings in this Gospel. the phrase "I am" links Jesus to the "I am" name for God in Hebrew. You may recall that in last week's Gospel, Jesus refers to himself as The Good Shepherd.

What connections would the "I am" formula have suggested to John's original readers?

In what ways does this link to Hebrew Scriptures enrich our own understanding of connections through the vine?

Think about people whose lives have touched yours over the years. What did they offer to help you grow? How might you have helped them? How are we all inter-connected?



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THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

2009

Easter 6, Year B

*You shall know they are
Christians by their Love*



Focus

New community formed out the resurrection and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the life of that community is grounded in love.

Scripture

Acts 10: 44-48

Psalm 98

1 John 5: 1-6

John 15: 9-17

Other Resources

Chicken Sunday, Patricia Polacco

The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams

The Hymnal 1982

We Sing of God

Activities

See individual age groups suggestions on page 3-4 of this lesson.

Scripture (taken from NRSV)

The Collect

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP p. 225)

The Readings

Acts 10: 44-48 - The Holy Spirit is given to all who hear the word, including the Gentiles.
Psalm 98 - God's gift of life to the people reveals God's steadfast love and faithfulness.
1 John 5: 1-6 - Faith is the basis for love and becomes the victory that conquers the world.
John 15: 9-17 - Jesus speaks of his great love for his disciples, which has come to him from the Father, and calls upon them to show the same love toward one another. This love has formed his followers into a new community in relationship with Jesus and the Father, no longer servants but friends.

(These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

Easter Hymns

The one who sings prays twice. Music and song are higher forms of praise than the spoken word. The Book of Psalms is Israel's song and prayer book. It represents a collection of hymns and prayers that came out of many generations of Israelites. New Testament writers quote from Psalms more than any other book in the Bible. We have a Psalm reading or singing in our worship services as well. In today's Psalm we are called to sing a new song.

The Hymnal 1982 has a hymn version of Psalm 98. You can find this hymn on page 413. You may wish to compare and contrast the words of the actual Psalm and the words of the hymn. Also Hymn #412 is an excellent hymn to use with this psalm.

An interesting article heard on KUHf recently may generate conversation in the class. It has also been discovered that people suffering from various forms of dementia retain their musical "ear" after many other faculties are lost. To hear or read the article please go to http://app1.kuhf.org/houston_public_radio-news-display.php?articles_id=1239229773.

For Children

Read Psalm 98 to the children. Then read *Chicken Sunday*. What did the children do for Miss Eula? How important was singing in the choir to Miss Eula?

How can we sing and make a joyful noise to the Lord?

Hymn 412 in **The Hymnal 1982** is a wonderful hymn to sing with children. Have them bring in things which make interesting sounds. Play them behind a screen and have the other children identify the instrument. Then play all the things together to “sing to the Lord a new song!” You also may like to make up movements for each thing listed in the hymn - for example, “hammers and saws, baseballs and footballs, sing to the Lord a new song!” Try to make the sounds of hail or wind or rain. Bring in a branch to shake at the point of the hymn that talks about loud rustling dry leaves. The list is endless and you will have a lot of fun doing this. Perhaps this hymn could be sung during your service. (*We Sing of God*)

For Youth

Music is very important for youth. If you have a youth choir or have youth involved in the worship in other ways, spend some time talking about this ministry.

Put a long strip of paper on the wall and have copies of musical notes. Each person can be invited to write on the note something for which they are thankful or would like to offer praise for. Tape the notes on the white paper.

Discuss what kind of music do you listen to and when do you listen to it?

What are some of the topics of the lyrics in the music you like the most?

How does your favorite music make you feel?

Do you sing or make music with instruments? If so, do you like to do this alone or with others?

Write their answers around the notes on the white strip.

Read together Psalm 98. Read together or sing together Hymn 412.

For Adults

Have a variety of taped music available to begin the session. Include some classical religious music, some religious music from other cultures, some popular music of the day, etc.

Discuss the feelings of listening to the various pieces of music. Was it familiar to you?

Talk about your favorite hymns. Why are they your favorites?

Read Psalm 98 together in unison. Try your hand at chanting it. Or sing the version you might sing in your liturgy. Look through the Book of Psalms and find other “hymn” psalms. You may like to look through the hymnal you use and see if you can find Psalms set to music there. Look at Hymn 412 and 413 in **The Hymnal 1982**.

You may wish to invite your organist/choirmaster or a member of the choir to come talk to the class about the ministry of music in your place and how they serve as ministers in their respective roles.



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THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

2009

Easter 7, Year B (The Sunday after Ascension)



The Ascension

Focus

The Church is consecrated as the Body of Christ. We celebrated Ascension Day this past Thursday

Scripture

Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26

Psalm 1

1 John 5: 9-13

John 17: 6-19

Other Resources

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2woTBUD96Tg> - A link to Father Matthew YouTube on The Ascension and Mary Poppins.

Jesus, Brian Wildsmith

Activities

Bubble-blowing

Painted Pictures (Wezeman, page 57-58)

Scripture (taken from NRSV)

The Collects

Collect for Easter 7 -

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen. (BCP p. 226)

Collect for Ascension

Almighty God, whose blessed Son our Savior Jesus Christ ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things: Mercifully give us faith to perceive that, according to his promise, he abides with his Church on earth, even to the end of the ages; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen. (BCP p. 226)

The Readings (For 7 Easter)

Acts 1: 15-17; 21-26 - Peter tells about the death of Judas and the need to choose someone to fill Judas' place among the twelve apostles. They chose Matthias, who had been with them from Jesus' baptism and had witnessed his resurrection.

Psalm 1 - Happy are those who are open to a relationship with God.

1 John 5: 9-13 - God has given us eternal life, and this life is found in Jesus.. If we believe in Jesus we truly have eternal life.

John 17: 6-19 - In his final time with his disciples, Jesus intercedes for them with the Father, through prayer.

(These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

The Readings (For Ascension Day)

Acts 1: 1-11 - The story of Jesus ascending to heaven.

Psalm 47 - Shout to God with a cry of joy

Ephesians 1: 15-23 - Paul's opening encouragement to the Ephesians.

Luke 24: 49-53 - Jesus' last words with his disciples and the promise of a gift.

What is Ascension?

The Feast of the Ascension is celebrated 40 days after Easter and is always on a Thursday. On this day we remember Jesus' return to heaven. He gives his disciples the Great Commission and promises the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them with their ministry.

The Ascension is the third event in the crucifixion-resurrection-ascension.

Jesus left his disciples to return to heaven. He left them with each other to continue to reflect on his teaching and to put into practice all that he had taught them. We are called to do likewise.

For Children

The lesson today is a difficult concept for children to understand. Tell the story of Jesus' ascension in simple language and help them make the booklet as described. Stress that Jesus cared about his friends and followers, that he cares for us today and that we can pray for those we care about.

Have green, blue, purple, brown and other assorted colors of construction paper (regular size), water color paints, brushes, water, containers, stapler.

Tell the story of the Ascension and ask the children to visualize the scenes. Give everyone a green sheet of paper and invite them to paint a picture of Jesus and the disciples on the hillside. Set the pages aside to dry.

Pass out sheets of blue construction paper and suggest that they paint a picture of Jesus ascending into heaven. Set aside to dry.

Choose a color for the next page that will symbolize the feelings of the disciples as they watch Jesus rise out of their sight. Encourage the children to paint something on this page that captures their feelings. Let dry.

Give out pieces of purple paper and ask the children to paint something that reminds them of royalty - crowns, scepters, etc. Let dry.

For the final color, pass out brown paper. Make sure they understand this brown paper symbolizes the earth. Encourage them to paint themselves doing something that carries out Jesus' work on earth. Set aside to dry.

After the pages are dry, put them together in the proper order and staple the sides of the books together. Encourage them to take the booklet home to tell the Ascension story to their family.

For Youth

Read the Gospel of John's account of the Ascension. Look at the other Gospel accounts of this story. How are they alike? Different? Watch the YouTube segment of Father Matthew in which he compares the Ascension with Mary Poppins.

How are we called to live into the teachings of Jesus?

This time after the Ascension was a time of tremendous transition for the disciples. Talk about the following characteristics needed for transition: hope, vision for life, rule of life, focus, willingness to learn, grow, take risks and assume responsibility for failure and success and an attitude of gratitude.

For Adults

Read the various gospel accounts of the Ascension. We couldn't have the resurrection without Ascension and we couldn't have Pentecost without the Resurrection and Ascension. Yet, most of us don't attend church on Ascension Thursday.

Read the entire chapter 17 (John 17). This beautiful prayer of Jesus for his disciples and for himself is often referred to as the High Priestly Prayer. This pattern of prayer is similar to the one prayed by Moses and Joshua.

Discuss what it means to be "of this world."

What associations come to your mind when you hear the word "unity"?

If you were commissioned to do an artistic piece of this reading, what images come to your mind?

Distribute paper and a variety of colored pencils or felt-tipped pens and encourage people to choose an image that speaks to them and draw it. Encourage volunteers to show their art and explain why they chose a particular image.

Adults may enjoy watching the YouTube piece referenced in the Youth section of this curriculum.



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THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS CURRICULUM

2009

Pentecost Year B



Focus

The gift of the Holy Spirit comes to the disciples. It is the birthday of the Church.

Scripture

Acts 2: 1-21

Psalm 104: 25-35; 37

Romans 8:22-27

John 15: 26-27; 16: 4b-15

Other Resources

Fifty Ways for Fifty Days, Phyllis Wezeman

Jesus, Brian Wildsmith

A Child's Book of Prayer in Art, Sister Wendy Beckett

Activities

Flame hats

Wind Chimes

Birthday Cake

Scripture (taken from NRSV)

The Collect

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP p. 227)

The Readings

Acts 2: 1-21 - The experience of the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled them and they were able to tell the people of “every nation under heaven” in their own languages the great things God has done for us.
Psalm 104: 25-35; 37 - A creation hymn through which praise is given for God’s wonderful and benign order, the source of new life on earth.
Romans 8:22-27 - Believers share both suffering and glory with Christ, and the Spirit is our intercessor with God.

John 15: 26-27; 16: 4b - 15 - Jesus’ departure is the means by which he is able to send the Holy Spirit, our Advocate and Guide. (These synopses of the scripture were taken from The New Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education)

Pentecost

Happy birthday, Church!

Today we celebrate the beginning of the Church. The empowering of the disciples on this Pentecost Day actually happened during the Jewish Festival of Pentecost or Weeks (meaning 50 days from the harvest). So Jerusalem was filled with people from all over.

We read in Acts that the Holy Spirit was like a great rushing wind and that flames of fire appeared above the disciples’ heads. After Easter, Pentecost is the second most important feast of the church.

Themes for Pentecost include wind and fire recalling the sound of the rushing wind and the tongues of flame that appeared above the apostles’ heads as they were in the upper room.

The liturgical color for this day is red. Hereafter, the season of Pentecost uses green - the long green growing season of the church.

The main emphasis during the Season of Pentecost (which runs until the first Sunday of Advent) is mission, building and rebuilding the church. We will hear of the travels of the Apostle Paul. Spiritual gifts are another emphasis of the season. The Discovery Series, published by the Diocese has several lessons on spiritual gifts, on the spread of the church and its mission. The season of Pentecost is a good time to not only examine our own gifts but the gifts that others around us have and how we might use all these gifts for the church.

For Children

Using the Beckett book, look at pictures with the children.

Tell the Pentecost story in your own words.

Make hats out of plain red birthday cone hats. Using multicolored curly ribbon, gather about 10 pieces of ribbon that have been cut to about 12 inches and push them through the pointed hole at the top of the hat. Draw down to outside hat and tie all in a knot. Push back to the top of the hat so that the knot is holding the ribbons in place. Then take scissors and curl the ribbon. These are their Pentecost hats.

Invite the children to decorate a sheet cake with squirt-on icing in red, blue, yellow and orange colors. Write Happy Birthday on the cake and share it with the rest of the congregation.

Teach the children how to do breath prayers. Breath prayers are very short prayers that are used as often as you wish. They are simple - Jesus, remember me. Or, God be with me.

For Youth

Read the Pentecost story from Acts. Some churches have this story read in multiple languages. If you have this capability in your class do so. Or, print out the passage in a variety of languages.

Make wind chimes.

Provide 4 inch embroidery hoops for each person. Wrap the hoop with red ribbon and glue together. Get small capiz discs and draw symbols of Pentecost on each shell - fire, doves, words for the fruits of the Spirit or pictures of fruit. Tie on to the hoops with lengths of dental floss. Add small bells or washers to add weight and sound. Then tie 4 lengths of red ribbon onto the hoop and knot the ends and attach to an "s" hook. Have a fan in the room so that the wind chime will ring.

For Adults

Read the Pentecost story. What key words or phrases come to your mind in the reading?
If you have people who can speak several languages, read the Pentecost story together in your own language. You can also download translations to help out.

The reading from Romans talks about a gentler Spirit, the Spirit of Comfort. Holy Comforter is another name for the Holy Spirit. Spend a few minutes becoming relaxed. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and slowly. Pay attention to your breath as it enters and leaves your body. Allow the tensions and stress to flow away. Then have someone slowly read Romans 8: 22-27 aloud. Provide the reading printed so that people can mark phrases or words that especially speak to them.

Have you ever felt so overwhelmed that you could not even communicate with God? Try to recall such a time. What was troubling you? What sustained you, kept you going? Perhaps your unspoken prayer was too deep for words. Imagine your own sighs mingling with those of God's spirit. What from this past experience gives you strength to face other tough situations?

Continue to reflect upon your own experience. Recall a time when you felt at peace, comfortable, with yourself and the world. In your imagination return to that time and place. Identify what you could see, hear, smell, touch, taste. How can these images help you be aware of God's spirit when you are in need of comfort?

In the Romans passage Paul uses the image of creation's groaning in pain - labor pains - new life is about to begin. Where in your life today are you groaning? How might your recollections sustain you now? Is it possible that the pain signals new life coming?

Pray the following prayer

Come down, O Love divine,
Seek out this soul of mine
And visit it with Your own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, Within my heart appear,
And kindle it, Your holy flame bestowing. (The Hymnal 1982, #516)

(From Pentecost Sunday Lesson, *The Inviting Word*)



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Christian Formation
Episcopal Diocese of Texas

BRINGING THE LESSONS HOME

2009

What is this curriculum?

Goals

- " The curriculum is designed for children K-5th Grade, Youth 6-12th grade and Adults. Younger children can listen to the Bible story and do a simpler art response.
- " To provide something can be used in the home

How to use the curriculum

- " The curriculum can also be used in the homes during the week with the Bible study continuing during the week. The children's literature selection could also be read at home during the week. Some families may have some of these books at home, or can check them out of the local library or school library.

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We Sing of God, A Hymnal for Children, Nancy Roth
The Discovery Series: A Christian Journey, The Episcopal Diocese of Texas
Luke for Everyone, Tom Wright
John for Everyone, Tom Wright
Revised Common Lectionary, Episcopal Edition, St. Mark's Press
The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams
Chicken Sunday, Patricia Polacco
Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge, Mem Fox
Rechenka's Eggs, Patricia Polacco
The Easter Story, Brian Wildsmith
Jesus, Brian Wildsmith
Read Aloud Bible Stories, Volume 2, Ella Kay Lindvall
Fifty Ways for Fifty Days, Phyllis Wezeman and Jude Dennis Fournier

Activities for Home

For Home Devotions

For the Great 50 Days make a center for your home devotions. You may wish to light a small tealight in a glass votive and place it on a white mat. Include some Easter eggs (probably plastic or pysanka eggs). A flower would be nice as well. Make a time for devotions, if only for a minute or two. The devotion printed below is appropriate for the morning, but could be used in the evening as well. You can choose from other devotions in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Taken from *The Book of Common Prayer* pg. 137)

In the Morning

Light the candle if you are using it.

Pray together Psalm 51:

Open my lips, O Lord,
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
Give me the joy of your saving help again
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be
for ever. Amen.

A Reading

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1
Peter 1:3

A Song to the Lamb, (BCP p. 93)

Splendor and honor and kingly power
are yours by right, O Lord our God,
For you created everything that is,
and by your will they were created and have
their being;

And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain,
for with your blood you have redeemed for
God,
From every family, language, people, and nation,
a kingdom of priests to serve our God.
And so, to him who sits upon the throne,
and to Christ the Lamb,
Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor,
for ever and for evermore.

Prayers for ourselves and others may follow.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Collect

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us, with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Activities for home

You might like to make pysanka eggs at home.

For directions please visit this website:

<http://www.learnpysanky.com/>.

Rechenka's Eggs by Patricia Polacco is a wonderful book about a Russian woman and her pysanka eggs. The children in *Chicken Sunday* also make pysanka eggs.

You might like to make an Easter Garden at home. Find a good space and make an empty tomb. Tombs can be made from flower pots on their side with a large rock placed to one side. Small buckets can serve the same purpose. Place blooming plants around the "tomb". Some churches make very elaborate displays of the empty tomb.

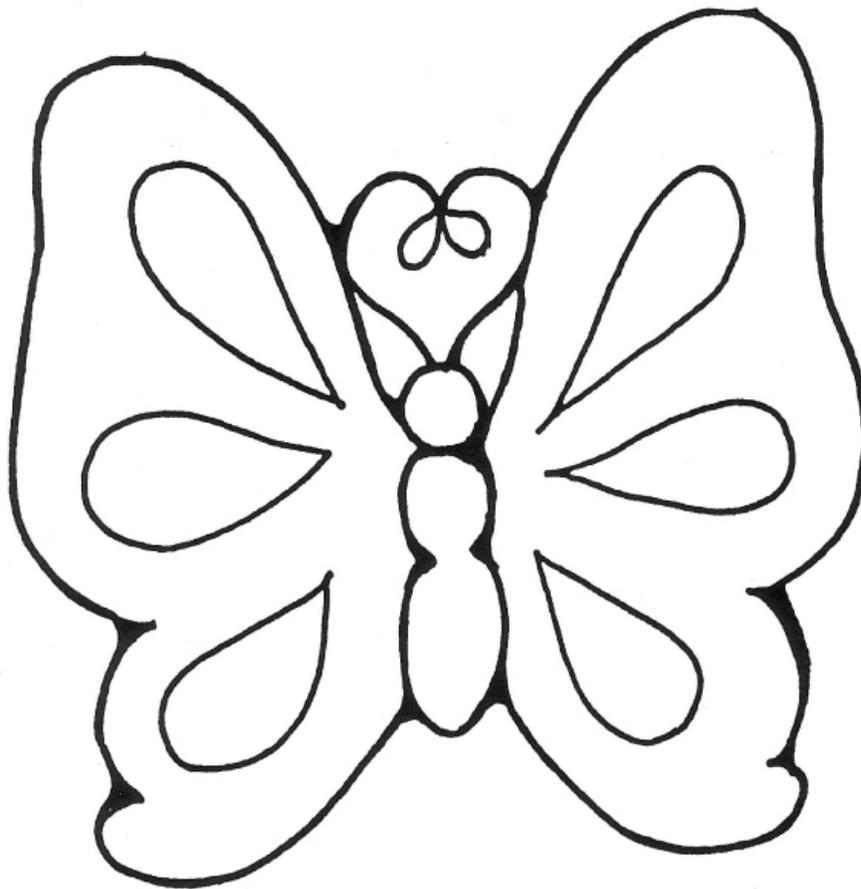
Butterflies are a wonderful symbol of the resurrection. Using the butterfly shape on the next page, cut out butterflies for each family member. Using fabric scraps, notions, sequins, beads, etc. make beautiful butterflies and place them on your worship mat. You can also make butterflies with colored tissue paper glued onto the butterfly shape. Coloring the pattern provided also makes beautiful butterflies. Perhaps you can send some butterflies to family members or service men and women to whom you send packages.

One of the lessons suggests making a gift bag to take home. During the week you are encouraged to place items such as socks, small toys, books, toiletries, etc. When the bag is full take it to your church for distribution to a selected place or take it yourself to a women's shelter, homeless shelter, Salvation Army, etc. If you made butterflies you could put one in the bag.

The "I am the Vine" lesson suggests planting a small plant to take home. You may like to plant an ivy or other vine and watch it grow. Look at it carefully. Are you a branch or a leaf?

You might find time each week to read the Gospel for the previous Sunday. Faith formation begins in the home and even with our hectic schedules we still spend more time at home than at church. So it makes sense to continue our study at home. Find examples in newspapers or magazines of resurrection stories, stories of love, stories of mission. Talk about these as a family.

Activities for home



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