

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fourth Sunday in Easter
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Acts 2: 42-47

In the early church Easter was the day for Baptisms. The festival season of Easter marks the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost. It is a time for reflecting on the meaning of our Baptism and the other sacraments. The church calls this process of studying the mysteries of the church mystagoga. We explore what it means to be the Body of Christ and members of His church and how we are to live this out in the world today. During the Easter season the Old Testament readings are replaced with selections from the *Book of Acts*. We hear about the sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord so that we too may know how to proclaim the good news of Jesus with similar joy and conviction.

A Notation for this week's Scripture

The time of the church's beginnings was one of intense, frequent and observable activity by the Holy Spirit. Although they were aware that something new was happening, the early followers of Jesus still considered themselves good Jews. They still prayed daily in the Temple. What was new was their perception of themselves as a unified group bonded together by grace. These two short paragraphs provide us with a beautiful blueprint for church life. Teaching, praying, sharing with those in need, fellowship, and breaking bread together were all the elements needed for a joyful communal life. Fellowship implies that they lived out the teachings together. The breaking of the bread is the continual reenactment of the historical event of Jesus' life and sacrifice as was modeled for us at the Last Supper. The early Christian lifestyle was marked by power. God's people, then and now, have the power to transmit to others discernable acts of grace, mercy and healing. These are genuine, tangible signs and wonders. People who observed them were overcome with awe or fear because they realized the early Christians had the power of God to transform and heal lives.*

Theme: Showing Christ to Others

Before Class

You will need food, cups, napkins, and plates for a shared feast. Good choices can include cut up fruit, crackers, cheese, cookies, juice or water. For the art project you will need a large sheet of paper or a poster board.

Get the feast ready for distribution by dividing it up so that each child only has one component of it. For example, one child gets cups, one the juice, divide up the crackers or fruit if necessary. Draw a simple outline of a butterfly on the large paper or poster board. Each child will need one piece of white paper, one piece of colored paper [different color for each child], and a glue stick.

Beginning

Review the Easter greeting.

Teacher: *Alleluia! The Lord is risen.*

Children: The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, fill our hearts with awe and wonder at your power to change our lives and make them better. Amen

The Story

What an exciting time to be a follower of Jesus! The people that Peter baptized were so happy and full of joy. No one had to be lonely or afraid or hungry anymore. Every day the new followers went to the Temple together to pray. They studied with the apostles to learn more about Jesus. Everyone shared everything they had. If someone had a lot of extra things he would sell them, so that the community could buy food and clothes for the poor. Many neighbors and friends would share meals together where they would remember what Jesus did and said in his life on earth and especially at the Last Supper. This is something like what we do at communion on Sunday. Every day and in every way they praised God and showed their gratitude for Jesus by trying to live good lives. Peter and the other eleven apostles were filled the power of God's Holy Spirit.

They were able to heal people and do other amazing signs and wonders that pointed to God's awesomeness. Everyone who saw them was filled with awe or fear. Every day the Lord brought more people into the community of followers of Jesus. A church is not a building. It is the people who pray, worship and work for God together. This church was growing.

The Agape Meal

Let's see what it might have felt like to share one of those early meals. Let's call each other Brother and Sister [like Brother Eric, Sister Jane] because we are all part of God's family. Distribute a portion of the feast to each child; saying something like Brother Joe these cups belong to you, Sister Kate, these are your cookies. To get the idea of sharing started say, "I really would like something to drink but I don't have a cup or anything to put in it. I wonder what those early followers of Jesus would do." See what happens. Make the point that by sharing everyone gets what they need and there is enough for everyone.

Tell the children that at these early meals people would tell stories about something they heard or remembered that Jesus said or did. Ask if anyone has something to share. You could start it off by saying I remember Jesus saying, "I am the good Shepherd .I know all my sheep by name." Listen to the children's stories.

Tell the children it was the custom to pray together at these meals. Teach two simple ways to start a prayer. Have some children start with *Thank you Lord for*..... Others can start with *We praise you Lord for*..... Make sure everyone has a turn. End the meal with a hymn or song the children are familiar with.

Option Two: Butterfly Art Project

Explain that butterflies are symbols of new life. Ask if they know why. Explain the change from caterpillar to butterfly. Tell them that Easter, Jesus' resurrection from the dead, brought all of us a new life in Christ, where nothing can separate us from the love of God. Hang up the large butterfly outline. Hand out one piece of white and one piece of colored paper [a different color

for each child as far as your supply goes], and a glue stick. Call the children by the name of their color [Brother Blue, Sister RED]. Say you can each make your own butterfly or we can make one the way the early followers of Jesus would have. Try to get them to notice that each individual butterfly would only be one color. The large group butterfly would be multi colored. Do not force anyone who insists on making his own to do the group one. Instruct the children to tear up the colored paper into smaller pieces. These will be glued onto the larger or the small butterflies. The group working together may have an easier time if the large butterfly outline is on a table. If some ingenious child suggests they trade with one another honor that, but still allow those who wish to make the larger butterfly to do so. Call attention to the idea that although it is one butterfly, every color is unique or distinct, but part of the whole. Hang the finished work with a sign that says, "WE HAVE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST".

Closing

Have the children return any supplies the room and clean up their work space. Return to the story circle. Say this closing poem:

Our time together is almost done
I hope you had a bit of fun.
May God's blessings go with you.
Show His love in all you do.
So now on this special day
Let us bow our heads and pray.

Closing Prayer

Dear Risen Lord, thank you for our community of followers of Jesus. Help us show others God's power by how we learn, pray and work together. Amen

Easter Lesson Plans for Young Children written by Trudy Ardizzone, 2011

Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2014 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.