

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

Scripture: Acts 10:34-43

In the early church Easter was the day for Baptism. 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 on this week's Scripture

In the Book of Acts we learn the stories of the early church, what happened to the apostles after Jesus ascended to heaven, the trials and persecutions they faced for spreading the Good News, and the work of the Holy Spirit in emboldening the apostles and inspiring new converts. In the next seven weeks we will be hearing accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus through the eyes of his apostles as they attempt to share Jesus' message. In today's story Cornelius, a Roman centurion [commander of a hundred soldiers] has been told in a vision to find Peter and bring him to his home to speak to Cornelius' family and friends. Peter agrees to go. Peter tells the story of Jesus, his death and resurrection, as good news for all. This story marks the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles.

Theme: Alleluia, Christ is Risen

Jesus is risen from the dead! This is the most joyous day of the church year. Easter brings us everlasting life because of Jesus' resurrection. God's love is stronger than anything, even death and because of this we do not have to be afraid of death. Easter is about new life, new possibilities, and new ways of doing things. This is the good news and it is for everyone. God does not play favorites.

Before Class

Gather some traditional Easter symbols for children such as eggs, bunnies [stuffed or chocolate], butterflies, lilies, a flowered cross. On a board or large pad write "Good Words to Know". Underneath the heading write: *Easter, New Life, Resurrection, Alleluia, Apostle, Witness, Proclaim.*

For the Easter Celebration, you will need large pieces of paper (poster board or easel paper would be great), colored chalk, crayons, markers, tissue paper, glue sticks, construction paper, Easter egg shapes of paper, and any other art supplies you may want to have for the children to create their Easter Posters to decorate the room.

Beginning

Review the Easter greeting.

Teacher: *Alleluia! The Lord is risen.*

Children: *The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Show the Easter symbols you have assembled. Explain that we use them to celebrate Easter because they are symbols of new life. New life is what Jesus gave us that first Easter. Show the words on the list. Ask what the children's understandings of New Life, Easter and Resurrection might be. Explain that Resurrection means that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning to show us that nothing, not even death, could separate us from God's love for us. Because of this we have New Life. This means we live differently knowing we do not have to be afraid and knowing God will always love us. Ask is this good news? Should we share this good news with others? Today we will hear how Jesus' apostle [someone who follows Christ] Peter shared the good news.

Opening Prayer

Dear Jesus, help us to hear and share the good news of your love for us. Amen.

The Story

Today's story comes from a part of the Bible called The Book of Acts. These are the stories about how the church got started. These are the times after Jesus went back to heaven. It was up to Jesus' apostles to tell the stories of what Jesus did for us so that the good news would spread around the world. In those days God's Holy Spirit was speaking to a lot of people in their hearts and in their dreams. There was a Roman soldier named Cornelius. Cornelius and his family did not know anything about Jesus or God. The Holy Spirit told Cornelius to go find Peter and bring him to his house. Cornelius obeyed.

Before Cornelius got there, Peter had a dream about all kinds of food coming down from the sky. He heard God say to him, "All my food is good and alright for everyone to eat." Peter understood that it was ok for him to share a meal with people who weren't Jewish and didn't keep the same food laws. This means that God wanted Peter to share the good news stories of Jesus with everyone, even the Gentiles [people who weren't Jewish.] So Peter knew he had to go with Cornelius to his house to speak to his family and friends.

Peter began by telling them that God doesn't have favorites. Everyone, no matter where they were from, could be with Him, if they were willing to respect God and behave in a good way. He told them all about Jesus. Peter said he was a witness to Jesus' life and death and miracles and teachings. Now it was Peter's job to share the news with everyone. Jesus was sent by God to be Lord of all. Everyone who believes in Jesus will be forgiven for bad things they have done and can live with Him forever in heaven when they die. This is the good news story that Peter told Cornelius and his family and friends. This is the news that opened their hearts and changed their lives. Now they were followers of Jesus too.

Easter Celebration

Invite the children to join you in an Easter Celebration. Invite them to use the materials you have for them to decorate their Easter Posters to hang around the room. These posters will stay up for

the entire Easter season as a reminder of what it is we are celebrating. Remind them of the Easter Symbols you shared with them so they can use those symbols on their posters if they wish.

If you have food or special snacks to share with the Easter Celebration, put them out after most of the children are done with their posters.

Game: “Jesus Calls You to Be His Own”

Ask have you ever been left out of something or not picked to be on a team or play a game? How did you feel? How do you think God feels about that? Let’s play a game about being included. Make a standing circle. Choose one child to be Peter. Peter sings to the tune of “Oh, Have You Seen the Muffin Man”:

*Jesus calls you to be his own,
To be his own. To be his own
Jesus calls you to be His own
No matter who you are.*

Peter walks around the outside of the circle singing and taps a child on the shoulder. They join hands and walk and sing and the second child taps a third, and so on until once again there is only one circle and everyone is in it.

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for the Good News of your never-ending love for us. Help us to share your Good News and love with our families, friends and others. Amen

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