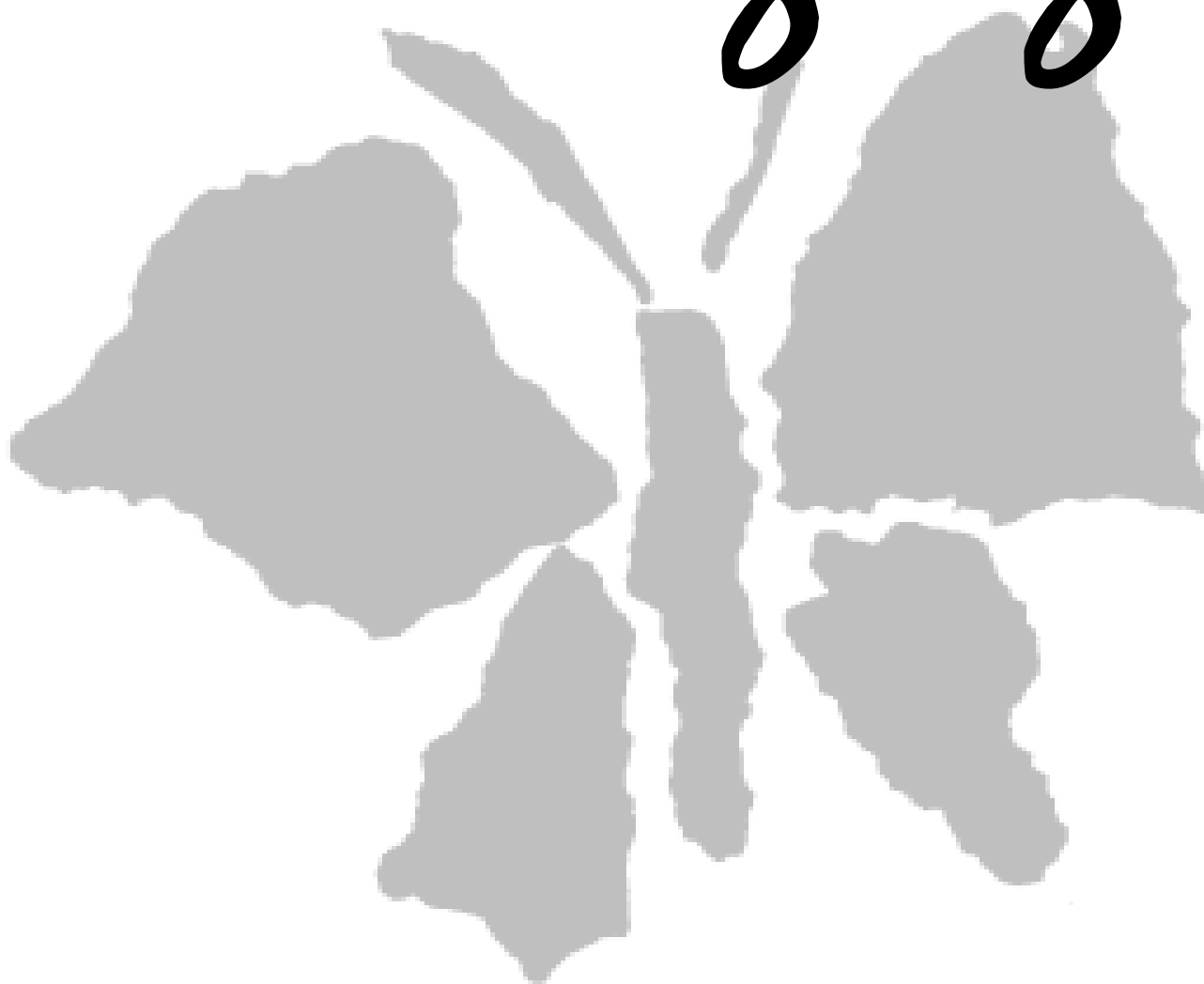


# Lenten Longings



*Worship Resources for the Creative Church--Lent & Eastertide 2010*  
Sacred Seasons, a quarterly series of worship packets with a peace and justice emphasis,  
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# Sacred Seasons:

## Creative Worship Tools for Your Church

*These unique worship resource packets are available for the liturgical year, three packets a year for \$100 (\$125 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$50 (\$65 outside of the US).*

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# Lenten Longings

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## A word about this packet

This worship packet was produced, as are all of our resources, with a great deal of love and prayer, and, we confess, a certain amount of obsession. We want you to be able to use these contents to enhance your congregation's Lent and Eastertide experience while keeping their eyes focused on our true mission.

The art for this issue was collected from our large and generous group of artists.

While going through the Seeds archives for Lent & Eastertide resources, we came across "Upside-Down Kingdom," Mary Meadows's wonderful Lenten curriculum for children—which has lain hidden for a good many years. We decided that our longtime subscribers would enjoy seeing an update, and that many of you will enjoy it for the first time.

Speaking of our archives, we strongly encourage you to check out the Lenten services listed, as well as the Easter dramas and children's dramas. Please contact us if you have trouble retrieving any of these. They are posted for your use, free of charge.

We are grateful to Charley Garrison for pulling together the "Lessons & Hymns for Easter," which we think would be good for either a vigil or a sunrise service.

As always, we have tried to pull together worship resources and information to help you lead your congregation in a meaningful Lent and Eastertide, to respond to the darkness of our world with hope and creativity. The material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely and share with others as the need arises. May we together bring the news of incredible hope to a world of fear and struggle. —*Gratefully, The Staff and Council of Stewards*

# Lent & the Practice of Gratitude

by Katie Cook

I've probably written this somewhere before, but an important fact of my life is that at least part of my Lenten discipline each year is decided by high school students. Donna Kennedy and I have taught (or been designated as teachers; we learn as much from them as they do from us) older youth in Sunday school for as long as I can remember.

Each year we decide upon a corporate discipline for Lent, and most of us choose another personal discipline as well. In years past, we have given up things like chocolate, caffeine, soft drinks, shopping, television and meat on Fridays. We have pledged to pray for each other daily at a designated time.

We have tried to give up bad attitudes. One memorable year, two of them decided to give up bad attitudes toward each other. In 2008, we decided to give up whining. All that seemed to accomplish, however, was to show us how negative we were. By Easter, we were all depressed and disgusted with ourselves.

But we felt that we were close to an important breakthrough, so we tried again in 2009, approaching it this time from a different angle. We kept gratitude journals. Donna bought small spiral notebooks for us, and every day we wrote down things for which we were grateful. By Easter, we were all in a much better frame of mind—and we had stopped complaining so much.

I think we had made a good Lenten journey. Truly difficult and painful things had happened to some of us during that time. We were all (yes, including the students) operating under a great deal of stress, but the discipline of naming the good things had given us a new strength and a new spirit.

The actor Johnny Depp recently told a group of students in New York, "Every breath is a gift." We

should get this framed in needlepoint and put it where we can see it all day, every day.

Deborah Harris, who wrote some of the material for this packet and who proofread every page (and if there's a mistake, it's because I messed it up again), wrote meditations for her church for Advent 2009. As she pondered what to write, she kept saying that the concept of gratitude should permeate all of those weeks of hope and peace, joy and love. She said that she kept returning to the feeling that Advent should begin with thanksgiving.

And so should Lent. Back when the Council of Stewards and staff were brainstorming for this packet, we chose "Lenten Longings" as the theme, because we saw and experienced, all around us, profound levels of fear and anxiety. The number of people in need, in the US and around the world, has hit a new pinnacle. Violence seems to have exploded in every corner of the globe, including our own corners.

The people who read and use Seeds materials work in programs that assist hungry people. We work in agencies that advocate for hungry people. We try to lead our congregations to have compassion for people in need. We have watched this new food crisis in disappointment and disbelief.

Many of us feel like throwing up our hands. Has our work not counted for anything? How can we go on, when all of our work seems to have been swept away? I am convinced that something like those gratitude journals will give each of us the fuel to stay with this quest.

Years ago, Dan McGee and I wrote an article for *Seeds Magazine* called "ChristStyle." (You can find it on the Seeds web site.) It became a seminar that we led in a number of churches in various forms. The concept, which sprang from Dr. McGee's ethical studies, was that the lifestyle of Jesus Christ included eight major ways of being in the world. The first of these was gratitude.

Yahweh says through Moses in the book of Exodus, "I am the Lord your God who delivered you from bondage—therefore, you will keep these commandments."

Paul writes to the church at Rome, "Here are the things that God has done for us, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ—therefore, present yourselves as living sacrifices."

Maybe it's not so much as a prescription as a statement of attitude. Maybe it means if you acknowledge these things that God has done for you, you will follow God's commands, you will take up the way of Christ.

We have almost seven weeks. Let's try it.

# A Treasury of Lent and Eastertide Resources from Seeds

The *Sacred Seasons* archives, which you can find at [www.seedspublishers.org](http://www.seedspublishers.org), hold a number of useful Lenten resources that may complement the materials in this packet. Below is a catalogue of some of the ones we thought you will find helpful.

## Preparing for Lent

"Journeying from Anguish to Joy: A Youth Activity for Lent & Easter" (K. Cook, *Journey into Hope*, Lent 1998, page 5)

"Fasting for Lent: The Modern Relevance of an Ancient Ritual," (K. Sehested, *How Can We Sing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land?*, Lent 2003, page 5)

## Ash Wednesday

"An Ash Wednesday Service of Worship" (J. Ballenger, *Journey into Servanthood*, Lent 1999, page 6)

"Ashes from Our Lives: An Ash Wednesday Idea for Youth (and Others)" (K. Cook, *Glorious Quest*, Lent 2001, page 3)

"Ashes & Foolishness: An Ash Wednesday Service for Youth and Other Imaginative People," (K. Cook, *Fools for Christ*, Lent 2002, page 8. See below for the "matching" Maundy Thursday service.)

"What Does It Mean to Be Me? A Guided Meditation for Lent," (K. Cook, *Seeking the Face of God*, Lent 2004, page 5)

## Holy Week

"Journey into Darkness: A Tenebrae of the Seven Last Sayings of Christ" (*Journey into Hope*, Lent 1998, page 10)

"Youth Activity: A Drama Series for Holy Week," (J. Ballenger, *Journey into Servanthood*, Lent 1999, page 13)

"Communion of Holy Fools: A Service for Maundy Thursday," (K. Cook, *Fools for Christ*, Lent 2002, page 17. See above for "matching" Ash Wednesday service.)

Ten Stations of Suffering: A Holy Week Activity for Youth and Others," (C. McKeever, *Seeking the Face of God*, Lent 2004, page 9)

"Walking the Labyrinth: A Holy Week Meditation Guide," (E. Campbell-Reed, *What Does It Mean to Follow This Man?*, Lent 2006, page 13)

"Easter Walk: A Holy Week Drama for Children" (Editor's note: One of our most popular creations, the Easter Walk is a series of dramatic scenes. Children walk from scene to scene with baskets and collect tokens from each witness to help them remember the stories. The original can be found in *Crossroads*, Lent 2000, page 15, but several monologues have been added. The updated collection is posted separately on the Seeds web site.)

## Easter Sunday & Eastertide

"Drama for Easter Sunrise" (*Journey into Hope*, Lent 1998, page 12)

"A Monologue for Easter Morning" (K. Cook and D. B. Pate, *Journey into Servanthood*, Lent 1999, page 20)

"Practicing Resurrection: A Service of Word and Table for Eastertide," (D. Ripley, *How Can We Sing the Lord's Song in a Foreign Land?*, Lent 2003, page 18)

"With Our Own Eyes: Seven Monologues," (Monologues based on seven resurrection appearances in the New Testament, C. Goolsby, K. Scott and K. Cook, *Extravagant Love*, Lent 2009, page 19)



art courtesy of Seventh & James Baptist Church

# Ten Ideas for a Simpler, More Meaningful Lent & Eastertide

—adapted from *Alternatives for Simple Living*

**1** Plan ahead. Instead of going on auto-pilot, hold a family meeting to decide what the group really wants to do and who's going to do what. Consider using a study guide from your denomination or the annual "40 Days to Better Awareness" calendar from the Seeds Hunger Emphasis packets.

**2** Focus on relationships with family, friends and other people, and with God, rather than on "stuff."

**3** Focus on symbols of resurrection, rather than bunnies, eggs, candy or new clothes. Consider moving such "fertility" celebrations to the first day of Spring, March 21st; Earth Day, April 22nd or May Day, May 1st.

**4** Avoid debt and gluttony. Refuse to be pressured by advertising to overspend or overeat. Prepare a meal of (mostly) locally produced food—planned, prepared and cleaned up by the whole household.

**5** Avoid stress. Give to yourself. Don't assume that things have to be the same way they've always been. Make changes slowly but persistently. Don't try to change everything and everybody all at once. The resistance may make you feel defeated and lonely.

**6** If you need to give gifts, give appropriate ones. Get to know the recipient. Give what they want to receive, not what you want to buy. Give children one thing they really want, rather than many gifts. Set a price ceiling. Put gifts out shortly before opening them. Then take turns opening them, not all at once, so that each gift can be admired and each giver thanked.

**7** Give alternative gifts. Give at least 25 percent of what you spend to the needy—individuals or groups locally, nationally or internationally.

**8** Give of yourself, not just things: a coupon book for future services (such as baby-sitting or an "enchanted evening") or something baked, sewn,



art by Rebecca S. Ward

handmade, composed, etc. Consider more time for volunteering rather than entertainment. If you need to give cards, make your own.

**9** If you need to buy gifts and clothing, buy them from developing countries at alternative gift markets, not from commercial importers, so that the artisans receive a fair price for their work. Avoid mass-produced knickknacks, novelties and toys. Look for fair-trade stickers or do research on fair-trade organizations like the Fair Trade Federation ([www.fairtradefederation.org](http://www.fairtradefederation.org)), Ten Thousand Villages ([www.tenthousandvillages.com](http://www.tenthousandvillages.com)) or SERRV International ([www.serrv.org](http://www.serrv.org)).

**10** Choose simplicity of decoration over extravagance. For example, one modest, well-placed display instead of dozens of lilies in church or home. If you can, avoid plastic and imported flowers and trimming.

—*Alternatives for Simple Living* is an international, nonprofit organization that "equips people of faith to challenge consumerism, live justly and celebrate responsibly." Their most widely read resource is the family-oriented Christmas booklet "Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?" For more information, go to [www.simpleliving.org](http://www.simpleliving.org).

# Upside-Down Kingdom

## A Lenten Curriculum for Children

by Mary T. Meadows

### General Instructions and Tidbits

This Bible study was developed for a multi-age, small group of children for use during a six-week Lenten series. The lesson plan presumes a 50-minute work period. It is based loosely on Donald B. Kraybill's *Upside Down Kingdom*, published by Herald Press.

This book is designed for Bible study with discussion questions at the end of each chapter. Ideally, the adults could work through Kraybill's book while the children study some of the same stories on their own!

Please feel free to use these lessons as you find them helpful. If you have more time or older children, you may want to try more complicated art projects. You may also want to work on a specific piece of music. For example, the Ghana folksong "Jesu, Jesu" would work well with these lessons and verses could be learned over time. It can be found in the *Chalice Hymnal*, among other hymnals.

Most of the other music I suggest in these lessons I have learned over the years from others. Occasionally, I actually find the music in a songbook. If you don't know a song and would like more information, please feel free to e-mail me at [mtmeadows@oberlin.edu](mailto:mtmeadows@oberlin.edu).

The Ken Medema CD *Just Kiddin' Around* has many wonderful stories and story songs. It can be obtained through Brier Patch Music ([www.kenmedema.com](http://www.kenmedema.com)). It is a worthwhile resource for children and adults alike!

I hope that you have as much fun with these lessons as I have with the children I've worked with. Enjoy!—mtm



### Week 1: Upside Down Birthday

#### Gathering Time

10 minutes

(Sing a gathering song together. Example: "Ha-la-lah" or "Peace Like a River." Introduce yourself and

invite the children to introduce themselves by finishing the following sentence: My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and if I could walk upside down I would \_\_\_\_\_.)

#### Introduction

5 minutes

What is right-side up and upside down?

#### Experiment

- Stand on heads
- Spin around and then look at the world
- Show a picture/object and turn it upside down

#### Story Time

10 minutes

*The Upside-Down Birthday* (Luke 2:1-14)

Now we're going to sing an "Upside-Down" song. (Sing "Away in a Manger.") Who can tell me the story of Jesus' birth? (Let the kids tell pieces of the story. If they are slow starting, remind them of the Christmas story. Prompt as necessary.)

How is Jesus an important person? (Let the children talk about who Jesus is—King, Savior, Messiah, friend, etc. Explain words like Messiah—one who saves.)

How would *you* expect a king to come into the world? (Have kids throw out ideas...you may ask some of the questions below.)

Where would you expect a king to come from? (A palace, a rich place)

What kind of clothes would he have? (Royal, expensive)

What kind of parents? (A king/queen, etc.)

How old would he be when he was king? (A grown-up)

Who would be told about the king first? (Important people)

How did Jesus come into the world? (He was born as a human)

Where did he come from? (Bethlehem, a small town—a stable, manger—a feeding trough for animals)

What kind of clothes did he have? (swaddling clothes)

What kind of parents? (Peasants—father a skilled laborer)

How old was he when he was called king? (A baby)

Who was told about Jesus first? (Shepherds, people who were considered crooks)

What do you think God was trying to say by sending Jesus as God did?

### **Project**

15 minutes

When God sent Jesus, God saw a lot of things God didn't like. People were fighting. Some people were very rich while most people were very poor, and the rich weren't helping the poor. In the Temple, which was a little like our church today, the religious rulers made up lots and lots of rules and told people that you had to follow all the rules exactly right or you weren't a Godly person.

Today I'd like us to create an Upside-Down world. I want you to think about what would make a world Rightside Up in God's eyes, but maybe Upside Down to what we sometimes think is important. We'll make a mural so that we can work together to make our Upside Down world.

(Prompt for ideas if needed to get started. You could use markers, crayons for mural. Or, if you have magazines available, let them cut out pictures, words, etc. If your children are younger, it would be helpful to have useful magazine pictures already cut out.)

### **Prayer**

5 minutes

(Talk about prayer.) What is prayer? (talking to God, asking God to help us, etc.) What are different ways we can pray? (in church, being quiet, etc.) Today we are going to pray by singing a song and using our hands to help us. (Teach "Spirit of the Living God" with motions. Once learned, ask children to sing once more, this time with their eyes closed.)

### **Closing**

5 minutes

(Let kids shout out something learned today. Have the children talk about one "upside-down" thing they can do this week.)



## *Week 2: The "Happys"*

### **Gathering Time**

10 minutes

(Sing together, repeating some songs from last week.)

### **Looking Back**

5 minutes

(Talk about last week's session.) How was Jesus's birth Upside Down to what people expected? (You may want to let them look at things Upside Down again, as in the first session. Ask children if they did anything Upside Down in the last week.)

### **Story Time**

10 minutes

*The "Happys" (Matthew 5:1-12)*

In today's lesson, Jesus talks about people who are happy. But some of the people this song describes as happy may not seem like the type of people we think of as happy.

Do we usually think of someone who is poor as happy? What do we usually think about someone who is poor? (Let the kids throw out ideas.)

What about someone who is sorrowing? Do you know what it means to sorrow? It is like being very sad.

What about people who show mercy? When they help other people are they doing it so someone will help them?

We're going to hear a song based on these things that Jesus said to the people he was teaching. In this song, we'll sing "Happy are the ones," but sometimes you hear people say "Blessed are the ones." Sometimes people refer to this part of Jesus's teachings as the "Beatitudes," which is just a big word for blessings. And being blessed is a little bit like being happy.

This song is going to need some help from us, so listen closely. (Play Ken Medema's "Happy Are the Ones" from *Just Kiddin' Around*. It quotes an echo song; let your kids dance around and participate as they like.)

What did you think about that song? Did that song make you happy? How did that song make you feel about God? What do you think Jesus was trying to say about God?

### **Project**

15 minutes

(Have the children try their hand painting or drawing one of the "Happys!" This might result in some interesting pictures. You might want to have each child choose a different "happy" and then put them up on the wall for them. You might want to play the Ken Medema song again while they paint.)

### **Prayer**

5 minutes

(Talk again about prayer. Use "Spirit of the Living God" again as a prayer, showing how we can use all of ourselves for prayer. Try humming it and using motions, also.)

### **Closing**

5 minutes

(Let kids shout out something they learned today. Sing a song enjoyed in the beginning.)

### Week 3: Zacchaeus

#### Gathering Time

10 minutes

(Sing together.)

#### Looking Back

5 minutes

(Talk about last week's session.) What did we talk about? (The "Happys.") What was Upside Down about the Happys? (You may want to play the song again if the children enjoyed it last week.)

#### Story Time

10 minutes

*Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)*

Do you know the song about Zacchaeus? (Hopefully, they'll say "yes.") Let's sing it together. "Zacchaeus was a wee little man."

Now that song tells us a little bit about who Zacchaeus was, but it doesn't tell the whole story. Today, we're going to hear a story about "transformation," about change.

But we should really start at the beginning. Who was Zacchaeus? (A Jew, but he worked for the Roman government collecting taxes. Tax collectors often took more than they were supposed to and kept it for themselves. Zacchaeus was rich!)

Was Zacchaeus liked by anyone? (No, because he cheated people. He used force to get taxes and worked for the Romans. In fact, religious people wouldn't take money from, or even eat with, a tax collector because that would make them less clean, pure. And the Romans just used him for work; they didn't associate with Jews.)

Well, the song tells us that Jesus saw Zacchaeus in the tree and told him to come down because Jesus was going to go to Zacchaeus's house and eat with him. Jews aren't supposed to eat with tax collectors, so this was pretty shocking to the religious people.

But what happened after Jesus had lunch with Zacchaeus? (Let the children answer if they know the story.) Zacchaeus came out and called to his neighbors and friends. And he told them in front of Jesus, "Lord, I'm giving one-half of my goods to the poor, and if I've stolen from anyone, I'll give them four times more."

Then Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house."

So what transformation happened in this story? What changed about Zacchaeus? (He changed his



ways, his behavior. He changed his heart.)

I want you to hear another story today. This is a story about a girl named Alice and her pockets. Something happens to her in this story. See if you can tell me about it at the end. (Play Ken Medema's "Pockets" on the *Just Kidding Around* CD. After the song, ask questions.) What changed in this story?

#### Project

15 minutes

(Have construction paper ready with one-half the page one color, and the other half of the page another color. The kids can use markers or crayons. Or, if your children are all readers, you could have a sheet of paper on which the children could draw a cartoon strip.)

Today I want us to draw two pictures. I want you to draw me a picture of something that changes. See if you can draw me a picture of something or someone that makes a change—either because it just happens, or because someone helps them/it to change. (You may want to prompt the children with ideas.)

#### Prayer

5 minutes

(Continue with "Spirit of the Living God." This time, sing the song with motions, then hum the song with motions, and then try to do the song with the motions only. I often encourage the children to sing it with their eyes closed the last time.)

#### Closing

5 minutes

(Let the kids shout out something they learned today. Sing a song they enjoyed in the beginning.)



### Week 4: The Bent-Over

#### Woman

#### Gathering Time

10 minutes

(Repeat some of the opening songs. Then say the following.) I want to teach you a song about some followers of Jesus who also healed someone. It's a story about Peter and John going to the temple one day and there was a man outside who couldn't walk.

He was begging for money and he asked Peter and John for some. Peter said, "We don't have any money, but I'll give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up!" And the man did. Let's sing "Silver and Gold Have I None." (Let kids go "walking and leaping and praising God.")



## Looking Back

5 minutes

(Talk about last week's session.) What happened last week? (Zacchaeus climbed up a tree. Jesus went to his house to eat). What was wrong with that? (Zacchaeus was not liked very much by the religious people. He was a tax collector.) Did Zacchaeus make any changes? (Yes. He gave back everything he stole and four times more.) What was Upside Down about this?

## Story Time

10 minutes

*The Bent-Over Woman (Luke 13:10-17)*

This is a story about a woman who was bent over for 18 years. I want you to stand up and bend over and stay like that while I tell the first part of this story. One day Jesus was in the synagogue, which was a little bit like a church building.

It was the Sabbath day, which is like Sunday to you and me. And there were certain rules about what you could and could not do on the Sabbath. Mostly, you couldn't do any kind of work, and sometimes it was hard to tell what was work and what wasn't.

Well, on this day, Jesus saw the woman bent over and he told her "Come here." So she did. And then Jesus placed his hands on her (place your hands on one of the children's shoulders) and said, "Stand up!" and she did. How do you think that woman felt? (Happy, etc.) Yes, she was, and she thanked God for bringing this man to heal her.

But do you know what? Not everyone was happy about it. No, not the religious leaders. They were mad at Jesus. And do you know why they were mad? Because they thought that healing was "work" and you weren't supposed to do work on a Sabbath day.

But Jesus told them that healing this woman was like letting your ox go for water—you let go of its chain so it can walk to the water on its own. All he was doing was taking off the chains that had been put on this woman.

After that, the leaders of the synagogue sat down. They didn't have anything more to say to Jesus. But the women, and the other people who needed help, praised God for bringing Jesus to them.

What do you think Jesus was trying to tell the leaders of the synagogue? (Let the children come up with some ideas!)

## Project

15 minutes

Today, let's use clay to sculpt the story we heard today. (Pick a scene from the story and make a "picture" with the clay. You will want something sturdy to mount these "pictures." I have done it as a diorama in a shoebox.)

## Prayer

5 minutes

(Ask the children if they have any one they would like to pray for tonight. Perhaps they know someone who needs healing. Ask them to keep these people in their mind as they pray through "Spirit of the Living God." Again, sing through it once with the motions, then hum it with the motions, then go through it with only the motions.)

## Closing

5 minutes

(Let the kids shout out something learned today. Sing a song enjoyed in the beginning.)



## Week 5: The Good Samaritan

### Gathering Time

10 minutes

(Sing together.)

### Looking Back

5 minutes

(Talk about last week's session.) What happened in our story last week? (A woman was healed.) Why were the religious leaders upset about it? (It was on the Sabbath day.) Did Jesus think that was wrong? (No, Jesus thought people were more important than rules.)

### Story Time

10 minutes

*"The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37)*

Today we have another kind of upside-down story. It all started when a young lawyer stood up to test Jesus. He said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus asked the man what it said in the law. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

And Jesus told him that his answer was right. "Then who is my neighbor?" asked the man. So Jesus told him a story.

A man was walking along a winding, isolated road from Jerusalem to Jericho, minding his own business, when suddenly robbers came out of the hills, stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road just after the robbery and saw the man lying half dead in the road.

Now, what would be the neighborly thing to do? (Help the man.) Is a priest someone that you think would help people? (Yes.) Well, do you know what? This priest didn't. He saw him, but he passed by on the other side and went on.

And the same thing happened again with a Levite, a Levite being a fellow Jew. Jews had rules about being "unclean."

But a third person also walked by. He was a Samaritan. And I have to tell you something about Samaritans—the Jews did not like them.

Not only did the Jews not like Samaritans, but they would have no dealings with them at all. In fact, if a Jew wanted to insult you, they would call you a "Samaritan."

And yet this hated person stopped to help the Jewish man lying along the roadside. He took him to an inn and paid for him to stay until he was better. This was not what Jesus' audience was expecting Jesus to say in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus was calling Jews to love Samaritans, their sworn enemies.

In other words, Jesus was saying that God's love doesn't discriminate. In the Upside Down Kingdom, God loves everyone.

### **Project**

15 minutes

Let's act out the story of the Good Samaritan. (This does not have to be elaborate. I've been with children who begged to act it out several times in a row, switching parts each time. Let them do it!)

Now, I want you to think of ways God is calling you to love your "neighbor." What are ways we can help other people? Let's act some of those out.

(Scene 1: Explain there are two friends playing on the playground and one of them falls. A teacher is nearby. What can the friend do?)

Scene 2: Explain there are three friends and a new kid at school. Two of the friends are making fun of the new kid. What can the third friend do to be a neighbor?

Scene 3: Let the kids think up a scenario.)

### **Prayer**

5 minutes

(Talk about what asking God to "use me" might mean in the context of being a neighbor. Ask the children to think of someone they might know who needs a "neighbor" as they sing and motion their way through the song today. Continue with "Spirit of the Living God.")

### **Closing**

5 minutes

(Let the kids shout out something learned today. Sing a song they enjoyed in the beginning.)



## *Week 6: Jesus &*

## *the Upside-Down Kingdom*

### **Gathering Time**

10 minutes

(Sing together.)

### **Looking Back**

5 minutes

(Talk about last week's session.) What happened in last week's story? (A man was beaten up on the highway.) Who was he? (A Jewish man.) Who helped him? (A Samaritan.) What was Upside Down about that? (Jews considered Samaritans to be unclean, and to be enemies. Also, a priest and Levite had passed the man by without helping.)

### **Story Time**

10 minutes

Today is our last session together. I want us to talk a little bit about what we remember in the next couple of weeks and maybe why it happened long ago.

Does anyone know what the Sunday after next is? (Easter!) And what is Easter? (The day Jesus rose from the dead.) What happened before Easter? (Jesus was killed, crucified ...)

Well, we've been studying a lot about Jesus. Can you think of one mean thing that Jesus did? (No.) But Jesus was hung with a couple of criminals—did Jesus break a law? (No. Except maybe the religious people's law.) Then what do you suppose made people want to kill Jesus? (Let them think and talk about this.)

You know what I think? I think that people were scared of Jesus. You know why? Because Jesus made the religious leaders think about what was really important. The religious people had gotten so caught up in this rule and that rule, that they made it hard for ordinary people to get close to God.

When Jesus came, he reminded the religious people that rules that kept people from God and didn't help God's people were not good rules. Jesus said that you have to think about what you're doing, not just look up a rule.

And this was scary for the people because it meant they had to re-think everything they had learned. And it meant that they might not get to be so important anymore. How do you think you would feel if, just

when you thought you were first, you found out you had to be last? (Let the children talk about this.)

Do you know what was Upside Down about Jesus getting himself killed? He fooled everyone. What happened on Easter morning? (Jesus got up!) Jesus even beat death!

### **Project**

15 minutes

I want us to act out one more thing that Jesus did. Shortly before Jesus died, he was with his disciples having a meal. And Jesus realized that no one had had their feet washed.

Now in those days, people wore sandals or went barefoot, so feet could get pretty dirty. And usually the person who washed the other people's feet was the lowliest servant in the house.

But, on this day, do you know who washed the feet? Jesus. Because Jesus said that the most important thing about being a leader is knowing how to serve. So today, I'm going to wash your feet. Washing your feet is a symbol for showing you that I care for you; it's a way I can show you God cares for you.

(While washing their feet, you can talk to the children about other ways we can show people we care. When you are finished, you can talk to them about how it felt to have their feet washed by you.)

### **Prayer**

5 minutes

(Continue with "Spirit of the Living God." Talk again about what asking God to "use me" might mean as we think about caring for others.)

### **Closing**

5 minutes

Let's think about some of the stories we've learned about Jesus these past five weeks:

*Jesus' birth:* Showed that God wanted to get close to people. God didn't want Jesus to be born in a palace because then he wouldn't be able to be with and understand ordinary people.

*The Happys:* The beatitudes turned Upside Down the things that people thought were important and showed people that God could make good things out of bad.

*Zacchaeus:* This tax collector, who wasn't very much liked by the Jews

because he stole a lot of money, not only heard what Jesus had to say, but changed his life because of it.

*The bent-over woman:* Jesus placed his hands on her and she stood up, but he did it on the Sabbath. Jesus said you have to look at people first, not rules.

*The good Samaritan:* The Jews found out that the person they thought was their enemy was really their neighbor!

Have a special treat tonight!

—*Mary Meadows wrote this curriculum while serving as a volunteer with children in Toledo, OH. She has since worked as a minister with children in Raleigh, NC and as a pastor in Illinois. She continues to volunteer with children and youth at her local church, Peace Community Church in Oberlin, OH. Mary develops curriculum and plays as the inspiration comes between being mother to 10 year old Rose and working at her day job as an attorney. The art on pages 6-11 was done by Gertrud Mueller Nelson.*

## *Involving Children in Liturgical Seasons*

**H**ere's a way to teach your children about the changing of liturgical seasons and a little about the meaning of Lent. This will work best if you usually wait (which I do) until just before Ash Wednesday to burn your palm leaves from last year. There may be some kind of theological reason for doing it right away, but I usually burn them, involving the youth if I can, just before Ash Wednesday.

You could show the branches to the children and perhaps burn a leaf or two to show them what the ashes look like. (Many people purchase their ashes, but I like for mine to have little chunks of palm leaves in them.)

If you don't have leaves to burn, you could simply show the children the ashes, and let them experience how they feel on their fingers. If you have big shirts for painting or other messy crafts, this would be a good time to get the children to put them on. Talk to them about why people wear the ashes and tell them a little bit about Lent. Take them to the sanctuary and let them watch as the liturgical colors are changed.

Many churches have palm branches for children to process with during the opening of the Palm Sunday service. Usually the children leave the branches scattered at the front of the worship area. This year, ask them to gather a few to be kept for next year's ashes.

You could also discuss the John 13 passage about Jesus washing his disciple's feet and show the children how to wash each other's feet. I was asked to do this one year, and it is one of the most moving experiences of my life.

On Easter Sunday, give them small finger bells to ring during the "Allelujahs" in hymns.

You'll be surprised at how interested children are in these rhythms of the church calendar. —Katie Cook

# Quotes, Poems & Pithy Sayings

Lent is a time of repentance, in the best sense of that word: reordering our lives to reflect who God would have us be.

—Lanny Peters

I must love the questions themselves as Rilke said like locked rooms full of treasure to which my blind and groping key does not yet fit and await the answers as unsealed letters mailed with dubious intent and written in a very foreign tongue. and in the hourly making of myself no thought of Time to force, to squeeze the space I grow into.

—Alice Walker, "Reassurance"

It's easy to chant into the night, but it's what we do, physically, every day, that makes us followers of Jesus.

—Raymond Bailey

I believe that at the center of the universe there dwells a loving spirit who longs for all that's best in all of creation, a spirit who knows the great potential of each planet as well as each person, and little by little will love us into being more than we ever dreamed possible. That loving spirit would rather die than give up on any one of us.

—Fred Rogers, *Life's Journeys According to Mister Rogers*.

In despair we hope against hope. Apathy alone is hopeless. After every attempt to find meaning within ourselves has failed and irresistible compulsions continue to enslave us—there on the edge of despair, we perceive the Holy Presence.

—Martin Bell

It is the hour to rend thy chains,  
The blossom time of souls.

—Katherine Lee Bates

And He departed from our sight, that we might return to our heart, and there find Him. For He departed, and behold, He is here.

—St. Augustine of Hippo

If Easter says anything to us today, it says this: You can put truth in a grave, but it won't stay there.

—Clarence W. Hall

Let the resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair to strength and beauty and happiness.

—Floyd W. Tomkins

## Giving Away Our Lives

Giving our lives away may mean:  
turning the other cheek;

standing with the people who are losing;

doing good that will receive no applause;

sitting in a home where someone has died;

treating discarded people as children of God;

shopping for someone else's groceries;

baking cookies that we won't eat;

reading stories to someone else's children;

taking flowers to someone who's not our type;

visiting someone else's mother in the nursing home;

walking someone else's dog;

watering someone else's plants;

washing dishes we didn't dirty;

discussing current events that don't interest us;

sending cards when we don't know what to write;

talking about faith when we would rather be silent;

doing good for people who will do no good to us in return;

weeping when others weep;

praying not for an easier life, but for strength to give our lives away;

discovering that if there's nothing for which we would die, then we don't have enough for which to live.

—Brett Younger

art by Matthew Rosencrans

# A Litany of Longing

by Deborah E. Harris

**I**n this Lenten season, we pause to listen to the stirrings deep within us. To listen for your voice, O God, as you call us out of the darkness of this wayward world—the darkness that would, but for your grace, make its home in our hearts and minds.

We long for your voice, O God.  
We long for your light.

Day after day, we are tempted to partake of the poisonous doctrine of greed and fear and hate and indifference. Break through the lies with your truth, O Creator, and remind us of our mission to be co-creators with you—to love sacrificially as we have been loved.

We long for your truth, O God.  
**We long for your purpose.**

When we tremble with pain, when we grow weary and forget who we are meant to be, let your mercy transform us, O Christ, and give us grateful hearts. Birth in us the healing hope of your faithfulness and a deepening compassion for all your children.

We long for your mercy, O God.  
**We long for your hope.**

O God, restore to us the joy of our salvation and renew a right spirit within us. Let us be your servants and ambassadors, for you have made us for yourself, and you are the joy of all our longing hearts.

We long for your joy, O God.  
**We long for you.**

—Deborah Harris is the volunteer copy editor for *Seeds of Hope*, and a member of the Council of Stewards.



art by René Boldt

## Winter Invocation

by Katie Cook

**W**e come before you on this cold morning when it was so tempting to stay wrapped under blankets in a big chair, have another cup of tea or coffee, and read.

But you have brought us together into this motley and beautiful community, so we come together, seeking your presence, hoping to catch a glimpse of truth and hope and courage, to take with us into the week something of challenge and adventure.

We hope to hear the stories of your people in a fresh way, to see our own stories in a fresh light. We want to live for you in a new way. We want to be inspired.

So we ask that you would breathe on us this new breath. Let us know that you have been with us today.

—Katie Cook is the *Seeds of Hope* editor.

# A Confession for Ash Wednesday

by Katie Cook

ONE: God, we come to you in confession and entreaty. We long to worship you in spirit and in truth.

MANY: But we are too caught up in our comfort and privilege. We have allowed these things to blind us to the needs of others.

ONE: We long to follow in the way that you have shown us.

MANY: But we have become complacent in our quiet neighborhoods. We do not want to be bothered.

ONE: We long for the joy that we once felt in our hearts.

MANY: But we are weighed down by losses, by gains, by material belongings, by unmet needs, by disappointment and disillusion.

ONE: We are numbed by too many painful experiences, too much work, too little Sabbath.

MANY: Restore the joy of our first encounters with you. Teach us again to bask in your presence, to rest, to re-create ourselves.

ONE: We long for your will to be done on the earth, but sometimes we don't even know what that means.

MANY: Help us to trust you enough to keep following. Give us brave companions for the journey into hope.

ONE: We long to reach out our arms and embrace the world, to heal the brokenness, to dream again of a peaceable reign of God.

MANY: Show us the way to your holy mountain where the lion and lamb lie

down together, where wars are ceased and no harm comes to any.

ONE: Help us to join together—people from all neighborhoods, from many faith communities, from all political persuasions, young and old, rich and poor, great and small...

MANY: Embracing one another, working shoulder-to-shoulder, never ceasing, picking each other up, helping each other along, until all your children are fed, all your children are kept warm, and none of your children tremble with fear.

—Katie Cook is the *Seeds of Hope* editor. This litany was inspired by a responsive confession written by Sherry Castello.

*Easter is the great Christian celebration,  
but Easter is not our call.  
Sunday is not our call.  
Friday is our call... Good Friday.  
Easter Sunday is our hope.  
Good Friday is our lives radically committed.  
Easter Sunday is the promise  
such lives can claim.*

*Today we are called to embrace our ashes,  
our dust,  
to embrace our mortality,  
our dependence on God,  
to embrace the difficulty of our crosses  
with joyful hearts.*

—John S. Ballenger

# Sharing the Wounds of Christ

*a litany for Holy Friday*

by Brett Younger

LEADER: Let us challenge one another to share the wounds of Christ.

PEOPLE: God give us the courage to turn the other cheek,

LEADER: To spend time with people who can give us nothing,

PEOPLE: To stand with people who are the underdogs,

LEADER: To care for people who have made terrible mistakes,

PEOPLE: To do good that will earn us no applause,

LEADER: To share food with the hungry,

PEOPLE: To become a better friend to someone with AIDS,

LEADER: To do those tasks we all find discomforting,

PEOPLE: To lovingly hold hands stiffened by arthritis,

LEADER: To take other people's children to the park,


PEOPLE: To really listen to a lonely person,

LEADER: To treat discarded people as the children of God they are,

ALL: God, give us the courage to do these things, and to do them with joy.

*—Brett Younger is professor of homiletics at McAfee Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia.*

art by Erin Kennedy Mayer



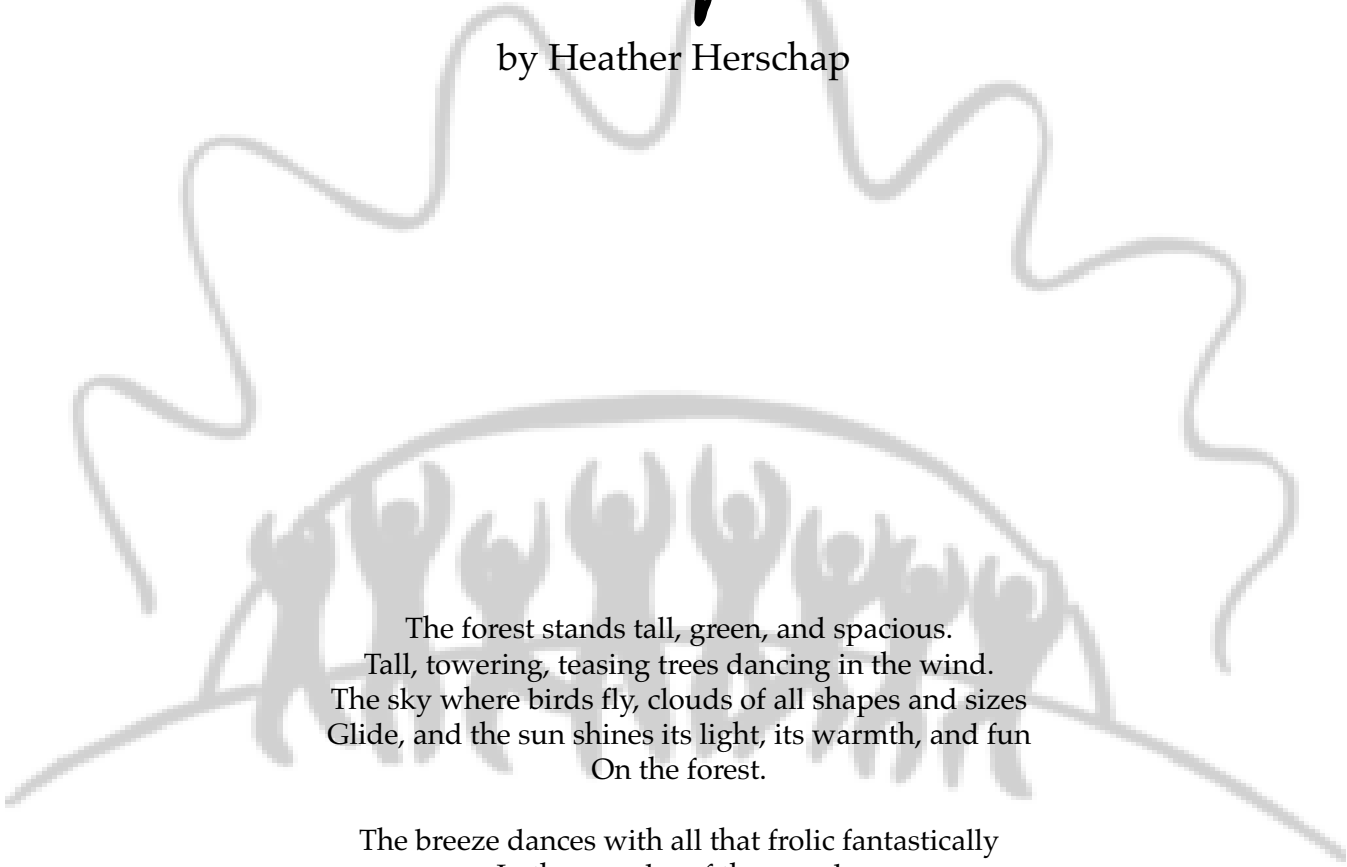
The spirit is breathing.  
All those with eyes to see,  
    women and men  
    with ears for hearing  
detect a coming dawn;  
    a reason to go on.  
    They seem small,  
    these signs of dawn,  
    perhaps ridiculous.  
All those with eyes to see,  
    women and men  
    with ears for hearing  
    uncover in the night  
a certain gleam of light;  
they see the reason to go on.

—Dom Helder Camara,  
*former Archbishop of Recife and Olinda, Brazil,*  
It's Midnight, Lord



# Hope

by Heather Herschap



The forest stands tall, green, and spacious.  
Tall, towering, teasing trees dancing in the wind.  
The sky where birds fly, clouds of all shapes and sizes  
Glide, and the sun shines its light, its warmth, and fun  
On the forest.

The breeze dances with all that frolic fantastically  
In the wonder of the woods.  
It whispers secrets, laughter, love, and truth  
To the core of creation that is in all.  
In fun it tickles, teases, and torments, the trees, squirrels.  
Deer, beavers, bunnies, birds...

It flies, whips, blows, breezes through the breathtaking  
Beauty of a forest, fast.  
Then faster, and fastest, the wind swirls, whirling,  
Swooping, picking up all in its path.  
The sky changes from light blue to dark.  
No sun, no clouds—nothing—just dark.  
The wind, the sky took the breathtaking beauty  
And turned it into dreadful destruction.

The sun shone after the wind was no longer fierce,  
But calm.  
It shone on the sad scenery which was lying beneath it.  
A scene of all the disaster, destruction and  
Skated pieces of debris,  
But then the sunlight shone upon one root,  
Shone upon hope.

—Heather Herschap is a minister/poet who lives in Laredo, TX. The art on this page is by Sharon R. Rollins.

# Lessons and Hymns for Easter

by Charley Garrison

## First Lesson

Isaiah 51:3-4, 52:6-7

For God will comfort Zion and will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of God. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song. Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples. Therefore my people shall know my name. Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

## Hymn

"Our God Reigns"

Number 229, verses 1, 3

*The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (Word Music: Waco, TX)

Text and Music: Leonard E. Smith, Jr. arr. Eugene Thomas

Tune: OUR GOD REIGNS



Number 213

*The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (Word Music: Waco, TX)

Text: Gloria Gaither & William J. Gaither

Music: William J. Gaither

Tune: RESURRECTION

## Second Reading

John 14:1-3, 18-19

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In God's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live."

## Hymn

"Because He Lives

## Third Reading

Matthew 28:1-6

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of God, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. The angel, whose clothing was white as snow, had an appearance like lightning. And out of fear, the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."

## Hymn

"Christ Arose"

Number 216

*The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (Word Music: Waco, TX)

Text and Music: Robert Lowry

Tune: CHRIST AROSE

## Fourth Reading

Matthew 28:7-8

And the angel said, "Go quickly and tell the disciples, Christ has been raised from the dead, and indeed, is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him. This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell the disciples.

## Hymn

Christ the Lord Is Risen Today (p. 217, verses 1,2)

Number 217, verses 1,2

*The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (Word Music: Waco, TX)

Text: Charles Wesley

Music: from *Lyra Davidica*, London, 1708

Tune: EASTER HYMN

## Fifth Reading

Matthew 28:9-10

Suddenly Jesus met the women and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell the others to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

## Hymn

"Alleluia! Alleluia!"

Number 215, verses 1,2

*The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (Word Music: Waco, TX)

Text: Christopher Wordsworth (altered)

Music: Ludwig von Beethoven, adapted by Edward Hodges

Tune: HYMN TO JOY

## Sixth Reading

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him. And Jesus came and said to them, "All

authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Creator and of the Christ and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

## Hymn

"Crown Him with Many Crowns"

Number 234

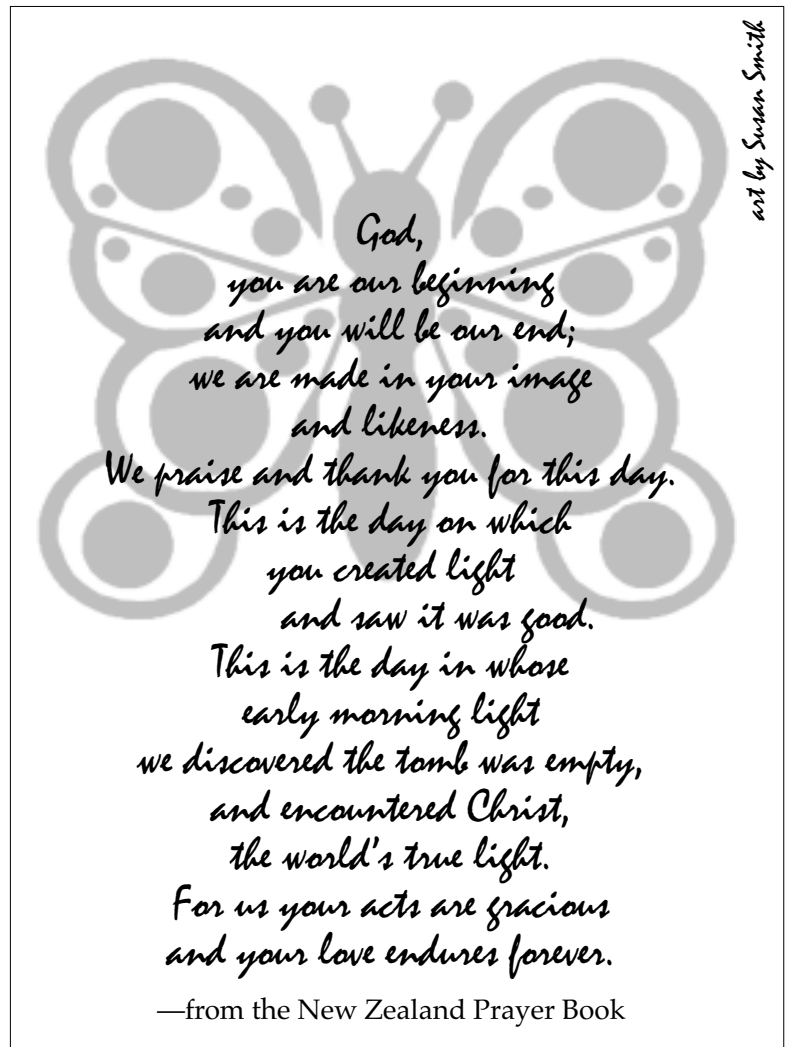
*The Hymnal for Worship & Celebration* (Word Music: Waco, TX)

Text: Matthew Bridges (stanzas 1, 2, 4); Godfrey Thring, stanza 3

Music: George J. Elvey; last stanza harmonization by Mark Hayes

Tune: DIADEMATA

—Charley Garrison is a pastor and longtime hunger activist in Waco, TX. He supervises the Red Door Pantry, a resource for people who are HIV-positive.



# The Women Went That Morning

a hymn for Easter Sunday  
by John Ballenger  
text: Mark 16:1-8  
music: Henry T. Smart  
tune: Lancashire 7.6.7.6.D.

1. The women went that morning  
to see where Jesus lay.  
They wanted to anoint him;  
they sought a place to pray.  
A stranger in a white robe  
said, "Jesus is not here  
He goes ahead before you,  
and to you he'll appear.
2. They left the tomb of Jesus  
amazed and terrified.  
The stranger said "Tell others,"  
but they did not comply.  
The heavy stone was rolled back,  
their heavy hearts remained.  
Their Savior was not with them,  
and fear their hearts constrained.
3. We hunger for the simple;  
we long for what is nice.  
As if it must be easy,  
believers to entice.  
But resurrection glory  
proceeds from darkest dread,  
to face the loved one buried  
now raised up from the dead.
4. God waits for us to notice  
that miracles abound,  
and Easter truth surrounds us,  
wherever truth is found.  
The mysteries of our faith  
are true to God's own way,  
and we arise to wonder  
each resurrection day.



*John Ballenger is a pastor in Baltimore, MD. The art on this page is by Robert Askins.*

# Some Thoughts for The Week After Easter

by John S. Ballenger

Can you imagine Jesus' disciples in the confusing aftermath of Easter, not knowing, you know, what Easter meant—that Easter meant ultimate triumph and joy—there in that locked room, maybe the same room where some of them had celebrated the Passover on Thursday, trying to figure out how everything could have changed so profoundly so quickly?

Can you imagine the trauma of the betrayal and arrest, trial and death of Jesus, the dawning awareness of how each one of them had let Jesus down. "And what do we do now?" they must have said. "Go home and say, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you and am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired fishermen?'"

Then there's the shock of resurrection news. Mary's probably in that room—head in her hands, frustrated as all get out—wondering how Jesus put up with these guys who don't listen to what you say and who don't believe what they hear. But she's still trying to convince them that she wasn't hallucinating when she saw Jesus in the garden.

The disciple Jesus loved, well, he believed. He's off in some corner muttering to himself: "How do I put this? Where do I start? Let's see, in the beginning was...what?"

The linen wrappings on the ground. Some are in shock. Some in rather violent discussions about things Jesus said and what those things might have meant or what those things might mean.

And then Jesus is there. In the locked room. "Peace," he says, and as many commentators as there are who say this was the normal greeting of the time, I maintain that it's a good bit closer to "Fear not" than to "Hi, guys." And he goes on: "As God has sent me, so send I you."

Seven days later, notice how much progress the disciples have made. They're still locked up in that room. Still trying to figure things out. Still not sure what's happened—what any of this really means.

All right, so Jesus is alive, what does that mean? Is he going to come back? Are we going to follow him around again like we have for the last three years? Add to the impressive list of neat stories and cool

miracles? So he's alive, what now?

And what are Caiaphas, Annas and Pilate going to think of this? "If he won't stay dead let's see about some of the others!" That could get nasty pretty quick.

Everyone's trying to figure out what it means for them that Jesus is alive, except, of course, for Thomas, who doesn't believe that Jesus is alive.

And here he is again.

We have this image of a calm, controlled, quiet Jesus. I am as convinced that Jesus had a mischievous

*All right, so Jesus is alive, what does that mean? Is he going to come back? Are we going to follow him around again like we have for the last three years? Add to the impressive list of neat stories and cool miracles? So he's alive, what now?*

streak a mile wide as I am that at least one of the disciples had prematurely gray hair and that several had irregular heartbeats due to repeated shock. "Peace. Hi, guys. Fear not. What are you all still doing here? Hi, Thomas."

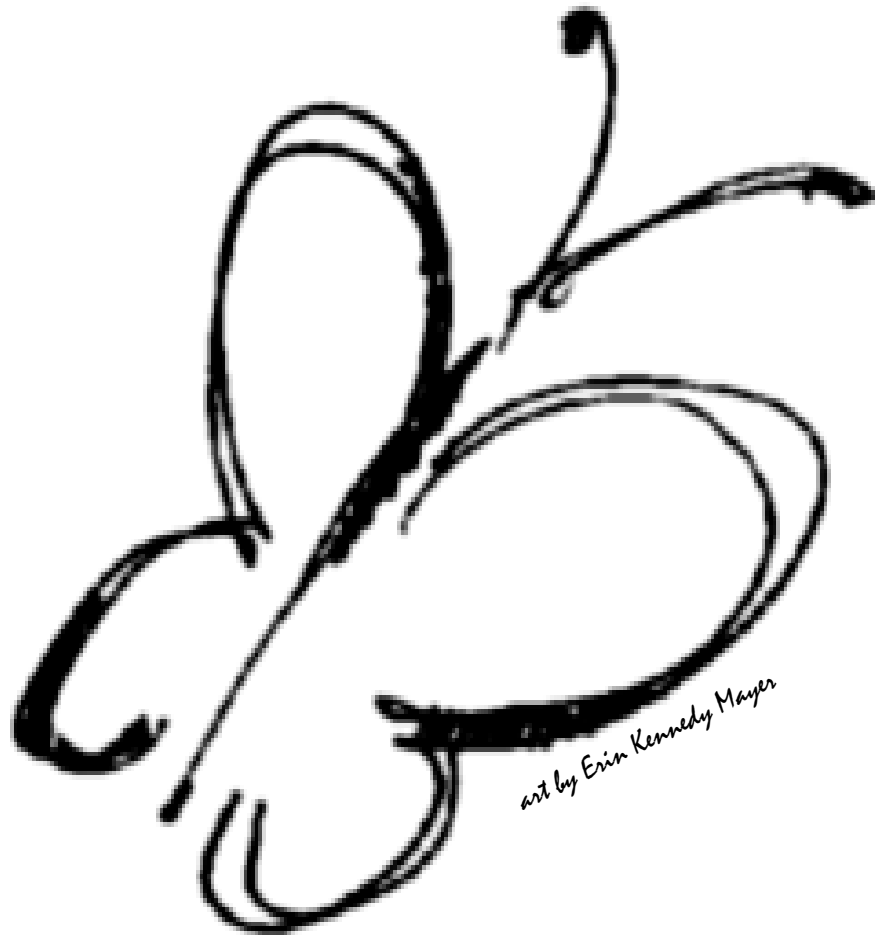
And here we are. The week after Easter in our enclosed room. Trying to figure out what Easter means to us. What does it mean to us to say that Jesus is alive? Because it should matter, shouldn't it? After all, it's what most of us say is basic to who we are as Christians.

But maybe it shouldn't just be a triumphant, beautiful sense of peace, a definitive clarity of dogma, but a scary proposition—confusing—unsettling, and infinitely mysterious.

"Fear not. Leave these enclosed rooms. Get out from behind these locked doors. As God sent me, so send I you."

—John Ballenger is a pastor in Baltimore, MD. The meditation above is taken from "One for All and All for One: A Sermon for Eastertide," Sacred Seasons: Journey into Lent, Lent 1998.

# Benediction



*Let us journey together  
through this season of Lent.  
Let us listen to stories of exile  
and hear cries for hope.  
Let us reach out  
for the hand of Jesus  
and walk a path of dangerous love  
into the possibility of new life.  
—April Baker and Amy Mears*

*April Baker and Amy Mears are copastors of a church in Nashville, TN.*