

thESource *Worship Service*

On Our Way to Easter

by Sally Hiller

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

What wonderful words these are to us who believe that Christ did indeed rise from the dead! The victory is won. We are no longer captive to death and its power.

The greatest of all church festivals is Easter, for without Easter the others would have little significance. In fact, each Sunday is to be celebrated as a "little Easter," a reminder of the resurrection of our Lord and the gift of eternal life, which becomes ours through Him.

In this resource, you will find many ideas for celebrating this most joyous of occasions. First, you will discover a basic worship experience. Then follow several ideas and suggestions—to be used with this service or separately.

Happy Resurrection! He is Risen!

A Worship Experience

Prelude

Note 1: Begin worship with the following opening dialog. It is the announcement of the resurrection. This can be done either as a reading from the chancel or, more dramatically, with the lights low to simulate the time of pre-dawn.

Note 2: The dialog is between Mary and Mary Magdalene. Also reflecting on death and life are two teens. An angel is needed to respond to their questions.

The Opening

Speech Reading: "Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb" (Mark 16:2).

Mary M: Do you still believe in miracles? It is so dark out tonight.

Mary: I feel the darkness within, too. I don't think morning will ever come.

Mary M: It will come. I believe.

Mary: But it will not be the same. My heart is broken. Within me there is such pain. My child is dead. They killed Him. My child... He is not here. I loved Him so much, but now He's gone. I held Him and played with Him and taught Him and watched Him grow up. I believed that He was someone special—the promised Savior, in fact. Someone whom God had chosen. But now He's dead. And life will never be the same. Do I believe in miracles? It's so dark out.

Mary M: Jesus was my friend. My body aches with pain, too. It's not fair that they would kill Him. He never hurt anyone. Couldn't they see how much He loved and cared for us—for all the people? Why did they hate Him so? What had He ever done to them? He didn't have to die. It's not fair that someone we love so much can be taken away like that. It hurts so much. But Mary, He promised—a miracle!

(Opposite the two Marys are the two youth.)

Youth 1: God, I don't understand it at all. Why did you take them away from me? Couldn't you have given us a little more time? They were my grandparents. I loved them. I don't understand. It's so unfair; they were just driving to meet me so we could go out together. Why did that car have to hit them? What did they ever do to deserve this? I stood beside them in the funeral home. They were so stiff lying there in those boxes. Where were their smiles and hugs for me? When I touched them, they were like plastic, and they didn't reach back to squeeze my hand. I didn't get to tell them "I love you." Help me to understand it. God, I need a miracle!

Youth 2: You can't take her, Lord, I won't let You take her! She's my sister and she's all I've got. How can you love me and do this to me? She's so little. Don't take her away. She hasn't had a chance

to even live yet. She's only fourteen, Lord. I know life isn't easy, but we had each other. I didn't know she was having so many problems. We always talked everything through. I thought she was okay. I didn't think she would end it this way. Oh, God, please don't take her from me. Don't put her in the ground. I'll never see her again. God, give me a miracle!

(Back to the two Marys.)

Mary: I can't believe this is really happening to me. I must go and take another look.

(The Marys and the youth walk to the center of the chancel. Lights begin to come on to signify the dawn. A timpani/drum begins an earthquake rumble. As the noise grows louder, an angel appears in the midst of the Marys and the youth. The earthquake stops. After the angel is in place and while the earthquake is quieting, the following is read:)

"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men" (Matthew 28:1-4)

(Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the two youth look towards the angel as if looking into the tomb. The angel faces the two Marys.)

Angel: Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay. Then go quickly and tell His disciples: "He has risen from the dead."

(The angel faces the two youth.)

Angel: Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for the ones you love. But they are not here, for they, too, have been raised and no longer do they know sorrow or pain, for they dwell with the Living One! Be comforted, be at peace. Go and tell your friends that a miracle has happened! Jesus Christ is the victor over death! Let all the earth ring with joy, for He is alive! Alleluia!

Processional Hymn

The Invocation

Leader: The Lord is risen!

Congregation: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

L: We welcome the presence of our resurrected Lord.

C: Death has now been changed to life.

L: The same power that raised Jesus from the dead

C: Now lives in us;

L: For God made His light shine in our hearts

C: To give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

L: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Choir Anthem or Hymn

Prayer of the Day

O God, You gave Your only Son to suffer death on the cross for our redemption, and by His glorious resurrection You delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, so that we may live with Him forever in the joy of the resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn

The First Lesson—Acts 10:34-43

The Second Lesson—Colossians 3:1-4

The Holy Gospel—Matthew 28:1-10

The Gospel Response (Hymn)

An Easter Journey Message

Speaker 1: Through the season of Lent, a period of 40 days, we journeyed with one another on the path to the cross.

Speaker 2: We spent our time in quiet reflection and earnest prayer. Our music took a more somber note, and we gave up the Alleluias.

Speaker 1: But today the journey starts anew. The Alleluias are back!

Speaker 2: We have a new joy and purpose in our journey.

Speaker 1: It is a journey of celebration.

Speaker 2: A journey of life.

Speaker 1: For our Lord is no longer dead!

Speaker 2: He conquered death and now the power of Satan is forever broken.

Speaker 1: We can journey in joy.

Speaker 2: And in hope. For He is risen!

Speaker 1: He is risen indeed!

Together: Alleluia!

Responsive Reading (optional)

Note: This next section is optional. It can be read responsively between a leader and the congregation, with the congregation taking opposite parts, by two speakers, or the youth of the congregation can do it Speech Choir style. This dialogue was written by Rev. Lee Hovel for the 1989 LCMS Youth Gathering "Blessed in the Journey".

1: Life is a journey:
from infancy to adulthood
from Good Friday to Easter
from sorrow to victory
from sinful self to water-marked child

2: We are blessed in the journey!

1: Life is a journey:
from flood to rainbow
from slavery to freedom
from wilderness to Promised Land
from pigpen to our Father's house
from darkness to light
from slave to heir
from death to life

2: We are blessed in the journey!

1: Life is a journey:
from disappointment to surprise
from hopelessness to promise
from enemy to friend
from rejection to acceptance
from loneliness to belonging
from brokenness to wholeness
from Adam to Christ
from cross to empty grave

2: We are blessed in the journey!
Death tries to swallow life
Sorrow wants to overcome victory
Fear wants to strangle joy
Darkness wants to keep out the light
Death wants to shut out life

1: And so the ending litany:
I hurt, He heals
I cry, He comforts
I question, He guides
I run, He welcomes
I hide, He seeks
I fight, He forgives
I worry, He provides
I hate, He loves
I despair, He cares
I die, He lives
I die (*louder*), He lives (*louder*)
I die (*louder*), He lives (*louder*)
I die (*softer*), He lives (*louder*)
I die (*whisper*), He lives (*louder*)
I live (*soft*), He lives (*louder*)
I live (*louder*), He lives (*louder*)
I live (*shout*), He lives (*shout*)
We live (*shout*), We live (*shout*)
We live (*shout*), We live (*shout*)
He is risen! He is alive!
Alleluia! Alleluia!
He is risen! He is alive!
Alleluia! Alleluia!

1: We are blessed by His journey!

2: He is risen! He is alive!

1: We are blessed in the journey!

2: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Hymn

Offering

The Prayers

Note: Have youth members write prayers for this service. You may wish to use the theme of completion found in the ending portion of the litany. For example, Let us pray for all who cry in loneliness and despair. Lord, as You surround them with Your comforting presence, wipe away their tears.

L: Lord, in your mercy

C: Hear our prayers.

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

Hymn

Some Additional Thoughts

Hymns and songs: Use the hymnal to pick Easter hymns for the congregation. Look for more contemporary songs for youth choirs.

Psalm of the Day:

Psalm 118:1-2, 15-24

Read the psalm between the First and Second Lessons. You can do this in a variety of ways:

- Alternating verses (men/women, youth/adults)
- Use Leslie Brandt's paraphrase from *Psalms/Now*, Concordia Publishing House
- Play the music of an Easter hymn softly while reading the psalm

Children's Talk

Use any of these objects as you tell (give witness to) how they show the resurrection.

1. Bring a real chick or duck with you. (Ducks will follow you in; children really love them.) Show an unbroken egg. Ask the children how they might get the duckling or chick back in. Thanks be to God, you can't! And neither can we ever be put back into the grave to be held in eternal death.
2. Hold up a blown-out egg. (Make sure the children cannot see that it has been blown out.) Share how Jesus broke the chains of death and, just like Humpty Dumpty's egg, it will never be the same. Smash the egg and show that it, too, is empty. (Note: be sure you have done a good job on blowing out and drying the egg. Once, I literally had egg on my face!)
3. Find a cocoon, a butterfly, or a caterpillar. Talk about how it changes. It must go through a deathlike state, but then emerges more beautiful and glorious. And, it will never again be the same! Make paper butterflies or butterfly cookies, and give one to each child present.
4. Use a flower bulb (an elephant's ear is great because it is so big). Tell about putting it in the ground and trusting that it will come up and produce a beautiful plant and blossom. We can see or understand how in winter's darkness and cold this growth happens. But it's part of God's great miracle of life! It's one of the earthly symbols that He gives to remind us that we, too, shall live in beauty and without fear.
5. Save your Christmas tree, cut off the branches, and use it to make an Easter processional cross. Invite everyone to bring a blossom. Use a staple gun to affix the blossoms and greenery to the cross. Use it in the procession and recession, then leave it in view so that this living reminder of our Lord becomes a witness to the community.

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