

Easter Children's Message

Easter will be a joyous celebration! The "Children's Message" or "A Time For All Ages" may look different depending on your context and your format for worship. The resources and links below can serve as guides regardless of your worship format.

The first section is "Tips for the Children's Message."

The second section contains recommended books.

The third section contains scripts that you can use or adapt.

For links and additional resources, visit lifelongfaith.org/children/children-lent/

Tips for the Children's Message

- Know your why and shape the time to honor your why
- Know your audience
- Limit your children's time to 3 - 5 minutes
- Use visuals and avoid object lessons. Preschool and elementary kids are concrete thinkers and will remember the object and not the lesson. Using images with questions can invite theological conversation.
- Use open-ended questions and not "right or wrong" answers. For example: "I wonder what Mary thought when she arrived at the tomb, and the stone was rolled away." Instead of "What did Mary find when she arrived at the tomb?" (you can get all kinds of responses to that!)
- If you want to limit movement, consider asking children to stay in their seats, but say this is a special time for them. You may even want to call the time "A Time for All Ages" or something that encompasses the entire congregation. Read (or paraphrase - you don't necessarily have to read every word) a children's book. If you have a small congregation, ask open-ended questions that anyone can respond to.
- If you are in-person and/or streaming live - talking to two audiences at one time is tricky. Make sure that you make eye contact with both the in-person congregation and the camera for the online congregation. If you want to ask an open-ended question, invite people to respond to someone near them or type in the chat box or comments section.

Additional Resources for Preparing a Children's Message

- Cokesbury Kids: <https://www.cokesburykids.com/blog/preparing-for-childrens-sermons/>
- Building Faith: <https://buildfaith.org/the-childrens-sermon-5-dos-and-donts/>
- Illustrated Ministry: www.illustratedministry.com/2018/preparing-for-childrens-sermons/

Read a Book (be aware of copyright limitations if livestreaming)

Recommended Easter Books

- *This is the Mystery of Easter* by Amelia Richardson Dress
- *'Twas the Morning of Easter* by Glenys Nellist
- *Good News! It's Easter!* by Glenys Nellist
- *The Story of Easter* by Patricia A. Pingry

Recommended Children's Story Bibles

- *Celebrate Wonder Story Bible*
- *Growing in God's Love*
- *Spark Story Bible*
- *The Story of Easter: A Spark Bible Story from Sparkhouse*

This resource was curated by Rev. Kathy Pittenger for the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church. If you need additional information or support, contact Kathy at kpittenger@michiganumc.org.

For more Lent and Easter resources visit:
lifelongfaith.org/children/children-lent/

Script 1

Emotions of Easter

This script is based on Matthew 28:1-10 and was written by Rev. Kathy Pittenger.

Invite the congregation to the Children's Time/Time for All Ages. (if the person doing the children's time has not participated in worship yet, take a moment to introduce themselves)

Say: "Today is a day of celebration! It's also a day filled with lots of emotions. This past year has been filled with lots of emotions. Sometimes there has been fear, anxiety, sadness, and joy. Let's listen to the Easter story from Matthew and listen for different emotions. (Optional - invite people to make a face that expresses the emotion they hear as you read the story. This adds an interactive element, especially if you are in-person and streaming live at the same time.)

"Jesus' friends were very sad when Jesus died on the cross. (pause) His friends, Mary Magdalene and another Mary, went to the tomb very early in the morning, when the sky was still pink and orange. They were going to put special spices on Jesus' body. They wondered with one another how they were going to roll the enormous stone away from the front of the tomb. But, when they arrived, there was a tremendous earthquake as an angel came and rolled away the stone from the entrance of the tomb! The guards who were there were terrified! The angel said to the women: "Don't be afraid!!! You are looking for Jesus and he has been raised! He isn't here! Go tell the disciples!!" Mary Magdalene and Mary were both afraid and excited! They hurried away from the tomb to tell the disciples. Then, surprise! Jesus met them and greeted them! They were so excited that they worshipped him right there! Jesus told them not to be afraid and to tell the disciples.

Wow! I heard lots of different emotions in the story. I heard sadness, because Jesus died. I heard anxiety about how the women would roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb. I heard fear from the soldiers and the women. I heard excitement and joy as the women realized that Jesus was alive and hurried off to tell the disciples. I heard surprise and excitement when the women saw Jesus! I wonder what emotions you feel as you listen to the story (offer a moment of pause or invite people to share out loud or on social media). I wonder if you have ever felt more than one emotion at the same time. Like Mary and Mary were afraid and excited at the same time!

Today we celebrate Easter! We celebrate that even after very sad things, God makes it possible for amazing things to happen! We can be very happy that Jesus is alive!

(optional - teach the ASL sign for "resurrection" -

<https://www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=5134>)

Let's pray: "Dear God, we give thanks for our emotions. All of them! Thank you for moments when we can go from sad to happy. Thank you for the love of Jesus who is with us through ALL our emotions. Thank you for always being with us. Alleluia! Amen!"

Script 2

Alleluia Butterflies

This script is based on Mark 16:1-7 and adapted by Rev. Kathy Pittenger with permission from Rev. Christine V. Hides. <https://christinevhides.com/2017/01/20/three-easter-sunday-childrens-time-ideas/>

Consider your worship format:

- In-person - provide butterfly pictures and crayons (consider a small box that people can take home with them)
- Online - put butterfly printouts on a website or on social media for people to download, or have printouts available at the church for people to pick up ahead of time.

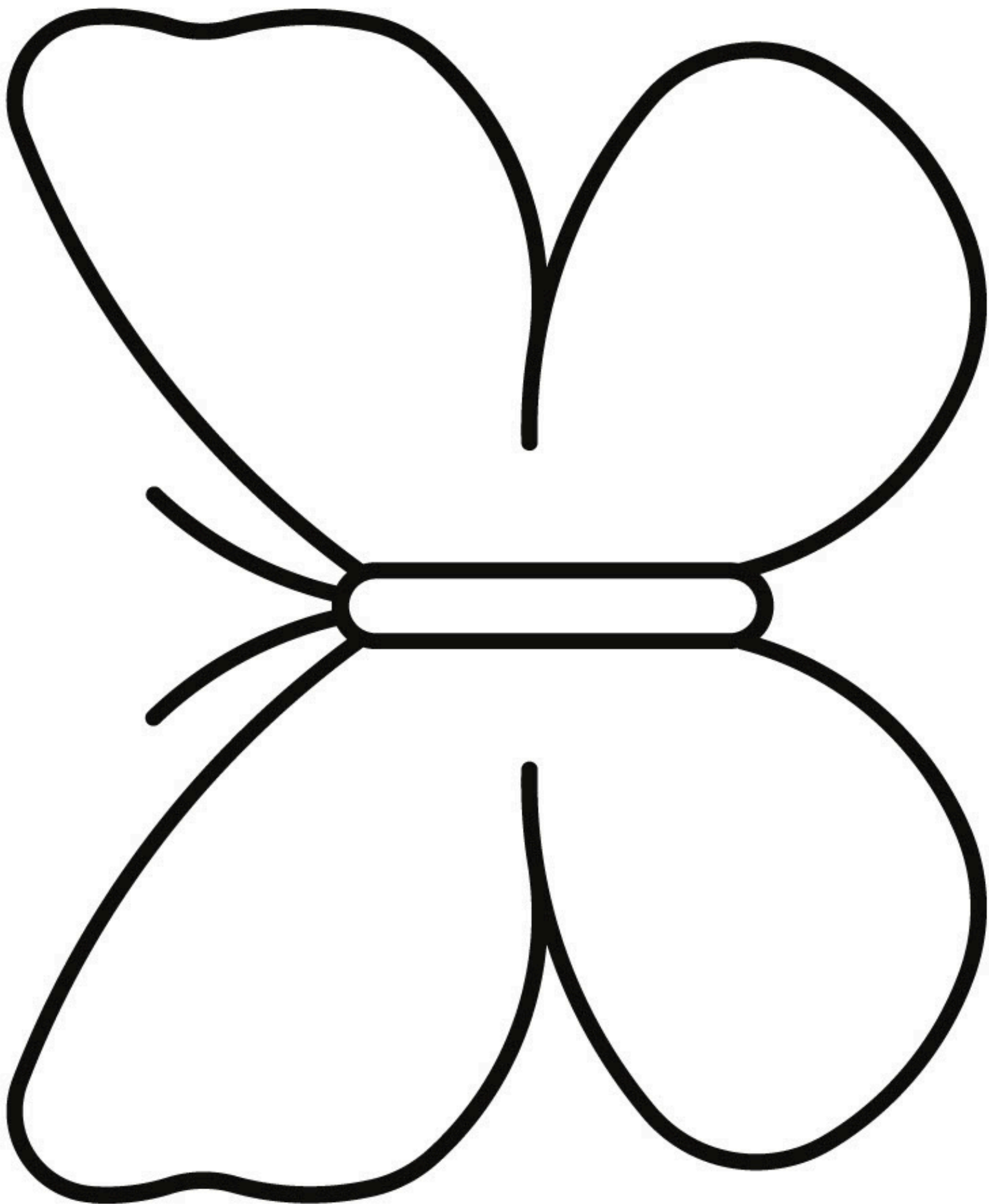
At the beginning of the service, invite people (all ages can participate) to color their butterfly to prepare for the Children's Time/Time for All Ages

Invite the congregation to the Children's Time/Time for All Ages. (If the person doing the children's time has not participated in worship yet, take a moment to introduce themselves.)

Say: "Today's Bible reading is about the empty tomb." (You can read the Easter morning story from a children's story bible, re-tell it in your own words, or continue with the script.) "Jesus' friends were very sad when Jesus died on the cross. Three of the women who were his friends, Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome, went to the tomb very early in the morning, when the sky was still pink and orange. They were going to put special spices on Jesus' body in a way that was common during that time. They wondered with one another how they were going to roll the enormous stone away from the front of the tomb. (If you want to ask a question, you could ask, "I wonder how you might have thought to roll away the stone? And give a moment or two for responses.) But, when they arrived, they noticed that the stone was already rolled away! When they peeked into the tomb, a young man in a white robe was in there and it startled them! The man said "Don't be afraid!!! You are looking for Jesus and he has been raised! He isn't here! Go tell the disciples!!" (If you want to ask a question, you could ask, "I wonder what you might have thought when Jesus' body was gone and the young man said Jesus was alive? And give a moment or two for responses.)

"Easter reminds us that even after very sad things, wonderful new things can happen. God makes it possible for amazing things to happen: people to make up after a fight, plants to grow again after a long winter, and any time we go from sad to happy. We have a special word we say when we are this happy, "Alleluia!" "Alleluia" means "Praise the Lord" or "Praise God" "Take out your butterfly, and as we wave our butterflies in the air, let's say "Alleluia" together. "Alleluia!" (repeat a couple of times) (Depending on your context, you may need to have people whisper it or invite people on-line to shout it out!)

"If you haven't finished coloring your butterfly, as we continue in worship, you can keep coloring, whisper "Alleluia" and remember the mystery and wonder of Easter." Let's pray, "Dear God, thank you for Jesus! And for the mystery and wonder of Easter. Help us remember that you make amazing things happen! Alleluia! Amen."



Script 3

Easter Morning

Written by Elizabeth Christie. Used with permission.

This children's message is based on Mathew 28

materials

- a dry-erase board and appropriate marker
- a gift bag or wrapped box that you can easily open with the children; it needs to be empty inside
- a basket with plain grocery bags (you can use recycled ones or purchase some)
- washable markers or crayons

the message

My friends, it is so good to be together on this beautiful morning! Everything is changed- the alleluias are back, we have fancy flowers, the music is on point, and JESUS IS RISEN! Alleluia!

I brought a dry-erase board this morning. Let's play a game. I'm going to draw something. Let's see if you can guess what I'm trying to show you. But I should warn you, I didn't go to school to learn how to be an artist. This may be tricky.

Begin to draw a present. It could be a gift bag with a ribbon or a box with a bow. It doesn't have to be perfect, but something that is recognizable as a gift.

So, what do you think it is? Allow for responses. Yup! You guys are good at this! Gifts are fun, aren't they? We know about Birthday and Christmas presents, but have you ever opened an Easter present? I brought a gift here (pull it out)- let's see what's inside. Allow the children to open/look inside. What?! It's EMPTY?! How is that a gift?!

My friends, that is exactly the point on this beautiful Easter morning. How is something that is empty a gift? This is how our Scripture reading starts out today. Two women, who were disciples and special friends of Jesus, went to where Jesus had been buried. He died three days before, and they went because they loved Jesus. Yes, there were guards there, but they wanted to make extra sure that everything was safe. It was a very difficult and sad time for Jesus's disciples. They loved him, and they wanted to continue the good work he had done. They were so, so sad that he was dead. They were also scared. Everything had changed, so they did what they knew how to do: take care of Jesus's tomb.

When Mary and Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb in the morning, they found a big, heavy stone in front of the tomb; it had been rolled up against the opening so no one could get inside. Have you ever moved a giant, heavy stone? Do you think it would be easy to do? Allow for responses. Do you think someone could have emptied the tomb easily? Allow for responses. I agree. You can't easily move a big, heavy stone. It would be just as hard to put it back if you had moved it. No one was getting into that tomb easily. Jesus's body was safe.

Just when the women got to the tomb and felt an earthquake!! They must have felt a bunch of feelings. It would be an alarming event, right? But it didn't stop there. They met an angel at the opening of the tomb, and the angel moved the stone away. The guards were terrified. This wasn't an ordinary event. Earthquake, angel, moved stone? That's a lot. The guards' one job was to make sure no one stole Jesus out of the tomb. That tomb was supposed to stay shut. The angel turned to the women and told them

Easter Morning

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the message, continued

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Can you imagine being happy about an empty present? Why would it matter that Jesus wasn't there? This is a hard question. But here's what it comes down to- LOVE. Jesus had died, that is true. And his death made it possible to share God's great LOVE for all of God's people. Jesus being alive on Easter means that Jesus continues to be with us. Jesus continues to love us. Love isn't something we can see, is it? But we can feel what it does. We can see how people react when they are treated with love. That love then spills into other relationships. We can't keep love inside a gift box. We can't keep love inside a tomb. Love gets into our lives, and we share it around. We do little things with great love, like sharing a snack at snack time, picking up the Pokémon card that someone dropped, and handing it back to them, smiling at a person you pass on the street. Jesus and the love that comes from Jesus had to come out of that tomb. It couldn't stay there. It had to be shared all around. As the angel told the women, go, tell the others. That's our job, too. Go, tell others. Love never ends. This is amazing! AMEN!

repeat after me prayer:

Dear God / *Dear God*

Thank you for Easter! / *Thank you for Easter!*

Thank you for the empty tomb / *Thank you for the empty tomb*

Thank you for sharing your love / *Thank you for sharing your love*

Help us to share your love, too. / *Help us to share your love, too.*

Amen. / *Amen.*

the extension:

My friends, I have something for you to take back to your seats. These are paper grocery sacks. We use them in our pantry (or, we will give them to a local food pantry), where we share food with people in our community. I have markers and crayons for you to use to decorate them. Your pictures will be more than decorations. Just like the women were told to go and share the good news, we get to go and share love. These bags are one way we tell our community, 'Jesus is alive, and you are loved.' Color your designs and pictures as you listen to the sermon and continue in worship. You can put your decorated bags back into this basket when you are done, and we'll get them to the food pantry.