



Date: 20th April – 1st June 2025

Easter Season

A special edition covering seven weeks

Theme: Resurrection Gospels

Bible Readings: Matthew 28, Mark 16,
Luke 24, John 20 (and more).

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

This material provides a framework for **the whole of the Easter Season**, from Easter Day until Ascensiontide (just before Pentecost). If you meet fortnightly, this will be around three sessions. (If you meet more often, you will be able to take more time over it, so there are suggested additional readings.) Work out beforehand when you will be meeting (bear in mind bank holidays), and choose which material you would like to use for each session (you don't have to use it all!). Feel free to add your own questions. *The Methodist Worship Book* would be a useful resource for prayers, or pray in your own words. Please make sure all group members know the dates and can prepare for each session accordingly. Group members might like to borrow a copy of *Singing the Faith* from your church for their preparation at home.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS (before each session)

Take some time before each session to think and pray, or read through one of the Bible passages. *What does the Easter season mean to you: a nice bank holiday weekend, or something more? What do you make of Good Friday and the Passion (Jesus' suffering and death)? What is the significance of Jesus' resurrection? What does it mean that we say "Alleluia!" for seven weeks as we celebrate it in church? How does the idea of resurrection affect your own life and faith? And what about hope for the world?* All of these things are worth considering again and again, as we go through the Easter season.

If you have a copy of *Singing the Faith* (or ask to borrow one), read through some of the hymns in the 'Jesus Christ: Risen and Ascended' section (292-316), and choose one to share with the group.

STARTING THE SESSION: PRAYERS

Faithful God,
the strength of all who believe
and the hope of those who doubt;
may we, who have not seen, have faith
and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Loving and eternal God,
through the resurrection of your Son,
help us to face the future
with courage and assurance,
knowing that nothing in life or death
can ever part us from your love for us.
in Jesus Christ our Saviour;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

(Collects for the Easter season, from *The Methodist Worship Book*. More can be found on pages 540-544.)

FINDING OUR ROOTS

Opening discussions (either in smaller groups, or in the group as a whole):

Has anyone brought a resurrection hymn to share with the group? What struck you about the words? In the group or in worship at church, have you learned anything new recently about resurrection or the Easter story? Or has anything come to you in a new way, with new meaning? How are you growing?

1. RESURRECTION IN MATTHEW Read together the Easter Gospel: [Matt chapter 28](#)

What surprises you about this passage? What details did Matthew think was important to include?

In this very dramatic account, Matthew invites us to consider too the alternative story of the guards... *Is it plausible that Jesus' disciples would risk stealing a body from under the noses of armed soldiers?*

What does 'the Great Commission' (verses 18-20) tell us about Jesus' continuing work, and ours?

Additional: Peter became one of the great leaders of the early church, based in Jerusalem. It was still a hostile place, and the church went through periods of growth, fierce debate, and persecution. Two of the New Testament letters are written in Peter's name, and remain a gift to the whole church. **Read 1 Peter 1:1-9.** This is a rich and densely-packed passage, full of joy. *What does it say to you about resurrection, suffering, and salvation? Why do you think Peter might have felt the need to write it?*

2. RESURRECTION IN MARK Read together the Easter Gospel: [Mark 16:1-8a](#)

What surprises you about this passage? What did Mark leave out? Is there strength in his simplicity?

What was the question asked by the women on the way to the tomb? The answer is given by a 'young man in a white robe' (verse 5). Who do you think this might have been?

Can you understand the women's initial silence? At some point, though, they must have shared their stories! How can we overcome our fear or reluctance to talk about our faith, or tell our stories?

Additional: Our bibles have additional 'endings' added to Mark's Gospel. These are generally not believed to have been by the original author; perhaps added later in attempts to finish off a chapter that seems strangely incomplete. **Read Mark 16:8b-20.** *What do you make of these endings? Can you see a difference in the style of writing? Is there anything wrong with Mark remaining 'unfinished'?*

3. RESURRECTION IN LUKE Read together the Easter Gospel: [Luke chapter 24](#)

What surprises you about this passage? What questions do you have after reading this chapter?

Have you ever had a 'penny-drop' moment like the two at Emmaus when they recognised Jesus?

Luke includes the strange fact that Jesus ate some fish! *How important is this 'solid' (bodily) detail?*

Additional: The Gospels each tell the resurrection story differently, probably from different eyewitness perspectives. But the *earliest* written account comes from Paul, in his first letter to the church at Corinth. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.** *Why was Christ's resurrection such an important part of their faith? Why did it matter that there were eyewitnesses still alive? ('Cephas' is Peter. James is likely Jesus' brother.)*

4. RESURRECTION IN JOHN Read together the Easter Gospel: [John chapter 20](#)

What surprises you about this chapter? What is special about the encounters with Mary and Thomas?

How does Jesus greet his disciples? What do you think is the 'tone' of his words? How might they feel?

In verses 19-23, when Jesus appears in the locked room, he gives the disciples his peace and breathes on them (the Holy Spirit). *How important is the Spirit of God in our life and witness as Christians?*

Additional: **John 21** is his 'Epilogue', perhaps written later by the same author, to tell of a turning-point for Peter. (After all, John 20:31 does make a nice ending on its own!). **Read John 21** and you will see why it needed to be told! Think about this from Peter's perspective; look at the details and see where it resonates with his 'backstory' – especially his calling and his moment of great failure. *What does this passage tell us about God's grace, and how God might respond to our failures? Can we still be called?*

PRAYING AND SINGING TOGETHER

Invite the risen Lord Jesus to be with you as you pray together for the needs of your group, your church, and your community. Ask God to fill you with hope, even in difficult times.

Thank God for what you have learned or reflected on together, or for signs of hope or answered prayer.

Share in **the Lord's Prayer** together, or use some of the prayers from *The Methodist Worship Book*, pages 160-166, or the canticles in *Singing the Faith (795-798)*. Finally, **sing together an Easter hymn!**