READY TO USE ALL-AGE SERVICE

# Easter Sunday

MEETING AIM

To encounter the risen Jesus!

BIBLE PASSAGE

John 20:1-18

BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video-conferencing software.

If you have been around church for any amount of time, this story will be very familiar. However, we do well not to get too used to the incredible truth of the story and what a life-changing difference it makes to us today. Take the opportunity to allow the truth to become fresh again and communicate this ‘alive truth’ to the children, young people and adults in the service.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

## WELCOME – 5 mins

As people arrive at the service, welcome them warmly! You might want to serve refreshments at the start, as this will ease people who don’t come regularly into an environment they may feel unsure about.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE: Praise and worship**

**You will need:** simple songs that speak of Jesus’ resurrection

Before the service, select some songs about Jesus’ resurrection. Be careful to choose a good mix of songs, including ones that the children, young people and adults will know.

Enjoy singing these songs together. Perhaps you could invite some of the children or young people to teach ‘their’ songs to the rest of the congregation.

**OPTION TWO:** Who’s that?

**You will need:** photos of celebrities that have been doctored so it’s difficult to make out who they are

Before the service, prepare your photos, making sure you have a mix of people that different generations will have heard of. Stick the photos around your meeting space.

Show the photos by sharing your screen and invite everyone to guess who all the celebrities are in the pictures. After you have finished, ask for some feedback on how easy it was to recognise someone they probably knew.

## BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a volunteer to play the part of Mary; biblical costume

It’s important for your volunteer to be able to rehearse this role play before the service. Ideally, they’d be able to learn their lines to give a smooth performance. As you thank people for coming along to your special service, Mary Magdalene should start shouting, trying to attract your attention.

Mary: Have you heard?

Leader: Heard? Heard what?

Mary: It’s Jesus!

Leader: It’s Jesus what?

Mary: JESUS! HE’S ALIVE!

Leader: I’m sorry, I think I’m missing something. Who are you?

Mary: Oh, sorry, getting carried away. My name’s Mary Magdalene.

Leader: Really? *The* Mary Magdalene?

Mary: Well, I think so. I’m not sure how many other people are called Mary Magdalene!

Leader: This is great! Welcome, Mary! What’s all this about Jesus? He’s alive?

Mary: Yes! Yes! He was dead, but now he’s alive! I’ve seen him with my own eyes!

Leader: Whoa! Slow down! Start from the beginning…

Mary: Yes, that’s a very good place to start. Or so I hear. Right. The beginning. Well, a week ago, Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem to the shouts of the crowd – everyone welcomed him into the city, waving palm branches and cheering and shouting…Jesus was on a donkey, which seemed a bit strange, but it showed everyone that he was a king!

Leader: I think I heard about that. Not everyone was so happy with Jesus, were they?

Mary: No, not at all. All the religious leaders were very jealous that people were listening to Jesus. He made them look stupid in front of the crowds and now they wanted him dead!

Leader: Dead? Really?

Mary: Yes! They started plotting to kill Jesus. And they even recruited one his friends, Judas, to help!

Leader: No!

Mary: I know! The long and the short of it was that Jesus was arrested and put to death – crucified, even though he had done nothing wrong. We took his body down from the cross and put him in a tomb. Well, this morning, I went to the tomb to put spices on Jesus’ body but when I got there, the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty.

Leader: Where had Jesus body gone?

Mary: I didn’t know, so I went to get Peter and John. They came to see, but they didn’t know what happened either. They left as confused as when they’d arrived. But then two men in white – angels, I suppose – appeared.

Leader: Wait a minute…you saw angels? This morning?

Mary: Yes, I promise you! They asked me why I was crying, and I told them: “Well…Jesus!” Then I realised there was someone standing behind me. I thought it was the gardener. But then he said my name and I knew who it was.

Leader: Jesus!

Mary: Yes! Jesus! He’s alive! I’m just one my way to tell all his friends all about it! I can’t wait to see their faces! Bye! *She rushes off.*

Leader: Bye, Mary!

## SMALL GROUPS – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in smaller groups. Give each group a copy of these questions:

* What do you think Mary said to the disciples when she went back?
* What would you say to Jesus if you were Mary?
* What do you think is important about this story?
* What difference does this story make to you?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## REVIEW – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the questions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Reflection

**You will need:** reflective music and the means to play it

Play the music and lead the group in this short meditation:

Imagine you are standing next to the tomb. The stone is not there and the tomb is empty. Then imagine you hear a voice behind you, calling your name. It’s Jesus. You turn around and see him. What do you want to ask him? Imagine that you’re asking him that question. What does he say in reply? Imagine you’re having a conversation with Jesus now. What things does he say to you? *Allow some time for people to imagine this.* When you leave church today, what thoughts and ideas are you going to take away with you? *Give some time for people to think about this.*

**OPTION TWO:** Art response

**You will need:** art materials

Ask the group to create a picture or collage about what God is saying to them. Encourage them to chat with God as they create.

**OPTION THREE:** Discussion

Ask a couple of people to lead a discussion about the story today and people’s response to it. You could review the questions from ‘Small groups’ as well as any questions that the people in the group may have.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

**ALEX TAYLOR**

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children’s Work*.