

The background of the entire page is a close-up photograph of a white fabric, possibly a tablecloth, featuring intricate cursive handwriting in dark ink. Several small, vibrant purple lavender flowers are scattered across the fabric, some in sharp focus and others blurred. A solid green rectangular bar is positioned at the top left corner of the page.

Experience Easter in **residential homes** and with **older people**

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How to use this pack

This pack contains a series of ideas for talks and activities with those in residential care homes. It may be that you only make one visit during the season or Lent and Easter, or you may choose to offer a morning with more than one story or activity.

You will need to acquire a very special box to use as the treasure box. Inside it you will need to have a special cloth: you may like to change the colour of the cloth from purple to gold depending on the appropriate liturgical colour at the time of your visit. The box also needs to be large enough to contain one or more of the items at the heart of each programme – the largest item is some home baked bread and a small water spray.

It may be appropriate to have enough items to give or hand round to each member of the group. These might be in the box or kept separately.

One item might be left behind for display in a suitable place, depending on the layout and needs of the residential home.

Each session is based around talk and reminiscence and involves telling a simple story, with an optional craft activity. It is important to give plenty of time to talk.

The materials could also be used with other groups of people eg in day centres or lunch clubs.

Starting a session

It is helpful to have some clear indicator that the time is moving from a more informal chat towards a more purposeful input. This might be lighting a candle and using a simple response such as: “The Lord be with you”. “And also with you.”

Begin by placing the box in a visible place, such as a table.

Open it respectfully and then take out the cloth, placing it on the table, with the open box nearby.

Say: This is the place for the treasure of memory. This is the place for the treasure of Easter.

Getting ready: The story of Lent



In the box

A container with ash from a fire; a container with ash for Ash Wednesday.

Take out the ash from a fire and begin to talk about what it might be. Pass it round, invite people to smell it. If the memories of fires in the grate don't start flowing, you might prompt with a story of your own. Talk about coming down on cold mornings to the job of clearing the ash away; of the struggle to light fires etc. But also talk about the joy of seeing the fire burning.

Then take out the container for Ash Wednesday. Pass it round. Ask if anyone can remember being in church for Ash Wednesday, the feel of ash being placed on your forehead as a sign that the season of Lent is beginning. Explore memories of Lent, about giving things up, about eating fish and no flowers in church.

The story

The way we behave in Lent is inspired by Jesus. After he was baptised, and before he began the work of teaching and healing that would bring such joy that crowds followed him everywhere, and such anger

that it would lead to his death on the cross, Jesus took time away from everyone.

You might remember the story:

Luke 4: 1-13 Either read from the Bible version with which most people are familiar OR

Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist in the Jordan. As he walked away, he knew that God was with him and loved him, and he was so aware that God's spirit was with him. Jesus walked on, further and further away from the villages, the houses, the farms, even the trees. He walked right into the wilderness. Day after day he thought and prayed. Day after day he ate nothing and drank little. Forty long days went by, and Jesus was famished – famished of food, famished of company, and the Devil stepped in and began to taunt him.

"Why go hungry Jesus? If you are really the son of God, you could turn all these stones into lovely, tasty loaves of bread."

Jesus spoke firmly. "The scriptures tell us that human beings do not live by bread alone."

Getting ready: The story of Lent

The Devil continued. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world spread out before him – all the cities, all the people, all the beauty. And the Devil said to Jesus: “All this could be yours. All you have to do is worship me.”

Jesus spoke firmly: The scriptures tell us to worship and serve God and God alone.

But the Devil continued to torment Jesus. He took him to the highest point of the temple and said: “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself off. You know that God will send his angels to protect you. Not a bone of your body will be harmed.”

Jesus spoke firmly:” Scripture says do not test the Lord your God.”

So the Devil left Jesus. And Jesus left the wilderness.

After reading the story, continue with a short conversation about any memories of the story.

It may be appropriate to introduce a short time of reflection and penitence, before offering the imposition of ashes to those who want it. Alternatively, pray using these or similar words:

*Lord Jesus,
who struggled, but who stood strong when the
Devil spoke,
help us who struggle to be strong,
and to be faithful in following you
when life feels good and when life feels difficult.
In Jesus’ name.
Amen.*

End with a blessing.

Craft activity: Painted prayer stone

You will need:

- Enough smooth, large pebbles for everyone.
- Appropriate paints eg enamel.
- Paint brushes.
- Some design ideas for copy eg a cross, flowers, a dove etc.

Each person chooses a design and paints the stone.

Leave to dry.

On the move: The story of Palm Sunday



In the box

Enough palm crosses for everyone; an unmade palm cross.

Open the box and place one of the palm crosses on the fabric. If you are able, make a palm cross whilst you talk. Pass one or more crosses round the group. Begin to talk about whether people have held one before. Where do they keep it when they get home? Add a story of your own if appropriate. Encourage conversation about processions and donkeys, being outdoors, a very long service, music.

The story

Palm crosses are given out on Palm Sunday, often a service with a procession. We hear the story of Jesus last week as we get ready to remember again everything that happened. We also remember that first time, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. It must have been amazing to be there; the noise, the smells, the crowds pressing in.

You might remember the story:

Luke 11:1 – 11:11: read from the Bible version with which people are most familiar OR Trevor Dennis, Book of Books page 370 -373 OR

Jesus called his disciples together. Go down there and when you find a donkey and her colt, bring them back to me.

The disciples went and found the donkey just as Jesus had said. They brought her back to Jesus. Then Jesus got on the donkey, and they began to walk towards Jerusalem. Crowds gathered along the way. Children started shouting "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hurray!! Hurray!" Everyone began to join in, cheering and shouting. They pulled palm branches from the trees and threw them in front of the donkey. It was like a royal procession. It was a procession fit for a king. Jesus was the king.

After reading the story, continue a conversation about memories of Palm Sunday.

Hand out palm crosses to each person present and encourage them to hold it as you pray in these or similar words:

On the move: The story of Palm Sunday

*Loving God,
As we hold this palm cross,
help us to remember that you are a King,
and that you are a Saviour.
Help us to give you praise and thanks
in the quiet moments of our days,
and help us to remember your presence
in the long stillness of the nights.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.*

End with blessing.

Craft activity: A 'Gomez' cross (see coloured cross in the picture above)

Divide a cross shape into seven segments – four longways, three across. Each segment is illustrated to represent either something from the story of Jesus or aspects of the story of someone's life eg

Centre – sunrise for resurrection

Top panel – crown of thorns

Next panel – jug and bowl

Bottom panel – scene of praying in the garden

Left side – donkey

Right side – bread and wine.

Pause for thought: the story of the anointing with oil



In the box

Some solid/spray perfume (perhaps from the 1950s or 60s eg Avon), a scented candle, a lavender sachet.

Place the scented candle on the fabric, and pass the solid perfume around. Invite people to smell the perfume. Encourage conversation about how smell is very evocative of different situations. Talk specifically about perfume, talking about times when perfume has been special. Think about when it was given, who gave it, whether it signified something special. Perfume is often given as a sign of love.

The story

Perfume is often given as a sign of love, and it's not just a modern invention. There was a time when someone poured perfume all over Jesus as a token of love. You might remember the story:

Read Mark 14: 3-9 or John 12 1- 8 from the Bible version with which people are most familiar OR

Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper. Jesus was always around people that he shouldn't be with. And unusual things were often happening around Jesus.

Whilst the men were sitting around talking, a woman came quietly into the room. No-one paid her any attention: they probably thought she was a servant. She moved as quietly as she could until she came close to Jesus. Then from under her shawl, she pulled out a small bottle, pulled out the stopper and then poured the contents all over Jesus. A beautiful perfume filled the room. Everyone began to talk, their voices full of irritation, even anger.

"This is really expensive perfume. It should have been sold. The money could have been given to the poor." They began to rebuke the woman.

Pause for thought: the story of the anointing with oil

Jesus thought differently. He said to those listening: "Leave her alone! This woman has done something really special for me. There will always be people in need – and you can help them whenever you wish. But this woman has done what she can – she has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. You might not believe this, but whenever people are told the good news, what she has done will be remembered."

Take some time to reflect further on the memories of perfume and love and what this might have meant for Jesus. Pray in these or similar words:

*Lord Jesus,
We know you come to us with love,
and have blessed us with love in our lives;
help us to show love to you in our words and actions,
and help us to show love to those around us,
in our families, amongst our friends,
and in this place.
In Jesus' name. Amen.*

End with a blessing.

Craft activity: Lavender bags

This is a very simple way to make lavender bags. Lavender is the herb of healing, and you might want to encourage people to make their bag(s) for someone else as a token of their thoughts and prayers.

You will need:

6" or 7" squares of fabric for everyone.

Dried lavender.

Craft elastic bands.

Pretty matching ribbon.

Take a square of fabric. Place a small handful of lavender into the centre. Gather the edges around the lavender and secure with an elastic band. Then simply tie a length of ribbon around.

OR

Craft activity: Decorated candle holder

Decorate a simple glass as a holder for a tea-light.

You will need:

- Wooden or glass candle holders (available from craft suppliers such as Baker Ross)
- Appropriate paints

After decorating, place a scented candle into in the holder.

More than bread: The story of the last supper



In the box

Some home baked bread, which needs to be large enough to share. You might also want to have the smell of home baking, perhaps by using a scented candle.

Place the bread on the fabric.

Show the bread and talk about bread, about bread making, and other domestic activities. There might be memories of food shortages, whether in the war or because of strikes in the 1970s. Draw out memories of meals around the table, talking about special occasions.

The story

Bread is such an ordinary thing. Yet it means so much to us – it reminds us of the essential things of life, reminds us of happy times and sad times as well, makes us think about sharing, but also about what is really important in life.

Jesus used bread in both these ways when he met with his disciples for the last time.

You might remember the story:

Read Luke 22: 7 -13 from the Bible version with which people are most familiar OR

It was the night of the Passover. Everything had been made ready for Jesus and his friends to share the special meal together.

As they were gathered around the table, sharing the Passover meal, Jesus took some bread. He gave thanks to God, and broke the bread, saying: "This is my body, given for you. Every time you do this in the future, remember me." Then he took the cup filled with wine, gave thanks to God, and said: "This is my blood, given for you. Every time you drink this in the future, remember me."

Time was running out.

Shortly after, Jesus and the disciples left the room and went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray.

Take some time to reflect together, continuing to think about special meals and particularly about Holy Communion.

More than bread: The story of the last supper

Pray using these or similar words:

*Loving God,
Thank you for the good things we have in our
lives,
For food, friends and family gathered together.
Thank you for the special things we have in our
lives,
for the gift of bread and wine,
as we gather together and remember you
and all that you mean to us.
Draw close to us today and help us know your
presence
in the ordinary things of our lives.
Amen.*

Finish with blessing.

Craft activity: Ornamental bread

Use salt dough to make ornamental bread.

You will need:

2 cups of plain flour

1 cup of cooking salt

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water

Mix the salt and flour together with a spoon. Gradually add half a cup of water and keep mixing. Add water until the mixture reaches the desired consistency and you can roll it into a ball. Knead the dough for a few minutes to make sure it has been mixed fully. Make shapes and leave for 48 hours to dry. Glaze if desired.

Water, water, everywhere: The story of the foot-washing



In the box

A small water spray, a towel and some basic soap.

Place the towel and the soap onto the cloth. Gently spray people with the water, and then talk about what water is used for. Draw out memories of weekly baths, laundry days, using the same water many times. Talk about when there is too much water, reminiscing about floods and washing machine disasters etc.

Place the water spray back on the fabric.

The story

Water is easy to take for granted, and the things we use water for are taken for granted. Jesus did something that was both very ordinary and very special with some water.

You might remember the story:

Read John 13: 1-11 in a familiar Bible version OR

Everything was ready for Jesus and the disciples to share a meal together. The meal had already begun, when Jesus did something unexpected. He stood up, took of his robe, and wrapped a towel round his waist. Then he began to wash the feet of those around the table.

Most of the disciples were too shocked and embarrassed to speak – except Peter.

Peter said: “Jesus, this can’t be right! You are my teacher, my master. It’s not for you to wash my feet.”

After he had washed everyone’s feet, Jesus sat down again. He asked the disciples a question: “Do you realise what I have done for you? If I, your Lord and Master, wash feet, then this is something you should be doing for others. I have set you an example, an example you should follow as you behave towards other people the way I have behaved with you.”

Reflect on the story, talking about feet and how personal it might seem to have your feet washed.

Water, water, everywhere: The story of the foot-washing

Pray in these or similar words:

*Creator God, who made the world,
gave us water as the source of life,
and showed us how to care for one another,
help us to show care to those around us,
to make small gestures of kindness
and to share love with all those we meet.
In Jesus' name, we pray.
Amen.*

End with blessing.

Craft activity: Felt making

You will need:

- Raw wool
- Washing up liquid
- Bowl of hot water.
- Bowl of cold water.
- Towel.

Pull the raw wool apart and fluff it up. Wet your hands with warm water and put a little bit of washing up liquid on your hands. Gently roll the wool into a ball. As it begins to felt, press harder so it stiffens and flatten it out. When it is firm, rinse it with cold water and press it in the towel. Allow it to air dry and cut it into desired shapes.

OR

Make and decorate a small gift box to give to someone as an act of kindness.

Sound of silence: The story of Peter



In the box

A small ornament of a cockerel and a sound effect CD. Place the cockerel on the cloth and play the some of the sound effects from the CD. Talk about the memories triggered by sounds and noises. For example, the sound of thunder might bring back memories of a storm. You might want to play some music from appropriate eras eg early rock or a swing band.

Then play the sound of a cock crowing. Talk about whether it has any memories for anyone. Some sounds remind us of happy times, but some sounds remind us of difficult or disappointing events.

The sound of the cockerel crowing must have been very significant for Peter. You might remember the story.

The story

Read Luke 22: 54 -62 in a familiar Bible version OR

The soldiers led Jesus away from the garden where he had been praying with his friends. The disciples scattered in fear as they dragged Jesus into the courtyard on the

High Priest's house. Peter tried to stay close, weaving in and out of the shadows, so he couldn't be seen.

A fire was blazing in the middle of the courtyard, and the soldiers and servants gathered around. Peter slid in among them. One of the servant girls saw him and said: "I reckon he was with Jesus."

Quickly Peter moved back and said loudly: "Woman, I do not know him." The night dragged on, and a while later another servant saw Peter and said: " You are one of them, the friends of Jesus." Peter swore loudly and said: "Man, you must be joking! I am not one of them."

Time went by. About an hour later as dawn light crept into the courtyard, still another servant came to Peter and said: "This bloke is from Galilee. He must have been with them."

Peter spoke more firmly than ever: "Man, you do not know what you are talking about! Leave me alone!" At that moment a cock crowed.

Jesus turned and looked across the courtyard, right into Peter's eyes.

Sound of silence: The story of Peter

And Peter remembered. He remembered the meal they had shared. He remembered how he had boasted and bragged that he would never let Jesus down. He remembered how Jesus had shaken his head and said: "Peter, this very night, you will deny me three times." Even then Peter had laughed with bravado, so sure of himself. He remembered now.

And he turned and ran from that place, the cock crow ringing in his ears, and his eyes blinded by tears.

Reflect on this story and any further memories before praying in these or similar words:

*Loving God,
you have promised to be with us all the time,
when things go well and when things are
difficult,
when we fail you and disappoint others.
Be with us today, give us courage to face our
challenges,
and peace in knowing your presence.
Amen.*

Craft activity: Cockerel book mark

You will need:

- Enough pictures of cockerels for everyone.
- Cardboard.
- Scissors
- Glue.

Print out pictures of cockerels and glue them onto cardboard, cutting around the shape. (If members of the group are likely to find this hard, bring ready cut shapes.) Stick them onto the top of a two inch by seven inch piece of cardboard so that the cockerel's comb sticks out over the top of the bookmark.

The end: The story of the cross



In the box

One or two crosses from church/chapel, including a crucifix, plus enough holding crosses for each person. Take the crosses out of the box and place on the fabric.

Ask if anyone can remember seeing a cross like these – perhaps in a church or chapel, perhaps at a war memorial. Talk about any particular occasions people can remember, such as a church which was special. But also talk about how the cross makes people feel. For some people the cross will have strong associations with loss, death and sadness. It may even make some people feel anger or disgust. Others may want to begin talking about times when it was really helpful to them.

The cross is very important to Christians. Show the crucifix: it reminds us of the fact that Jesus died on a cross, put to death by his enemies. Show the empty cross: it reminds us that his body was taken down and laid in a tomb, borrowed from a stranger and waiting for new life again.

You might remember the story:

The story

Either read Mark 15: 2- 47 from a familiar version of the Bible OR

The crowd made their choice. The soldiers finished tormenting Jesus. So began the long walk up the hill to the place where people were crucified. Crowds watched as Jesus struggled, some laughing at him, some crying. Jesus stumbled, and the soldiers grabbed a man from the crowd to help him. Simon was only there for the day with his sons, but he had no choice. He shouldered the cross and walked with Jesus.

At the place called Golgotha, the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, and raised it high. The soldiers sat down to wait, and as they waited they gambled for his clothes.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified Jesus. There were others there, thieves and robbers, also left to die. People walked by and laughed at Jesus, calling out to him: "Come on down and save yourself". The temple leaders came by and shouted: "Come down from the cross, come down and make us believe." But Jesus said nothing.

The end: The story of the cross

Three hours later, at noon, everything went dark... and it stayed dark until three in the afternoon. It was such a long day. Then Jesus called out and the soldiers thought he wanted a drink. They offered wine vinegar on a stick, but Jesus took nothing. He gave a loud cry, and then he was dead.

At that exact moment the curtain in the temple ripped in half.

One of the soldiers waiting at the cross looked at Jesus and said: "Truly, this man was the Son of God."

Only the women who followed Jesus were there. All his friends had run away.

It was a terrible day.

Pause for a short time or play a well-known Good Friday hymn, such as "There is a green hill far away" or "When I survey the wondrous cross."

Then continue to talk about memories of Good Friday – perhaps thinking about any special customs, visits to church, eating fish, shops being closed etc. Then hand everyone a holding cross. Encourage them to hold it close as you pray in these or similar words:

*Lord God,
Good Friday ought to be bad Friday,
as we remember Jesus put to death on the cross.
We remember all the dark times in our own lives
and the dark times in our world;
and as we look at the cross,
we know that Jesus shares all our pain,
and bears all our wrong-doing.
Give us courage and give us hope
as we trust in you to bring us to new life again.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

End with blessing.

Craft activity: Good Friday bracelet

You might like to make a simple Good Friday bracelet that tells the story of the journey to the cross.

You will need:

- A selection of coloured beads.
- Some jewellery thread (waxed nylon or equivalent).
- Needles.

Choose a series of coloured bead to represent different moments of the story – purple for the mocking and trials, red for the cross, black for the death and gold for the hope of new life. Thread them in between a different neutral colour and tie together to make either a bracelet or necklace.

If your parish has sufficient resources, you might be able to give a holding cross to those who want to keep one.

New beginning: The story of Easter



In the box

A banana and an orange, an empty cross, a large stone and some daffodils. You might also like to have some chocolate eggs to give away.

Take the banana and orange from the box first.

Ask if anyone can remember the first time they saw one of these. Talk about rationing and shortages, and how it felt when that time was coming to an end, how it felt like a new beginning.

Then take out the daffodils and talk about spring memories, the joy of gardening and seeing new things appear.

Finally take out the cross and the stone, and begin to talk about Easter. Talk about memories of Easter day, any special customs, eggs, Easter bonnets, new clothes, flowers.

Easter Day is the greatest day in the Church calendar. Perhaps you can remember the story.

The story

Read Luke 24: 1-11 in a familiar Bible version or "Mary" p398 in Book of Books by Trevor Dennis OR

After the burial, after the Sabbath, after long sleepless nights and after long weary hours of grief, the women wanted to do something. Mary, from the town of Magdala, and some of the other women who knew Jesus, crept out in the early morning light. They walked quickly, quietly, to the place where Jesus' body had been left. They were ready to put more spices and herbs nearby. But as they drew closer, they realised that the stone had already been moved! They were shocked and worried. What could have happened? Then two men in dazzling white clothes came and stood next to them. Now the women were not just shocked and worried – they were absolutely terrified, so terrified they bowed low to the ground.

One of the men said: "Why are you looking for the living here in the place where the dead belong? Jesus is not here, he is risen. He is alive!" The women didn't know what to feel or think: shock, worry, fear, delight,

New beginning: The story of Easter

excitement – so many feelings all at once. They looked at each other – and they ran. They ran back through the streets, back through the morning light, back to the house where many of Jesus' friends were waiting and wondering, crying and talking. They burst in through the door. Peter, John, James, all the men looked up in amazement. Mary looked at them for a moment. Then she said: "He is alive! Jesus has risen from the dead!"

But the men laughed at them. "What do a bunch of women know?" they thought. Except Peter. Peter pushed past them all and ran, ran through the streets as the sun rose higher in the sky. He ran right into the tomb. Then he stopped. There was nothing there except a few empty sheets and a few stale herbs.

Slowly he walked back, stunned, amazed and full of joy. Suddenly, he jumped high and punched the air: "Alleluia!" he shouted. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! The shout echoed round and around. Everything had changed. Jesus is alive again...

Encourage everyone to shout alleluia as they are able. Talk about how exciting it is to celebrate good news and if appropriate, talk about times when good news has been shared or received. Then hand out chocolate eggs to share and pray in these or similar words:

*Almighty God,
We thank and praise you for the good news
that Jesus is alive.
We thank and praise you that your mighty
power
rolled back the stone,
and that life has triumphed over death.
Fill our hearts with joy and hope,
and give us confidence to share the good news
with those around us.
In Jesus name.
Amen.*

End with blessing and Easter egg eating!

Craft activity: Painted egg shells

You will need:

- An empty egg shell for each group member (see directions below).
- Felt tip pens or poster paints.
- Cotton.
- A branch or tree for display.

Before the session, prepare an egg shell for each group member. Make a hole in both ends of an egg, with a slightly larger hole in the wider end of the egg. Push a needle through the larger hole, pierce the yolk and break up the membranes.

Give each participant an egg shell and felt tip pens or poster paints to create a decorative egg. Try threading a piece of cotton through the centre of each egg, so that they can be displayed on a decorative Easter tree or branch.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
**DIOCESE OF
GLOUCESTER**

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