

a basket

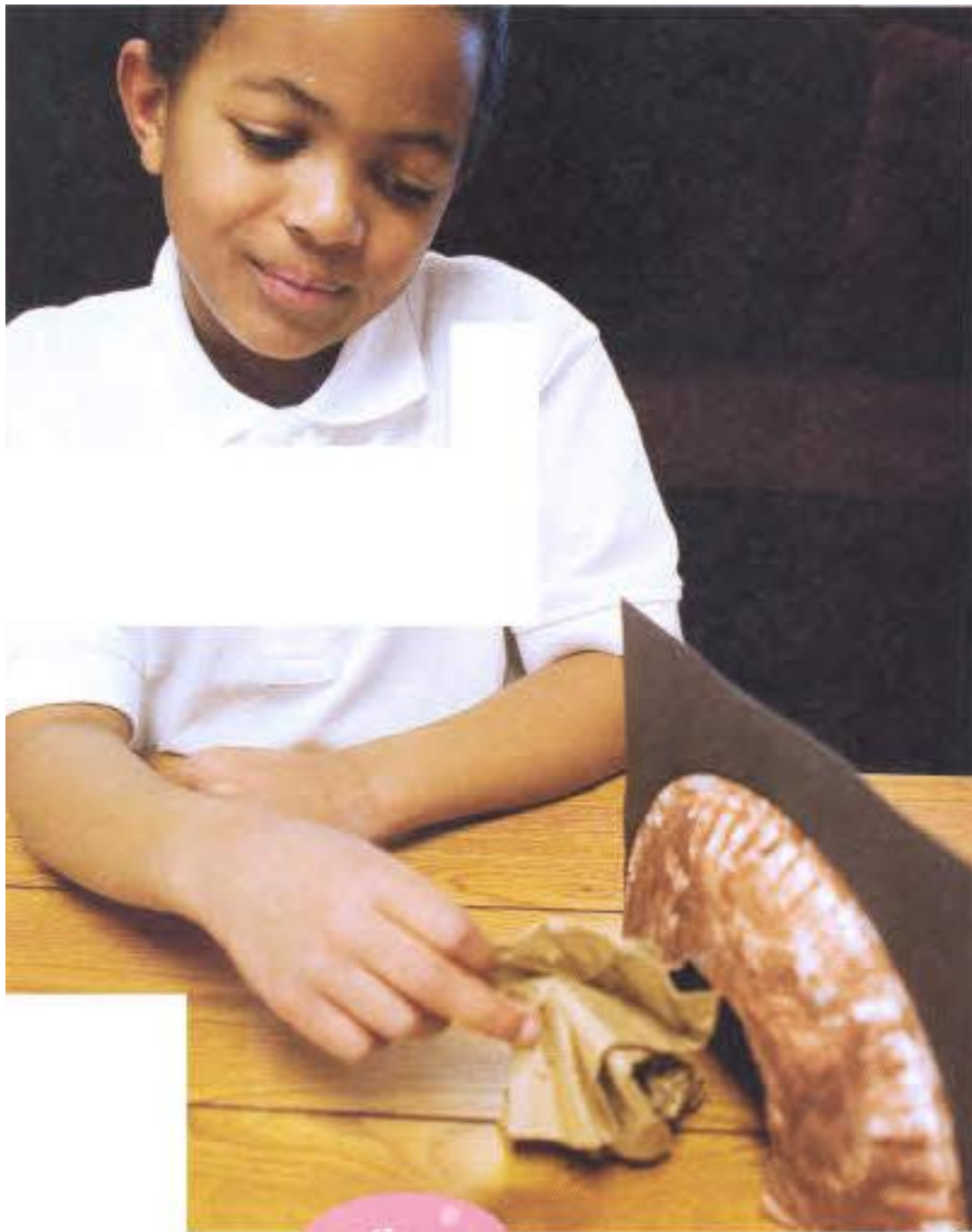
Easter is one of the biggest days on your church calendar—and for good reason. As a children’s ministry leader, you want Easter celebrations to make a big impact in children’s lives. After all, it’s the resurrection of our Savior that changes all our lives! For some new ways to capture attention and hearts on this joyful day, dig into this “basket” of ideas that’ll help children and families know Easter’s true meaning.

full

Spread the good news of Jesus’ resurrection with these **10** new “egg-citing” experiences

of ideas





Best for Ages 3 to 6

This simple craft lets children picture Jesus' empty tomb.
Get Ready You'll need paper or foam plates, scissors, glue, paint (gray or brown), paintbrushes, black cardstock or construction paper, and paper lunch sacks.

Get Set Help children each cut a plate in half and cut out an opening in the center to look like a cave or tomb. Then let them paint their plates. When the paint is dry, glue black cardstock to the back of the plate. Next, have children create a "stone" by wadding up a paper lunch sack and placing it in front of the tomb.

Faith Talk Read Mark 16:3-4. Tell children to roll back their stones and ask them what's inside. When they say "nothing," remind them that's because Jesus has already come back to life. He died to forgive our sins, and now he's alive in heaven.

Tania Willis Columbus, Ohio

**Family
Art
Show**

Best for All Ages

Host an Easter Family Art Show so families can work together to discover the reason we celebrate. Encourage families to get creative; they can draw or paint a picture, create a clay display, sew an object, build a block structure, take photos, or create a collage depicting an aspect of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Have families bring their artwork to church the week before Easter. Display it throughout your children's ministry area and invite people to attend the show.

Amy Dolan

Arlington Heights, Illinois



Best for Preschool

Get Ready You'll need plastic eggs, taped shut, with different objects inside, and prizes.

Get Set Simply have kids shake the eggs and guess what's in there, for a prize. You could also put two of the same objects in plastic eggs and put all of the eggs in a pile. Like Memory, have kids shake eggs to see if they can match up the sounds, and then keep the "pairs" of eggs.

This game is from the exciting (we think so) Neighborhood Easter Egg Hunt Kit (from us). Multiply the impact by having 10, 15, or even 50 families-invite neighbors over for egg hunting, candy, games, and, most importantly, the good news of Jesus' resurrection. What a great way to leave a lasting impression ! Kits are available at group.com.

Best for ages 6 and up

Get Ready



You'll need two egg-hunting areas, one without eggs and one with lots of filled plastic eggs.

Get Set Before this year's egg hunt, help children try to imagine what it was like to be at the first Easter. Gather in a room separate from the hunt location. Read or tell about Jesus dying on the cross. At the part when the soldiers put Jesus' body in the tomb, have a volunteer interrupt to take children to the egg hunt. Tell children you'll finish the story when they return.

At the egg-less location, ask children what it's like to discover that something's unexpectedly missing. Discuss their feelings and explain this is probably how Jesus' friends felt when they went to the tomb and couldn't find his body.

Faith Talk Read Luke 24:3-6. Say "Jesus wasn't in the tomb because he's alive. This surprised Jesus' friends, but it was a good surprise. The good news of Easter is that Jesus didn't stay dead. By rising, he gives us good gifts such as forgiveness and peace."

Then send children to the hunt location that's filled with eggs and have fun hunting.

Ashley Kuhn Parkersburg, West

Easter Dedication

Best for Ages 5 and under
Combine your Easter service with a child dedication for a powerful time of recommitment.

Because of Easter, Christ makes us new creations and gives us a fresh start. Similarly, a dedication service is an opportunity for parents to commit to making good decisions.

Hold a brief ceremony and allow parents to answer a few simple statements as their commitment to raise their children to love Jesus. Afterward, give each family a framed certificate to commemorate the occasion.

Angela Moore Knightstown, Indiana



Best for ages 6 and up

If you're hosting a churchwide Easter egg hunt, you'll have to fill a lot of plastic eggs with candy. Make it fun for volunteers by holding an egg-stuffing party. Choose a theme; for example, invite people to join you for "The Amazing Race to Easter." Before volunteers arrive, prepare a bin of Easter eggs and a bin of candy for each team. Hide three "roadblock challenges" in each team's egg bin. Go to childrensministry.com/webextras for a fun list of roadblock challenges.

When the party begins, form table teams and let people come up with team names. Explain the stuffing procedures, noting that whenever a team comes to a roadblock, that entire team must stop stuffing and complete a challenge. Once that team finishes the challenge, team members can return to stuffing.

Crown the winning team as egg-stuffing champions and present egg trophies, available at orientaltrading.com.

Jessie Ryan *Columbus, Ohio*

Best for ages 6 and up

Because church attendance is high on Easter Sunday, help children get acquainted with one another by playing this Easter-themed game.

Get Ready You'll need small sticky notes, pencils, plastic eggs, a basket, and some music.

Get Set Give each child a sticky note, a pencil, and an egg. Have children each write something on the note about what they're wearing, such as a blue watch or red earrings. Then have children put their notes in their eggs, close them, and place them in a basket.

Mix up the eggs, play some music, and have children sit in a circle. Pass the basket around. When the music stops, have the child who's holding the basket pull out an egg. Have him or her open it and guess who wrote the note. If the child guesses correctly, have the note-writer stand up and share his or her name and a fun personal fact. If the guess is incorrect, the egg goes back in the basket and play continues. Continue until everyone has a turn.

Jake Engel *Seymour, Indiana*



Best for Ages 8 and up

This year, help kids experience the Easter message with a hands-on lesson that appeals to all their senses.

Get Ready You'll need a Bible, an audio clip of an angry mob (available for download at childrensministry.com/webextras), a bowl of water, some thorns, vinegar mixed with water and a bit of grape juice (divided into small cups), a clean cloth sprayed with fabric softener or linen spray, cotton balls sprayed with cologne, and a room that can be darkened.

Faith Talk Open your Bible to Matthew 27:11.

Say: "Jesus has just been arrested and is on trial before Pilate. When Jesus is accused of crimes, he says nothing. Pilate lets the angry crowd choose one prisoner to go free, and they choose Barabbas, not Jesus. (Play the audio clip.) Pilate, tired of the ordeal, washes his hands in front of the people. He wants them to know that Jesus' death is their responsibility." (Wash your hands and pass around the bowl so kids can do so, too.)

Say: "Then the soldiers strip Jesus and put a red robe on him. They twist together a crown

Of thorns. (Pass around the thorns.) They mock Jesus and lead him away to be crucified. Jesus stumbles under the weight of the cross, so the soldiers make Simon, a bystander, carry it for him. They offer Jesus a drink, but he refuses it." (Pass around the drinks for kids to taste.)

Say: "The soldiers nail Jesus to the cross. He suffers because of physical pain and because he knows he will die on the cross. As Jesus dies, the temple curtain tears and a great earthquake hits. Everything is dark." (Turn off the lights.)

Say: "Joseph, Jesus' friend, wraps his body in a clean cloth and lays him in the tomb. (Pass around the cloth.) Women who are friends with Jesus prepare spices for his body, but they must wait until after the Sabbath to use them." (Pass around the cotton balls.)

Say: "At dawn, some women go to the tomb. (Lift a small part of the window coverings to let in a bit of light.) An angel greets them. (Turn on all the lights.) The women are afraid, but the angel says that Jesus has risen. Then the women run to share that good news with others."

Lindsey Whitney Erie, Pennsylvania



Best for ages 6 and up

Families can use this classic, interactive recipe at home the night before Easter.

Get Ready You'll need one

cup whole pecans, a baggie, a wooden spoon, one teaspoon of vinegar, three egg whites, a pinch of salt, one cup sugar, a mixer, a greased cookie sheet, tape, and a Bible. Heat the oven to 300 degrees.

Get Set Place the pecans in the baggie. Let children beat them with the wooden spoon to break them into small pieces. Say, "After Jesus was arrested, soldiers beat him" (John 19:1-3). Next, let children smell and taste the vinegar. **P**ut one teaspoon in a mixing bowl. Say, "When Jesus was thirsty on the cross, soldiers gave him vinegar to drink" (John 19:28-30). Add the egg whites. Say, "An egg can sometimes have a new life in it, such as a bird. Jesus died so we can live with him forever" (John 10:10-11).

Sprinkle a little salt into each child's hand. Let kids brush it into the bowl and then taste what's left. Say: "Salt represents the tears of Jesus' friends" (Luke 23:27). Add the sugar. Say: "The sweetest part of Easter is that Jesus died because he loves us-and then he came back to life" (Psalm 34:8 and John 3:16).

Beat ingredients with a mixer on high for 12 to 15 minutes, until stiff peaks form. Say: "The color white represents how we become pure because Jesus washes away our sins" (Isaiah 1:18). Fold in the broken nuts. Drop by teaspoonful onto a greased cookie sheet. Say: "Each mound represents the rocky tomb where Jesus' body was laid to rest" (Matthew 27:57-60).

Put the cookie sheet in the oven, close the door, and turn off the oven. Give each child some tape to seal the door. Say: "When Jesus was sealed in the tomb, the world was dark" (Matthew 27:65-66). Tell children it's time to go to bed and ask how they feel about leaving the cookies in the oven overnight. Say: "Jesus' friends were sad to leave him in the tomb, too" (John 16:20).

Faith Talk On Easter morning, open the oven and give everyone a cookie. Notice the cracked surface and take a bite. The cookies are hollow. Say: "On the first Easter morning, Jesus' followers were amazed, too. The tomb was empty because Jesus came back to life" (Matthew 28:1-9)1

Jeanne Oliver Castle Rock, Colorado

Allergy Alert : ... Some children have food allergies that can be dangerous. Know your children, and consult with parents about allergies their children may have.



Jesus' Great Big Gift

Best for Preschool

Help kids explore how Jesus washes away our sins.

Get Ready You'll need washable red markers, a white bedsheet torn or cut into 3x3-inch squares, permanent markers, and bowls with warm, soapy water.

Get Set Tell preschoolers that Jesus loves us very much-so much that he forgives the bad things we do. Tell them he died on the cross so we could live with him forever in heaven.

Help children color their thumbs with a red washable marker so they can make a thumbprint on a piece of white fabric.

Once each child has made a print, you can draw a heart around it and write the child's first name. Tell kids that their prints represent the things we do that make Jesus sad.

Have kids dip their fabric in a bowl of soapy water and wash it. When they're done, the red print will be gone. Explain to kids that that's what happens to our sins when we ask Jesus to forgive us. He takes our sins away Let kids take home their wet pieces of fabric.

Faith Talk Say, "Jesus gave his life so we could live with him forever in heaven. His big gift to us is that he forgives our sins. He loves us no matter what! Jesus is alive today and he loves you!"

Excerpted from Group's **Journey to the Cross**-a multisensory event that guides families along the path Jesus walked during his final days on earth. Activity stations focus on Jesus' love and forgiveness to demonstrate the truth of Easter.

The kit is available at group.com.

Web extras

From **A Basket Full of Ideas** -- "Roadblock Challenges"

Use these roadblock challenges to add a dash of excitement and fun to your egg-stuffing rally.

1. Walk around the room backwards.
2. Find one person in the room who's traveled to another country.
3. List the most US presidents you can in one minute.
4. Convince someone from another team to play a game of Tic-Tac-Toe with you.
5. Eat a piece of candy. As you eat, sing the "A-B-C Song."
6. Thumb-wrestle someone from another team.
7. Introduce yourself to someone you don't know very well and find out three things about that person.
8. Take off your shoes and socks and put them back on as quickly as you can.
9. Pray that someone you know who needs to meet Jesus will have that opportunity this Easter.
10. Sing "The Itsy-Bitsy Spider"...backwards.