



Easter renewal

Colleen Moore | May 13, 2013

Our branch church has an annual Christmas Celebration involving our Sunday School, but we had never done anything special for Easter until this year. At first, we were uncertain if we would be violating the *Manual of The Mother Church* By-Law regarding, “no special observances, festivities, nor gifts at the Easter season by members of The Mother Church” (p. 60). However, we were so grateful for the prompt research conducted by the Mary Baker Eddy Library informing us that this By-Law was added after Eddy had received too many gifts from church members. Having a special Easter program for us certainly accomplished the Discoverer and Founder’s description of Easter in *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*: “I love the Easter service: it speaks to me of Life, and not of death” (p. 184).

We decided to spend the month of Sundays before Easter discussing the important events of the Passion Week in our Sunday School. After going through the chronology, Sunday School students were allowed to select a story that they wanted to learn more about and to paint a poster about that story. For example, we had posters of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, the resurrection with Mary Magdalene, and so on. We used the online version of Concord to add pertinent verses from the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy’s writings below each painting.



Photo by Colleen Moore

One Sunday we had a Passover feast complete with matzo (unleavened bread), bitter herbs (romaine lettuce), a cardboard lamb bone, grape juice, and candles, so that we could learn more about the Last Supper and the earlier commemoration of the Israelites exodus from Egypt.

On the final Sunday before Easter, we invited the adult congregation to join us after church. Sunday School students presented their posters and explained the Bible stories behind them. Then we had a three-part Resurrection play with these scenes: the empty tomb; the disciples with Thomas inspecting Jesus’ wounds; and fishing before the morning meal. The tomb and the fishing boat were made from cardboard washer and dryer boxes donated by a neighbor. We had one net without fish and one net with paper fish to cast on the right side of the boat.

Jesus’ last words in the play were “Join us for this meal and fellowship,” so we had our morning meal as a potluck lunch after the program. We have a very young Sunday School, so lunch was followed by an Easter egg hunt on the church grounds. Bible verses were included in the Easter eggs along with traditional candy. As an added bonus, one of the Christian Science Camp Directors happened to be visiting our city, so he was able to share a camp slide show before and after the Easter egg hunt with parents and children who would not have known about this camp otherwise.

Our Easter program was open to other churches, and we had so many visitors. Several members expressed appreciation for our program during the following Wednesday Testimony Meeting. One member, for example, was surprised to learn new historical information about the Passion Week from our Sunday School students.

Our branch church and the surrounding neighborhood were flooded with 11 feet of water after Hurricane Katrina. Activities such as this Easter program reflect the resurrection of our church and neighborhood. It was wonderful to experience the fellowship between the children and adults in preparing for this Easter program in a part of our city that had once appeared beyond repair due to hurricane damage a few years earlier. We hope to continue organizing activities like this in the future to express the renewal of our church and neighborhood.

If you enjoyed this blog, you might also enjoy these other pieces about how branch churches have embraced their community during various holidays:

A community Thanksgiving

Give a 'cup of cold water'

Christmas morning--at church

A special Christmas program

1. **Jessie** - 5/15/2013

I loved your Easter celebration. Great idea.

2. **Elisabeth** - 5/15/2013

How creative and wonderful!

3. **Peter Dreyer** - 5/15/2013

I draw the line on easter egg hunts. Who laid the eggs anyway? The easter bunny? And where did he/she come from? Let's stick to the Easter story and explore its message. What did Jesus mean when he said that he had power to lay down his life and power to take it up again? Why did Mrs Eddy never write that Jesus "died for us on the cross"? These questions to me are more exciting than imitating the traditions of other churches.

4. **name** - 5/15/2013

the healing keeps coming when our bible is understood, I know Mrs. Eddy says this and so did Jesus great job!

5. **Colleen Moore** - 5/16/2013

In response to comment #3, a few of our members placed the eggs; we didn't have anyone disguised as an Easter Bunny. The tradition about eggs being a symbol of resurrection and spring is quite ancient and universal. A Jewish neighbor spoke to us after Sunday School on the week we were learning about the Passover, and surprise, an egg is placed on a contemporary Seder plate!

6. **Dorothy Bumbaugh** - 5/16/2013

I like what you did... I think it is good that they also learn how some of the other churches celebrate Easter..

7. **Dorothy Bumbaugh** - 5/16/2013

I good idea.. I will forward this link to my granddaughter who teaches sunday school in our local branch church..

8. **Marta, Seattle, WA** - 5/16/2013

I love what you did, including the Easter egg hunt. I don't see an issue since it was done after Sunday School. Our children don't like to feel "different" or left out. It's a non-religious tradition and should be looked at in that way, just for fun. Eggs simply signify renewal. Learning about God is a natural attraction but children, especially young ones benefit from learning in creative ways & at a level they can comprehend. Great job on on doing a creative hands on & interesting activity for the children. We need to do what we can to inspire them and interest them. I am going to pass this on to our Superintendent (my mom) so our Sunday School children (mine, plus 2 more) can do something active. Thanks for sharing!!

9. **Camille** - 5/16/2013

I love the Easter Egg hunt as a symbol for renewal and hunting for God's ideas expressed all around us.

Of course the deeper questions #3 presented need to be explored by older Sunday School students & adults, but the eggs speak to the littlest students of joy and expectancy of good to be discovered in Bible lessons and in their own Sunday School experience.

The preliminary work on the whole Passion Week teaches the grand lessons to every age and keeps the focus on spiritual lessons. What inspired and loving ideas! Thanks for sharing.

10. **Sandy J, Newmarket** - 5/17/2013

Nice:)

11. **Ginny S.** - 5/22/2013

I love what you did. CSists who have had no association with another religion often find it difficult to relate to people of other faiths. A fuller appreciation of all that is associated with what is often referred to as "Holy Week," the Easter celebration, can only enrich what we ourselves find holy and spiritual in Easter. Thank you.

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