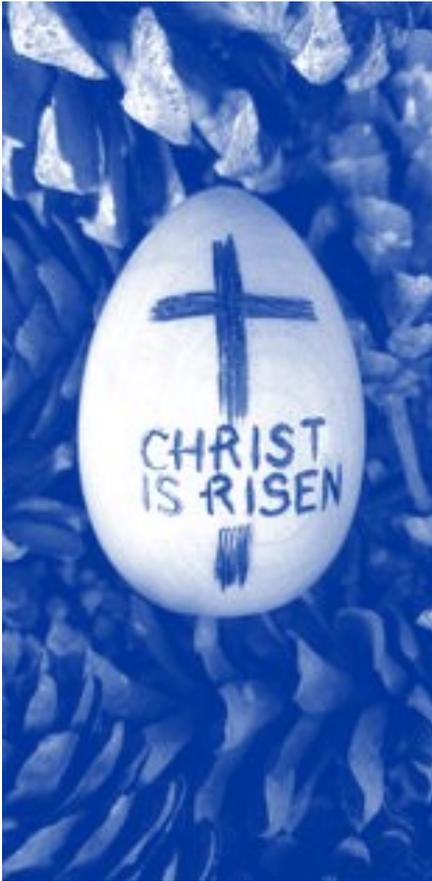


The Fig Tree

"Nurturing the seed of faith"



Easter

In this issue of "The Fig Tree" we will be exploring Easter.

Easter is not just a single day, but a whole season of fifty days, of which Easter Day is just the beginning.

This season is very much about hope. The church waits with hope and expectation of the coming of a New Kingdom, or a new world order, where God's will and laws will dominate. It will therefore be a world of peace and joy.

Christians usually greet each other at Easter by saying, "Christ is risen", and the response is, "He is risen indeed!" This expresses some of that hope—that even death no longer has a hold over us, and cannot hold us back!

Welcome to our sixth edition of "The Fig Tree". It is hoped that parents, caregivers and grandparents will use this as a tool to build upon the faith of their family. We strongly believe that the home is the place where faith is best caught, taught, practised, nurtured and lived out. The role of the Church is to nurture and resource you in living this out, and be a place where we come together to share life with all its ups and downs.

We hope you might find some ideas that will assist your family in finding deeper meaning, and new life.

Rev'd Michael Armstrong.

Key 1: Caring Conversations

Caring conversations express an interest in others—their hurts, their concerns and dreams, their values and faith. Caring conversation requires time to be available to listen and to speak. Here are some conversation starters:

- Ask your family if there are things they do which are life-giving. Talk about these. Spend time thinking why that is. Ask what may also be things you do that might seem to take away life. Think about why that is. Are these things that you have to keep doing? If so, how can they become life giving?
- Why not start a conversation about choices. Think of a time when you have had to make a tough choice. How did you do this? What did you decide? How did it turn out? Be willing to share both good and bad choices.
- Can you describe the feeling of peace? Spend time talking with your family about that feeling. When do you feel it? How do you feel it?
- What is hope? What are some of your hopes and dreams? Share some of what your hopes and dreams are with your family. Listen to some of their hopes and dreams.
- Talk about some of the things which you are afraid of in life. Not just things like spiders, but some of your real fears—like failure or being hurt.
- What do you think resurrection is? Spend time talking together about this. Do you think Jesus rose again from the dead? If so, what impact does that have on us now? What would be resurrection for you and your family?
- Talk about the way that you live as a family. Maybe come up with a list of the ways you would like to live as a family— for example: less fighting, more sharing, greater honesty, more playing together etc. Stick this on the fridge door as a reminder to everyone. Maybe people could add to it along the way?
- Conversations require good time. Think of times when you could have conversations and prepare for them, for example, in the car on the way to school. You could prepare by entering the car calmly, turning off the radio and even having a few questions ready to fire, or your own thoughts or story to share.



*Blessed are the
peacemakers,
for they will be called
the children of God*

(Matthew 5: 9)



Key 2: Spirituality in the Home

This is all about your family's devotional life—how do you practice the presence of God through the word of God. It includes deliberate activities like bible stories, prayer and table graces through to ensuring that you say please, thank you or sorry. It can include not only what you say and do, but what you listen to and how you consciously set out to bring God into your daily family life.

- Read with your family the story of the resurrection in the Gospel according to Luke. You will find it in Luke, Chapter 24. Read it a few times with them so that you get to know the stories well. When you think you know it really well, why not try and tell it to each other without the book as a prompt. Maybe even try and imagine what it would have been like to have been there, or act it out.
- Living as a “resurrected person” is about making choices to live differently. Spend time ensuring that you say please, sorry and thank you. Model behaviour you would like to see.
- Borrow a copy of *Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* and watch it together as a family. Maybe you could start some conversations about some of the choices that were made in the film—especially Aslan's choice to die.
- This month, why not try and begin each meal together by saying grace. It can be a very simple prayer.

Key 3: Family Rituals and Traditions

Rituals and Traditions are patterns of behaviour that can be expected to occur on a routine basis and communicate certain meaning in life. They can include bedtime prayers, celebrations, birthdays, baptisms, anniversaries etc.

The Hollow Egg

Easter eggs should be hollow on the inside! They are designed so that when they are cracked open, there is nothing in them. They are just like the empty tomb which Jesus rose from. So, next time you open an egg, remember that it is hollow because Jesus is risen!

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Do you Remember?

Easter is a great time to remember things that have happened in the past. Jesus asks that we should remember him whenever we eat together. Why not have a special meal together and then pull out some of your family photos or movies. Don't watch them to the point of boredom—choose some key times to remember. Your child's baptism or thanksgiving may be good to remember, as every Easter we are called to renew our baptism vows. Maybe it is a good time to think about how we are choosing to live out those vows.

Family Day Trip

Take a day trip with a difference. Set out without any set agenda or having planned where you are going. You can do this on foot, or in a car. Every time you reach a major intersection toss a coin—heads is turning right, tails is to turn left. Be aware—this could mean you go around the block a couple of times—but this is part of the fun! The aim is to go exploring together. Sometimes it is amazing what you notice in your own back yard if you slow down enough.

Key 4: Involved in Acts of Service

Serving one's neighbour is the response to Christ's love for us. Service communicates that love to others.

- ⊗ As a family, write a letter to someone who you really admire for their passionate stance on an issue, and encourage them and wish them well.
- ⊗ As it starts to get cooler, why not collect old blankets from friends and family members and take them to your local mission agency to distribute?
- ⊗ Take turns at warming up beds. It sounds strange, but there is nothing nicer than to jump into a warm bed on a cold evening. Why not surprise someone in your family by putting in a hot water bottle earlier that night, or turning on the electric blanket (please don't do both of these together!).
- ⊗ Why not wake up your household with a really nice breakfast? You could add to this by undertaking some household chores that others normally have to do as an extra surprise.



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