 **Teaching Notes – Faith**

**Hymn: Jesus is risen, alleluia!**

The delightful Easter hymn *Jesus is risen, alleluia!* shares the central gospel message of God sending Jesus into our world to save us, the story of Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit – all of which we should sing about with great joy!

The Christian festival of Easter comes every year in the spring and the gospel story of hope and resurrection fits well with the new life found at this time of year: spring flowers appearing in the garden, lambs gambolling in the fields and birds busily feeding their young in their nests. Just as the natural world awakens in springtime after the long, dark and cold months of winter, in the Church calendar, Easter follows Lent, which is a season of prayer, fasting and quite often doing without things we enjoy. Christians use Lent to focus their minds and hearts on God and, in the same way we might look out for the first signs of spring, the sense of reawakening at Easter makes it a time of great joy and celebration. In many churches this journey feels even more like the shift of the seasons as flowers are not used as decorations during Lent, the music is often more reflective and the word ‘alleluia’ is not used at all.

The week before Easter is called Holy Week and important events from the end of Jesus’ time on earth are remembered. It begins on Palm Sunday with his triumphant arrival in Jerusalem, riding on a donkey, recalls the Last Supper he shared with his disciples – his friends – on Maundy Thursday, the desperate sadness of his death on the cross on Good Friday, and ends with his wondrous resurrection on Easter Day. What a rollercoaster week of emotions!

Yet the ups and downs of this journey are what makes Easter such a special, joyful festival; in order to fully understand just how amazing the resurrection of Jesus was, we need to walk the path with Jesus and his disciples in the lead up to that Easter morning when Mary Magdalene and the others find the empty tomb. In this hymn, the hymnwriter takes us on that journey, and continues on past Easter to Jesus’ ascension to heaven and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The celebratory, dance-like feel of this hymn means it would work well at any assembly or service during the Easter season (normally during the first half of the summer term).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Verse 1***Bible reference:**Matthew 8&9* | The first verse of the hymn tells us how Jesus was sent to earth by God to save us – all the people in the world – from our sins and mistakes. In Jesus, God showed just how loved we are; everything Jesus did was out of love for us all.The verse mentions Jesus healing sick and helping the poor – the gospels are full of examples of Jesus’ miracles and teachings. Matthew’s gospel, chapters 8 and 9, includes many healing miracles – these will be included in all children’s Bibles. |
| **Refrain** | The repetition of this infectious refrain gives a real sense of overflowing joy and excitement. The word ‘alleluia’ is an old Greek word based on the ancient Hebrew ‘Hallelujah’, which literally means ‘praise be to God’ – exactly what needs to be said at the news that Jesus is alive! |
| **Verse 2** *Bible references:**The passion story appears in all four gospels. Recommend using a children’s Bible for a concise retelling.* | In this second verse we journey through Holy Week and the minor key of the music tells of the sadness and pain of this part of the story. First, Jesus is betrayed by one of his disciples – his followers and closest friends. Judas tells the guards where Jesus is so they can arrest him, and this leads to Jesus being taken away and crucified. Once he has died, some of his disciples take his body away for burial, it feels like the end. But – and the music moves back into the major key – the tomb is empty, and Jesus appears to his disciples: he is alive! |
| **Verse 3***Bible references:**Luke 24. 49-53**Act 2. 1-4* | In this verse, the hymnwriter tells how Christians believe that, with Jesus’ resurrection, God’s love is proven to be stronger than the darkness of death. Jesus appears to his disciples a number of times after his resurrection, before he ascends to heaven. But this is not the end of the story: Jesus promised the disciples that he would not leave them alone and God sends the Holy Spirit to be with them – and us – so we know God’s love for ever. |
| **Verse 4** | In this final verse we are reminded that, as well as being filled with great joy and singing at the tops of our voices, we must show God’s love in the world through kindness and sharing the good news of Jesus’ resurrection with everyone. |

*Katie Etherington, February 2024*