

Eyewitness Assemblies

15 ready-to-use assemblies for Easter to Pentecost



Ideal for KS2

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Foreword by Rupert Bristow, Director of Education
for the Diocese of Canterbury

**Assemblies
RE
PSHE/Citizenship**

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Introduction

Eyewitness Assemblies can be used to deliver whole-school, Key Stage or class assemblies during spring term, summer term or at other times of year to consider a variety of Christian themes. Each assembly can be used as a stand-alone at any time of the year, but the assemblies can also be used to form a series starting in the weeks before Easter and continuing after the Easter break. Teachers may also use the material as part of RE lessons, to help pupils gain an understanding of the events associated with the death and resurrection of Christ.

Each story is written in the first person, from the point of view of someone involved in the events.

The book covers aspects of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection. Much of the material is centred on the events and personalities of the Easter story, but it also extends beyond Easter to include assemblies dealing with the resurrection appearances of Jesus, the ascension, Pentecost and the conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus.

Visual aids and introductory questions are suggested for each assembly, along with an introduction that may be read before the 'eyewitness story'. Poetry, news reports and drama ideas are also given. These may be performed by pupils to emphasize the message of the assembly. (When a poem is read, a candle may be lit in order to create an atmosphere of reflection. Many schools use candles during their time of worship.) Some of the ideas given may be useful for pupil performance in church celebrations.

Each section includes a prayer and suggestions for suitable songs. Suggested music could be used to top and tail the assembly.

The teacher's notes give curriculum links so that the assemblies may be followed up within the classroom. This could be of particular use where the assembly forms part of the RE syllabus.

Story synopsis for each assembly

1. Andrew's story is written from a disciple's point of view, describing Jesus' invitation to the fisherman to become a close friend of Jesus. The story helps to explain Jesus' ministry and, in particular, the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead.
2. Judas' story tries to suggest how Judas felt when Jesus rode into Jerusalem, hailed as a king by cheering crowds who threw down palm leaves in front of him. The story attempts to set the scene for Judas' betrayal of Jesus.
3. Caiaphas' story explores the events in the temple when Jesus overturned the money changers' tables. It is written from the point of view of the chief priest and shows how the religious leaders plotted against Jesus.
4. Jesus' story uses words from John's Gospel to describe the preparations that Jesus made for his own death. During the last supper, Jesus washes his disciples' feet. He breaks the bread, takes wine and talks of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus shows that he is aware of his impending betrayal by Judas.
5. Marcus' story describes the events in the garden of Gethsemane. It is written from the point of view of a soldier who realizes that the man who has been arrested is far from ordinary.
6. Peter's story (1) takes listeners to the night when Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before the cock crowed.
7. Pilate's story: the trial before Pilate is described by Pilate himself, explaining why he did not want Jesus to be executed.
8. The story of Good Friday is based on the poem 'Death', which describes the events of the crucifixion. It links the units leading

Eyewitness Assemblies

up to Easter with those beyond: the resurrection, the ascension, Pentecost and the early Church.

9. Mary Magdalene's story tells of Mary's feelings when she finds the empty tomb and then sees the risen Jesus, at first mistaking him for the gardener.
10. Cleopas' story takes listeners along the road to Emmaus, where two disciples encounter a stranger who is revealed to be Jesus.
11. Thomas' story investigates faith through Thomas' scepticism and his refusal to believe until he sees Jesus' wounds.
12. Peter's story (2) shows how Peter experienced Jesus' forgiveness and how he began his journey to establish the Christian Church.
13. Matthew's story describes Jesus' ascension to heaven through the eyes of those who loved him.
14. Philip's story deals with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the events that followed.
15. Paul's story investigates the powerful events that caused a man who persecuted the early Christians to encounter Jesus for himself and become a major influence in the spread of worldwide Christianity. (Paul changed his name from Saul to Paul after his conversion to Christianity.)

Framework links for RE, PSHE and Citizenship

Eyewitness assembly	RE Framework	PSHE and Citizenship National Curriculum KS2	QCA Unit for RE
Andrew's story	1a, b, e, f, g, h 2a, b, c, e 3e, f, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b, c, d, e 2e, h	3c, 3d, 3e 4c; 5d; 6c
Judas' story	1a, e, f, g, h 2b, c, d, e 3a, e, f, j, k, m, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b, d 2d, e	3c, 3d 4c
Caiaphas' story	1a, e, f, g, h 2b, c, d, e 3a, e, f, i, j, k, m, s	1a, b, c 2a, b, e, h	3c, 3d 4c 6a
Jesus' story	1a, b, c, e, f, g, h 2c, e 3f, g, h, i, j, k, p, q, r, s	1a, b, e 2a, d, e, h	3c, 3d, 3e 4c 6a, 6c, 6f
Marcus' story	1a, e, f, g, h 2c, d, e 3e, f, i, j, o, p, q, r	1a 2a, e	3c, 3d 4c
Peter's story (1)	1a, e, f, g, h 2b, c, d, e 3e, f, i, j, k, o, p, q, r	1a, b 2a, e, f	3c, 3d 4c 5d
Pilate's story	1a, b, e, f, g, h 2b, c, d, e 3e, f, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b, c 2a, e, f, k	3c, 3d 4c 6f
Good Friday's story	1a, b, c, e, f, g, h 2c, e 3e, f, h, i, j, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b 2a, e	3c, 3d 4c
Mary Magdalene's story	1a, b, c, e, f, g, h 2c, e 3e, f, g, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a 2a, e	3c, 3d, 3e 4c; 5d 6c, 6f
Cleopas' story	1a, b, c, e, f, g, h 2c, e 3e, f, g, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b, c, d 2a, e	3c, 3d, 3e 4c; 5d 6c, 6f
Thomas' story	1a, c, e, f, g, h 2a, b, c, e 3e, f, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a 2a, e, f	3c, 3d, 3e 4c 6f
Peter's story (2)	1a, b, e, f, g, h 2a, b, c, e 3e, f, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b, c, d 2a, e, f	3c, 3d, 3e 4c
Matthew's story	1a, b, e, f, g, h 2c, e 3e, f, g, h, i, j, o, p, q, r, s	1a 2a, e	3c, 3d, 3e 4c 6f
Philip's story	1a, b, d, e, f, g, h 2a, b, c, d, e 3e, f, g, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b, c 2a, e, k	3c, 3d, 3e 4c 6a, 6c, 6f
Paul's story	1a, f, g, h 2b, c, e 3e, f, h, i, j, k, o, p, q, r, s	1a, b, c 2a, e, f	3c, 3d, 3e 4c; 5d 6c

Teacher's notes

Unit 1: Andrew's story: the disciple

Andrew's story

The story of Lazarus is set in Bethany, but Andrew's eyewitness account also looks back to the time when Jesus first chose him to be one of his disciples and the life-changing events that followed.

The story can be used to retell one of Jesus' miracles or as part of an assembly about Jesus' disciples at any time of year. The story is followed by a reflective poem exploring the subject of faith.

Bible references

Jesus chooses Andrew

MARK 1:16–18

As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were fishermen and were casting their nets into the lake. Jesus said to them, 'Come with me! I will teach you how to bring in people instead of fish.' At once the two brothers dropped their nets and went with him.

Jesus and the catch of fish

LUKE 5:1–11

Jesus told Simon, 'Don't be afraid! From now on you will bring in people instead of fish' (v. 10b).

Jesus and the death of Lazarus

JOHN 11:1–44

A man called Lazarus was sick in the village of Bethany. He had two sisters, Mary and Martha... The sisters sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick (vv. 1 and 3).

Jesus then said, 'I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die' (vv. 25–26).

Discussion starters

Miracles

- ❖ What is a miracle? Do we use the term lightly?
- ❖ What is our view of miracles today?
- ❖ Do we have any examples of modern-day miracles?

Faith

- ❖ What does it mean to have faith in something?
- ❖ In what ways did Christian faith change the lives of Jesus' first disciples?
- ❖ In what ways does Christian faith change lives today?

Follow-up

- ❖ Research some people whose faith was the inspiration for their actions, such as Gladys Aylward, Florence Nightingale or Edith Cavell. What is a missionary? Do we need missionaries today?
- ❖ Research early Christian symbols, such as the fish and the anchor.

PSHE and Citizenship links

- ❖ In what ways did Jesus and his disciples operate as a team?
- ❖ In what ways does Andrew's eyewitness account describe friendship?
- ❖ What are the qualities of true friendship? (*Loyalty, trust, commitment and so on.*)

Assembly outline

Visual demonstration

You will need: A bandage and a scarf or blindfold

Blindfold a volunteer. Ask another child to lead the blindfolded volunteer across the room. Take off the blindfold. Ask the volunteer how it felt when the blindfold was taken off.

Introduction

Jesus chose some people to be his special friends or disciples. One of them was a fisherman called Andrew. In our story, Andrew describes one of Jesus' most famous miracles. If you listen carefully, you will understand why we have a bandage to help us with the story, and also why we have experimented with a blindfold.



Eyewitness account: Andrew's story

I remember the days when Jesus taught the crowds about God. The crowds always flocked to see and hear him. His charge to tell people about God was going well. Everywhere we went, his words captured the hearts of those who listened, so that time itself seemed to stand still as they heard him speak.

On one such day, a message came to say that Mary and Martha's brother Lazarus was ill. Jesus was a close friend of that little family and we all thought that he would go straight away to help his friends, but in fact it was two more days before Jesus

decided that we should go to Judea to see Lazarus.

‘He is asleep,’ Jesus insisted. We did not realize what he really meant until he told us clearly, ‘Lazarus is dead! I’m glad I wasn’t there, because now you will have a chance to put your faith in me. Let’s go to him.’

What did he mean? Had we shown a lack of faith? I had always felt unworthy of being chosen to be his close friend. I’m just a simple fisherman, so how could I help in his great work? Had I disappointed him? I remembered one morning, the water of Lake Galilee clear and blue, and the sky red-orange at sunrise over distant hills. I sat with my brother Simon, looking at empty nets after a long night. Jesus told us to go out again and let down our nets for a catch. When we returned, our nets were full of writhing silver! We had seen how Jesus could change everything in an instant with his power over people on land and creatures in the sea. We had become used to amazing miracles, but had he cause to doubt our faith in him? I prayed that it was not so.

Before we entered Bethany, we found that Lazarus had already been buried. Martha rushed out to meet us. She spoke to Jesus: ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’

Jesus answered, ‘Your brother will live again!’

Martha thought he meant that Lazarus would have life in heaven, but then Jesus said, ‘I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?’

Martha replied, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God.’

Mary came out when Martha told her that Jesus had arrived. She was crying, surrounded by grieving relatives and friends.

Mary repeated Martha's words. We all knew that it was true—if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would still be alive, making us welcome in his house as he had done so often. Jesus also was overcome by emotion. He asked where Lazarus was. Mary took him to the tomb. Tears fell from the Lord's eyes and everyone knew how much he loved these friends. I heard someone behind me say, 'He gives sight to the blind. Why couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?'

I tried to drive the thought from my mind, even though I was plagued by the same question. We went to the tomb and Jesus, still crying, told the people to roll the stone away. Martha was there, practical as always: 'Lord, you know that Lazarus has been dead for four days, and there will be a bad smell,' she said.

Surprisingly, Jesus spoke with a touch of impatience: 'Didn't I tell you that if you had faith, you would see the glory of God?'

Standing before the open tomb, Jesus prayed, looking towards heaven: 'Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. I know that you always answer my prayers. But I said this so that people here would believe that you sent me.'

Jesus paused, then he shouted, 'Lazarus, come out!'

Everyone seemed to hold their breath. How could Jesus ask this of a man who had been dead for four days? We stood staring at the darkness of the gaping tomb. At first, all appeared still, then we sensed movement and the 'dead' man walked slowly out of the tomb, covered with strips of burial cloth. He was alive!

The onlookers gasped in amazement and then recovered themselves, rushing to help Lazarus.

Jesus said to the people, 'Untie him and let him go.'

As I say, I had witnessed many of Jesus' miracles, but now I understood what he meant when he told us to have faith in him. Nothing was impossible and yet everything had a purpose. He had waited for Lazarus to die, knowing that he would save him. Even so, the strain of knowing his dear friend had died upset him greatly.

Since the day when Jesus first chose me to be his friend, I have often marvelled at my part in his mission, but I have seen with my own eyes that, for Jesus, even death held no mystery. He could defeat it.

Follow-up questions

Why did we have a bandage to help us with this story? What did the experiment with the blindfold tell us about the story?

Suggested prayer

Dear Lord, help us to follow you as Andrew did. Help us to put our faith in you as Martha and Mary did. In this way, we may see the miracle of your love in our daily lives, leading us from darkness into light. Amen

Suggested songs

Now Jesus one day (*Someone's Singing, Lord* 30)

Shine, Jesus, shine (*Songs of Fellowship for Kids* 123)

Suggested music

'Messe Basse' from *Missa Brevis* (Fauré) (developed from the *Fishermen's Mass*)

'Mary, did you know?' from *Pure* (special edition) (Hayley Westenra)

Reflective poem: On the shores of Galilee

*On the shores of Galilee
Simple fishermen,
Mending empty nets; despondent.
Jesus approaches.
In deep water, a second time:
Have faith.
Writhing, silver fish
Heaving, full nets.
Now, faith to follow,
A new catch:
People instead of fish!*

*A friend in need
Sleeps, in death.
Delayed footsteps
Reach a sealed tomb.
Lord, if you had been here.
Have faith!
Brother called forth,
Lazarus walks.
Bandaged body, alive!
Have faith! God's Son
Conquers death.*

*Christ stands
At the threshold
Between
Life and death,
Faith affirming.
Follow and believe!*

From Palm Sunday to Pentecost, *Eyewitness Assemblies* presents 15 short stories giving imaginative 'first hand' accounts told from the perspective of a character in the original Bible story. The eyewitness account is followed by a reflective poem, role-play or news report to help spark children's imagination and enable them to get under the skin of the story. Each unit is stand-alone, while at the same time giving a clear and comprehensive picture of the part of the Christian story that led to Jesus' death and resurrection and the birth of the early Church.

Ideal for KS2

Each unit comprises:

Teacher's notes: Background information
Bible references with key verses written in full
Ideas for using the material
Discussion starters
Focused links into PSHE/Citizenship and RE

Assembly outline: Ideas for visual demonstrations
Introduction
Eyewitness story
Follow-up questions
Reflective poem or news report
Suggestions for prayer, songs and music

The material is ideal for Key Stage 2, and class or whole-school assemblies, over the Easter period, or in RE at other times of year.

Overall notes give general PSHE/Citizenship and RE links so that the assemblies could be followed up in class. This may be of particular use where the assembly forms part of the RE syllabus. There is also a helpful glossary and Bible index.

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