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| **Name of Unit: Creation – What is so special about Easter?** | **Faith: Christianity** |
| **Key Stage in which this unit should be taught:** Early Years | **Recommended Year Group *(if specified:)*** Reception |
| **Previous Learning:**Salvation – How did Jesus Rescue People? This unit could come before or afterwards. |
| **What This Unit Teaches:*** The events of Holy Week, as celebrated by Christians
* That Christians believe Jesus died on a cross to show God’s love to the world, and that because of Jesus, everyone can be forgiven for their ‘sins’
* That Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead
* Beginning to recognise the importance of bread and wine for Christians
* How Christians remember what happened at Easter and how they celebrate the festival of Easter
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| **Key RE Vocabulary:**Christian, Easter, Palm Sunday, disciple, Last Supper, Garden of Gethsemane, cross, prayer, risen, tomb, festival, celebrate | **Areas of Learning and Development Links:**Personal, Social and Emotional Development; Physical Development; Communication and Language;Literacy; Maths; Understanding the World; Expressive Arts and Design. |
| **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development:**Understanding how people celebrate and remember things that are important to them.Beginning to understand ways people show love to each other, and the importance of having friends.The importance of saying sorry for the things we have done wrong, and repairing relationships – with each other, and with God. | **Sensitivities:**Different religious will not share the Christian understanding of Jesus as risen from the dead.Some children may find the idea of Jesus dying very upsetting – this needs to be handled with care.Sensitivities for children who have fallen out with their friends and feel lonely. |
| **Possible Further Thinking and Extension Activities:**Exploring how Easter is celebrated in different cultures.Link to the school’s own Easter service in church or school. |  |
| **Future Learning:**Why is Easter the most important festival for Christians? (Year 1) |

**Lesson 1: What was the donkey’s special job?**

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| Learning Objectives | Suggested Teaching Activities | **Points to Note** |
| * To learn about the story of Palm Sunday.
 | **Introduction:**Show the children a picture of a donkey? Do you know what this is? Have you ever seen one? Where might you find a donkey (on a farm, at the seaside)? What jobs do they do now? Find images of donkeys performing different roles. Usually these jobs are very ordinary and involve ordinary people. But the donkey in our story today had a very important job indeed – he actually carried a ‘king’! *There are some great pictures online of a donkey pulling Queen Victoria in a carriage, which you could use for comparisons.*Use a children’s Bible or video clip to tell the story of Palm Sunday.What was the donkey’s job? Why did Jesus want to ride on a donkey? How do you think the donkey might have felt about having a special ‘king’ on his back? **Activities:**✞ Create a pathway for Jesus, by laying down a large roll of paper and drawing/ painting palm leaves and robes on it, just as the people at Palm Sunday put palm leaves and robes down onto the ground for Jesus to ride on. Why did they make such a big fuss?✞ Make palm leaves and re-enact the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem. What did people say? (‘Hosanna’ which means ‘save us’) Palm leaves can be made with rolled up newspaper, a collection of green handprints, a cut-out template of a palm leaf, lego, computer paint programme etc…✞ Make palm leaf shapes and record on them the things they would say to Jesus if he came into our school, potentially to make into a display.✞ Create a trail using paper leaves, or by drawing leaves on the floor children to follow. How do you think Jesus felt when he went into the city?✞ Find out about donkeys. What is it like to ride on a donkey? Create a donkey for the children to sit on out of blocks and fabric. Where would you go on your donkey? What would it have felt like for Jesus to ride on a donkey? Why did he choose a donkey not another animal?**Plenary:** Why were people so excited to see Jesus? What made Jesus special? Do kings usually ride on donkeys? Talk about how Jesus was a special kind of king – Christians believe he is King of the whole world and came to earth to show God’s love and save people. | **Resources:****Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-19**Simple Bible eg ‘The Beginner’s Bible’ for retelling the story.Donkey costume (or mask).Materials for making palm leaves.Large roles of paper and paint.Blocks and fur fabric to create a donkey to sit on. |
| * To learn that Christians believe Jesus is a special king.
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| * To think about how we treat people who are special.
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| **Sensitivities:**If acting out the story, be aware of asking children of different faiths to ‘play’ Jesus, or act as animals, as this may be considered offensive.**RE Vocabulary:****Palm Sunday –** the day when Christians remember Jesus entering Jerusalem at the beginning of ‘Holy Week’ (the week when he died)**Hosanna** – the word that Jewish people shouted at Jesus, which means ‘save us’ |

**Lesson 2: What was special about Jesus’ meal with his friends?**

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| Learning Objectives | Suggested Teaching Activities | **Points to Note** |
| * To learn about the story of the Last Supper.
 | **Introduction:****Display** images of people sharing a meal together. Who do you share your special meals with (eg for a birthday or religious festival)? What do you like to eat and drink at your special meals?**Explain** that Jesus knew that he was going away, so he wanted to have a special meal before he went. If you were going away somewhere, who would you choose to have a meal with?Jesus chose his closest friends – his disciples – to eat with. What do you think they talked about? Read, retell or show the children the story of the Last Supper.They ate a special Jewish meal called a ‘Passover’ meal, which included bread and wine. Show the children some bread (eg pitta bread, ideally bread without yeast) and a cup of wine (grape juice or Ribena is a good substitute). Have you ever seen people eat and drink this in church? Today Christians do this to remember Jesus.**Activities:**✞ Talk about children’s favourite meals to have with special people: they could use the role play or mud kitchen to create a meal, use playdough or plasticine, or collage one onto a paper plate. What makes this meal special? Why was Jesus’ meal special?✞ Make models of the Last Supper, using lego, playmobil, small world play equipment, or as a craft activity with round head shapes stuck to a cardboard box to show Jesus and his friends around a table. Who was at Jesus’ meal? Find out the names of some of the disciples.✞ Make unleavened bread (without yeast) and find out about the Jewish festival of Passover. Share the bread with the class, or ask the children to take it home and share it with the people who are special to them at home.✞ Decorate a transparent plastic cup (or glass) using permanent markers, glass paint or sticking tissue paper. Use these to share juice with the class. How does it feel to share? \*NB be aware of health issues and take care not to spread any illnesses! A way around this could be to pour from one central goblet into their individual glasses, still sharing the same drink.✞ Show the children a paten and chalice, and talk about how these are used in church. Perhaps someone from the church might be willing to show the children and talk about this.**Plenary:** Why do you think Jesus wanted to eat a special meal with his friends before he went away? Why do you think Christians still copy Jesus’ special meal today?What do you do when you want to remember someone special?As a class, plan a special meal you could all have before the Easter holidays. What would make is ‘special’? Who could be invited? | **Resources:****Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-19; John 13-14**Simple Bible eg ‘The Beginner’s Bible’ for retelling the story.Materials for creating their own play meals.Materials for making a ‘Last Supper’ model.Ingredients for unleavened bread.Materials for decorating cups.Paten and Chalice. |
| * To start to explore why Christians have bread and wine today.
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| * To think about special meals in our own lives, and special people we share food and drink with.
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| **Sensitivities:**Be aware of food allergies when making and handling bread and juice.Be aware of any children who may have recently lost or had family members move away.**RE Vocabulary:****Last Supper** – the Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples in ‘Holy Week’, the day before he died on the cross.**Disciple** – One of Jesus’ special friends, who followed him. |

**Lesson 3: Why did Jesus go to a special garden?**

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| Learning Objectives | Suggested Teaching Activities | **Points to Note** |
| * To learn the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.
 | **Introduction:****Show** images of gardens. Ask thechildren what this makes them think of. What do they like to do in a garden? Explore, rest, play, have a BBQ, plant seeds etc. After Jesus had his special meal, he then went into a garden nearby called the ‘Garden of Gethsemane’. He was feeling worried about what was going to happen to him, and he wanted to go somewhere to pray. What is praying? Why do you think Jesus wanted to talk to God? Do you ever talk to God? Where do you go if you pray? Do you ever feel worried? Where do you go? What makes you feel better when you are worried?Jesus took three of his favourite friends with him. Who do you like to have with you when you are worried?**Tell** the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.**Activities:**✞ Make a garden prayer area in your class or outdoor area. What will you need? Include real plants, planted seeds, craft flowers and leaves, rocks and twigs etc. Encourage children to pray or reflect here. Their prayers could go into a class prayer book, along with exiting prayers and images.✞ Write prayers on leaves and tie them to branches to create a prayer tree.✞ Write prayers on the walls using ‘moss graffiti’ and watch them grow (eg ‘your will be done’ like Jesus prayed)✞ Draw around their hands in a prayer position, and write prayers onto the hands, to put into the class prayer book or Easter display.✞ Plant quick-growing seeds (eg cress) in cups to create individual gardens, which can be added to over the next few weeks with a cross, tomb etc✞ Make a collage of a garden and talk about what you like to do in a garden. Discuss how gardens make you feel. How do you think Jesus felt in the garden that night? Place an image of Jesus inside the garden to think about how Jesus felt.**Plenary:** Use one of the activities to talk to the children about their prayers/ reflections. What helps you when you are worried about something?Remind them that they should always say if something is upsetting or bothering them.Share some of the prayers, or create a whole class prayer, about feeling worried and asking God’s help. | **Resources:****Matthew 26:36-46**Simple Bible eg ‘The Beginner’s Bible’ for retelling the story.Moss graffiti – buttermilk or yoghurt, moss and water gel combined and painted onto the wall with a paintbrush.Materials for a prayer garden.Branches for a prayer tree.Paper for leaves, hands etcSeeds, soil and plastic cups.Garden images for collage. |
| * To explore where, when and why Christians pray.
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| * To think about where people go and what they do, when they are worried.
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| **Sensitivities:**Be aware of any incidents which could indicate a child is sad because of ill-treatment or bullying, or because of grief in the family. If children disclose anything of a child protection nature, this must be reported to the school’s Designated Safeguarding Lead.\* If acting out the story, be aware of asking children of different faiths to ‘play’ Jesus as this may be offensive.**RE Vocabulary:****Disciple** – One of Jesus’ special friends, who followed him**Gethsemane** – the garden where Jesus went to pray with his disciples**Prayer** – talking to God |

**Lesson 4: Why is the cross special?**

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| Learning Objectives | Suggested Teaching Activities | **Points to Note** |
| * To learn the story of when Jesus died.
 | **Introduction:****Look** at a wooden cross (eg holding cross, or altar cross). Ask the children what it is. What do they know about crosses? (eg is there one on their school logo/ building/ church etc)**Explain** that the next part of the story will help us understand why crosses are so important to Christians. Some children may already know the story, but it is important to tell the story together to address any misconceptions!**Retell** the story of Jesus dying on a cross, explaining that there were some people who didn’t like Jesus and thought he was making trouble, so wanted him to die. In those days, people were put on a wooden cross to die when they had done things wrong. Jesus hadn’t done anything wrong, but Christians believe he died for all the people who had done things wrong, including us. It was God’s special way of showing that he loved everyone – giving up the thing he loved most. Although this is a sad part of the story, it shows us something wonderful. God’s love!What is special to you? Would you give it to someone that you loved? (eg a favourite toy – the story Dogger is a good example of giving up something you really love for someone you love)**Activities:**✞ Create multi-coloured crosses by finger painting with different colours. You might want to put a heart at the centre of the cross to show that it is a sign of God’s love.✞ Make a silhouette of the crosses against the sky, using black paper and a paper plate. Create a sunset using paint or crayons, then stick the crosses in front. Talk about how it was a sad moment when Jesus died, but that 3 days later it was all going to get better!✞ Add to the little gardens the children planted in the last lesson, making simple lollystick crosses and adding them in.✞ Make a large paper cross in the classroom. Get the children to write or draw things that they have done wrong that they want to say sorry to God for and then pin these to the large cross. Talk about how Christians believe that God forgives the bad things people do when they say sorry (‘confess’ and ‘repent’).✞ Write on the ground outside with water things they want to say sorry for (as above). Talk about how when God forgives them, they are forgotten forever. Like when the water dries and the writing has gone away.✞ Make crosses out of card or lolly sticks. Write the things we want to say sorry for on them (as above) and then cover the whole cross in plasticine and talk about how Christians believe that all those bad things have now been forgiven because of Jesus.✞ Make crosses out of playdough or salt dough, and decorate them with beads or small stones. Talk about why the cross is so special.✞ On hearts, write or draw things that you would do for someone you love. Talk about how Christians believe the cross is one of God’s ways of showing how much he loves people.**Plenary:** Look at the crosses the children have made. Which is our favourite? Why? Talk about how the cross is a sad thing because it reminds us that Jesus died, but it also reminds us of God’s love. Talk about ways that you might show love to someone you care about. Explain that Christians believe that God helps us to love other people and they pray to God to ask him to help them to be more loving. | **Resources:****Luke 23:26-43**Simple Bible eg ‘The Beginner’s Bible’ for retelling the story.Paints and paper to make crosses.Paper plates, black paper and paints for silhouettes.Large scale paper + post it notes for large cross.Water and paint brushes (outside).Lolly sticks, plasticine. |
| * To learn that Christians believe Jesus died to show people how much God loves them and to rescue them.
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| * To think about the ways people show their love to each other.
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| **Sensitivities:**Be aware of any children who are sensitive to talking about death, or have lost someone recently.**RE Vocabulary (for teachers only!):****Crucifixion –** a method of execution used by the Romans, where criminals were put on a wooden cross until they died.Sins – the things we do that hurt others, ourselves and God.**Confess** – to admit to our ‘sins’.**Repent** – to say sorry and decide not to do those things any more. |

**Lesson 5: What is special about the stone?**

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| Learning Objectives | Suggested Teaching Activities |  |
| * To learn about Jesus’ resurrection.
 | **Introduction:****Show** the children a large stone. Explain that it is a very important part of the Easter story. Does anyone know why?Start retelling the story from when Jesus has died. Talk about how his body was put into a tomb, which is like a big cave, and that a giant stone was used to block the tomb so no one could get in or out. It’s a bit like the lid on a jam jar, or the door of a safe!Carry on telling the story, explaining how Jesus’ friends went to visit the tomb, but the stone had moved and the tomb was empty. They didn’t know where Jesus was, until they saw him and realised he had come back to life again!**Activities:**✞ Make pictures of Jesus’ tomb, with the stone fixed with a split pin, so that it can open up. What was inside the tomb? (the cloths Jesus was wrapped in, angels, or perhaps show it as empty to give the idea that Jesus wasn’t there any more).✞ Make an Easter sunrise picture, using half a coffee filter and yellow/ red food colouring. Talk about how Jesus’ friends rushed to the tomb first thing in the morning to see Jesus.✞ Give children stones to paint with an image of new life, or the words ‘He is risen’. Talk about why the stone was so special in this story (because it showed that the tomb was empty and Jesus wasn’t there any more because he was alive).✞ Make a resurrection garden, showing the empty tomb, the stone rolled away and add figures to show: Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the disciples, soldiers and an angel. Use it to retell the story and think about how surprised Jesus’ friends were to see him.✞ Create an ‘empty tomb’ role play area and use it to retell the story.✞ Make resurrection rolls by wrapping a marshmallow in pastry. When baked, the rolls will be hollow because the marshmallow will have melted, and like the tomb, the roll will be empty! **Talk about why the tomb was empty:**✞ Return to the already planted pot of seeds. Take out the cross and replace it with a stone. Talk about how the cross is for when Jesus died, but Christians believe he came back to life and the stone reminds us that the tomb was empty.✞ Play a game of ‘Chinese Whispers’ showing the first child an image or telling them a word, which they pass on to others. Talk about how the disciples who saw Jesus went and told all their friends that they had seen Jesus. Do you think people believed them?✞ Look at paintings of the risen Jesus. Use them as a stimulus for talk, drawing own pictures or writing simple sentences about what might be happening.**Plenary:** Look at an image of the risen Jesus with his disciples. Brainstorm words which describe the feelings of the disciples – how would they have felt when they saw Jesus again? What might they have thought? At first, Mary thought Jesus was the gardener and other disciples wondered if he was a ghost! How would you have felt? Have you ever found something you lost? How did that make you feel? Christians feel joyful and excited at Easter time because they remember that Jesus’ tomb was empty and he had come back to life! | **Points to Note:****Resources:****Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-10; Luke 24:1-11; John 20:1-18**Simple Bible eg ‘The Beginner’s Bible’ for retelling the story.Materials for making sunrise or tomb craft pictures, including split pins, coffee filters and food colouring.A collection of stones for children to paint, hide or use for storytelling.Materials for an Easter garden.Already planted seeds in pots, and stones to add in.Pastry and marshmallows for ‘resurrection rolls’.Cloths, angel and soldier costumes for tomb role play.Paintings as stimuli for talk (eg Noli me tangere by Fra Angelico, Morning of the Resurrection by Burne-Jones, or an icon by Kiko Arguello). |
| * To begin to understand that Christians believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and that he is still alive today.
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| * To explore feelings of loss, surprise, hope and joy.
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| **Sensitivities:**Be aware of children who may have lost a relative and wonder why they haven’t come back to life like Jesus.Other faiths and world views will dispute that Jesus did rise from the dead, which is what makes Christianity distinctive. Be aware of this when teaching the story to children from other faith backgrounds.\* If acting out the story, be aware of asking children of different faiths to ‘play’ Jesus as this may be offensive.**RE Vocabulary:****Disciple** – One of Jesus’ special friends, who followed him.**Tomb –** the place where a person was buried after they died.**Risen/ Resurrected** – come back to life, having been dead. |

**Lesson 6: What is so special about Easter?**

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| Learning Objectives | Suggested Teaching Activities |  |
| * To retell the Easter story.
 | **Introduction:****Show** the children pictures of the donkey riding into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, a cross and the empty tomb. Can the children remember what happened in each part of the story? Retell the story together.Ask the children what they think of when they think of Easter. Look at images of Easter eggs, the Easter bunny, hot cross buns, Easter egg hunts etcTalk about how:* Easter eggs are empty like the tomb, which reminds Christians of Jesus being alive
* Hot cross buns have a cross on them, like Jesus’ cross
* Bunnies and chicks are born in the springtime, so they start their new lives at Easter time like Jesus did.

Watch a video about how Christians celebrate Easter eg CBeebies ‘Celebrating Easter’.**Activities:**✞ Make a concertina book, with images from the story of Holy Week. Retell the story verbally, or in writing.✞ Make Easter eggs – there are lots of wonderful ideas for this eg marbling paper, and making the two halves of the egg move apart with a split pin; finger painting or printing patterns on sugar paper eggs; stained glass eggs, using tissue paper in laminating pouches; hardboil eggs in food colouring, then decorate; Easter egg-shaped potato prints; Easter egg baskets, with woven paper etc. Talk about how the empty eggs are like the empty tomb, reminding Christians that Jesus came back to life.✞ Put Easter eggs onto an Easter tree. This could use the same branches as the prayer tree from lesson 3. Attach to each egg something that the children are thankful for at Easter.✞ Grow cress inside egg shells (with some cotton wool inside) and talk about how new life comes at Easter.✞ Set up an Easter egg hunt in the garden, or in the sand pit. Put different Easter symbols/ pictures on the eggs and then use these (when retrieved) to tell the Easter story!✞ Make Easter bonnets, using images and symbols from the Easter story (eg palm leaf, donkey, cross, garden, tomb stone, angel etc). Organise an Easter parade for the children to show their bonnets, and incorporate into this a simple retelling of the Easter story. See if the children can tell the story using some of the pictures.✞ Make Easter cards, with an Easter image on, to send to a friend or family member. What sort of message will we write? \***Plenary:** Share what the children have made and talk about how different aspects of Easter celebrations remind us of the Easter story. What festivals do you celebrate in your family? What special things do you do to celebrate?  | **Points to Note:****Resources:****Video** showing celebration of Easter eg CBeebies ‘Preparing for Easter’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qVW9IjhIlU> and ‘Celebrating Easter’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StlJgYF-Ki8>Paper and pictures to make concertina books.Materials for making Easter eggs, baskets, Easter tree etc.Eggs for hunting, with Easter images attached.Empty egg shells with cotton wool and cress seeds.Materials for Easter bonnets including images from Easter story.Resources for an Easter party. |
| * To know some of the ways that Christians celebrate Easter.
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| * To think about ways we celebrate special events and festivals in our own lives.
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| **Sensitivities:**Be aware of children with allergies or other food issues when making Easter food. Be aware that people of other faiths and none don’t believe that Jesus rose from the dead, so be careful when decorating items with verses such as ‘He is Risen’. \***RE Vocabulary:****Celebrating a festival** – what people do to mark a special time in their religion. |