

Easter Worship Ideas

Passover and the Easter Season offer many opportunities for unique and meaningful worship experiences. Seventh-day Adventist Congregations have tended more to focus on the Death of Christ. But the Resurrection is the culmination of the Victory of Calvary!

1. Easter Décor: If winter is an opportunity to talk about and understand death, then Easter is the time to embrace new life. Everyone who comes into your church during the Easter season should know that your hope is in the Resurrection. Utilize the symbols of Easter including the cross. Also use living plants, new blossoming plants and flowers with lots of color. The Easter lily is not only beautiful and symbolic, but carries a wonderful perfume.
2. Celebrate the Resurrection; learn from others: The Resurrection is as important to Seventh-day Adventists as other Christians. Many mainline Christian Churches engage in a number of wonderful, celebratory rituals and services that would be meaningful for Seventh-day Adventists. Pastors, why not visit other churches— Adventist or other denominations-- to see what they do. Because our services are on Sabbath, it is more convenient to visit Sunday churches especially during the special Christian celebrations.
3. Sunrise Service: Plan a sunrise service for Sunday morning (rain or shine!) to remember the wonderful surprise of Easter morning. Tell the dramatic story of the visitors to the empty tomb. Give your members permission to express their excitement and really celebrate Christ's Resurrection. If you have a connection with a Pastor of a Sunday church, perhaps your congregations could share the joy of an Easter Sunrise Service. This would also communicate to the community that indeed Seventh-day Adventists believe in the miracle of the Resurrection and in the saving power of Jesus Christ. Follow the service with a delightful brunch that demonstrates that healthy food can also be tasty.
4. Communion-Seder: To better understand the context of the time that Jesus was crucified, a Christian version of the Seder, incorporating a communion service, is a wonderful family church service that clarifies the link between the Passover time and Christian communion. It also clarifies the historical significance of Christ's Sacrifice.
5. A Play: There are a number of plays that focus on the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Check at your local Christian bookstore. A play provides an opportunity to utilize members and even non-members who would not normally be involved in the services of the church. There are those who would not attend a church service, who would attend to see friends or family in a play.
6. Music: Many of the grand old hymns communicate the spirit of the Resurrection. Some of the new contemporary songs also speak of the joy of the season. Study the

hymnal. There are wonderful Easter hymns that perhaps your congregation has never sung. Adventists are good singers. A few weeks before the special service, prior to the beginning of the worship, have your song leader teach the congregation some of these new songs so they can become familiar with them. Also consider inviting a choir from a Sunday congregation to sing for your worship. Through your visits to other churches, you will learn which groups have the best choirs.

7. Dramatic Children's Lesson: Our children's leaders continue to do such marvelous things. Give them ample opportunity to plan and have them share songs and/or a drama for the worship service. Include costumes and the presence of a real live lamb and the impact of the Resurrection will not soon be forgotten in your church.
8. The Hope of the Resurrection: One of the most moving services I've ever participated in on the Sabbath before Easter created an opportunity for church members to remember loved ones that had died. While wonderful instrumental music was being played, a narrator read the names of members who had died while their loved ones came to the front and laid flowers at the foot of the cross. This was their way of remembering their loved ones and claiming the hope of the Resurrection, of seeing them again. Or remember them on Memorial Day weekend.
9. Testimonies: Testimonies can at times be a test of our patience if they run on without clear direction. Members can be taught how to give a testimony. That is, they should be instructed to focus on one particular point and to state it clearly and concisely. Then a testimony is indeed very effective. Announce two weeks ahead of time that during the Easter service there will be opportunities for testimony. Encourage members to pray about it, think about it and write it down. Perhaps pastors might illustrate how they "in their sermons" must be focused, concise and brief to be effective. Encourage the testimonies to be moments of gladness that honor God for His faithfulness and care. Then the service becomes a joyful celebration, a time to Praise God for the Gift of life through the Death and the Resurrection of Christ.
10. Easter Garden: You need a paint stirrer and construction paper cut on a fold in the outline of a lily or some other spring flower. Invite the children to come up front and get one of each, plus a marker and a glue stick. The kids write an Easter message to Jesus on the inside of their flower then glue the flower to the stick. At some point in the service the pastor invites the children to come up front and "plant" their flowers in a planter box up front. Or have a children's pastor or teacher lead them out front to plant their flowers in the grass at the front of the church. Option: Give the kids two pieces of wood to hot glue together; they write their messages on the cross and then plant the crosses.

The Easter season celebrates the crowning act of salvation. Involve the whole congregation. Plan ahead and make it the Worship to remember!

BEFORE EASTER

1. Palm Sabbath: The Sabbath before Easter, give the children palms to wave when they come up for the children's story. (One palm frond can be divided into many; give each child just one piece.) Then tell the story of the triumphal entry. The children wave their fronds every time you say certain words, such as: *Jesus, hosanna!* and *donkey*.
2. For a very special effect arrange for someone to bring a live donkey. Cue them to begin walking down the aisle of the church when you start talking about Jesus sitting on the donkey. Help the children imagine Jesus there on the donkey and to wave their palm branches and to call Hosanna! Keep the donkey tied up and tended in a makeshift stall so that the children can come see it after the service.