



Eastertide: a teachers' guide

Thank you for downloading this resource. We hope that it will be a useful teaching tool in your classroom.

As we continue to grow our free catalogue of teaching resources, we'd really appreciate a few minutes of your time to let us know what you liked and what could be improved. Please complete this [five-question survey](#).

Introduction

This guide has been produced by Westminster Abbey to be used in conjunction with the primary or secondary short guides to Eastertide. Within this guide, you will find key information on the Christian festival of Eastertide, to support the delivery of Religious Education within your classroom.

Westminster Abbey has a distinctive role within the Church of England. It is neither a cathedral nor a parish church, and it stands outside the normal jurisdiction of bishops and archbishops. It is instead a 'Royal Peculiar', which was a status granted to it in 1560 by Elizabeth I, under which the Dean and Chapter are directly answerable to the Sovereign. This resource discusses Eastertide in broad terms based on the teachings of the Abbey.

All Bible references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

What is Eastertide?

Eastertide is a series of festivals which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the end of this period, Christians celebrate his gift of the Holy Spirit – God's power in action and the third Person of the Holy Trinity. It is also known as Easter time or the Easter season. 'Tide' is another name for festival or time period. It is associated with the Jewish holiday of Passover, as well as the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, as described in the Old Testament.

When is Eastertide celebrated?

Eastertide begins on Easter Day, just after Holy Week and Lent. It lasts for a period of 50 days (seven weeks) and ends on Pentecost Sunday. The exact date is determined by calculations around the moon, which is why it is a moveable feast.

How do we celebrate Eastertide?

Eastertide is celebrated through a mixture of very solemn and happy celebrations and services. These are outlined below.

Easter Day



Easter Day, also known as Easter Sunday, is a joyous occasion in the Christian calendar and celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After the crucifixion, Jesus' body was placed in a cave with a huge stone in front of it. On Easter Day, the stone was found to have been moved and Jesus' body was gone. People realised that Jesus had been resurrected by God and saw Jesus Christ walk among them. Easter Day is the most important Christian festival, when churches are filled with flowers and joyous hymns are sung. Christians believe that Jesus' resurrection has destroyed the power of death.

Images of eggs and rabbits, along with the consumption of chocolate, are often associated with Easter. It's believed that eggs represented fertility and birth in certain pagan traditions that pre-date Christianity. Egg decorating, especially in the Orthodox tradition, may have become part of the Easter celebration in a nod to the religious significance of Easter, i.e. Jesus' resurrection or re-birth.

The events of Easter Sunday are referenced in St Matthew 28: 1-13, St Mark 16: 1-14, St Luke 24: 1-49 and St John 20: 1-23.

The word 'Easter' has origins in ancient Germanic languages and may have come from the Anglo-Saxon Eostre, or Eostrae, a goddess of Spring.

Ascension Day

For 40 days after his resurrection on Easter Sunday, the Bible says that Jesus travelled and preached with his apostles, preparing them for his departure from Earth – a very solemn part of the Christian calendar. Ascension Day marks the moment Jesus literally ascended into Heaven before his disciples, at the village of Bethany, near Jerusalem. A special service is held in churches on this day, a Thursday, or on the nearest Sunday, to mark Ascension Day. The story of Jesus' Ascension is told in St Luke 24:49, St Mark 16:19 and Acts 1: 3-9.

Ascensiontide is the ten-day period between Ascension Day and Pentecost.

Pentecost

The Day of Pentecost marks 50 days since Easter Sunday and brings the Easter season to an end. It is a joyous time in the Christian calendar, with many people choosing to be baptised or confirmed on this day. It is a major feast of the Church's year, when Christians recall how God's Holy Spirit was given to the disciples after Jesus' ascension, empowering them to begin the work of making disciples of all nations – adding 3,000 followers to the Church in one day. The gift of the Holy Spirit shows how Jesus' ministry is still active, through the Church, in the world today.

Various symbols and colours are associated with Pentecost. This includes the colour red which represents the fire which the Acts of the Apostles describes seeing above the heads of the disciples indicating that they had received the Holy Spirit. Other symbols include wind, doves of peace and the breath of God.

The events of Pentecost are referenced in Acts 2:1-13, Exodus 34: 22-43 and Deuteronomy 16: 9-25.

Pentecost comes from a Jewish harvest festival called Shavout.

Westminster Abbey

Learning



Finding out more

You can find examples of previous sermons covering Eastertide on the [Westminster Abbey](#) website. These give an indication of how Eastertide is observed at Westminster Abbey and how Christians mark this period. The website also provides a [virtual tour](#) of the Abbey which may provide context for the supporting imagery provided in the PowerPoint presentation.

You may also wish to look at our [other Christian festivals teaching resources](#), which examine Lent and Holy Week in the same way.