

EASTER - PENTECOST 2005

Visual Arts In Worship

Well-chosen visual elements can enhance the celebration of the Easter Season and help to illuminate the theme, “**Unbound!**” Several ideas are offered as well as simple suggestions for movement and ritual related to the visual elements.

A white Easter cloth is used as the central visual on Easter Sunday, which is then used in a variety of ways each Sunday. The ideas for each Sunday suggest ways to use the cloth, along with a special Christ candle or lamp.

A large white Christ candle or lamp could be placed on a central table. For this season, a very special type of lamp is a “dancing flame oil lamp” made by Wild Thyme Pottery. If your congregational budget permits their purchase, these lamps (3) would be a wonderful addition to your visual arts resources. You will, however, need to order the lamps several months in advance of the season because they are handcrafted and in limited supply. Ordering information:

Wild Thyme Pottery

413-258-3352

June Keener Wink

jkwthyme@bcn.net

155 Sandisfield Road

Sandisfield, MA 01255

www.walterwink.com <<http://www.walterwink.com>> (scroll down the screen until you come to June Kenner Wink)

Very large white Easter candles can also be ordered from:

www.ChurchCandlesOnline.com <<http://www.ChurchCandlesOnline.com>>

Or purchase at a local candle supply store.

Another option: A very simple but effective visual focus throughout the season would be a gauzy or sheer white cloth draped or cascading from the ceiling where it puddles on the floor beneath. Large trees, pots, green plants, colorful pots or baskets of colorful spring flowers (located at the base of the cloth) could suggest resurrection joy. This could also be added to the above visuals.

Easter One

Visual Center: A draped white cloth on the altar table symbolizes grave clothes left behind by the Risen Christ. A single Christ candle or lamp is lit. If allergies are not a problem in your congregation, a display of Easter lilies can be placed near the table. You may also incorporate trees, green plants, and stones to create a garden scene.

Set Up: You might choose to use a white king or queen bed sheet for the Easter cloth or 6 yds. of white fabric. Since the Easter cloth will be torn

dramatically during the reading of the poem, *Opening*, you will want to prepare the cloth for tearing in advance. Remove hems from sheet. Place a small cut at exactly the center of the width so the sheet will tear lengthwise. If yardage is used, tear across, ending with 2 pieces about 45" X 3 yards. The two pieces of Easter cloth will be needed throughout the series.

For the children's procession, you will need long pieces of white paper (one-half sheet per child of easel-pad newsprint paper pre-torn in half lengthwise). For the recessional, you will need 3 lengths of white ribbon (2 ½ "wide which is #40) to be used as streamers. Fold one end of each ribbon in a "V" and tack to a wooden dowel (or cut 6" pieces from an old broomstick). These may be used again for Pentecost with red, yellow and orange ribbons.

Movement/Ritual: During the singing of HWB 280, *Christ The Lord is Risen Today*, a candle or lamp is carried in and placed on the table where a cloth is draped. The candle carrier and worship leader rip the fabric in half during the reading of the poem, *Opening*. The reader pauses after the second line, "torn open, flung apart, rent wide by love", so the tearing can be heard. Leave the torn cloth in a heap on the altar table just as the grave clothes might have been left behind after Jesus' resurrection.

At the closing line of the poem, "Let the dance begin", children come down the aisles tearing long pieces of white paper. They dance with paper floating in the air and then drop the paper at the front near the table. Also, at the end of the service, the children take the resurrection joy out into the world by waving white streamers as they lead the congregation out after the benediction song, the Duncan *Alleluia*.

Easter Two

Visual center: Boxes, twisted cloth and extinguished lamps symbolize our fears and doubts. Even so, hope shines through.

Set up: Cover the table with a soft rough textured gray or tan cloth and arrange 3 boxes of varying heights. Drape an additional gray or tan cloth over and between the boxes, scrunching the cloth around the bases. Drape half of the Easter cloth across the table among the boxes. Place three lit lamps or candles at various levels. The other half of the torn cloth should be included in the display but draped in a way that makes it easily accessible to a child for children's time.

Movement/Ritual: After the reading of John 20: 19-31 and before the personal stories, the worship leader and another person walk to the table and stand, one on each side, in silence with heads bowed. After a moment of silence, they pick up each end of the white cloth and twist until the cloth begins to loop and curl. Then it is placed over the largest center box and draped among the other boxes. The flame of each lamp is blown out to be re-lit later during the Affirming Our Faith section. A benedictory action could be included at the end of the service.

Invite all to put the sign of the cross on the palm of each other's hand as they leave, repeating Thomas' words to each other: *My Lord and my God.*

Easter Three

Visual Center: A gray or tan cloth covering the bread and the draped white Easter cloth on the table represent continuing doubt and fear. Soon eyes are opened. Doubt and fear are lifted.

Set-Up: Cover the table with a white cloth. Add some small boxes or books underneath for varying heights. Baskets of bread and three lamps are placed throughout. The Easter cloth is draped across the table among the baskets and lamps. A gray or tan cloth is draped over the baskets of bread and over some of the white tablecloth. Trees, plants, and rocks can be added for visual impact. Drape the other half of Easter cloth over corner of table near side where the children's time will be held.

Movement/Ritual: The gray or tan cloth is lifted off the baskets of bread as Luke 24:28-31a is read again as a response to the sermon and invitation to the sharing of bread. Invite people to come to the table to serve each other. Encourage the people to share words of greeting similar to "Through Christ, you are set free" or "*Christ comes to us anew when we share bread.*" Bread can be eaten as served rather than waiting to eat simultaneously.

Easter Four

Visual Center: Draped white cloth and a shepherd's crook symbolize our shepherding Jesus who gives guidance and offers healing.

Set-Up: On the table, create some height with a crumpled blanket (hump) covered with the Easter cloth. Place a sheepskin (or imitation sheepskin pad) over the hump. A shepherd's crook is placed over the sheepskin with the top of the crook extending as high as possible. If shepherd's crook is not available, a substitute can be made with PVC pipe (directions below). The Easter cloth used in the children's time is draped loosely over the lower end of crook. A shepherd's headdress may be used in the display if available.

Crook: Cut a $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch PVC pipe to 62". Make a stack of 24" aluminum foil sheets, enough to roll up lengthwise tightly to be the same thickness as pipe. Pinch one end and hot glue into PVC pipe. Scattered patches of crunched aluminum foil may be hot glued randomly down pipe to give rough texture to pipe. Wrap with brown stretchy floral tape slightly spiraling from bottom to top of foil and back down again until you go several inches down over pipe. Shape foil area into crook and tip up the end for a perfect crook shape.

Movement/Ritual: See children's time.

Easter Five

Visual Center: The spaciousness of the heavenly dwelling place Jesus has prepared for us is brought to life through the expansive spread of the Easter cloth.

Set Up: Spread the Easter cloth in an open, commodious manner above the altar table or elsewhere (perhaps the concept of a canopy is helpful). Since each worship space is different, use your own creativity to achieve an appropriate look. Since our understanding of a new, restored earth is part of our concept of a heavenly home, the altar table could resemble a garden. Have one piece of the Easter cloth available for children's time or if both pieces of Easter cloth are needed for the canopy, have a matching piece nearby to use for children's time.

Movement/Ritual: To emphasize the spacious concept, consider using dancers to bring in the Easter cloth. Their movement of the cloth should accentuate the sense of spaciousness and unlimited room.

Easter Six

Visual Center: A movement from being bound toward joyfulness is symbolized in the Easter cloth flowing upward. A hint of expectation of Pentecost brings hope.

Set-Up: The Easter cloth is placed on the table with one corner raised toward the ceiling. (See options). Using another cloth to cover the table allows the Easter cloth to be raised higher through the last three Sundays of the Easter series. Three lamps are at various heights on the table. A long red ribbon -2 ½" wide (#40) is placed on the table (see Movement). Part of the Easter cloth will be draped for use during the children's time.

Options: For any of these options, plan how you will raise the cloth higher in Easter Seven and possibly higher for Pentecost.

1. The table could be placed against or near the front wall with the Easter cloth attached to the bar of a screen and lifted. Use fishing line or fine wire. This method may be best used for the highest level on Pentecost Sunday. You may need both Easter cloth pieces for the last Sunday.

2. The table could be placed in front to the podium (be sure the cloth does not obstruct the eye contact between leader and congregation) with the cloth lifted upward with a simple pulley system.

3. The table could be placed to the side and below the podium with the cloth lifted to the podium (supported with a dowel rod extending in front of the podium) and then lifted higher supported by a simple pulley system or hidden tall pipe in the cloth.

Movement/Ritual: During opening music, a long red ribbon (2 ½" wide attached to a 6" dowel) is brought in by a tall person and waved high above the heads of the seated people. This could be a creative movement/dance or simply walked in. After flowing throughout the worship space, the ribbon comes to rest on the table over the white cloth, intertwining the lamps and hanging off one edge of the

table.

Easter Seven

Visual Center: The choice to bind ourselves to the hope and promise of resurrection life is seen in the flowing red ribbon and the Easter cloth.

Set-Up: The Easter cloth remains as it was for Easter 6, although it could be lifted higher for Ascension Sunday. The long red ribbon from Easter 6 flows upward with the raised white cloth. The red ribbon could spiral beyond the tip of the Easter cloth. Additional ribbon yardage may be needed to flow across the visual. Three lamps are arranged on the table in a design that rises at the same angle as the cloth. If the lamps with dancing flames were not purchased, use candles (taper style) to give the most flame.

Pentecost

Visual Center: New freedom in the coming of the Holy Spirit is experienced in the rushing about of flowing ribbons and lifted cloth.

Set-Up: The table remains the same as Easter 7 (lamps removed), and the cloth could be raised higher. Place firewood on the table with sides built up to make a fire pit. Hidden in the middle of the wood is a container (perhaps a cut-off paper grocery bag) which holds ribbon streamers. Have as many ribbon streamers as there are aisles. Fan-fold the ribbon loosely inside the container with the dowels pointing upward so they can quickly be pulled from the "fire." Additional ribbon of red, yellow, and orange flow upward with the cloth to make a stronger visual statement. The red ribbon could extend upward beyond the cloth a few inches.

To create the ribbon streamers, attach 36" lengths of red, yellow, and orange ribbon (2 ½" wide) to a 6" dowel or cut 6" lengths from old broomstick. Each ribbon is folded to a point and all 3 are tacked to a dowel.

Movement/Ritual: Immediately following the reading of *The Way To Build a Fire*, as the Duncan *Alleluia* is sung, 3-7 people (or as many as aisles in the sanctuary) go to the pile of wood on the table and take a dowel and energetically pull the ribbon toward each aisle. The ribbon pullers walk, run or dance the ribbons up the aisles and back while the people continue to sing the *Alleluia*. Each ribbon streamer is brought back to the table. Place the stick inside the container letting the ribbon streamer flow out and over the logs.

To symbolize spreading the joy of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the children could be invited to wave streamers (the white ribbons made for Easter with additional ribbon of red, yellow, and orange) as they exit randomly through the congregation while the Duncan *Alleluia* is sung as a benediction.