

Session One: Introduction - Christ IS Risen!

Main Ideas: Introduction to the theme and acclimation to the new season.

Supplies needed: chart paper or whiteboard, writing utensils, poster board (or continue to utilize chart paper), a copy of the Participant Workbook for each youth (This will be used during each session and should be kept with you after sessions are completed.) Refreshments for open house and getting to know you activities.



Preparation: Place your poster board (chart paper) somewhere in the room. Separate the paper with two columns. At the top write "greeting" and at the other "response". Under the first column write, "Christ is Risen" and in the second, "Indeed He is Risen!" We suggest that throughout the year you add new greetings and responses in different languages. You will open and close each session with "Christ is Risen".

(10 minutes) Begin this Session with a piece of chart paper with the word "Pascha" written in the middle. After greeting the students, have students think of words that come to mind when they think of "Pascha" then ask them to write them around the outside. You can prompt students by saying Easter if necessary. Invite children to share their favorite memory about Pascha. It can be as simple as remembering lighting their candles in the complete darkness or a favorite item in their basket. If there isn't time for everyone to share, give students the opportunity to share with a partner and then write a quick reminder in case you have time to share later.

(5 minutes) When you finish your conversation, turn to this page in the workbook (page 3 in their book) and take turns reading the following section.

Indeed He IS Risen! This short, but powerful phrase is our theme this year. Throughout the next two weeks we'll look at what it means to us. We'll learn about Pascha, when we traditionally greet each other this way, the events leading up to and following Pascha, as well as the many ways in which this truth applies to our life all year long. Let's start with the meaning of the words- Christ IS Risen! Indeed He IS Risen! They are simple, but tell the most important message there is to tell.

CHRIST: There are lots of ways to talk about or describe Jesus, but for this message- Christ is Jesus, the Son of God, an equal part of the Trinity and who was born on earth as a man to be the Messiah who was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament.

IS: We don't say Christ 'rose' or 'has risen' like it happened many years ago and now it's over. His resurrection was completed many centuries ago, but the most important part of the Resurrection is that it opened heaven to us, and it is and will always be open to us. He will never be 'un' risen.

RISEN: We will learn more about the events of Holy Week and Pascha later, but for now it is important to know that Jesus was born here on earth, His earthly body was crucified on the cross, and then He appeared again risen from the dead.

These three words wrap up the most important aspect of our beliefs. It isn't just a happy way to greet your Orthodox family and friends, it is a statement of faith. Saying "Christ IS Risen!" shows that you believe in Him, in His Resurrection, and in God's power to defeat Satan, allowing us into heaven.

When you respond to someone with "Indeed He IS Risen!" it is not just a polite reply... it's an agreement. You are saying, "Yes, I too believe in Him, in His Resurrection, and in God's power to defeat Satan, allowing us into heaven."

What else can we learn about Christ and His Resurrection? You don't have to be a theologian, someone who studies and becomes an expert in the faith, to let the world know that Christ IS Risen, but the more we learn about the reasons why we say it, the more we can share with others. Let's begin!

For the grace of the feast is not limited to one time, nor does its splendid brilliancy decline; but it is always near, enlightening the minds of those who earnestly desire it.

-St. Athanasius

At this point we suggest conducting a "Welcome Back" social for parents and youth. You may want to invite parents to attend the first session so they will also learn what will be addressed this year. Encourage parents to participate in the discussion. An alternative would be to have parents have a special meeting/introduction to discuss aspects of the coming year.

During the Welcome Back Social, you may choose to conduct some "getting to know you" activities for any families who are new to your program or just to renew current friendships. Activities for returning families could focus on what they experienced during the summer. Consider asking older children to plan and lead an activity.

