

Rise: A Child's Guide to Eastertide Activity and Discussion Guide By Laura Alary

A Note to Grownups

On a wall in my home hangs a print by the artist He Qi. It depicts the women at the tomb on Easter morning. What I love about it is that it captures the moment *before* the women have realized what has happened. They are standing in the entrance to the tomb, their postures slightly bent and downcast, still holding their bottles of ointments and unguents. The colors are deep and sombre: shades of purple, red, and blue. But behind them in the distance, we can see what they cannot: there is an empty cross, backlit by the rising sun. Easter has already dawned; they just don't know it yet.

This painting speaks to me because it points to aspects of Easter we sometimes forget, and which I have tried to highlight in *Rise: A Child's Guide to Eastertide*.

First, Easter begins in the dark. This detail can get lost in the dazzle of white and gold, bright flowers, and triumphant hymns. But we enter the story in the early morning darkness of the garden through which Mary Magdalene moves slowly, carrying the spices she needs to anoint the body of her beloved Jesus. Although Easter is joyful, there is room in it for sadness, uncertainty, confusion, and not-knowing.

Second, Easter is more than a day. Although we tend to focus on the exuberant celebrations of Easter Sunday, the season of Eastertide lasts for seven weeks—all the way to Ascension and Pentecost. In its own way this is a time for getting ready. The Risen Jesus is still himself, but he has changed. His friends need practice learning to seek and find him in new ways before the next big change, when Jesus disappears from sight, and the Spirit comes.

Finally, resurrection is not just something extraordinary that happened to Jesus long ago. Neither does it belong only in the distant future. Resurrection happens here and now: in new beginnings when we thought there was no hope; in starting fresh and trying again; in forgiving and being forgiven. There are signs of this new life all around us. The more we learn to see them, the better we understand what Easter has to do with us.

Easter is so much bigger than we sometimes imagine! I hope *Rise* and this Activity Guide help you and the children you love see how the story is about you too.

In the Garden: Change and Letting Go



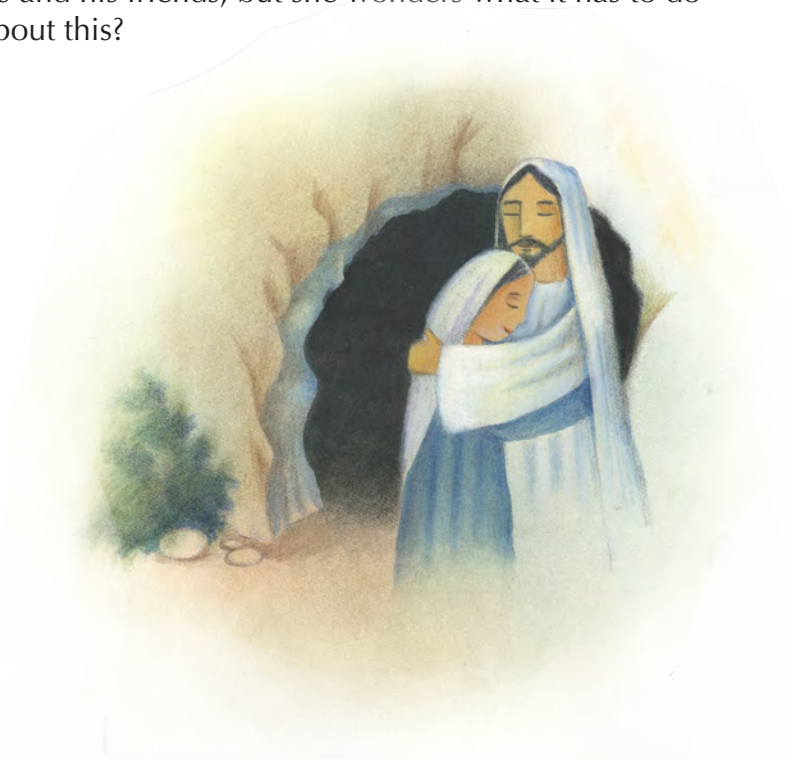
When Mary meets Jesus in the garden, she doesn't know him at first. Although he is still himself, something about him has changed. This is a mystery we can't fully understand, but we can think about it by noticing other things that change in the world around us. Caterpillars hide in chrysalises and cocoons and emerge as butterflies, tadpoles become frogs, seeds grow into flowers and trees, one season turns into another. These small wonders in nature help us imagine bigger mysteries. They remind us that change is part of being alive.

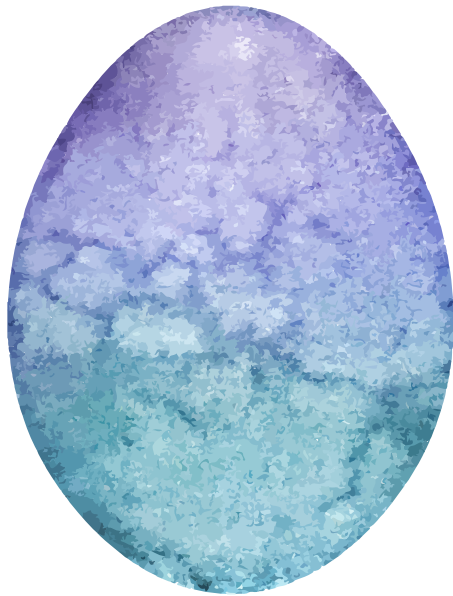
Getting Started

Read the "In the Garden" section of *Rise*.

Things to Talk About

- In *Rise* the narrator says, "Easter is a joyful day, but there is a bit of sadness in it." Do you think this is true? Why does the narrator say it? What is she thinking about? She can see that the Easter story is good news for Jesus and his friends, but she wonders what it has to do with her. Have you ever wondered about this?
- When Mary meets Jesus in the garden, she is so happy to see him she wants to hold onto him forever, but Jesus tells her she needs to let go. Have you ever felt like you wanted to hold onto someone or something and never let go?
- How do you feel about change? Is it exciting? Scary? Both? What kinds of changes do you like? What kinds are hard for you? Is there anything that helps you feel better about change?



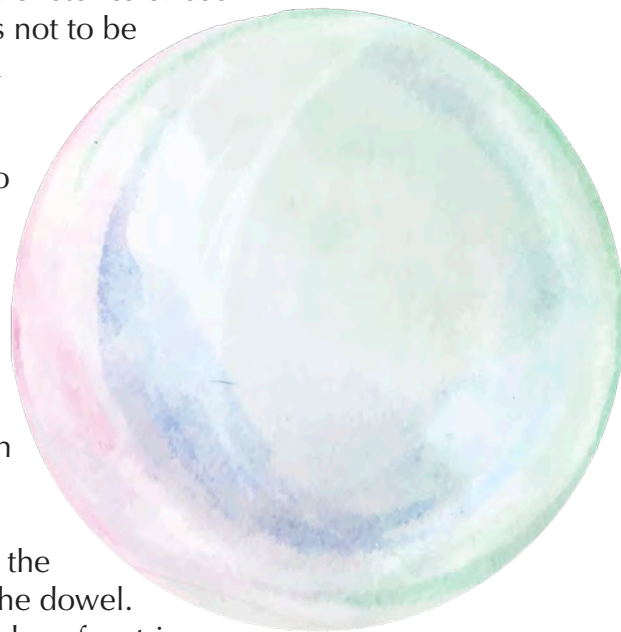


Things to Do

- **Easter Tree:** If you have used a bare branch as a symbol in your home during Lent, transform it into an Easter tree. Decorate the branches with green ribbons, dyed eggs, or coffee filter butterflies (see below).
- **Dye eggs:** There are so many fun ways to dye eggs. One method is to fill a baking dish with whipped cream or shaving cream (don't eat it!). Use a dropper to put drops of food dye on the surface of the cream, then swirl it gently with a spoon. Place your eggs in the cream and roll them around a bit to give the shells a marbled effect. Let them sit for a few minutes, then rinse off the cream. You can do this with hardboiled eggs, or empty eggshells with the insides blown out.
- **Coffee filter butterflies:** Use watercolor paints or drops of food coloring to make patterns on recyclable coffee filters. Let them dry, then pinch each filter in the centre and wrap it with a pipe cleaner to create the effect of wings. Use the ends of the pipe cleaner to make antennae for your butterfly.
- **Raise and release monarch butterflies** (you can find instructions and kits online). You can learn more about butterflies (and other animals that go through metamorphosis) from books. Here are some suggestions: *A Butterfly is Patient* by Dianna Hutts Aston and Sylvia Long; *If You Want to Be a Butterfly* by Muon Thi Van and Andrea Armstrong; *Winged Wonders: Solving the Monarch Migration Mystery* by Meeg Pincus and Yas Imamura; or *The Girl Who Drew Butterflies: How Maria Merian's Art Changed Science* by Joyce Sidman.
- **Make a miniature Easter Garden:** Pour an inch or two of potting soil in a pie plate, sprinkle it with fast-growing grass seed, then add a tomb made of plasticine or self-hardening dough. Water the soil, put your garden in a sunny place, and wait for the green grass to rise.
- **Decorate an Easter or Paschal candle** with shapes cut from sheets of beeswax. Light the candle at mealtimes or other special times. When you extinguish the candle, notice how the smoke rises and the scent lingers. The light is changed, but it is still with us in a new way.
- **Blooming Branches:** If you have access to a forsythia or lilac bush, or some other blooming shrub, cut a few branches whose buds have not yet opened, put them in a vase of water, and bring them indoors to watch them blossom.
- **Plant seeds indoors** in containers and then transfer the seedlings outside. Or plant native wildflower seeds in memory of someone you love.

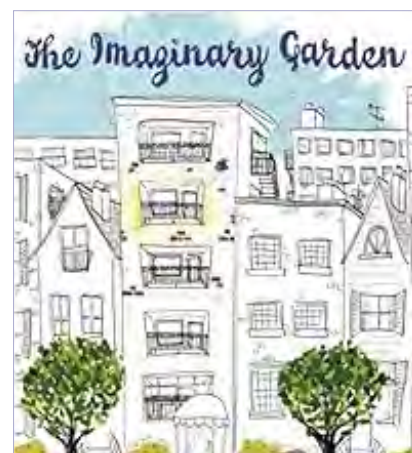
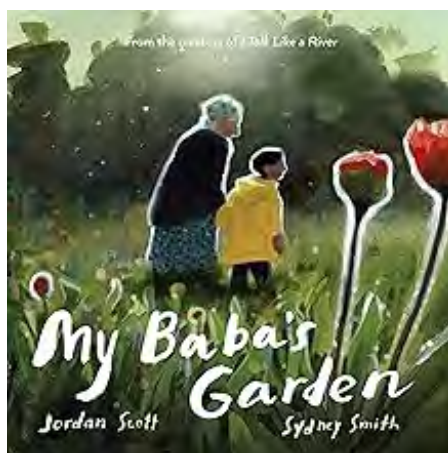
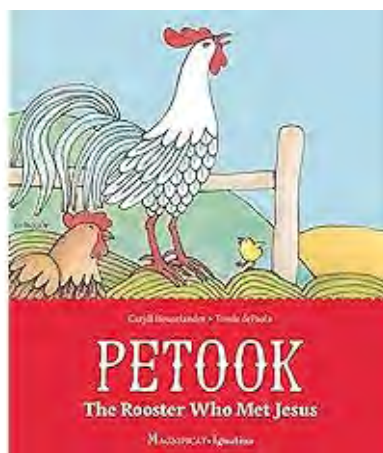


- **Bubbles:** Make things that you can't hold onto or keep: Blow bubbles and let them float away without bursting them; create pictures from sand or stones or use water to paint on a chalkboard. Talk about how it feels not to be able to hold onto what you've made. If you live near a beach, build a sandcastle.
- **More Bubbles:** A fun variation on bubble blowing is to make your own giant bubble wand. You need a dowel about two feet long (or a bit longer), a washer big enough to slide easily on the dowel, and a piece of heavy cotton string about three feet long. Tie or tack one end of the string to the end of the dowel, tie the other end to the washer, and slide the washer onto the other end of the dowel. Make bubble solution of a mixture of 1 liter (1/5 gallon) of hot tap water, 1 cup of blue Dawn dishwashing liquid, and 2-4 tbsp glycerin (a pharmacy should have it). Dip the wand in the bubble solution and carefully slide the washer down the dowel. Wave the wand to make a gigantic bubble! This may take a few tries.



Things to Read

- *Petook: The Rooster Who Met Jesus* by Caryll Houselander and Tomie dePaola
- *My Baba's Garden* by Jordan Scott and Sydney Smith
- *The Imaginary Garden* by Andrew Larsen and Irene Luxbacher
(Note: In this story, an old man has to let go of his garden when he moves to a smaller home. After you read the book, maybe you'll be inspired to make an imaginary garden indoors with a friend who can no longer look after a real garden. Use a big piece of butcher paper as a background. Choose what kind of flowers you want to "grow" in your garden and make some with paint or cardstock and construction paper.)



At the Table: Playing Hide and Seek with Jesus

Like Mary when she first came to the garden, some other friends of Jesus were sad and disappointed as they left Jerusalem and headed home. When Jesus came and walked with them, they did not recognize him. Once again, this story tells us that the Risen Jesus was changed—different from how he was before. Little by little, through stories from the bible and a shared meal, Jesus lets his friends in on a secret: they *can* see him and recognize him, if they know how to look. But first they need to get to know him in a new way.

Getting Started

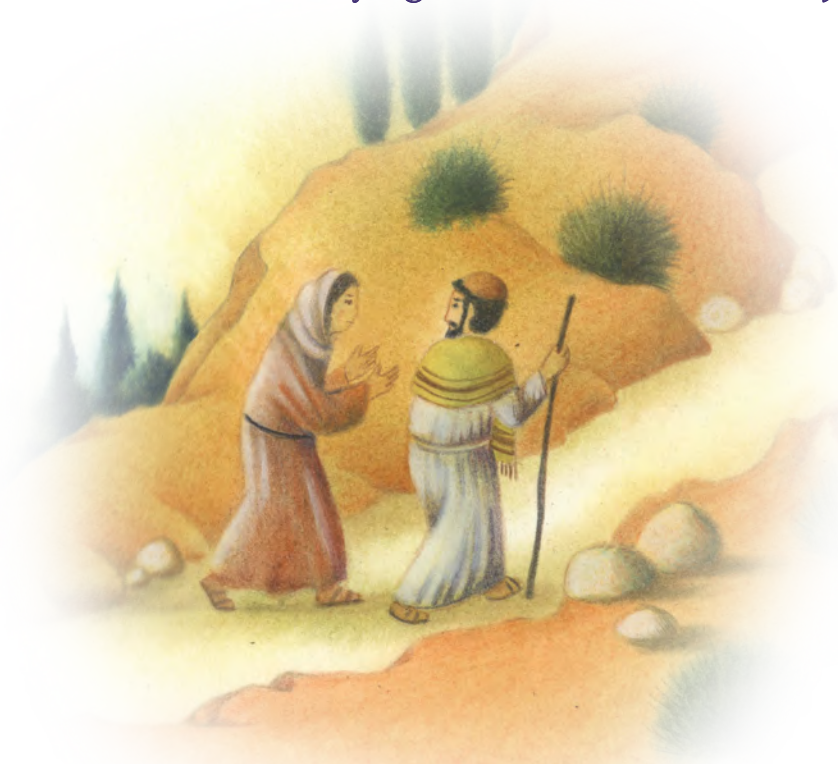
Read the “At the Table” section of *Rise*.

Things to Talk About

- Have you ever felt very sad or disappointed?
What made you feel that way?
What made you feel better?
- Have you ever played hide-and-seek?
Would you rather be the hider or the seeker?
Why? Can you imagine playing hide-and-seek with Jesus?
Where would you look for him?
- Can you think of times and places when you have seen love in action?
Do you think Jesus was there?

Things to Do

- **Emmaus Walk:** Find a partner, set a timer for five minutes, and go for a walk. For the first five minutes, only one person speaks while the other one listens. The speaker can talk about themselves or tell a story about seeing love in action. At the end of five minutes, turn around and walk back. This time, switch roles so that the speaker is now the listener. If you are with a group, take turns telling the group the story that your partner told you. What made you feel that way?



• Emmaus Road Word Search

disappointment	communion	welcome
eucharist	Jerusalem	stories
gratitude	surprise	friends
companion	prayer	Jesus
village	bread	Easter
memory	guest	hope
table	supper	wine
Emmaus	hideandseek	host
thanksgiving	scripture	road

Y	C	E	P	C	J	Q	D	G	U	E	S	T	H	T
E	O	A	J	O	E	L	I	W	S	T	C	E	T	A
U	M	S	E	M	S	I	S	E	C	L	W	M	H	B
C	P	T	R	M	U	G	A	L	R	P	I	M	A	L
H	A	E	U	U	S	R	P	C	I	S	N	A	N	E
A	N	R	S	N	F	A	P	O	P	U	E	U	K	V
R	I	S	A	I	R	T	O	M	T	R	M	S	S	I
I	O	U	L	O	I	I	I	E	U	P	E	S	G	L
S	N	P	E	N	E	T	N	Y	R	R	M	T	I	L
T	E	P	M	S	N	U	T	H	E	I	O	O	V	A
B	R	E	A	D	D	D	M	O	H	S	R	R	I	G
L	O	R	I	Q	S	E	E	S	O	E	Y	I	N	E
P	P	R	A	Y	E	R	N	T	P	N	B	E	G	H
F	B	X	G	H	P	X	T	J	E	P	D	S	O	Y
H	I	D	E	A	N	D	S	E	E	K	R	O	A	D

• Acts of Love Scavenger Hunt:

Go for a walk in your neighborhood and watch and listen for acts of love and kindness. For inspiration, check out *The Sound of Kindness* by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater and Teresa Martinez.

• Play a game of hide-and-seek.

• Plan a meal in memory of someone

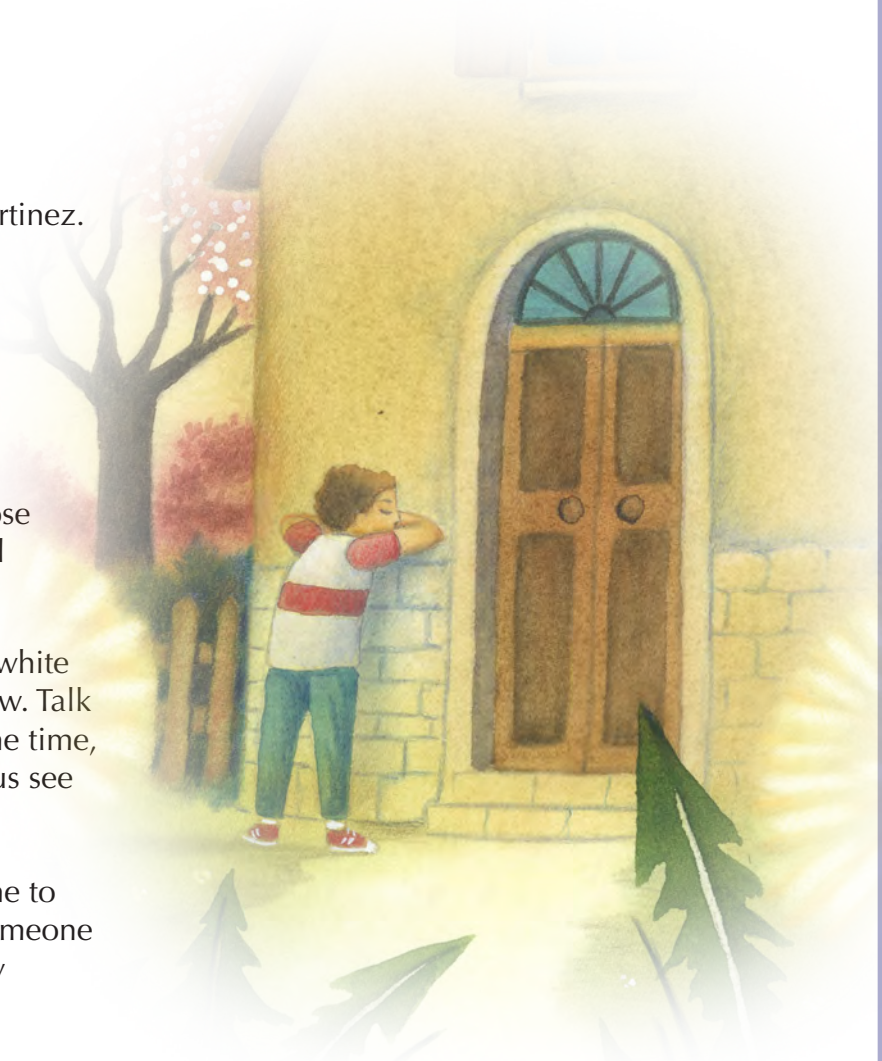
you love who is no longer with you in person (it could be someone who has died, or simply moved away.) Set a place for your loved one, choose their favourite foods, tell stories, and look at photographs.

• Hidden colors:

Use a prism to split white light into all the colors of the rainbow. Talk about how the colors are there all the time, hiding in the light. The prism helps us see what is always there.

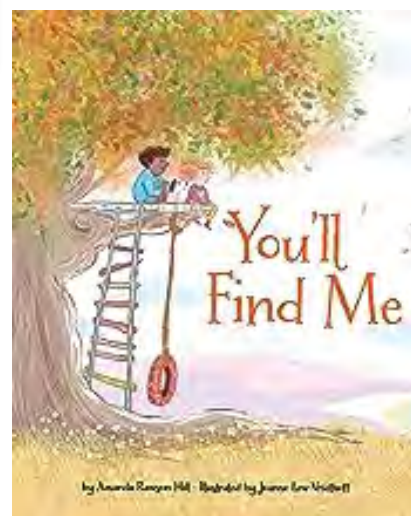
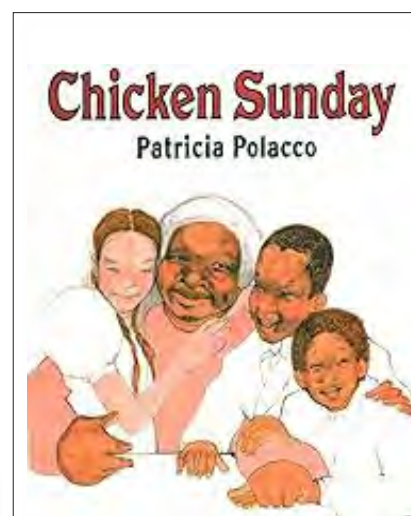
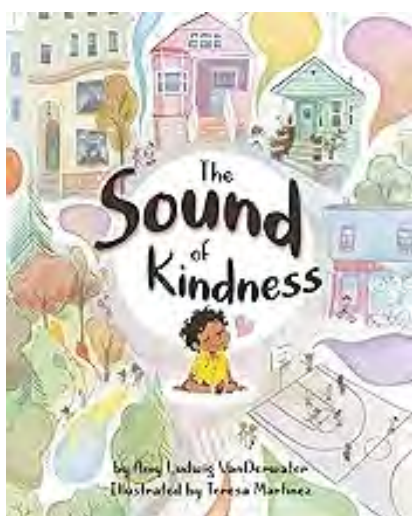
• Host a pot-luck supper.

Ask everyone to bring a dish that reminds them of someone and to share the recipe and the story behind it.



Things to Read

- *Chicken Sunday* by Patricia Polacco
- If a child (or children) has experienced the death of a loved one, consider reading a book about grief and how we can learn to find our loved ones in special places and activities, even if we can no longer hold on to them. Here are a few suggestions: *The Garden of Hope* by Isabel Otter, *The Hare-Shaped Hole* by John Dougherty and Thomas Docherty, and *You'll Find Me* by Amanda Rawson Hill and Joanne Lew-Vriethoff.



On the Beach: Beginning Again



Although he was one of Jesus' best friends and closest followers, Peter made some of the biggest mistakes! After boasting that he would stand by Jesus no matter what, when danger came Peter was so scared he pretended not to know Jesus—not just once, but three times! He was so ashamed of himself maybe he wondered if Jesus could ever forgive him. Maybe it was hard for him to forgive himself. The good news is that Jesus gave Peter a chance to try again.

Getting Started

Read the "On the Beach" section of *Rise*.

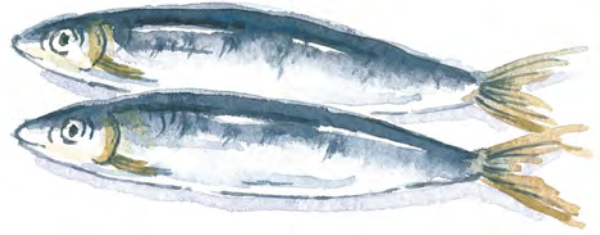
Things to Talk About

- Look at the different pictures of Peter. How do you think he feels in each part of the story? Have you ever felt this way? Which part of his story do you connect with most?
- Look closely at the illustration of the two children with the doll and scissors. What is going on in this picture? What do you think has just happened between the girl and her brother? What do you imagine will happen next?
- Have you ever said or done something that hurt someone else? What happened? Has someone ever said or done something that hurt you? How does Jesus show Peter that he wants to make peace and give him another chance to do better?
- Have you ever made a mistake at something and had to begin again? What happened? How did that feel? Or have you ever had to start again through no fault of your own? Was it hard to start over? Did anything good come of it?



Things to Do

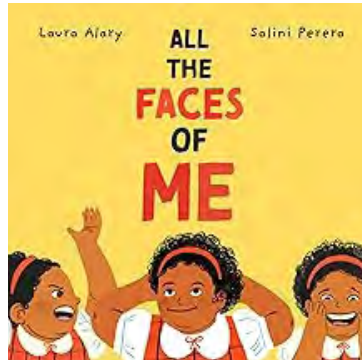
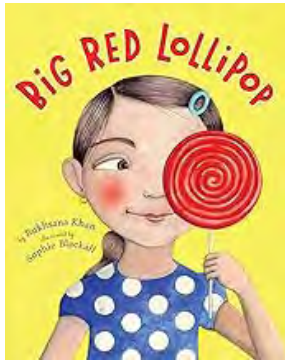
- **Beach Walk:** If you live near water, go on a beach or shoreline walk. Have a snack of bread and fish (tuna sandwiches, sardines, goldfish crackers, or whatever you like). Tell the story of Jesus and Peter with things you find (sticks, shells, stones, leaves).
- **Begin Again Stones:** In Greek, the name Peter means “a rock.” To help you remember the story of Peter and his fresh start, find a smooth stone, and paint the words “Begin Again” on it, then seal it with Mod-Podge or a spray sealant.
- **Resurrection Pictures:** Think of a time when you felt unhappy, hurt, or disappointed. Create a picture using pastels or crayons. Use colors that show how you felt. Tear that picture into pieces, then use the pieces to create a new picture by arranging them in patterns on a piece of cardstock. When you are happy with it, glue the collage together. Let it remind you that sometimes we have to start again, but we can still make something good out of the pieces.
- **Egg and Spoon Race:** Traditionally, this is done with two teams. When the race begins, one person from each team has to carry a spoon with a boiled egg resting on it from the starting line to the finish. If they drop the egg, they need to go back and start again. As each team member crosses the finish line, the next person starts. You can make this a cooperative game by having only one team, and timing how long it takes the entire team to get the egg (or eggs) through the course. Keep doing it to see if you can beat your own time!
- **Storytelling Circle:** Invite people (especially elders) in your community to come and share stories of starting over or beginning again.
- **Begin Again Bonfire:** With the help and supervision of a grownup, light a small bonfire in a fire-safe container. On slips of paper, write down things you are sorry for, regret, or want to change. When you are ready, burn them. Imagine they are being carried away so you can start fresh.



Things to Read

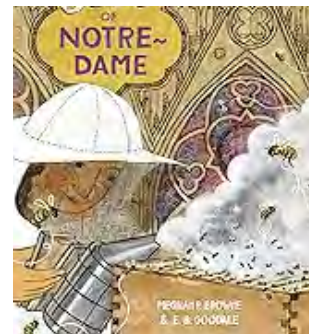
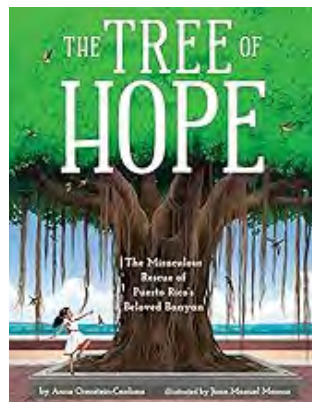
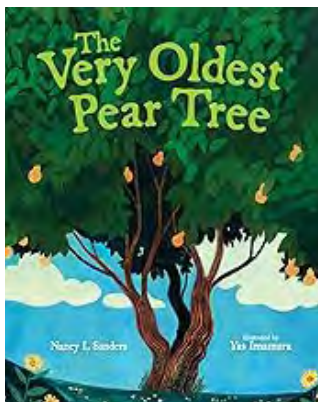
Here are some books about people starting fresh after conflicts, or making mistakes and trying again:

- *Big Red Lollipop* by Rukhsana Khan and Sophie Blackall
- *All the Faces of Me* by Laura Alary and Salini Perera
- *The Words We Share* by Jack Wong



And here are some books about renewal in nature—how life begins again even when it seems like too much damage has been done:

- *The Very Oldest Pear Tree* by Nancy Sanders and Yas Imamura
- *The Tree of Hope: The Miraculous Rescue of Puerto Rico's Beloved Banyan* by Anna Orenstein-Cardona and Juan Manuel Morena
- *The Bees of Notre Dame* by Meghan P. Browne and E.B. Goodale
- *The Miracle Seed* [graphic novel style for somewhat older readers] by Martin Lemelman



As you read them, ask yourself: *Could these be resurrection stories too?*

In Everything: Finding God All Around



As we move through the weeks of Eastertide, the mystery keeps getting bigger. We start in the garden with Mary, amazed to discover that Jesus was dead, but is now alive again, though changed. Then we play hide-and-seek, getting to know Jesus in new ways, and learning to look for him in new places. Finally, we learn something even more amazing: when we see Jesus, we are seeing God too! The Bible says that God is the One in whom we live and move and have our being. In other words, God is everywhere—in us and all around us.

Getting Started

Read the “In Everything” section of *Rise*.

Things to Talk About

- To help his friends understand that they would always be connected to him, Jesus used word pictures (the fancy word is metaphors). For example, Jesus told his friends he was like a grapevine, and they were the branches. The same life flows through them all. In *Rise* we hear how trees are connected to one another through threads of fungus attached to their roots. Could this be a word-picture too? Can you think of other things in nature that help you imagine how you are connected to Jesus and to God?
- What does a host do? What makes a good host? How can you be a host where you are? What about a shepherd? What does a shepherd do? Are there ways you can be like a shepherd?
- There is a lovely Irish blessing that goes like this: *Like a rock, God is under our feet. Like a roof, God is over our heads. Like the horizon, God is beyond us. Like water in a pitcher, God is in us, and in the pouring out of us. Like a pebble in the sea, we are in God.* There are lots of word pictures in this one blessing! Which ones do you connect with most? Try writing your own blessing, starting with the words, “Like a...God is...”



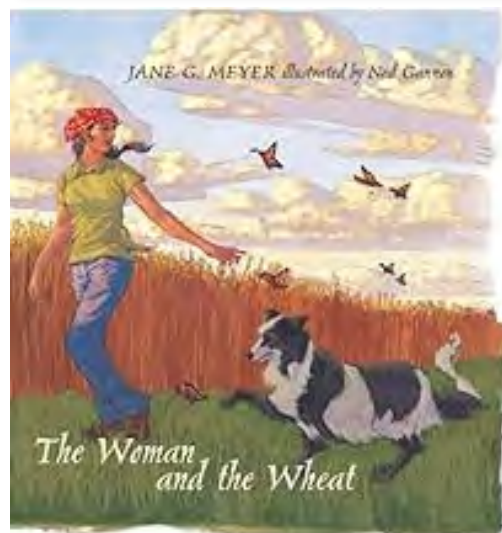
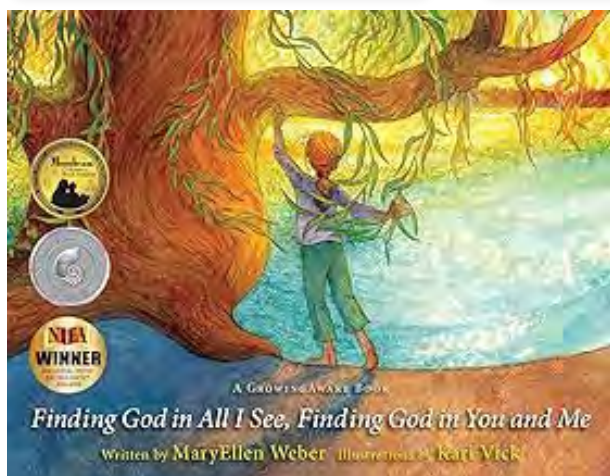
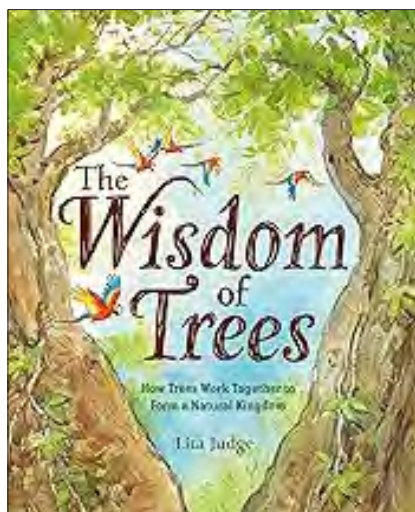
Things to Do

- **Go for a walk in the woods and have a picnic under a tree.** You can learn more about how trees communicate and share by reading *The Wisdom of Trees: How Trees Work Together to Form a Natural Kingdom* by Lita Judge.
- **Visit a farm,** especially if it is time when baby animals are being born.
- **Make a cloud jar:** You will need a glass jar with a lid, hot water, and ice cubes. Fill the jar halfway with hot water (the hotter the better). Put the lid on the jar and pile the ice cubes on top. Watch while the water in the jar evaporates, then condenses back into rain. If you add a bit of blue food coloring, the changes of state will be more obvious. Talk about the water cycle in nature, and how water keeps changing form and moving, but is never lost.
- **Compost:** If you don't already compost kitchen scraps, consider it. If you have access to a yard, you can have an outdoor composter. If not, you could try vermicomposting inside (lots of information available online). Talk about cycles in nature and how living organisms break down and become soil that helps new things grow.
- **Easter Bread:** Many cultures bake special breads for Easter (for example, Paska or Kulich). Find a recipe and bake your own, then share it.
- **Easter Cards:** You can use shaving cream and liquid food coloring to make marbled paper, much the same way you dyed eggs. Squirt shaving cream onto a sheet of parchment paper, add a few drops of food coloring, swirl it gently a few times with a toothpick, then press a piece of cardstock into the shaving cream. Let it sit a moment, then scrape the shaving cream off. You can use the marbled paper to make Easter cards.
- **Resurrection Eggs:** Instead of doing an egg hunt on the first Sunday of Easter, why not save it for later as a reminder that Easter is a whole season of celebration, seeking, and finding! In her book *Faithful Families for Lent, Easter, and the Season of Resurrection*, Traci Smith has a variation on Resurrection Eggs with symbols taken from nature. You can find them here: <https://tracismith.com/eggs/>
- **Dandelion Crown:** Make a dandelion crown or sit outside and blow the seeds into the wind.



Things to Read

- *Growing God* by Karen Kiefer and Kathy de Wit
- *Finding God in All I See, Finding God in You and Me* by MaryEllen Weber and Kari Vick
- *Apple and Magnolia* by Laura Gehl and Patricia Metola
- *The Woman and the Wheat* and *The Man and the Vine* by Jane G. Meyer and Ned Gannon



Create your own Easter Egg ornaments!



Draw and color your own!

