

Farewell to Alleluia

Strategies for Implementation

It is common in churches to refrain from using the word Alleluia for Lent. This worship activity allows the congregation to pack away or “bury” their alleluias for the season and restore them to use at the first Eucharist of Easter. To “bury” our alleluias is an ancient tradition meant to recall Christ’s death and resurrection.

Props:

- A trunk or large box that can stay in the worship space for the season of Lent. Imagery in ancient times was to recall the look and feel of a coffin.
- A visual representation of our “alleluias” Enclosed are printable “tickets”. They are about the size of a bookmark and can be distributed on Sunday alongside service materials like the order or service.
In other contexts, I have had children paint a banner with the word alleluia that they roll up and pack away. Or I have represented alleluias by giving children party materials like balloons, hats, blowers etc. that they pack away.
- On Easter Day, a bell for each child to ring. Your church may have a collection of bells. If not, I have purchased jingle bells in bulk from craft suppliers and threaded them on pipe cleaners as a cost-effective measure. They are also a gentler sounding bell for impulsive ringers.
- On Easter Day, helium balloons for the trunk attached with fishing line to weights. I typically use three gold or silver balloons to represent the Trinity. I have also used a cross, a butterfly etc. to capture the idea of resurrection.

On the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, at the end of the worship service, give the congregation or just the children access to the alleluia props. Sing *Farewell to Alleluia* as your closing hymn. During the singing, invite people to add the Alleluias to the open trunk.

Close up the trunk and leave it in the worship space for the season of Lent as a visual reminder. Omit the use of the word alleluia from hymns and prayers.

On Easter Day, for the first gloria of Easter, put the trunk front and center. The priest or other leader recalls for the congregation that the alleluias were buried. Pound on the chest to get ready to open it. Use the Gloria setting enclosed set to the well-known hymn tune *Jesus Christ is Risen*. On the alleluia chorus, invite those with bells to ring them. On the first alleluia refrain, open the trunk and let the helium balloons emerge to signal the return of the word and Christ’s glorious resurrection. You may wish to use another setting of the Gloria. Church traditions have hundreds to choose from. We found the value of this one is the refrain. Constant bell ringing for the gloria is a lot for people, especially those dealing with sensory issues. This setting encourages bell ringers to pause their ringing for the verse and ring only on the refrain. This can be a more gentle use of bell ringing on Easter.