

INTRODUCTION

Many of us have come to associate the celebration of Easter with our normal Sunday morning gathering. Traditionally, however, the height of the Church year was the Great Vigil of Easter, held between sunset on Holy Saturday and sunrise on Easter Day. In Jewish tradition, the day begins not at midnight, but at sundown. This gave rise to the practice of a first celebration of Easter in the evening hours of what we consider Holy Saturday, with many contemporary services falling around midnight. At *Living Waters*, we wish to restore the practice of keeping the Vigil, and have made available this liturgy for family celebration in preparation for our communal celebration of Easter at our usual Sunday morning time.

This “home edition” liturgy is a modified version of the first two parts of the traditional Great Vigil of Easter liturgy: the Service of Light and the Service of Lessons. At the Vigil, it is customary to prepare and light the Paschal (or Passover/ Easter) Candle. This Candle is a symbol of Christ that, in the Easter season, comes alongside the other traditional symbols of Christ in an Anglican Church: the Cross, the Altar/Table, and the Gospel Book. It is rich in meaning, but at its most basic, is a symbol of the Risen Christ and His triumph over darkness. While you will not be lighting the Paschal Candle in your own homes, the candle you will light takes up this symbolism. The lighting of the Candle is followed by the *Exsultet*, an ancient hymn of praise rich in Passover and Exodus imagery that highlights the victory of Christ over death and hell, our own salvation through the blood of the Lamb, and Christ as our eternal light.

The *Exsultet* is followed by the Service of Lessons, which follows the pattern of the Risen Jesus opening all the Scriptures (what we know as the Old Testament) to reveal the things concerning Himself to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-27). The readings are intended to show that God’s past acts with Israel are a type or foreshadowing of His acts with us, which give rise to a resulting hope of our own. You may choose to proceed through all the readings, or select a minimum of three. The only caveat is that one always reads of Israel’s Deliverance at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:10-15:1), due to the centrality of baptism to the Easter Vigil, of which crossing the Red Sea is a type (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Each reading follows an important pattern: Scripture, responsive Psalm, time of silence for meditation and prayer, and a Collect prayer based on the reading that typically sums up the reason for its selection. The intention of the

Service of Lessons is that, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, our hearts might burn within us (Luke 24:32), in order that we might be prepared to recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread at the Easter Eucharist (Luke 24:30-31).

The traditional celebration of the Great Easter Vigil continues with baptisms and the renewal of our baptismal vows. We hope these prayers, hymns, and readings will draw you into the Paschal mystery and the hope and joy of the Resurrection—the ultimate sign of Christ’s victory over sin and death and the promise of new life to all who die and rise with Him in baptism!

May this be a time to remember and prepare to renew in spirit your own baptismal vows, and to prepare to keep the Passover feast (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

May you have a blessed Holy Week and joy-filled Easter!

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLE

In the darkness, the leader says;

(Dear friends in Christ:) On this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, the Church invites her members, dispersed throughout the world, to gather in vigil and prayer. For this is the Passover of the Lord, in which, by hearing his Word and celebrating his Sacraments, we share in his victory over death.

The leader may say the following prayer;

Eternal God, who made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of your one true light: sanctify this new fire, we pray, and so set us aflame with the fire of your love, that with pure hearts and kindled affections we may attain to the radiance of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The leader lights a candle (which represents the Paschal (or Christ) Candle in church, saying;

May the light of Christ, rising in glory, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds.

The light of Christ.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE EXSULTET

This ancient hymn of praise may be said by the leader alone or by everyone present, together.

Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and choirs of angels, and let your trumpets shout Salvation for the victory of our mighty King.

Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth, bright with a glorious splendour, for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal King.

Rejoice and be glad now, Mother Church, and let your holy courts, in radiant light, resound with the praises of your people.

All you who stand near this marvelous and holy flame, pray with me to God the Almighty for the grace to sing the worthy praise of this great light;

through Jesus Christ his Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Leader: Let us pray;

It is truly right and good, always and everywhere, with our whole heart and mind and voice to praise you, the invisible, almighty, and eternal God, and your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who paid for us the debt of Adam's sin, and by his blood delivered your faithful people; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, the very Lamb of God, whose blood marks the doorposts of believers and makes us holy.

This is the night when you brought our forebears, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

This is the night when with a pillar of fire you banished the darkness of our iniquity.

This is the night when all who believe in Christ are delivered from the gloom of sin, and are restored to grace and holiness of life.

This is the night when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell, and rose victorious from the grave.

Our birth would have been no gain, had we not been redeemed.

How wonderful and beyond our knowing, O God, is your mercy and loving kindness to us, that to redeem a slave, you gave a Son.

O wonderful providence of Adam's sin
destroyed completely by the death of Christ.

O happy fault, which gained for us
so great and glorious a Redeemer.

This is the night of which it is written:
the night shall be as bright as the day.

How holy is this night when wickedness is put to flight,
and sin is washed away.

It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn.
It casts out pride and hatred, and brings peace and concord.

How blessed is this night when earth and heaven are joined,
and Man is reconciled to God.

Therefore, O holy Father, accept our evening sacrifice,
the offering of this candle in your honour,
the work of bees and of your servants' hands,
the gift of your most holy Church.

May it mingle with the lights of heaven,
and shine continually to drive away all darkness.

May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting,
find it ever burning—he who gives his light to all creation,
and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

THE LESSONS

The leader may introduce the Scripture readings in these or similar words;

Let us hear the record of God's saving deeds in history, remembering how
he saved his people in ages past and in the fullness of time sent his Son to
be our Redeemer; and let us pray that God may bring to completion in each
of us the saving work he has begun.

At least three of the following Lessons are read, of which one is always the

*Lesson from Exodus. After each Lesson, the appointed Psalm (or canticle)
may be said. A period of silence may be kept; and the Collect prayer
provided, or some other suitable prayer, may be said.*

THE CREATION

GENESIS 1:1-2:3

PSALM 104:1-13 (14-24)

Let us pray. Silence

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the
dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him
who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our
Lord. Amen.

THE FALL

GENESIS 3

PSALM 32

Let us pray. Silence

O God, you sent your blessed Son, the seed of the woman, that he might
crush the serpent's head and make all creation new: Grant that, having this
hope, we may purify ourselves as he is pure; that, when he comes again
with power and great glory, we may be made like him in his eternal and
glorious kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE FLOOD

GENESIS 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-20; 9:8-13

PSALM 36 or PSALM 46

Let us pray. Silence

Grant, Lord, that we who are baptized into the death of your Son our
Saviour Jesus Christ may continually put to death our evil desires and be
buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass
to our joyful resurrection; through the merits of him who died and was
buried and rose again for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

GENESIS 22:1-18

PSALM 16

Let us pray. Silence

Almighty God, whose servant Abraham faithfully obeyed your call, and rejoiced to see the day of your Son: Multiply the number of your children by the grace of the Lamb who was slain; that your Church may also rejoice to see your promise to our father Abraham fulfilled; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE AT THE RED SEA

EXODUS 14:10-15:1

THE SONG OF MOSES (Exodus 15:1-18)

Let us pray. Silence

O God, whose wonderful deeds of old shine forth even to our own day, by the power of your mighty arm you once delivered your chosen people from slavery under Pharaoh, to be a sign for us of the salvation offered to all nations by the water of Baptism: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may be numbered among the offspring of Abraham, and rejoice in the inheritance of Israel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOD'S PRESENCE IN A RENEWED ISRAEL

ISAIAH 4:2-6

PSALM 122

Let us pray. Silence

O God, you led your ancient people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: Grant that we, who serve you now on earth, may come to the joy of that heavenly Jerusalem, where all tears are wiped away and where your saints for ever sing your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SALVATION OFFERED FREELY TO ALL

ISAIAH 55:1-11

PSALM 42:1-7

Let us pray. Silence

O God, you have created all things by the power of your Word, and you renew the earth by your Spirit: Give the water of life to all who thirst for you, that they may bring forth abundant fruit in your glorious kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

EZEKIEL 36:24-28

PSALM 42:1-7

Let us pray. Silence

Heavenly Father, by the power of your Holy Spirit you promise your faithful people new life in the water of Baptism: Guide and strengthen us by the same Spirit, that we who are born again may serve you in faith and love, and grow into the full stature of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

EZEKIEL 37:1-14

PSALM 30 or PSALM 126

Let us pray. Silence

Lord God of our salvation, you speak the word to your scattered people, and raise us up from the valley of death: Breathe your Spirit upon your Church, that we may live and stand before you confident in your risen Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

JONAH AND THE FISH

JONAH 1:1-2:10

PSALM 130

Let us pray. Silence

Almighty God, by the resurrection of your Son you have brought us out of sin into righteousness and out of death into life: Grant to those who are sealed by your Holy Spirit the will and the power to proclaim you to all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

ZEPHANIAH 3:12-20

PSALM 98

Let us pray. Silence

Almighty God, you called your Church to bear witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself: Give us boldness to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you; through him who was lifted high upon the Cross, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

The leader prays;

O God, you made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up in us (your Church) that Spirit of adoption which is given to us in Baptism, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: As now as our Saviour taught us, we are bold to pray:

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

The Leader then offers this final prayer;

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**