

HOME WORSHIP FOR THE VIGIL OF EASTER

without full scripture text

11 APRIL 2020

While Easter is every Sunday, the days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are like one great annual Sunday. Because of the pandemic, we cannot do these important services together in church. While Easter is a joyful festival, we keep it now in a time of difficulty and worldwide sorrow. Still, we believe that Christ is with us in his word, by his Spirit drawing us together as one before God. We believe that the gospel of Christ gives us strength amid distress and comfort in the face of our sufferings.

These three services are really one event, stretched over three days. As a sign of unity, you might consider using these three resources for prayer at the time the congregation would have gathered in the church building or at another commonly designated time. (Alternatively, several homes together or the entire congregation may observe these services using Zoom, Facetime, or some other internet platform.)

For this service on Saturday evening, place a bowl of water and a candle in the worship space.

After the last prayers on Saturday evening, do celebrate. It is Easter. Have at least one piece of chocolate or something else you love.

These resources for worship at home on the Three Days were developed by Gordon Lathrop and Gail Ramshaw for Resurrection Lutheran Church, Arlington, Virginia, and are offered for ecumenical use. They have been slightly adapted for United Methodist use.

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THE VIGIL OF EASTER

Sit before an unlit candle and a bowl of water.

Light the candle, saying:

The light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.
Thanks be to God.

Then read this "Easter Proclamation"

Rejoice, all heavenly choirs of angels!
Christ has conquered; the risen Savior shines upon you.
This is the night in which the true Lamb is slain.
This is the night: **this is the night.**

This the night in which the children of Israel were led through the sea.
This is the night: **this is the night.**

This is the night in which all who believe in Christ are renewed in grace.
This is the night: **this is the night.**

The holiness of this night restores joy to those who mourn and humbles earthly pride.
Therefore, this night, O God, receive our praise for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
May Christ, the Morning Star, rising from the grave, shed light on the whole human race.
And we pray, O God: preserve and protect your church,
giving us peace, in this time and forever.
Amen.

Then pray:

O God,
you are the creator of the world,
the liberator of your people,
and the wisdom of the earth.
By the resurrection of your Son,
free us from our fears,
restore us in your image,
and ignite us with your light,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Then choose among these five Old Testament readings:

FIRST READING: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: Especially now, we long for an ordered world. In spite of death and sorrow, the resurrection of Jesus Christ contains the promise of a new creation. Baptized into his death and resurrection, we are made witnesses to God's new creation, and it is very good.

SECOND READING: Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: We long for freedom from fear and confusion, sin and death. The resurrection of Christ brings us through the sea to new life, and baptism has enacted that exodus.

THIRD READING: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: We are the dry bones. The Spirit of God, poured out from Christ's death and resurrection, makes us alive together with him, a whole people standing together in new life, even when we are separated from each other.

FOURTH READING: Jonah 1:1—2:1

Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: We have often run away from our vocation as witnesses to new life, hope and forgiveness in Christ. His resurrection, like Jonah coming out of the fish after three days, and our baptism into that resurrection, making us like Jonah, restores us to that vocation.

FIFTH READING: Daniel 3:1-29

Word of God, Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

About this reading: In this difficult time, we are in the fire. But the Crucified and Risen Christ is with us in the fire, and we are saved. And Nebuchadnezzar once again does not get it: no one is to be torn limb from limb! God's mercy is for all.

After the Old Testament readings, read the Gospel:

GOSPEL: John 20:1-18

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

About this Gospel: Mary weeps; so do we. But do not weep. The Risen Christ calls each of us by name. And remember the other readings: he is rescue from the fire, restored vocation, our dry bones made alive, freedom from slavery and fear, and the very down payment on a new creation. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Here you may share your thoughts with others. Or, if an Easter sermon has been prerecorded, listen to it or view it here.

If you have the United Methodist Hymnal, you might now read or sing

Hymn # 302 "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"

Or: *Mil Voces para Celebrar* #152

[https://hymnary.org/text/christ the lord is risen today wesley](https://hymnary.org/text/christ-the-lord-is-risen-today-wesley)

Then, in remembrance of your baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, confess the baptismal creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Make the sign of the cross on your forehead with water from the bowl. Please note, that this action may be entirely omitted, especially if someone in your house has tested positive for the virus. Or make the sign of the cross without the use of water from the bowl.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

On this most holy night, we pray for the church, the earth, the world, those in need, and all the members of God's family, responding to each petition with the words, **Hear our prayer.**

A brief silence.

We pray, O God, for all the churches around the globe: for their people and leaders; for the newly baptized; for the believers who cannot assemble for worship; for faithful endurance during this time of sorrow and distress; and for a deepening sense of your presence among us.

A brief silence.

O God, you are our Temple: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for the wellbeing of creation: for the health of seas and rivers and lakes; for [local bodies of water]; and for the will to care for your earth.

A brief silence.

O God, you are our Rainbow of promise: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for peace and justice in the world: for an end to war and international turmoil; for concord in our troubled society; for the heads of state, legislators, and local civic leaders, that they enact wise procedures to deal with the coronavirus.

A brief silence.

O God, you are our Mighty Fortress: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God for all who are facing the coronavirus: for all who mourn their dead; all who have contracted the virus; those who are quarantined or stranded away from home; those who have lost their employment; those who fear the present and the future. We pray for physicians, nurses, and home health aides; medical researchers; and the World Health Organization. Fill the aching in our hearts with your merciful power.

A brief silence.

O God, you are our Everlasting Arms: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for all in need: for those suffering for the faith; for those who are poor, hungry, and homeless; for those who are sick and those awaiting death; and for those we name before you here.

A brief silence.

O God, you are the Healer of our every ill: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray, O God, for the desires of our hearts:

A longer period of silence.

O God, you are our Heart's Desire: in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Receive our thanks for all who died in the faith, and bring us at the final resurrection into your everlasting life, where sorrows will be no more.

A brief silence.

O God, our Beginning and our End, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Into your gracious and mighty hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Pray the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
And deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power,
And the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen.

Pray this prayer and speak these final sentences:

Eternal giver of life and light, this holy night shines with the radiance of the risen Christ. Renew your church with the Spirit given us in baptism, that we may worship you in sincerity and truth and may shine as a light in the world, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever. **Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!