

EASTER VIGIL

AN AT-HOME LITURGY FOR AN AWKWARD AGE

THE BIG IDEA:

When it was still dark, on the first morning, the women showed up.

When it was still dark, and there were no answers, only grief, the women showed up.

They came to care for the body of Jesus but were surprised by emptiness, by absence.

As the light dawns out of the shadows, they begin to see that absence makes way for life, for the God of resurrection to be present to them in ways they could not have imagined.

The Easter Vigil provides a space, a liturgy for us to show up in the dark, holding the absence and grief of these days, so that God might teach us again how new life can be born even here.

What is the Easter Vigil?

The Easter Vigil may be a liturgy with which you are familiar or may be an opportunity to encounter Easter resurrection in a new way.

While we now celebrate Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day as three separate worship services, in the earliest days they were celebrated in unity, one single liturgy that began on Saturday evening and continued into Easter morning.

As we celebrate Holy Week and Easter at home this year, this time of worship is for sometime late on Saturday night, in the darkness just as the resurrection is about to spring out into the world. Like the women, you can gather in the darkness of the night, or at the latest, the darkness of Sunday's early morning, whichever works best for you.

This liturgy was known as the **Easter Vigil**. It was the holiest and most joyful night of the Christian year, where Christians experienced the fullness of Jesus's life, sacrificial death and breath-held waiting of his promised resurrection. In this service, we experience the passage from slavery to freedom, from sin to salvation, from death to life.

When celebrated together, the Easter Vigil typically consists of four parts:

1. The Service of Light,

2. The Service of the Word,
3. The Service of the Baptismal Covenant, and
4. The Service of the Table.

Because we cannot be together at the Table, this liturgy will only include the light, the word, and remembrance of baptism.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

1. Candles for each person and a lighter
2. A smart device with mobile liturgy site, which will include the readings and an audio guide with sung responses, OR the printed liturgy for each person participating with you
3. A bowl with water inside your home

You may consider joining together with another household through the gift of technology or even just starting outside with neighbors at a safe distance from one another.

If you are praying in solitude, pray both the leader and responsive parts.

If you are praying with others, the leader prays the words in plain text and the people respond with the words in bold.

If you can, divide up the Scripture readings so that God's Word can be heard through many voices.

PART 1: THE SERVICE OF LIGHT

With the women, we begin the service in the dark, and encourage worshipers to start a quarter mile or so from home, lighting their candles as the service begins and making their way toward home as the liturgy continues.

GREETING

Speak aloud:

Sisters and brothers in Christ, on this early morning when our Savior Jesus Christ passed from death to life, we gather with the church throughout the world in vigil and in prayer.

This is the Passover of Jesus Christ: Through light, the Word and water, we recall Christ's death and resurrection, we share Christ's triumph over sin and death, and with invincible hope, we await Christ's coming again.

Hear the Word of God:

In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

FIRST PRAYER

Let us pray:

Eternal God, in Jesus Christ you have given the light of life to all the world. Sanctify this new fire, and inflame us with a desire to shine forth with the brightness of Christ's rising, until we feast at the banquet of eternal light; through Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. **Amen.**

At this time light each candle.

Join in the sung response as you make your way back toward your home:

The light of Christ! **Thanks be to God.**

At the threshold of your home, play the Exsultet. After it's finished, extinguish your candles, and move into your home. Find a comfortable place to gather. You may also choose to remain outside, sitting on a porch or back deck, in order to witness the dark moving to light.

[Link to the Exsultet Chant \(transcribed\)](#)

PART 2: SERVICE OF THE WORD

Read aloud:

Friends in Christ,

Let us listen attentively to the word of God, recalling God's saving deeds throughout history and how, in the fullness of time, God's Word became flesh and dwelt among us: Jesus Christ our Redeemer!

A Reading from Genesis 1:1-2:2: The Story of Creation

Read aloud:

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were

under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." 21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. 25 God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

27

So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." 29 God said, "See, I have given

you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. 2 And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

Sung Response

“The Lord Is My Light”

Sing this three times after the first reading, and once after each consecutive reading (Find the audio accompaniment at <https://nccumc.org/hw2020/>):

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the song, with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket labeled 'A1' above it. The second staff contains the melody for the second line, with a repeat sign and a first ending bracket labeled 'B1' above it. The lyrics are written below the notes.

The Lord is my light, my light and sal-va-tion: in
him I trust, in him I trust. The

Let us pray:

Almighty and Eternal God, you created all things in wonderful beauty and order. Help us now to perceive how still more wonderful is the new creation, by which in the fullness of time you redeemed your people through the sacrifice of our Passover, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever. **Amen.**

A Reading from Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21: Israel’s Deliverance at the Red Sea

Read aloud:

10 As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. 11 They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to

die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."

15 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. 16 But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. 17 Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers."

19 The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. 20 It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night. 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. 22 The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. 23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. 24 At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. 25 He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. 29 But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Sung Response

“The Lord Is My Light”

Sing along (Find the audio accompaniment at <https://nccumc.org/hw2020/>)

Let us pray:

God of steadfast love, your wonderful deeds of old shine forth even to our own day. Through the waters of the sea, you once delivered your chosen people from slavery, a sign for us of the salvation of all nations through the grace of Baptism. Grant that all of 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.**

A Reading from Ezekiel 37:1-14: The Valley of Dry Bones

Read aloud:

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3 He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” 4 Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” 10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

11 Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ 12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall

live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”

Sung Response

“The Lord Is My Light”

Sing along (Find the audio accompaniment at <https://nccumc.org/hw2020/>)

Let us pray:

O God, you have created all things by the breath of your Spirit and the power of your Word. Breathe into us yet again, renewing our bodies and all of your creation that we might rise up from our graves and live for your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A Reading from Romans 6:3-11

Read aloud:

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For whoever has died is freed from sin. 8 But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Sung Response

“The Lord Is My Light”

Sing along (Find the audio accompaniment at <https://nccumc.org/hw2020/>)

Let us pray:

Eternal Giver of life and light; this holy morning shines with the radiance of the risen Christ. Renew your church with the Spirit given to us in Baptism, that we may worship you in sincerity and truth, and shine as a light in the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel according to John 20:1-18

Read aloud:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to their homes.

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Sung Response

"Jesus, the Lord Is Risen! Alleluia!"

Sing along (Find the audio accompaniment at <https://nccumc.org/hw2020/>):



Je - sus, the Lord, is ris - en! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.



Je - sus, the Lord, is ris - en to - day! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

PART 3: WE REMEMBER OUR BAPTISM AND GIVE THANKS

With everyone standing as they can, from the bowl of water, splash water on your face and make the sign of the cross on your forehead.

Praying together:

Through the sacrament of baptism
God's Spirit has been poured out upon water,
water poured over and immersing us,
water that flows freely for all who will receive it,
water from the streams of God's saving power and justice,
water that brings hope to all who thirst for righteousness,
water that refreshes life, nurtures growth, and offers new birth.

**Today, through this water, we renew our commitments to Christ who has raised us,
the Spirit who has birthed us, and the Creator who is making all things new.**

Today, through this water, we renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin.

Today, through this water, we accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

Today, through this water, we confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, put our whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as our Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.

Today, through this water, we commit to be faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world.

Today, through this water, we receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and put our whole trust in God, the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ, his only Son, and in the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Almighty God, the life you birthed in us by baptism into Jesus Christ will never die.

Your justice never fails.

Your mercy is everlasting.

Your healing river flows.

Your Spirit blows where you will.

We cannot stop you, God!

But we confess that we try.

**We try to block the flow,
we redirect the winds of the Spirit,
or we walk so far away from the life-giving stream
that we do not hear its sound,
and we forget its power.**

We parch ourselves.

**We are dry and thirsty, O God,
forgive us we pray.**

Silence is held for personal confession.

For your Son, Jesus Christ, who died and rose for us while we were yet sinners, for mercy that flows like a never-ending stream, gracious God, we thank you. **Amen!**

Passing the Peace

Signs of peace are exchanged.

Song of Thanksgiving

“Jubilate, Servite (Raise a Song of Gladness)”

Sing along (Find the audio accompaniment at <https://nccumc.org/hw2020/>):

The musical score is written on a treble clef staff in the key of D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. It consists of three lines of music. Above the first line, guitar chords are indicated: (A) D, G, A, and (B). The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables across notes. The first line of music ends with a double bar line.

Ju - bi - la - te De - o om - nis ter - ra. Ser - vi - te
Raise a song of glad - ness, peo - ples of the earth. Christ has come,

Do - mi - no in lae - ti - ti - a. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
bring - ing peace, joy to ev - 'ry heart. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

in lae - ti - ti - a! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, in lae - ti - ti - a!
joy to ev - 'ry heart! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, joy to ev - 'ry heart!

Charge and Blessing

Share this word of blessing with one another:

Go forth into this day upheld by the truth of new life, by the power of resurrection. Go forth to love and serve the Lord.

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

Alleluia, Alleluia!