

Easter Vigil

3rd April 2021

This service is our first celebration of Easter as we move from the darkness and sorrow of our Lord's crucifixion to the light and joy of his resurrection.

THE SERVICE OF LIGHT

The service begins in darkness. The ministers go in silence to the west door, the congregation are in their seats. All stand and face the minister.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, on this most holy night, when our Lord Jesus Christ passed from death to life, the Church invites her children throughout the world to come together in vigil and prayer. This is the Passover of the Lord. We remember his death and resurrection by hearing his word and celebrating his mysteries, confident that we shall share his victory over death and live with him for ever in God.

A fire is kindled

Eternal God, who made this most holy night to shine with the brightness of your one true light: set us aflame with the fire of your love, and bring us to the radiance of your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Easter Candle is marked with these words.

Christ yesterday and today
The beginning and the end,
Alpha and Omega,
All time belongs to him, And all ages
To him be glory and power,
Through every age and for ever. **Amen**

Five incense studs are inserted into the Easter Candle, reminding us of the five wounds of Christ (the piercing of the nails through his hands and feet on the cross and the sword cut in his side) and these words are said.

By his holy and glorious wounds
May Christ our Lord guard and keep us. **Amen.**

The Easter candle is lit from the fire outside to remember Christ the light of the world, a light no darkness can quench. These words are said.

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

The minister bearing the candle says:

The light of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

The procession moves down the church and the candles of those around are lit from the Easter candle. The response is repeated twice.

The Exultet is sung

THE VIGIL

As we await the risen Christ, let us read the record of God's saving deeds in history, recalling 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 through this Easter celebration God may bring to perfection in each of us the saving work he has begun.

READINGS *by candlelight*

CREATION: Genesis 1:1-27, 31

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the 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. ³Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God 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.' ⁷So 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. ⁸God 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. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then 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.

¹²The 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. ¹³And 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, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And 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.' ²¹So 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. ²²God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' ²³And 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. ²⁵God 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.

³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Thanks be to God.

CROSSING THE RED SEA: Exodus 14:10, 13, 14, 21-30a

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. ¹³But 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. ¹⁴The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.'

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. ²²The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ²³The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. ²⁴At 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. ²⁵He 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.' ²⁷So 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. ²⁸The 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. ²⁹But 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.

Thanks be to God.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES: Ezekiel 37:1-14

37The 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. ²He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' ⁴Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I 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. ⁸I 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. ⁹Then 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

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." ¹²Therefore 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. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I 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.'

Thanks be to God.

THE EASTER ACCLAMATION

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

A fanfare is played, bells are rung, lights switched on and a champagne cork is popped to celebrate the good news of Easter! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Our candles are extinguished.

THE COLLECT

Let us pray that we may reign with the risen Christ in glory.

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.
Amen.

GOSPEL READING: Mark 16:1-8

Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one:

I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore. *Revelation 1:17,18*

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

16When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' 4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' 8So they went out and fled from the

tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

HOMILY

THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISM PROMISES

As we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, we remember that through the paschal mystery we have died and been buried with him in baptism, so that we may rise with him to a new life within the family of his Church.

Water is poured into the Font at the front of church and the water is blessed with these words:

Blessed are you Lord God of all creation:

Through your goodness we have the gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life.

Blessed by God for ever.

The Holy Spirit moved over the waters in the beginning of creation;

in water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John;

in the water of baptism we are buried with Christ in his death and share in his resurrection,

our sins are washed away,

and through the same Spirit we receive the sign and seal of new birth in the family of your Church.

Blessed by God for ever.

Accept our praises, heavenly Father,

And by the power of your Spirit bless these waters of your new creation.

Lord, receive our prayer.

The minister addresses the people.

At your baptism you turned to Christ as Lord and Saviour, and came to Christ the way, the truth and the life. Do you now re-affirm your allegiance to him?

I do. May God give me grace to follow him now and always.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father who made all things, in his Son Jesus Christ who redeemed the world, and in the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the people of God?

I do. I believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Will you continue in the apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you persevere in resisting evil and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself?

With the help of God, I will.

Will you recognise Christ's authority over human society by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak and by seeking peace and justice?

With the help of God, I will.

May God the Creator, the rock of our salvation, who has given us new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and forgiven us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, keep us faithful to our calling, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The people are sprinkled with water with the words:

Remember your baptism into Christ Jesus.

Each time all respond:

Thanks be to God.

THE PEACE

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.'

Then were they glad when they saw the Lord.

Alleluia! The peace of the Lord be always with you

and also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

HYMN: Alleluia, alleluia, hearts to heaven and voices raise

Sung by St James Church Choir

Alleluia, alleluia!

hearts to heaven and voices raise:

sing to God a hymn of gladness,

sing to God a hymn of praise;

he who on the cross a victim

for the world's salvation bled

Jesus Christ, the king of glory,

now is risen from the dead.

Christ is risen! Christ the first-fruits

Of the holy harvest field,

Which will all its full abundance

At his second coming yield;

Then the golden ears of harvest

Will their heads before him wave,

Ripened by his glorious sunshine,

From the furrows of the grave.

Christ is risen, we are risen!

shed upon us heavenly grace,

Rain and dew, and gleams of glory

From the brightness of thy face;
That we, with our hearts in heaven,
Here on earth may fruitful be,
And by angel-hands be gathered,
And be ever, Lord, with thee.

Alleluia, alleluia!
Glory be to God on high:
alleluia to the Saviour
who has gained the victory;
alleluia to the Spirit,
fount of love and sanctity:
alleluia, alleluia
to the Triune Majesty!

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord is here.
His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give thanks and praise.

The president praises God for his mighty acts and we respond:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

The president recalls the Last Supper.

Great is the mystery of faith:
**Christ has died:
Christ is risen:
Christ will come again.**

The Prayer continues. At the end we respond:
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rejoicing in God's new creation
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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.
Lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and forever.
Amen.**

Jesus says, I am the bread of life,
Whoever eats this bread will live forever.

**Lord our hearts hunger for you;
Give us this bread always.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.**

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.
Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia!

GIVING OF COMMUNION

You are invited to use the prayer for Spiritual Communion below asking Jesus to be with you now.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day.
Amen.

An hymn is sung, 'At the Lamb's high feast we sing'.

1 At the Lamb's high feast we sing
praise to our victorious King,
who hath washed us in the tide
flowing from his pierced side;
praise we him whose love divine
gives his sacred blood for wine,
gives his body for the feast,
Christ the victim, Christ the priest.

2 Where the paschal blood is poured,
death's dark angel sheathes his sword;
Israel's hosts triumphant go
through the wave that drowns the foe.
Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,
paschal victim, paschal bread;
with sincerity and love
eat we manna from above.

3 Mighty victim from the sky,
Hell's fierce powers beneath thee lie;
Thou hast conquered in the fight,
thou hast brought us life and light:
Now no more can death appal,
now no more the grave enthral:
thou hast opened paradise,
and in thee thy saints shall rise.

4 Easter triumph, Easter joy,
sin alone can this destroy;
from sin's power do thou set free
souls new-born, O Lord, in thee.
Hymns of glory and of praise,
risen Lord, to thee we raise;
holy Father, praise to thee,
with the Spirit, ever be.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of life, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection have delivered us from the power of our enemy: grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live daily with him in the joy of his risen life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the death,
Open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life. **Amen.**
God the Son, who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory,
Give you joy as you share the Easter faith. **Amen.**
God the Holy Spirit, who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord,
Empower you and fill you with Christ's peace. **Amen.**
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

HYMN: Sing choirs of heaven
Sung by St James Church Choir

Sing choirs of heaven! Let saints and angels sing!
Around God's throne exult in harmony!
Now Jesus Christ is risen from the grave!
Salute your king in glorious symphony!

Sing, choirs of earth! Behold, your light has come!
The glory of the Lord shines radiantly!
Lift up your hearts, for Christ has conquered death!
The night is past, the day of life is here!

Sing, Church of God! Exult with joy outpoured!
The gospel trumpets tell of victory won!
Your saviour lives; he's with you evermore!
Let all God's people sound the long Amen!

Happy Easter!