

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

LITURGICAL NOTES

Because this liturgy is celebrated only once a year, and because it is unlike any other, it requires careful preparation. This will include not only the necessary liturgical items (fire, Paschal candle, candles, water, oil, etc.) but also of services sheets, music and so on. It is recommended that the service sheets for the people be as simple as possible. It might include music, hymnody and the like, when they occur within the liturgy, rather than moving from one book(let) to another.

Ministers and servers should rehearse, as should readers and musicians, especially as lighting for the first half of the liturgy will be very different from normal. The book for the presider needs to be prepared well in advance, and it is advisable for it to contain only the liturgical texts needed for this particular celebration.

The liturgical colour is white or gold.

Order of the Vigil

The Great Vigil consists of four parts:

- the Service of Light;
- the Ministry of the Word;
- the Ministry of Baptism, Confirmation, Reception and Renewal,
together with renewal of Baptismal promises; and
- the celebration of the Easter Eucharist.

Over the centuries these elements have been arranged in various ways. The order as provided here is the most common, although it is often used with the Ministry of the Word and the Service of Light reversed. To begin with the Ministry of the Word suggests that the readings from the Hebrew (Old) Testament are preparatory to the presence of Christ. To begin with the Service of light suggests that all we do is seen in the light of the presence of the risen Christ.

It is fundamental to this liturgy that it begin in darkness. Whether this is after nightfall, late at night, or before daybreak, is a pastoral decision for the local parish/community. Many communities are finding the pre-dawn start to be very appropriate, especially as during the progress of the liturgy, light from the sun grows, until the eucharist is being celebrated in the light of the early morning. As midnight is to Christmas, so dawn has become part of the liturgical spirituality of Easter for many Anglicans.

The Service of Light

This part of the liturgy normally begins outside the building. The fire is kindled, the Paschal candle lit and carried into the darkened building, the peoples' candles are lit and the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) sung.

The Paschal candle should be new every year. It should also be large, so that when in its place in the church it is clearly the major symbol of the resurrection. It should also

be large enough to outlast burning at all services during the Easter Season. For the traditional markings / decoration of the candle, see Appendix I.

The peoples' candles may be lit in various ways. Where people have come to the cross on Good Friday, it is highly appropriate that they come to the Paschal candle to light their own candle. This will take some time. Another option is to have a few people light their own candles from the Paschal candle and then pass the light on to others.

Versions of the Exsultet

The version of the *Exsultet* used in the text is based on that in the *Book of Common Prayer* (ECUSA). Other versions / translations of this text abound and may be substituted for the above: see, for example, the Church of England's book *Lent, Holy Week, Easter*, the *Book of Alternative Services* (Canada), or the *Roman Missal*. There are a number of musical settings from the traditional plainsong to simple modern versions.

By long tradition, the deacon sings the *Exsultet*. However, a priest may do so, or a lay cantor. What is important is that whoever sings this text should be able to do so very well. If there is no member of the community able to do this, then it should be said rather than sung. A better alternative might be for the entire community to sing the following metrical version.

**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 light is here!**

**Sing Church of God! Exalt with joy outpoured!
The gospel trumpets tell of victory won!
Your Saviour lives: he's with you evermore!
Let all God's people shout the loud Amen!**

(Tune: Woodlands AHB 109 or TiS 161)

The Ministry of the Word

This section may take place in a space other than the church building, e.g. a parish hall. The lectern should be centrally placed near the Paschal candle. The people sit for the readings and psalms and may stand with the ministers for the collects. They stand for the Alleluia Song and Gospel reading.

Baptism and the Renewal of Baptismal Promises

This section should be celebrated at the font. This may involve a procession, during which the *Gloria* ('Glory to God in the highest') could be sung, or some other hymn of Easter praise.

If there are candidates for Holy Baptism then they are baptized in the normal manner (see

APBA page 59).

If the bishop is presiding, candidates for confirmation, reception or reaffirmation then receive the laying on of hands, as set out in *APBA*. This also should take place at the font.

Two forms of Renewal of Baptismal Promises are provided: one for when Holy Baptism has been celebrated, one where it has not. After the renewal, water may be sprinkled over the people as a reminder of their status as baptized persons. The Greeting of Peace follows immediately.

The Renewal of Baptismal Promises may be used at all Liturgies on Easter Sunday, replacing the Nicene Creed and the Confession and Absolution, i.e. the order may be as follows

the Sermon
the Prayers of the People
the Renewal of Baptismal Promises
the Greeting of Peace.

Easter Eucharist

It is suggested that Thanksgiving Prayer 2 (*APBA* page 130) be used.

Where Thanksgiving 1 (page 128) is used, a seasonal preface can be found on page 154

Where Thanksgiving 5 (page 139) is used, this paragraph may be inserted before "And so with everyone who believes in you ..."

We thank you that you gave us back the Risen One,
full of grace and glory.
Because he rose again,
we go with joy wherever Jesus sends.

Lord our God,
we give you thanks and praise.

If a baptism has been celebrated, this paragraph may be inserted after the one immediately above.

We thank you that in baptism you made us one with Jesus,
and you brought us out of darkness into light.
When you pour out your spirit
you fill us with the gifts we need
to be your holy people.

Lord our God,
we give you thanks and praise.

The Great Fifty Days

The Easter Season extends from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. During this time the Paschal candle burns at all services. The use of an Alleluia Song before the Gospel reading, the addition of the Alleluias at the dismissal, a festive Great Thanksgiving, and the continued use of Easter hymns / songs all help give this 'season of seasons'

its special character and unity. The use of the Apostles' Creed in place of the Nicene Creed would help underline the baptismal character of this Season.

THE GREAT VIGIL OF EASTER

THE SERVICE OF LIGHT

In darkness, fire is kindled.

The presider may greet the people and may address them in these or similar words.

Dear friends in Christ, on this most holy night,
when our Lord Jesus Christ passed from death to life,
the Church invites believers throughout the world
to come together in vigil and prayer.

This is the Passover of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

We remember his death and celebrate resurrection,
confident that we shall share his victory
and live with him forever in God.

The presider may say the following prayer.

Holy God,
you gave your Name to Moses from the burning bush.
By the blessing of this new fire,
bring us to stand with awe on this holy ground,
our eyes alight with the glory we have seen in Christ,
and our hearts aflame with resurrection joy,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Paschal candle is brought to the presider, who marks a cross and traces Alpha and Omega and the numerals of the current year on it [see Appendix I].

The Paschal candle is lit from the new fire and the presider says

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

The minister takes the Paschal candle, lifts it high and sings or says

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

The Paschal candle is carried into the building, and the people follow.

The procession may pause a number of times: in each case the minister announces

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

The peoples' candles are lit from the Paschal candle.

When the Paschal candle is placed in its stand, the Exsultet is sung using this or another version (see Liturgical Notes).

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,
or 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 marvellous 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 God's Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The minister continues

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

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

It is always 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;
for he is the true Paschal Lamb,
who at the feast of the Passover
paid for us the debt of Adam's sin,
and by his blood delivered your faithful people.

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 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.
How wonderful, and beyond our knowing, O God,
is your mercy and loving kindness to us your children.

How holy is this night,
when wickedness is put to flight,
and sin is washed away.
You restore innocence to the fallen,
and joy to those who mourn.
You cast out pride and hatred,
and bring peace and concord.

How blessed is this night,
when earth and heaven are joined
and we are reconciled with God.

Therefore, all-holy Father,
accept the praises of your people,
and make this lighted candle shine continually to drive away all darkness,
as we celebrate the glad festivity of our redemption.

May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find it ever burning
- he who gives his light to all creation,
and lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Before the readings begin, the presider may say

Dear friends in Christ,
let us now listen attentively to the word of God,
recalling how God saved humanity throughout history and,
in the fullness of time,
sent Jesus Christ to be our redeemer.

*A selection is made from the following readings. At least three Old Testament lessons should be included.
The Exodus 14-15 passage [Lesson 4] is always read, as well as the Romans and Gospel readings.*

The chosen Lessons are read and are responded to by the relevant Psalm or with silence.

The Psalm Prayer is then said / sung.

*Lesson 1: Genesis 1.1-2.4a
 Psalm 136.1-9,23-26*

Psalm Prayer:

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 Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Lesson 2: Genesis 7.1-5,11-18;8.6-18;9.8-13
 Psalm 46*

Psalm Prayer:

Faithful God,
you have placed the rainbow in the skies
as the sign of your covenant with all living things.
May we who are saved through water and the Spirit,
worthily offer to you our sacrifice of thanksgiving;
through Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Lesson 3: Genesis 22.1-18
Psalm 16*

Psalm Prayer:

God and Father of all who believe in you,
you promised Abraham
that he would become the father of all nations,
and through the death and resurrection of Christ
you fulfil that promise.

May we respond to your call by joyfully accepting
your invitation to the new life of grace;
through Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Lesson 4: Exodus 14.10-31;15.20-21
Psalm: Exodus 15.1b-13,17-18*

Psalm Prayer:

God of steadfast love,
by the power of your mighty arm
you once delivered your chosen people
through the waters of the Red Sea,
and gave us a sign of our salvation
through the waters of baptism.

Grant that all the peoples of the earth
may rejoice with Miriam and Moses in your saving work;
through, Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Lesson 5: Isaiah 55.1-11
for the Psalm: Isaiah 12.2-6*

Psalm Prayer:

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

*Lesson 6: Baruch 3.9-15,32-4.4
Psalm 19*

Psalm Prayer:

Creator of the universe, Source of all light,
teach us to hold fast to the ways of wisdom,
that we may live for ever in the radiance of your glory;
through Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Lesson 7: Ezekiel 36.24-28
Psalms 42, 43*

Psalm Prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God,
in the paschal mystery you established
the new covenant of reconciliation.
Give us a new heart and a new spirit,
that we may show forth in our lives
what we profess by our faith;
through Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Lesson 8: Ezekiel 37.1-14
Psalm 143*

Psalm Prayer:

Living God,
by the Passover 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 power to proclaim you to all the world;
through Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*Lesson 9: Zephaniah 3.14-20
Psalm 98*

Psalm Prayer:

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
look favourably on your whole Church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery.
By the effectual working of your providence,
carry out in tranquillity the plan of salvation.
Let the whole world see and know
that things which were cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and that all things are being brought to their perfection;
through Jesus Christ, our Paschal Lamb,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

New Testament Reading: Romans 6.3-11

Alleluia Song

Gospel Reading: Matthew 28.1-10 or Mark 16.1-8 or Luke 24.1-12 or John 20.1-18

The Sermon

HOLY BAPTISM

(AND / OR Confirmation / Reception / Reaffirmation)
TOGETHER WITH THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL PROMISES

The Paschal candle is carried to the font.

The Gloria ('Glory to God in the highest') or some other Song of Praise may be sung.

When there are candidates for Baptism (Confirmation, Reception or Reaffirmation), the service continues from APBA page 55 #11.

When the Baptism and other rites have been completed, the presider says

Dear friends,
through the paschal mystery
we have been buried with Christ in his
baptism,
so that we may rise with him to new life.

Now that our Lenten observance is ended,
let us reaffirm the promises we made in
baptism.

Do you turn to Christ?
Do you repent of your sins?
Do you renounce evil?

I do.

I ask you to reaffirm as yours the faith of the
Church.

**We believe in one God,
who made and loves all that is.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was born, lived, died and rose
again,
and is coming to call all to account.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who calls, equips and sends God's
people,
and brings all things to their true end.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**This is our faith.
We believe in one God:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

God our creator,
Rock of our salvation,
has given us new birth by water and the Spirit,

Dear friends,
through the paschal mystery
we have been buried with Christ in his baptism,

*When there has been no baptism,
water is poured into the font filling it,
and the presider begins this
Thanksgiving.*

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and
praise.**

We give you thanks that at the beginning of
creation your Holy Spirit moved upon the
waters to bring forth light and life. With
water you cleanse and replenish the earth;
you nourish and sustain all living things.

Thanks be to God.

We give your thanks that through the
waters of the Red Sea you led your people
out of slavery into freedom, and brought
them through the River Jordan to new life
in the land of promise.

Thanks be to God.

We give your thanks for your Son Jesus
Christ: for his baptism by John, for his
anointing with the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

We give you thanks that through the deep
waters of death, Jesus delivered us from
our sins and was raised to new life in
triumph.

Thanks be to God.

We give you thanks for the grace of the
Holy Spirit who forms us in the likeness of
Christ and leads us to proclaim your
kingdom.

Thanks be to God.

And now we give you thanks that we are
made one with Christ in his death and
resurrection.

Pour out your Holy spirit in blessing, that
this water may be a sign of our new birth
in Baptism. May we continue for ever in
Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the
Spirit, now and for ever. **Amen.**

so that we may rise with him to new life.

Now that our Lenten observance is ended,
let us reaffirm the promises we made in baptism.

Do you turn to Christ?
Do you repent of your sins?
Do you renounce all that is evil?

I do.

I ask you now to reaffirm as yours the faith of the
Church.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in God the Son?

**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,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**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.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**This is our faith.
We believe in one God:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Will you each, by God's grace,
strive to live as a disciple of Christ,
loving God with your whole heart,
and your neighbour as yourself,
until your life's end?

I will with God's help.

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

Water may be sprinkled over the people.

THE GREETING OF PEACE

Christ is risen. Alleluia!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The peace of the risen Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

All may exchange a greeting of peace.

The people go to their places, and the ministers move to the Lord's Table.

The gifts of the people are brought to the Table, which is then prepared for the Eucharist.

A hymn may be sung

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Any authorised Great Thanksgiving is used: see Liturgical Notes.

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE COMMUNION

The presider breaks the bread, then says

As this broken bread was once man grains,
which have been gathered together and made one bread:

**so may your Church be gathered
from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.**

This invitation to the Communion may be given:

Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Come, let us celebrate the feast.

Draw near with faith, to feed on Christ on your hearts with thanksgiving.

Alleluia!

During Communion anthems appropriate to the season may be sung: see APBA page 146.

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

The Prayer after Communion is said (see APBA page 155), then

Living God,
make us apostles of the risen Christ.
Give us joyful hearts, words of hope,
and grace to recognize the Lord Jesus when he meets us,
wherever we are on the road.

A hymn may be sung.

A seasonal Blessing may be used (see APBA page 155 or page 222) or the following

The blessing of the Living God, who brings light out of darkness,
be upon you now and forever. **Amen.**

The blessing of the risen Christ, who sends you as apostles into all the world
be upon you now and for ever. **Amen.**

The blessing of the Holy Spirit, who fills the church with joy and praise,
be upon you now and forever. **Amen.**

The blessing of our God, the holy and glorious Trinity,
be upon you and remain with you now, and forever. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

APPENDIX: THE PREPARATION OF THE PASCHAL CANDLE

Any or all of the following rites may be used, depending on local custom.

A. Marking the Paschal Candle

After the prayer over the new fire, one of the ministers or a member of the community brings the Paschal candle to the presider, who cuts / marks a cross in the wax and traces the Greek letter alpha above the cross, and omega below, and the numerals of the current year between the arms of the cross.

While this is done the following may be said:

Jesus Christ yesterday and today (*as the vertical arm of the cross is traced*)
the beginning and the end (*the horizontal arm*)

Alpha (*alpha above the cross*)

and Omega (*omega below the cross*)

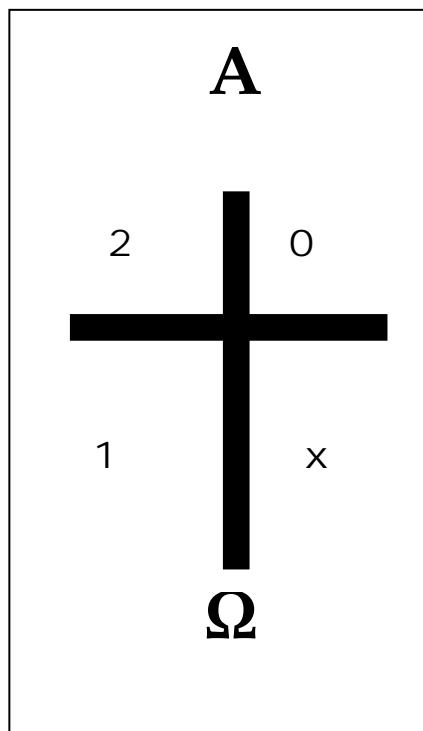
All time belongs to Christ (*first numeral, in the upper left corner of the cross*)

and all the ages (*second numeral in the upper right corner*)

To Christ be glory and power (*third numeral, lower left corner*)

through every age for ever (*last numeral in lower right corner*).

Amen.



B. Nails / incense grains for the Paschal Candle

When the cross and other marks have been made, the presider may insert five nails or grains of incense into the candle, normally at the extremity of the arms of the cross and at the centre. S/he may say,

- | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. | By his holy | | 1 | |
| 2. | and glorious wounds | | | |
| 3. | may Christ our Lord | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| 4. | guard us | | | |
| 5. | and keep us. Amen. | | 3 | |

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