**HOME WORSHIP FOR THE VIGIL OF EASTER**

***with full scripture text***

# 3 APRIL 2021

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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## RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

**THE VIGIL OF EASTER**

**THE THIRD OF THE THREE DAYS**

*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 (CEB)

When God began to create the heavens and the earth— the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters— God said, “Let there be light.” And so light appeared. God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other.” God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. God named the dome Sky.

There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

God said, “Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear.” And that’s what happened. God named the dry land Earth, and he named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. God said, “Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth.” And that’s what happened. The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was.

There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night.

They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth.” And that’s what happened. God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was.

There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

God said, “Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.” God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was.

Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.”

God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.” Then God said, “I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.” And that’s what happened. God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

The heavens and the earth and all who live in them were completed. On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

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 (CEB)

As Pharaoh drew closer, the Israelites looked back and saw the Egyptians marching toward them. The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses,

“Weren’t there enough graves in Egypt that you took us away to die in the desert? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt like this? Didn’t we tell you the same thing in Egypt? ‘Leave us alone! Let us work for the Egyptians!’ It would have been better for us to work for the Egyptians than to die in the desert.”

But Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again. The Lord will fight for you. You just keep still.”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to get moving. As for you, lift your shepherd’s rod, stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two so that the Israelites can go into the sea on dry ground. But me, I’ll make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will go in after them, and I’ll gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, all his army, his chariots, and his cavalry. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his cavalry.”

God’s messenger, who had been in front of Israel’s camp, moved and went behind them. The column of cloud moved from the front and took its place behind them. It stood between Egypt’s camp and Israel’s camp. The cloud remained there, and when darkness fell it lit up the night. They didn’t come near each other all night.

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord pushed the sea back by a strong east wind all night, turning the sea into dry land. The waters were split into two. The Israelites walked into the sea on dry ground. The waters formed a wall for them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians chased them and went into the sea after them, all of

Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and cavalry. As morning approached, the Lord looked down on the Egyptian camp from the column of lightning and cloud and threw the Egyptian camp into a panic. The Lord jammed their chariot wheels so that they wouldn’t turn easily. The Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites, because the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt!”

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water comes back and covers the Egyptians, their chariots, and their cavalry.” So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. At daybreak, the sea returned to its normal depth. The Egyptians were driving toward it, and the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the cavalry, Pharaoh’s entire army that had followed them into the sea. Not one of them remained. The Israelites, however, walked on dry ground through the sea. The waters formed a wall for them on their right hand and on their left.

The Lord rescued Israel from the Egyptians that day. Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the amazing power of the Lord against the Egyptians. The people were in awe of the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses. . .

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand. All the women followed her playing tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang the refrain back to them:

Sing to the Lord, for an overflowing victory!

Horse and rider he threw into the sea! 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 (CEB)

The Lord’s power overcame me, and while I was in the Lord’s spirit, he led me out and set me down in the middle of a certain valley. It was full of bones. He led me through them all around, and I saw that there were a great many of them on the valley floor, and they were very dry.

He asked me, “Human one, can these bones live again?”

I said, “Lord God, only you know.”

He said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the Lord’s word! The Lord God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. I will put sinews on you, place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the Lord.”

I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them.

He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, human one! Say to the breath, The Lord God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live.”

I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company.

He said to me, “Human one, these bones are the entire house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished.’ So now, prophesy and say to them, The Lord God proclaims: I’m opening your graves! I will raise you up from your graves, my people, and I will bring you to Israel’s fertile land. You will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people. I will put my breath in you, and you will live. I will plant you on your fertile land, and you will know that I am the Lord. I’ve spoken, and I will do it. This is what the Lord says.”

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 (CEB)

The Lord’s word came to Jonah, Amittai’s son: “Get up and go to Nineveh, that great

city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention.”

So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the Lord! He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the Lord. But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, so that there was a great storm on the sea; the ship looked like it might be broken to pieces. The sailors were terrified, and each one cried out to his god. They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to make it lighter.

Now Jonah had gone down into the hold of the vessel to lie down and was deep in sleep. The ship’s officer came and said to him, “How can you possibly be sleeping so deeply?

Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps the god will give some thought to us so that we won’t perish.”

Meanwhile, the sailors said to each other, “Come on, let’s cast lots so that we might

learn who is to blame for this evil that’s happening to us.” They cast lots, and the lot fell on

Jonah. So they said to him, “Tell us, since you’re the cause of this evil happening to us: What do you do and where are you from? What’s your country and of what people are you?”

He said to them, “I’m a Hebrew. I worship the Lord, the God of heaven—who made the sea and

the dry land.”

Then the men were terrified and said to him, “What have you done?” (The men knew that Jonah was fleeing from the Lord, because he had told them.)

They said to him, “What will we do about you so that the sea will become calm around us?”

(The sea was continuing to rage.)

He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea! Then the sea will become calm

around you. I know it’s my fault that this great storm has come upon you.”

The men rowed to reach dry land, but they couldn’t manage it because the sea continued to rage against them. So they called on the Lord, saying, “Please, Lord, don’t let us perish on account of this man’s life, and don’t blame us for innocent blood! You are the Lord: whatever you want, you can do.” Then they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raging. The men worshipped the Lord with a profound reverence; they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made solemn promises.

Meanwhile, the Lord provided a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Jonah prayed to the Lord his God from the belly of the fish.

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 (CEB)

King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue. It was ninety feet high and nine feet wide. He set it up in the Dura Valley in the province of Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar then ordered the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to assemble and come for the dedication of the statue that he had set up. So the chief administrators, ministers, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. They stood in front of the statue the king had set up. The herald proclaimed loudly: “Peoples, nations, and languages! This is what you must do: When you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument, you must bow down and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Anyone who will not bow down and worship will be immediately thrown into a furnace of flaming fire.” So because of this order as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument, all the peoples, nations, and languages bowed down and worshipped the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

At that moment some Chaldeans came forward, seizing a chance to attack the Jews.

They said to King Nebuchadnezzar:

“Long live the king! Your Majesty, you gave a command that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument should bow down and worship the gold statue. Anyone who wouldn’t bow and worship would be thrown into a furnace of flaming fire. Now there are some Jews, ones you appointed to administer the province of Babylon—specifically, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—who have ignored your command. They don’t serve your gods, and they don’t worship the gold statue you’ve set up.”

In a violent rage Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego. They were brought before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar said to them: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: Is it true that you don’t serve my gods or worship the gold statue I’ve set up? If you are now ready to do so, bow down and worship the gold statue I’ve made when you hear the sound of horn, pipe, zither, lyre, harp, flute, and every kind of instrument. But if you won’t worship it, you will be thrown straight into the furnace of flaming fire. Then what god will rescue you from my power?”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar: “We don’t need to answer your question. If our God—the one we serve—is able to rescue us from the furnace of flaming fire and from your power, Your Majesty, then let him rescue us. But if he doesn’t, know this for certain, Your Majesty: we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you’ve set up.”

Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and his face twisted beyond recognition because of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In response he commanded that the furnace be heated to seven times its normal heat. He told some of the strongest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the furnace of flaming fire. So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were bound, still dressed in all their clothes, and thrown into the furnace of flaming fire. ( Now the king’s command had been rash, and the furnace was heated to such an extreme that the fire’s flame killed the very men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it.) So these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell, bound, into the furnace of flaming fire.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in shock and said to his associates, “Didn’t we throw three men, bound, into the fire?”

They answered the king, “Certainly, Your Majesty.”

He replied, “Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they

aren’t hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.” Nebuchadnezzar went near the opening of the furnace of flaming fire and said, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. The chief administrators, ministers, governors, and the king’s associates crowded around to look at them. The fire hadn’t done anything to them: their hair wasn’t singed; their garments looked the same as before; they didn’t even smell like fire!

Nebuchadnezzar declared: “May the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be praised! He sent his messenger to rescue his servants who trusted him. They ignored the king’s order, sacrificing their bodies, because they wouldn’t serve or worship any god but their God. I now issue a decree to every people, nation, and language: whoever speaks disrespectfully

about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s God will be torn limb from limb and their house made a trash heap, because there is no other god who can rescue like this.”

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 readings, read the Gospel:*

# GOSPEL: John 20:1-18 (CEB)

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him.” Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn’t go in. Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus’ head. It wasn’t with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. They didn’t yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

She replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, “Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told

them what he said to her.

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 Hymnal 1982, you might now read or sing*

Hymn # 207 “Jesus Christ is Risen Today, Alleluia!” or this online version of the text [The Hymnal 1982: according to the use of the Episcopal Church 207. Jesus Christ is risen today | Hymnary.org](https://hymnary.org/hymn/EH1982/207)

*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 coronavirus. 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!