

EASTER VIGIL

"This is the night...the night of all nights"

**A worship service in joyful celebration
of the resurrection of Jesus Christ
with candle lighting, singing, scripture reading,
renewal of baptismal vows, and a festive communion**

Introduction to the Service

Since ancient times, Christians around the world have gathered on Easter Eve to worship throughout the night and wait together for the miracle of the Resurrection. As they sang, prayed, and listened to scripture, they rehearsed the entire salvation story from creation to the crossing of the Red Sea, through the history of the patriarchs and prophets, and then on to the story of Jesus. Just before dawn, new Christians were baptized, and then – as the sun rose in the eastern sky, Christians gathered around the Lord's Table and celebrated the joyous victory of their risen Lord.

In recent times, the all-night vigil has often been abbreviated into an early morning Easter sunrise service. More recently still, churches all over the world have begun to revive the ancient night-time service. Those who adhere most closely to the ancient tradition (in Africa or eastern Europe, for example) will worship all night long. Even though this service is a shorter version of the ancient service, we still experience something of the significance of what happens when people gather in darkness to wait for Easter light and joy.

In this service we join many Christians around the world who will participate in four services: the Service of the Light, the Service of the Word, the Service of the Water, and the Service of the Bread and Cup. Let us celebrate with joy!

Marlene Kropf (all-Elkhart area Mennonite Easter Vigil Service, Elkhart, Indiana)

SERVICE OF THE LIGHT

Musical prelude

Greeting *(worshippers stand and remain standing through the first hymn)*

Leader Grace and peace to you from Jesus Christ our Lord.
My brothers and sisters in Christ:
On this most holy night
 in which Jesus Christ passed over from death to life,
 we gather as the Church to watch and pray, to celebrate.
This is the Passover of Christ,
 in which we share in Christ's victory over death.

ALL ***O come, light of Christ,
 dispel our darkness,
 enlighten our hearts,
 and dwell within us.***

Lighting of the Easter candle

Leader Christ yesterday and today
the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega
all time belonging to him and all the ages
to Christ be glory and power through every age for ever.

Procession of light into the church

The Easter proclamation: *Exultet*

Cantor Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!
Jesus Christ our King is risen!

Leader Rejoice and sing now, all the earth, bright with glorious splendor,
 for darkness has been vanquished by our eternal king.

This is the night...

...when you brought our fathers and mothers,
the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt
and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

This is the night...

...when Christ broke the bonds of death and hell
and rose victorious from the grave.

How blessed is this night...

...when heaven is wedded to earth
 and all creation is reconciled with God.
 Holy God,
 accept our evening sacrifice,
 the offering of this candle in your honor.
 May it shine continually to drive away all darkness.
 May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting,
 find it ever burning –
 The One who gives light to all creation,
 who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

ALL AMEN

Hymn "Christ, whose glory fills the skies" 216
(worshippers are seated, individual candles are extinguished)

SERVICE OF THE WORD

First reading	<i>The days of creation</i> response	Genesis 1:1-2:2 "This is the day" <i>(sung after each day of creation)</i>	58
Second reading	<i>Noah and the flood</i> response	Genesis 7:1-5,11-18; 8:6-12,15-18; 9:8-13 "Like Noah's weary dove"	496
Third reading	<i>Abraham and Isaac</i> response	Genesis 22:1-18 Psalm 16:1,9-11 "Cast thy burden upon the Lord"	586
Fourth reading	<i>Crossing the Red Sea</i> response	Exodus 14:15-31; 15:20-21 "I will sing the Lord's high triumph" <i>(stanzas 1-3, unison; stanza 4: harmony)</i>	261
Fifth reading	<i>The everlasting covenant</i> response	Isaiah 55:1-11 "Come, ye disconsolate" <i>(sung in unison)</i>	497
Sixth reading	<i>The sprinkling of clean water</i> response	Ezekiel 36:24-28 "Open the wells" <i>(refrain, stanza one, refrain)</i>	514
Seventh reading	<i>A vision of dry bones</i>	Ezekiel 37:1-14	

response "O Holy Spirit, by whose breath" 291

Eighth reading *The Lord gathers a remnant* Zephaniah 3:12-20
response Psalm 126 and "Who is so great" 62
(sung in the middle and at end of psalm)

SERVICE OF THE WATER

Musical Interlude

Hymn "Wade in the water" 446

Prayer

Epistle reading *Baptized into Jesus' death* Romans 6:3-11

Easter gospel *Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, is risen!* Mt. 28.1-10

"The strife is o'er" 263
(The "Alleluia" opening of this hymn is sung, followed by stanza 1,
which is then repeated after each stanza of the chanted gospel)

Easter homily John Chrysostom (AD c 344-407)

Hymn "Lift your glad voices" 275

Thanksgiving for the water

Leader Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of water.
Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation.
Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage
into the land of promise.
In it your Son Jesus Christ received the baptism of John
and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ,
to lead us, through his death and resurrection,
from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

ALL *We thank you now for this water,
 the symbol of our baptism as well.
May it be both sign and promise
 that we, who are cleansed from our sin and born again,
 may continue forever
 in the risen life of Jesus Christ, our Savior.
To Christ, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
 be all honor and glory, now and forever. AMEN*

Renewal of baptismal vows

Leader Sisters and brothers,
 we have been buried with Christ in baptism
 so we may rise with Christ to new life.
Will you affirm your baptismal vows
 and renew your own covenant with God
 in the power of the Spirit?

ALL *We declare anew our covenant:
 to repent of our sinful ways;
 to accept Jesus Christ
 as authority and example for our life;
 to live in grace in God's holy community,
 according to Christ's rule and way.*

Leader God of abundant life,
 you have heard our renewed promises tonight.
Refresh us with your grace;
strengthen us with the anointing of your Spirit,
 and keep us faithful to you all the days of our lives.
Grant that this water may become a water of rest, joy and gladness,
 a water that reminds us of the death and resurrection of your Son;
may it be a bath of rebirth,
 bestowing the grace of adoption and the garment of immortality.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

ALL **AMEN**

Song with sprinkling of water "Water of Life/Agua de vida" (Hymnal Subscription Service #941)

Musical Interlude

SERVICE OF THE BREAD AND CUP

The Eucharist: A Service of Thanksgiving

Leader The Lord be with you.

People ***And also with you.***

Leader Lift up your hearts.

People ***We lift them up to the Lord.***

Leader Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Leader As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray:

People ***Our Father, who art in heaven... (using "sins")***

Leader Alleluia!
Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

People ***Therefore let us keep the feast.
Alleluia!***

Hymn "Be present at our table, Lord" 457
(stanza 1)

Communion *As hymns are sung, come forward to receive bread, dip it into the cup, partake, and return to sing with the congregation.*

"Christ the Lord is risen today" 280
"I am the bread of life" 472

Prayer after communion

Closing hymn "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" 118

Blessing

Postlude