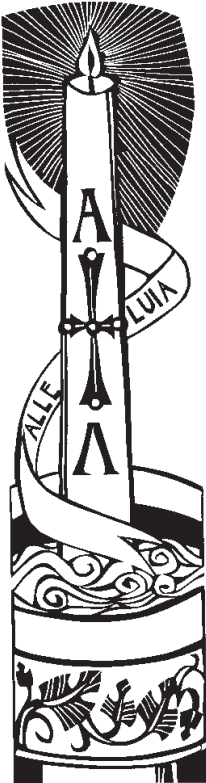


ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH, CANTERBURY



The Easter Vigil





An induction loop system for the hard of hearing is installed in our Church. Hearing aid users should adjust their aid to 'T'



Large print orders of service are available from the sidespersons. Please ask.



Toilet facilities are available in the Church Hall. Please ask a Sidesperson for directions.



This service is being live-streamed for those who are unable to join us in church; By attending this service, you are giving permission and acknowledging that you may briefly appear on this stream. If you have any queries or concerns about this, please speak to a churchwarden or member of the clergy before the service begins.

Introduction

According to ancient custom there is no celebration of the Eucharist on Easter Eve. The orders of Morning and Evening Prayer offer adequate liturgical provision for the day. It is particularly important that Evening Prayer should be treated, by the style of its celebration, as belonging to the Eve, and not as the first service of Easter, anticipating the Easter Liturgy itself.

From earliest times Christians have gathered through the night of Easter to recall the story of God's saving work, from creation through to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, the Easter Liturgy is not merely a presentation of God's work. It is meant to be a real experience of new life for the worshipper, a passing from darkness to light which offers hope to all the faithful. It is therefore important that the preparation is prayerful and thorough.

The Easter Vigil marks the end of the emptiness of Holy Saturday, and leads into the celebration of Christ's resurrection. The singing of the Exsultet, the ancient hymn of triumph and rejoicing, links this night of our Christian redemption to the Passover night of Israel's redemption out of Egypt. Christian baptism is a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, a dying to sin in order to be reborn in him, and the Easter Vigil was from early Christian times a preferred occasion for baptism. It is fittingly a time when those who are already Christians may repeat with renewed commitment the promises of their own baptism, and strengthen their sense of incorporation into the royal and priestly ministry of the whole people of God. The Easter Gospel is proclaimed with all the joy and splendour that the church can find.

The Easter Eucharist may follow immediately on the Vigil, or be deferred until Easter Day. All the resources of the church – music, flowers, bells, colours – are used to celebrate Christ's resurrection. The 'Alleluia', which has been silent throughout Lent, returns.

Now the queen of seasons, bright
with the day of splendour,
with the royal feast of feasts,
comes its joy to render.

John of Damascus

¶ *The Service of Light*

The building being in darkness, the ministers go in silence to the main entrance, one of them carrying the unlit Easter Candle.

All stand and face the ministers.

The president says

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.

The new 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.

All **Amen.**

The Easter Candle is marked.

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.

All **Amen.**

Nails or incense studs are inserted into the Easter Candle.

By his holy and glorious wounds
may Christ our Lord guard and keep us.

All **Amen.**

The president lights the Easter Candle, saying

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

The minister bearing the Candle enters the building, followed by the other ministers, and they pause just inside the entrance.

The minister bearing the Candle raises it and sings

The light of Christ.

All **Thanks be to God.**

The procession of the Easter Candle moves further into the building and then stops.

The versicle and response are repeated, and the candles of those around are lit from the Easter Candle.

The procession continues to the centre of the building and stops once more.

The versicle and response are again repeated, and the candles of those around are lit.

The Easter Candle is placed on a stand in the midst of the building.

The Exsultet

The Exsultet (the Easter Song of Praise) is sung by a minister standing near the Candle.

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!
O Universe, dance around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!
Sound the victorious trumpet of salvation!
Rejoice, O earth, in glory, revealing the splendour of your creation,
radiant in the brightness of your triumphant King!
Christ has conquered! Now his life and glory fill you!
Darkness vanishes for ever!
Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Saviour, our Lord of life, shines upon you!
Let all God's people sing and shout for joy.

The minister continues

All The Lord be with you
and also with you.

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

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

It is right and good that with hearts and minds and voices
we should praise you, Father almighty, the unseen God,
through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
who has saved us by his death,
paid the price of Adam's sin,
and reconciled us once again to you.

For this is the Passover feast,
when Christ, the true Lamb of God, is slain
whose blood consecrates the homes of all the faithful.
This is the night when you first saved our ancestors,
freeing Israel from her slavery
and leading her safely through the sea.
This is the night when Jesus Christ vanquished hell,
broke the chains of death

and rose triumphant from the grave.
This is the night when all who believe in him are freed from sin,
restored to grace and holiness,
and share the victory of Christ.
This is the night that gave us back what we had lost;
beyond our deepest dreams
you made even our sin a happy fault.
Most blessed of all nights!
Evil and hatred are put to flight and sin is washed away,
lost innocence regained, and mourning turned to joy.
Night truly blessed, when hatred is cast out,
peace and justice find a home, and heaven is joined to earth
and all creation reconciled to you.

Therefore, heavenly Father, in this our Easter joy
accept our sacrifice of praise, your Church's solemn offering.
Grant that this Easter Candle may make our darkness light.
For Christ the morning star has risen in glory;
Christ is risen from the dead and his flame of love still burns within us!
Christ sheds his peaceful light on all the world!
Christ lives and reigns for ever and ever!

All

Amen.

The Vigil

We sing the hymn, during which lights are taken from the Easter Candle to illuminate the Bible from which the Vigil readings will be read.

O Praise our great and glorious Lord

NEH 116

The president introduces the Vigil using these words

As we await the risen Christ, let us hear 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.

Each reading will be followed by a period of silence and a prayer.

Reading 1

Genesis 1: 1 – 2: 4a

Reading 2

Genesis 7: 1 – 5, 11 – 18; 8: 6 – 19; 9: 8 – 13

Reading 3

Jonah 1: 1 – 2: 10

Reading 4

Exodus 14: 10 – end; 15: 1a

Reading 5

Ezekiel 47: 1 – 12

The Easter Acclamation

The president says

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

All **He is risen indeed. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.**

A joyful fanfare is played, bells rung, cymbals clashed, noise made.

Gloria in Excelsis

The Gloria in excelsis is sung, during which all the candles in the church are lit from the Easter Candle, the lights are switched on and the people's candles extinguished.

All **Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect

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

Silence is kept.

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.

All **Amen.**

New Testament Reading

Romans 6.3-11

This is the word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Reading

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.

All **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Matthew 28.1-10

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Short Reflection

¶ *The Liturgy of Initiation*

The congregation gathers at the baptismal font.

The president says

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.

The Renewal of Baptismal Vows

The president addresses the congregation

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:

All Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?
I reject them.

All Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?
I renounce them.

All Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?
I repent of them.

All Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?
I turn to Christ.

All Do you submit to Christ as Lord?
I submit to Christ.

All Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?
I come to Christ.

If there are no candidates for baptism, the president says

May almighty God who has given you the desire to follow Christ give you the strength to continue in the way.

Prayer over the Water

The president stands before the water of baptism and says

All Praise God who made heaven and earth,
who keeps his promise for ever.

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

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ
was baptized in the river Jordan,
we thank you for the gift of water
to cleanse us and revive us.

All Saving God,
give us life.

We thank you that through the waters of the Red Sea
you led your people out of slavery
to freedom in the Promised Land.

All Saving God,
give us life.

We thank you that through the deep waters of death
you brought your Son,
and raised him to life in triumph.

All Saving God,
give us life.

Bless this water, that your servants who are washed in it
may be made one with Christ in his death and in his resurrection,
to be cleansed and delivered from all sin.

All Saving God,
give us life.

Send your Holy Spirit upon them,
bring them to new birth in the household of faith
and raise them with Christ to full and eternal life;
for all might, majesty, authority and power are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

All Saving God,
give us life.

Profession of Faith

The president addresses the congregation

Brothers and sisters, I ask you to profess the faith of the Church.

All Do you believe and trust in God the Father?
**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

All Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ?
**I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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.**

All Do you believe and trust in 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.**

Commission

The president uses this Commission

Those who are baptized are called to worship and serve God.
Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

All **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?

All **With the help of God, I will.**

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

All **With the help of God, I will.**

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

All **With the help of God, I will.**

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

All **With the help of God, I will.**

May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith,
that you may be rooted and grounded in love
and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.

All **Amen.**

Thanksgiving for the Resurrection

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious:
and his mercy endures for ever.

All

He has loved us from all eternity:
for his mercy endures for ever.

All

And remembered us when we were in trouble:
for his mercy endures for ever.

All

All For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
for his mercy endures for ever.

He became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

By his cross and passion he has redeemed the world:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

And has washed us from our sins in his own blood:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

On the third day he rose again:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

And has given us the victory:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

He ascended into heaven:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

And opened wide for us the everlasting doors:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

He is seated at the right hand of the Father:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

And ever lives to make intercession for us:
All **for his mercy endures for ever.**

For the gift of his Spirit:
All **blessed be Christ.**

For the catholic Church:
All **blessed be Christ.**

For the means of grace:
All **blessed be Christ.**

For the hope of glory:
All **blessed be Christ.**

All For the triumphs of his gospel:
blessed be Christ.

All For the lives of his saints:
blessed be Christ.

All In joy and in sorrow:
blessed be Christ.

All In life and in death:
blessed be Christ.

All Now and to the end of the ages:
blessed be Christ.

Blessing and honour and thanksgiving and praise
more than we can utter,
more than we can conceive,
be to you, O most adorable Trinity,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
by all angels, all peoples, all creation,
for ever and ever.

Lancelot Andrewes (1626)

All **Amen. Alleluia.**

We sing the hymn

Thine be the glory
NEH 120

The Blessing

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

All **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

The president says

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

All **Amen.**

God the Son,
who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory,
give you joy as you share the Easter faith.

All **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.

All **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

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