



Lent and the Three Days

Every Sunday in worship the church celebrates the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gathers us to receive again the gifts of God that come to us through Christ, the saving Word. On several key days at the center of the church year, however, worship takes a particular shape. These central days have come to be known as the Three Days, recalling Jesus' own words to his disciples that he would be handed over to death, and that "after three days he will rise again" (Mark 10:34). The Three Days encompass the time from Maundy Thursday evening through the evening of Easter Day. In particular, the services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Vigil of Easter unfold in a single movement, as the church each year makes the passage with Christ through death into life.

In addition to these central three days, the church has long used special orders of worship on Ash Wednesday—the first day of Lent—and on the Sunday of the Passion, Palm Sunday.

Pattern for Worship—Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is a solemn day of prayer that begins the season of Lent. On this day we confess our sin in a litany of repentance. During Lent's forty days we are invited to carry out the Lenten discipline, practices of fasting, prayer, and works of love, even as we accompany people around the world who are preparing for baptism at Easter. On this day we may receive the sign of ashes. This ancient symbol of repentance reminds us of our mortality. Returning to God's mercy and grace, marked with the cross of Christ, we make our way through Lent, longing for the baptismal waters of Easter, our spiritual rebirth.

Gathering

Greeting

Prayer of the Day

Meal

or

Offering

Concluding Prayer

Word

Readings and Responses

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

Invitation to Lent

Confession of Sin

with Imposition of Ashes

Prayers of Intercession

Sending

Pattern for Worship—Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday)

On this day, united with Christians around the world, we mark Jesus' triumphant entry into the holy city of Jerusalem to complete the work of our salvation. We follow in his footsteps as we enter the church, our Jerusalem, acclaiming the one whose throne was the cross. In today's gospel reading we hear the passion narrative of Jesus' suffering, death, and burial for our sakes.

Gathering

Processional Gospel

Blessing of Palms

Procession

Prayer of the Day

Word

with Reading of the Passion

Meal and Sending

Central elements of the liturgy are noted in bold type; other elements support the essential shape of Christian worship.

Pattern for Worship—Maundy Thursday

On this night we begin the Three Days during which we participate once again in the saving power of Jesus' passing over from death into life. The Maundy Thursday service includes the words of Jesus' new commandment (*mandatum*, from which *Maundy* comes) to love one another. As a sign of our calling to follow Jesus' example of humility and service, we may wash one another's feet as Jesus washed the disciples' feet. On this night in which Jesus was handed over to death we also gather around the Lord's supper. At the service's conclusion, the altar area may be stripped of furnishings as a sign of Jesus' abandonment.

Gathering

Confession and Forgiveness

Greeting

Prayer of the Day

Meal

concluded with

Stripping of the Altar

Word

Readings and Responses

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

Footwashing

Prayers of Intercession

Peace

Pattern for Worship—Good Friday

The Good Friday service continues the journey through the Three Days of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. At the heart of this service is the passion reading according to John, which celebrates Christ's victory on the cross. As Jesus draws all people to himself, we pray for the whole world for which Christ died. Finally, we honor the cross as the sign of forgiveness, healing, and salvation. With all God's people we are invited to bow before this mystery of faith. Christ has died, so that we may live.

Prayer of the Day

Readings and Responses

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

Bidding Prayer

Procession of the Cross

Pattern for Worship—Vigil of Easter

On the night before Easter Day, Christians around the world gather to celebrate Christ's passage from death to life. The service includes strong signs: new fire in darkness, light spreading from the light of Christ, the water and Word of baptism, the first resurrection meal. And powerful words: the great saving stories of Hebrew scriptures and the first Easter gospel. We keep this wondrous night in the spirit of vigil, our lamps lit, awaiting Christ's coming both now and at the end of time. Alleluia! Christ is risen! And Christ will come again.

Gathering

Greeting
Procession
Easter Proclamation
Prayer of the Day

Word

Old Testament Readings
and Responses
New Testament Reading
Gospel with Acclamation
Sermon

Baptism

or
Affirmation of Baptism
by the Assembly

Meal

Sending

Ash Wednesday



Gathering

The assembly gathers in silence.

The service begins with Psalm 51 or another penitential psalm, a Kyrie or another litany, or a hymn. Or, the service begins simply with the greeting.

Greeting

The assembly stands. The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Response after the prayer: **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

Word

Readings and Psalm

An assisting minister reads the first and second scripture readings. The psalm for the day follows the first reading. The psalm is Psalm 51, or Psalm 103:8-14 if Psalm 51 is sung at the gathering or during the imposition of ashes.

Response after the conclusion of the first and the second readings: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

The assembly stands. The following or another appropriate acclamation may be sung.

Return to the ¹ LORD, your God,
who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
and abounding in ¹ steadfast love.

Gospel

Response after the announcement: Glory to you, O Lord.

Response after the conclusion: Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

Sermon

Silence for reflection follows.

Hymn of the Day

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

Invitation to Lent

The assembly is seated. The presiding minister may invite the assembly into the discipline of Lent.

Confession of Sin

The presiding minister leads the following or another confession.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

The assembly kneels or sits. Silence is kept for reflection and self-examination.

Most holy and merciful God,
we confess to you and to one another,
and before the whole company of heaven,
that we have sinned by our fault,
by our own fault,
by our own most grievous fault,
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven.

Have mercy on us, O God.

We have shut our ears to your call to serve as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our past unfaithfulness, the pride, envy, hypocrisy, and apathy that have infected our lives, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to share the faith that is in us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our neglect of human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our false judgments, our uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, we confess to you.

Have mercy on us, O God.

Restore us, O God, and let your anger depart from us.

Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

Imposition of Ashes

People may come forward and kneel or stand to receive the ashes.

Ministers mark the forehead of each person with a cross of ashes, saying:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

During this time, hymns or penitential psalms may be sung, or silence may be kept. Psalm 51 may be sung if it has not been used earlier in the service.

After those who desire ashes have received them, all may kneel or sit, and the minister continues.

Accomplish in us, O God, the work of your salvation,
that we may show forth your glory in the world.

By the cross and passion of your Son, our Savior,
bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.

The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

A service with communion continues with the prayers of intercession. The prayer, blessing, and dismissal below may be used after the communion.

OR

A service without communion concludes as follows.

Prayers of intercession may be spoken.

An offering may be gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

“Create in me” (#185–188) may be sung after the offering is gathered.

The service ends with the following prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, and the sending.

The assisting minister leads a concluding prayer.

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is prayed by all.

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.

OR

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Sending

Blessing

The presiding minister proclaims God's blessing.

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.
Amen.

Dismissal

The assisting minister may address the assembly.

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;
be of good courage;
hold fast to that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak;
help the afflicted; honor all people;
love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Thanks be to God.



Sunday of the Passion Palm Sunday



Gathering

If possible, the assembly gathers at a designated place outside the usual worship space, so that all may enter in procession. Palm branches, or branches of other trees and shrubs, are distributed before the service begins.

The presiding minister begins (repeated one or more times).

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Processional Gospel

Response after the announcement: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Response after the conclusion: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Blessing of Palms

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

The presiding minister continues with the prayer of blessing, to which the people respond:

Amen.

Procession

The assisting minister addresses the assembly.

Let us go forth in peace,

in the name of Christ. Amen.

The assembly follows the ministers into the church. "All glory, laud, and honor" (#344) and other hymns, psalms, or anthems may be sung as the people process into the church or once they have taken their places.

Refrain

- All glory, laud, and honor
to you, redeemer, king,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosannas ring.
- 1 You are the king of Israel
and David's royal Son,
now in the Lord's name coming,
our King and Blessed One. *Refrain*
- 2 The company of angels
are praising you on high;
creation and all mortals
in chorus make reply. *Refrain*
- 3 The multitude of pilgrims
with palms before you went.
Our praise and prayer and anthems
before you we present. *Refrain*
- 4 To you, before your passion,
they sang their hymns of praise.
To you, now high exalted,
our melody we raise. *Refrain*
- 5 Their praises you accepted;
accept the prayers we bring,
great author of all goodness,
O good and gracious king. *Refrain*

The presiding minister concludes the procession.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Prayer of the Day

Response after the prayer: **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

The service continues with the readings, including the reading of the passion gospel.



Maundy Thursday

Gathering

Confession and Forgiveness

The presiding minister invites the assembly into the confession.

Following the invitation, all kneel or sit and keep silence for reflection and self-examination.

The presiding minister leads the assembly in the confession.

Most merciful God,
we confess

that we are captive to sin
and cannot free ourselves.

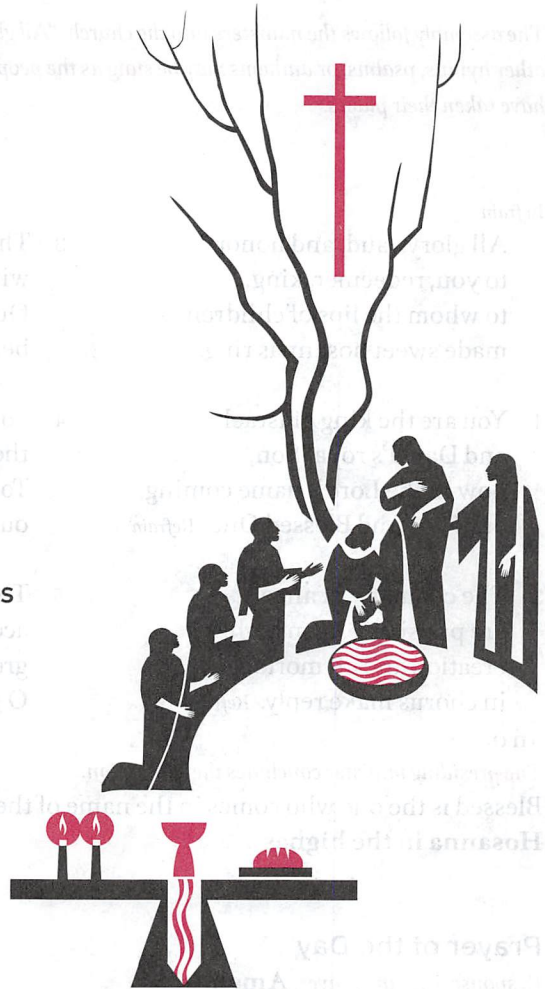
We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us,
so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.



The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

In the mercy of almighty God,
 Jesus Christ was given to die for us,
 and for his sake
 God forgives us all our sins.
 As a called and ordained minister
 of the church of Christ,
 and by his authority,
 I therefore declare to you
 the entire forgiveness of all your sins,
 in the name of the Father,
 and of the + Son,
 and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

OR

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us
 even when we were dead in sin,
 and made us alive
 together with Christ.
 By grace you have been saved.
 In the name of + Jesus Christ,
 your sins are forgiven.
 Almighty God
 strengthen you with power
 through the Holy Spirit,
 that Christ may live in your hearts
 through faith.
Amen.

The assembly is seated. People may come forward and kneel for the laying on of hands.

The minister, laying both hands on each person's head, addresses each in turn.

In obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins.
The person may respond Amen.

Assembly song and other music may accompany the laying on of hands. Then the assembly stands.

Greeting

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Response after the prayer: **Amen.**

The assembly is seated.

Word

Readings and Psalm

An assisting minister reads the first and second scripture readings.

The psalm for the day follows the first reading.

Response after the conclusion of the first and the second reading: **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

The assembly stands. The following or another appropriate acclamation may be sung.

I give you a ¹ new commandment,
that you love one another just as I ¹ have loved you.

Gospel

Response after the announcement: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Response after the conclusion: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The assembly is seated.

Sermon

Silence for reflection follows.

Hymn of the Day

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

Footwashing

When footwashing is included in the service, the assembly is seated.

The ministers and people may wash each other's feet. Assembly song and other music may accompany the footwashing. If it has not been sung as the hymn of the day, "Where charity and love" (#359, 642, 653) is especially appropriate.

Prayers of Intercession

An assisting minister invites the assembly into prayer with these or similar words.

Let us pray for new life in the church, new hope for the world, and God's love for all who are in need.

Each portion of the prayers concludes with these or similar words.

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

OR
... let us pray.
Have mercy, O God.

OR
Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

The presiding minister concludes the prayers with these or similar words.

We pray to you, O God, in the name of the one who endured the cross, forgives our sin, and feeds us at his table, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Peace

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace and may say Peace be with you or similar words.

Meal

The service continues with the offering.

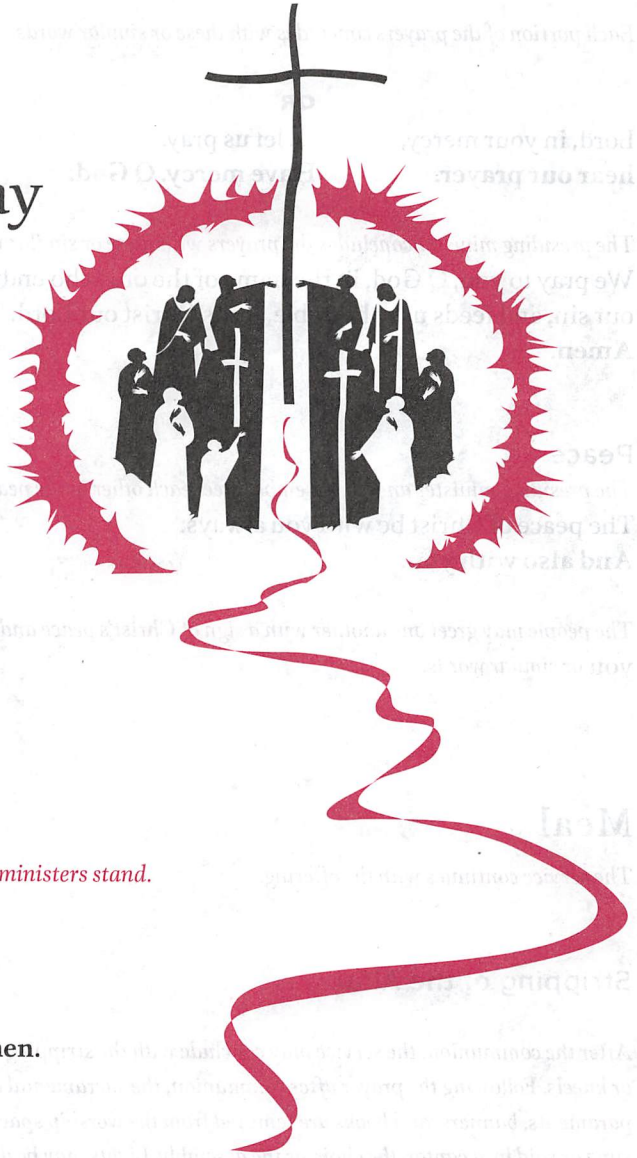
Stripping of the Altar

After the communion, the service may conclude with the stripping of the altar. The assembly sits or kneels. Following the prayer after communion, the sacramental elements and vessels, linens, paraments, banners, and books are removed from the worship space. Psalm 88 or Psalm 22 is sung or said by a cantor, the choir, or the assembly. Lights may be dimmed as the worship space is stripped.

All depart in silence.



Good Friday



All gather in silence.

The assembly stands when the ministers stand.

Prayer of the Day

*The presiding minister begins
with the prayer of the day.*

*Response after the prayer: **Amen.***

The assembly is seated.

Readings and Psalm

*An assisting minister reads the first and second scripture readings. The psalm for the day follows
the first reading.*

*Response after the conclusion of the first and the second reading: **Thanks be to God.***

Gospel Acclamation

The assembly stands. The following or another appropriate acclamation may be sung.

Look to Jesus, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him
endured the cross, disregarding its shame,
and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Gospel

The gospel is announced.

The passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

The assembly may be seated. The passion account is read or sung.

Silence for prayer and reflection follows the reading.

Sermon

Silence for reflection follows.

Hymn of the Day

The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

Bidding Prayer

The assembly kneels or sits. The assisting minister leads the invitations to prayer (the bids).

Silence for prayer follows each bid. The presiding minister leads the prayers that conclude the silence. At the conclusion of each prayer, "...through Christ our Lord," the assembly responds Amen.

The assembly prays for the following:

the church throughout the world

leaders in the church

those preparing for baptism

Christians in other churches

the Jewish people, first to hear the word of God

those who do not share our faith in Christ

those who do not believe in God

God's creation

those who serve in public office

those in need

The prayers conclude:

Finally, let us pray for all those things for which our Lord would have us ask.

OR

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.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

If the service does not include the procession of the cross, it ends here, and all leave in silence.

Procession of the Cross

A large cross is carried in procession through the church and placed before the assembly.

The assembly stands and faces the cross as it is brought forward.

The following dialogue is sung as the procession begins.

Behold the life-giving cross, on which was hung the Savior of ¹ the whole world.

Oh, come, let us ¹ worship him.

The dialogue is sung a second time at the midpoint of the procession.

The dialogue is sung a third time at the end of the procession.

The assembly may be seated. Texts expressing adoration of the crucified Christ, such as “O my people, O my church” (the solemn reproaches) and “We glory in your cross,” may be sung or said.

During this time, or at the end of the service, worshipers may come to the large cross to make a sign of reverence. Reverencing the cross may include actions such as pausing before the cross, bowing, kneeling before it for prayer, or touching it.

When the solemn reproaches are used, "Holy God" (the Trisagion, #159–161) is sung or said:

... you have prepared a cross for your Savior.

**Holy God,
holy and mighty,
holy and immortal,
have mercy on us.**

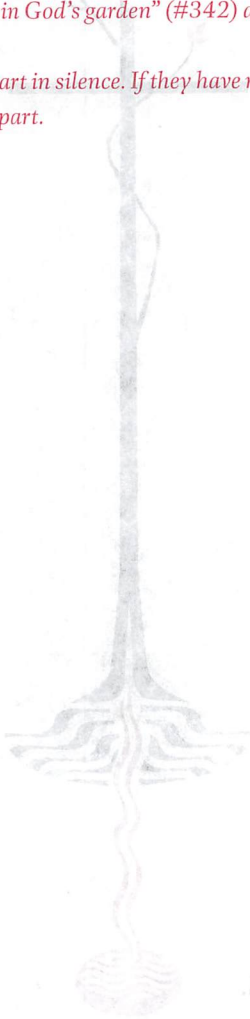
After a brief silence, the presiding minister continues.

We adore you, O Christ, **†** and we bless you.

By your holy cross you have re-†** deemed the world.**

All stand and sing, proclaiming the triumph of the cross. "Sing, my tongue" (#355–356) and "There in God's garden" (#342) are especially appropriate.

All depart in silence. If they have not done so earlier, worshipers may reverence the cross before they depart.



Resurrection
of Our Lord
Vigil of Easter

Gathering

Greeting



Resurrection of Our Lord *Vigil of Easter*

Gathering

The service begins in darkness, after nightfall. The lighting of a new fire takes place outside the church building, if possible.

All gather in silence.

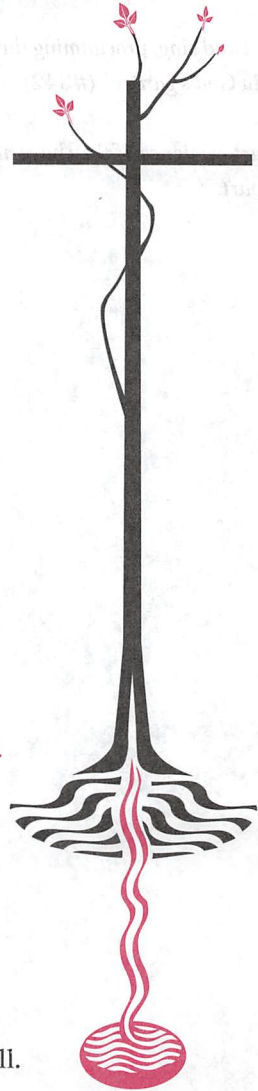
A small unlighted candle may be given to each worshiper.

Greeting

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.



The presiding minister may introduce and welcome the assembly to the vigil.

If it has not been burning, the new fire is lighted. A prayer over the fire may be prayed, to which the assembly responds **Amen**.

The minister may trace the inscription on the paschal candle.

Christ, yesterday and today,	+
the beginning	A
and the ending.	Ω
To Christ belongs all time	2
and all the ages;	0
to Christ belongs glory and dominion	decade
now and forever.	year
Amen.	

The presiding minister lights the paschal candle from the new fire and sings or says:
The light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

Procession

The procession begins, led by the assisting minister bearing the paschal candle. During or after the procession, light from the paschal candle may be passed until the peoples' candles are all lighted.

As the procession begins, the assisting minister sings:

The light of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

The procession continues, stopping at midpoint. The assisting minister lifts the paschal candle and sings on a higher tone:

The light of Christ.
Thanks be to God.


The procession continues. The assisting minister takes the paschal candle to its stand, lifts it high and sings on a still higher tone:

The light of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

The paschal candle is placed in its stand.


Easter Proclamation

An assisting minister sings the Easter proclamation. The proclamation includes this dialogue:




The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

S 268



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The Easter proclamation continues. The assisting minister may invite the assembly to respond in singing the following words.

This is the night!

The Easter proclamation concludes:

... one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Response after the prayer: **Amen.**

The assembly is seated. Hand-held candles may be extinguished.

Word

Vigil Readings

Twelve readings are appointed. Some may be omitted. The four readings marked with an asterisk are not omitted. Each reading may be followed by a sung response. After the response there is silence for reflection, followed by a prayer, to which the assembly responds Amen.

***First Reading:** Genesis 1:1—2:4a

Creation

Response: Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26

Second Reading: Genesis 7:1-5,
11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13

Flood

Response: Psalm 46

Third Reading: Genesis 22:1-18

Testing of Abraham

Response: Psalm 16

***Fourth Reading:** Exodus 14:10-31;
15:20-21

Deliverance at the Red Sea

Response: Exodus 15:1b-13, 17-18

***Fifth Reading:** Isaiah 55:1-11

Salvation freely offered to all

Response: Isaiah 12:2-6

Sixth Reading: Proverbs 8:1-8,
19-21; 9:4b-6

or Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4

The wisdom of God

Response: Psalm 19

Seventh Reading: Ezekiel 36:24-28

A new heart and a new spirit

Response: Psalms 42 and 43

Eighth Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Valley of the dry bones

Response: Psalm 143

Ninth Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-20

The gathering of God's people

Response: Psalm 98

Tenth Reading: Jonah 1:1—2:1

The deliverance of Jonah

Response: Jonah 2:2-3 [4-6] 7-9

Eleventh Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

Clothed in the garments of salvation

Response: Deuteronomy 32:1-4, 7,
36a, 43a

***Twelfth Reading:** Daniel 3:1-29

Deliverance from the fiery furnace

Response: Song of the Three 35–65

As an alternative to the following order of service, Holy Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism may be inserted here instead of after the sermon. The Litany of the Saints (#237) or a hymn may be sung as candidates for baptism, sponsors, and parents gather with the ministers at the font.

New Testament Reading: Romans 6:3-11

Gospel Acclamation

As the lights in the church are turned up, the altar candles are lighted, bells are rung, and an alleluia verse, an extended alleluia, a hymn with alleluias, or a canticle of praise (“This is the feast of victory” or “Glory to God”) is sung.

Gospel

The gospel is announced:

The holy gospel according to _____.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The gospel is proclaimed, concluding:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The presiding minister continues:

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Sermon

Silence for reflection follows.

Baptism

The Litany of the Saints (#237) or a hymn may be sung as candidates for baptism, sponsors, and parents gather with the ministers at the font.

Holy Baptism (p. 227) or Affirmation of Baptism (p. 234) follows.

Meal and Sending

After the order for Holy Baptism or Affirmation of Baptism, the service may continue with the prayers of intercession or the peace.

