

The Easter Vigil



The Easter Vigil 2026

6 am

St Stephen's Church



THE VIGIL

The ministers enter in silence.

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray,
and in your great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

In a darkened church, the service begins with readings from the Holy Scriptures. We are in the tomb with Christ, listening in silence to the evolving story of Salvation.

The readings recall how God in times past has been faithful even when all hope seemed lost.

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. We are invited to assemble outside with them.

The new fire is kindled and the president says

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.

Amen.

If the Easter Candle has not been marked already, it may be marked here.

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.

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.

Amen.

Standing before the Candle, 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. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

I repent of them.

The president lights the Easter Candle, saying

May the light of Christ, rising in glory, banish all darkness from our hearts and minds. In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Therefore I ask:

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

I submit to Christ.

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

I come to Christ.

We move back into the church following the light of the risen Christ.

We make the following response three times, ever more loudly

The light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

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

THE EXSULTET

We remain standing to listen to the Exsultet sung to plainsong.

Following the Exultet the president says

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed, Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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

We remain standing to proclaim the Gloria, during which all the candles in the church are lit from the Easter Candle and the lights are switched on.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

**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.
Amen.

THE NEW TESTAMENT READING:

Romans 6. 3-11

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

We stand to say Gradual psalm

PSALM 150

Praise the Lord!

Praise God in his sanctuary;

praise him in his mighty firmament!

Praise him for his mighty deeds;

praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

Praise him with trumpet sound;

praise him with lute and harp!

Praise him with tambourine and dance;

praise him with strings and pipe!

Praise him with clanging cymbals;

praise him with loud clashing cymbals!

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord!

THE GOSPEL READING:

Mark 16. 1-8

The Cantor introduces the reading

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Alleluia, 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.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.

Glory to you O Lord

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you O Christ

We sit for

A REFLECTION OR SERMON

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

We stand and turn to face the font. The president addresses the congregation

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

Do you believe and trust in God the Father?

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

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.**

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.**

*The president may sprinkle the whole congregation with water to remind us of
our own baptism.*

THE PEACE

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said,
'Peace be with you.'

Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.
The peace of the risen Christ be always with you
and also with you. Alleluia.

All may exchange a sign of peace

In place of the offertory hymn we say these verses together

Aurora Lucis rutilat (Latin 4th century)

**The morn had spread her crimson rays,
when rang the skies with shouts of praise;
earth joined the joyful hymn to swell,
that brought despair to vanquished hell.**

**He comes victorious from the grave
the Lord omnipotent to save,
and bright with him to light of day
the Saints who long imprisoned lay.**

**Vain is the cavern's threefold ward
the stone, the seal, the armed guard;
o death, no more thine arm we fear
the Victor's tomb is now thy bier.**

**Enough of death, enough of tears,
enough of sorrow and of fears,
o hear yon white-robed angel cry,
death's Conqueror lives, no more to die.**

**Grant, Lord, in thee each faithful mind
unceasing Paschal joy may find;
and from the death of sin set free
souls newly born to life by thee.**

**To thee, once dead, who now dost live,
all glory, Lord, thy people give
whom, with the Father we adore,
and Holy Ghost for evermore.**

Amen.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

**The Lord be with you
and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

The president praises God for his mighty acts and all respond

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

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

Hosanna in the highest.

The president recalls the Last Supper, and this acclamation is used

Jesus Christ is Lord:

**Lord, by your cross and resurrection
you have set us free.**

You are the Saviour of the world.

The Prayer continues and leads into the doxology, to which all respond boldly

AMEN

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

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,

the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Jesus, Lamb of God,

have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,

have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,

grant us peace.

Alleluia, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

At St Stephen's those who are confirmed or regular communicants in their own church are welcome to receive Holy Communion. Those who wish to receive a blessing, please bow your head when approaching the altar.

THE PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of Life,
who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son
to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection
have delivered us from the power of our enemy:
grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live with him
in the joy of his risen life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Please stand for

THE BLESSING

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

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

Amen.

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

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.

Amen.

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

Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

With the risen life of Christ within you,
go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

