

The Wisdom Way

Light Renewes our Life



EASTER

A Vigil Celebration

(leader's copy)

The Living Fire of Wisdom

We stand as able.

Presider: Blessed are You, Holy One, Source of unfolding creation;
to You be glory and praise for ever.
Your steadfast love infuses the heavens
and your faithfulness never ceases.
Illumine our hearts with your Wisdom
and strengthen our lives with your word,
for You are the fountain of life;
in your light we see true light.

All: **Amen.**

Deacon: This is the night in which Jesus the Christ passes over
from death to life. We gather to listen to the record of God's
Wisdom work in history and today, recalling how She gives life
to humanity and is Manifest as Jesus, the Life-Giver. And we
pray that through this Easter celebration God may bring to
perfection in each of us the life-giving work She has begun. This
is the Passover! Christ is one with God.

Lighting of primordial fire.

Presider: Jesus Christ, you are the light of the world;

Choir: **the light no darkness can overcome;**

Presider: Stay with us now for it is evening,

Choir: **and the day is almost over.**

Presider: Let your light scatter the darkness

Choir: **and shine within your people here.**

THE NEW FIRE OF WISDOM IS KINDLED IN THE DARKNESS

The Paschal Candle of Wisdom is lighted from the newly kindled fire and enlightens the assembly.



JOYOUS LIGHT OF HEAVENLY GLORY (OLD GATHER HYMNAL 762, MARTY HAUGEN)

Deacon at the baptismal font.

Deacon: The light of Christ.

Assembly: **Thanks be to God.**

TELLING THE STORY THE LIGHT OF WISDOM

Presider: Let us now hear the story of God's life-giving presence in our lives;
how Wisdom delivers us from oppressors and guides us along a marvelous way;
how She becomes our shelter by day and a starry flame through the night;
how She brings us over the Red Sea and through the deep waters;
how She passes into holy souls of every generation
making us friends of God and prophets;
and how She orders all things well.

adapted from *Wisdom of Solomon 10.15-18, 7.25-8.1*

We sit.



CREATION ALIGHTS IN THE DARKNESS – *based on* GENESIS 1.1-2.2

And God stepped out on space. And looked around and said: 'I'm lonely ... I think I'll make me a world.' And far as the eye of God could see, darkness covered everything. Blacker than a hundred midnights down in a cypress swamp. Then God smiled and the light broke, and the darkness rolled up on one side, and the light stood shining on the other, and God said, 'That's good.'

Then God reached and took the light in her hands. And She rolled the light around and around until the sun was made. And She set that sun a-blazing in the heavens. And the light that was left from making the sun God gathered it up in a shining ball and flung it against the darkness, spangling the night with moon and stars. Then down between the darkness and the light – She hurled the world. And God said: 'That's good.'

Then God stepped down ... and the sun was on her right hand, and the moon on her left. The stars were clustered about her head. And the earth was under her feet. And God walked. And where She trod Her footsteps hollowed the valleys out and bulged the mountains up. Then God stopped and saw that the earth was hot and barren. So She stepped over to the edge of the world and God spat out the seven seas

... Her eyes batted, and the lightning flashed
... Her hands clapped, and the thunder rolled
... And the waters above the earth came down,

the cooling waters came down. Then the green grass sprouted, and the little red flowers blossomed, the pine tree pointed its finger to the sky, and the oak spread out its arms, the lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground, and the rivers ran down to the sea; and God smiled again, and the rainbow appeared, and curled itself around Her shoulder. Then God's hand waved over the sea and over the land, and She said: 'Bring forth, bring forth.' And quicker than Her hand could drop, fishes and fowls and beasts and birds swam the rivers and seas, roamed the forests and the woods, and split the air with their wings, and God said: 'That's good!'

Then God walked around, and God looked around on all of creation. She looked at Her sun, and She looked at Her moon. And God looked at the little stars; God looked on the world with all its living things, and said: 'I'm lonely still.' Then God sat down on the side of a hill to think. By a deep, wide river She sat down. With head in hands, God thought and thought, till She thought, 'I'll make me a human child.'

Up from the bed of the river, God scooped the clay; and by the bank of the river, She kneeled down; and there the great God Almighty – Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky, Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night, and rounded the earth; this great God – like a mother bending over her baby – kneeled down in the dust, toiling over a lump of clay 'til She shaped it into Her own image; then into it She blew the breath of life. And the human child became a living soul.

by James Weldon Johnson; adapted by Kevin G. Thew Forrester

Gong



We stand as able.

PSALM 27: THE LORD IS MY LIGHT (GATHER, DAVID HAAS)

Presider: Let us pray. (*Silence*)

Holy Wisdom:

Foolishly we wonder where you dwell,
yet you build *us* as your very house.

Foolishly we wander about in the shadows of our passions,
yet your warm light shines from the hearth of our hearts.

Foolishly we hunger as we feast upon the fool's gold of acceptance,
yet the Bread of Life, who satisfies,
is already deep within.

Enlighten our souls, Holy Wisdom,
that we may become pilgrims
of our own holy ground.

All: **Amen.**

We sit.



NOAH'S FRIENDS – based on GENESIS 7:1-18

Like most people, Noah ignored bad news. For example, when God told Noah that only his family would be saved from the big flood, Noah figured, “God is very busy. Maybe the rest of the passenger list is in the mail. After all, this ark God wants me to build is huge. I’m sure there will be more than enough room for *all* my friends.”

Later on, when God told Noah to take pairs of all the animals onto the ark, Noah understood right then that there would be no room for his friends.

Noah didn’t have the heart to come right out and tell his friends. But he did try to tell them in a roundabout way. He said to his pal Jabal, “You know Jabal, this might be a very good time for you to take those swimming lessons you have been talking about for so long.”

And to his friend Jehaz, “Jehaz, ol’ buddy, take my advice and move your house to the top of that very high mountain. The view is great over there, and it’s much cooler in the summertime.” But Noah just could not bear to come right out and tell his friends about the flood.

Noah’s friends didn’t pay much attention to his advice. But they became very curious about the huge pile of wood in Noah’s front yard. Noah told them it was just a statue. And even after the thing really looked like a boat, he said it was just a statue of a boat.

Noah’s friends thought he was nuts. But then they thought that Noah was nuts even before he started building the ark.

Then the animals started to arrive. Noah still could not tell his friends the truth. So he said the animals were just there to pull the boat to the sea. But his friends did not believe him.

“Chipmunks?” asked one.

“Rabbits?” asked another. And they shook their heads.

On the day the rains began, the animals all ran into the ark. The water began to cover the ground. And Noah’s friends ran to the ark, banged on the door, and called up to Noah, who was peeping over the side of the ark: “Hey Noah, you rat, let us in! We’re your *friends*! You can’t float off and leave us here to drown. Save us, Noah! Save us!”

Noah looked down with tears in his eyes and said, “I didn’t pick me. God picked me. What can I do?”

Noah's friends Jehaz and Jabal came to the ark dressed in a zebra suit. They demanded to be let in. Noah knew it was them. They were too lumpy to be a zebra. "Let us – I mean, let me in," they said. "You forgot me when you gathered in all the animals. I am Jehaz – I mean – a zebra." Noah looked down on his friends and spoke through his tears.

"My dear friends, I don't know how I can live without you. The world was not this bad when God gave it to us. I don't know why God is saving me. Maybe God needs somebody to tell the story of how we all messed up the world. Maybe God wants some of the old life to grow up in a new clean place. Honestly, I don't know. All I know is that I didn't pick me. God picked me. I will remember you always. And I will tell the story of how to live in the right way. The story we all were told by God and by our parents but that we forgot. Maybe my children's children will learn the story. And then maybe the world will not turn bad again. And then nobody will ever have to say good-bye to his friends again. I love you. I am sorry for you, sorry for the animals, sorry for me, and sorry for God."

Then the great rains came and flooded all the earth.

Some say it was just rain, but others say that it was God's tears.

by Marc Gellman, *Does God Have a Big Toe?*

Gong



We stand as able.

NOT THE SUN BY DAY (ADAPT. FROM IS 60.1-22, MICHAEL WHITE)

Presider: Let us pray. (*Silence*)

Beloved God,

You are Holy Love,

the power to raise up and call forth life:

return to us this day

like the rains of spring that water the earth;

return to us this day

as the hope against hope;

return to us this day,

as the courage healing our hearts

dead in sleep.

Call us forth into life this day,

where your desire becomes our

unbounded kindness towards others and our

knowledge of You.

All: **Amen.**

We sit.



BREATH OF LIFE – based on EZEKIEL 37.1-14

The Spirit, the very same Spirit that hovered over the deep and brought forth life from the endless night darkness, grabbed me. She took me up and sat my stunned soul down in the middle of an open plain strewn with bones. She led me slowly around and among them – so many bones! There were bones all over the plain – dry bones; bones bleached pale white by the sun.

The Spirit blew through my body speaking to me as she filled my lungs, “Mere mortal, can these scattered bones live?”

I said, “O Breath of God, only you know that.”

Her voice sounded steadily within my heart’s chamber, “Prophecy over these bones: ‘Dry bones, listen to the Breath breathed upon your brittle and cracked remains!’”

She then wove her flowing and moist current of life among the desiccated bones, “Watch this; I’m bringing the breath of life to you and you’ll quicken again. I’ll attach sinews to you, put meat on your bones, cover you with skin, and you’ll dance, wondrously alive, on the wings of my breath. I am the Source of life!”

What else could I possibly do? For now awake and drunk on this pulsating Breath of God, I prophesied; yes, I, quickened in the Spirit, spoke without hesitation or stammer. As the words rolled forth from my pounding chest, there was a sound and, oh, a rustling and a jostling! The bones were moving and coming together, bone meeting bone. I kept watching. Sinews appeared, then muscles upon the bones, then skin stretched over them all. But – they still had no breath in them.

Once more the Spirit spoke to me, sounding gentle, yet strong, upon my being. She said, “Prophecy to the breath itself. Prophecy, mere mortal. Tell the breath, my breath, ‘Come from the four winds. Come, breath. Breathe on these slain bodies. Breathe life! Breathe my life!’”

I did. I prophesied, just as Spirit commanded me. The breath entered those once dead bones upon the plain and they came alive! They stood up on their feet, a countless company of women, men, and children.

Then the Breath of God surprised me by saying, “Mere mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Listen to what they’re saying. Can you hear their cry? ‘Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone, there’s nothing left of us.’”

“Therefore, prophecy. Tell these new born bones, ‘The Spirit of God says: I’ll dig up your graves and bring you out alive – my people! Then I’ll take you straight to the land of Israel. When I dig up graves and bring you out as my people, you’ll realize that I am your Life. I’ll breathe my life into you and you will live. I’ll lead you straight back to your land and you’ll realize that I am your Beloved. I’ve said it and I’ll do it. The Breath of Life has spoken.’”

adapted by Kevin G. Thew Forrester from Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*, and *The Inclusive Bible*

Gong



We stand as able.

PSALM 23: SHEPHERD ME, O GOD (GATHER 35, MARTY HAUGEN)

Presider: Let us pray. (*Silence*)
Beloved Sovereign,
You are enthroned in our hearts
as the gracious seat of eternal Mercy:
we lift our eyes to You,
strengthened in your sweet and sure compassion;
we open our ears to You,
listening for your thundering Word of silent and certain hope;
we stand up humbly before You,
mortal and divine, broken and beautiful.
May the quickening of your holy Spirit
shake off the complacent dust binding our souls,
thrusting open hearts of mercy
that receive each as your anointed one.

All: Amen.

We sit.



HEARTS OF FLESH/LETTERS FROM GOD - based on EZEKIEL 36.27-28

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.” - Ezekiel 36:26

whose?

“A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.
I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.
Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,

Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may
see and remark, and say *Whose?*”

... The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.
All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

A NEW HEART – based on Ezekiel 36:23-28

“Sprinkle clean water on us and
cleanse us from all our impurities;
cleanse us from all our idols.
Give us a new heart and
place within us a new spirit;
remove our hearts of stone and
give us hearts of flesh.
Put your Spirit within us and
make us live by your statutes,
careful to observe your decrees.
Empower us to live on this earth,
which you gave to our ancestors;
we will be your people
and you will be our God.”

LETTERS FROM GOD

“And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.)
I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least...
Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.”

AMEN

Gong



We stand as able.

DEEP WITHIN (GATHER 486, DAVID HAAS)

Presider: Let us pray. (*Silence*)
Holy Wisdom,
You weave together,
and are the woven heart,
of every living being.
You are the Source of Life
calling out from the deep.
You are the Word of Life
giving birth to us all.
You are the Breath of Life
dancing with delight
amidst the work of your graceful hands.
We are yours, body and soul,
and we place the trust of our heart in You.

All: Amen.

We sit.



THE DAZZLING LIGHT OF WISDOM – based on Luke 24.1-12

Sophia (Wisdom) is God's eternal insight and knowledge as the creative and continuous force that upholds the universe. She is the divine spark of our true nature.

Mary Magdalene: As you may know, I am Mary from Magdala. On the first day of the week, as dawn was just breaking, I went with the other women to Jesus's tomb. We were bringing spices we had prepared for his body.

Sophia:

I am Sophia, and let me share this truth with you – Love was the force that got Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James up and going early that morning.

Mary Magdalene: We found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when we went in, we did *not* find the body. While we were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside us. We were terrified and bowed our faces to the ground, but they said to us, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? The Rabbi is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

Sophia:

You may not know it, but it was I, Sophia, who drew the faithful hearts of these women to the grave. Standing alone and silent in the early darkness, they discovered not a cold tomb, but the holy womb of new life. Here, within the deep and dark, Wisdom was giving birth to Jesus as Christ.

Mary Magdalene: Then we remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, we conveyed everything to Jesus’ friends. Now it was Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and I, and the other women with us, who shared this news. But the words seemed to them an idle tale, and they would not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed, as we were, at what had happened.

Sophia:

This light of Wisdom was passed to them - -
to pass to the others.

The same divine spark glowing
within and around you -
through the creative and continuous ways
which we are woven together
with light and love
as the heart and hands of Christ.

Look!

Together we make up the stars of one sky!

The Kingdom of heaven is bursting alive right here!
It’s always been here!

Gong



We stand as able.

Presider: Alleluia!
Praise Mother God
whose passionate loving
conceives all creatures.
Look, in Jesus Love is making all things new:
every living thing is clean in God's pure Love.
Loving one another is the Wisdom way,
the only way,
to praise our God.

Assembly: **Amen.**



THE RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL VOWS

Presider: Let us renew our baptismal covenant.

Presider: Do you place the trust of your heart in God, the Source of life?

Assembly: **God, Creator of heaven and earth,
I place the trust of my heart in You.**

Presider: Do you place the trust of your heart in God, the Word of life?

Assembly: **God, Love incarnate,
Jesus Christ our Lord,
I place the trust of my heart in You.
You were conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
crucified, died, and buried,
You descended to the dead.
You arose again on the third day.
You ascended into heaven.
You are seated at the right hand of God,
and will come again
to judge the living and the dead.**

Presider: Do you place the trust of your heart in God, the Breath of life?

Assembly: **God, Holy Spirit,
I place the trust of my heart in You,
in the holy catholic Church,**

**in the communion of saints,
in the forgiveness of sins,
in the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.**

Presider: Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?

Assembly: **I will, with God's help.**

Presider: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to God?

Assembly: **I will, with God's help.**

Presider: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Assembly: **I will, with God's help.**

Presider: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Assembly: **I will, with God's help.**

Presider: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Assembly: **I will, with God's help.**

Presider: May we always know that all creation rests eternally in the compassionate arms of God, the Mother and Father of all, who ceaselessly gives new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, who forever bestows upon us the forgiveness of sin, and who graciously keeps all creation forever in eternal life, living in the heart of Christ.

Assembly: **Amen.**

HEART OFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE

In gratitude, we offer our grateful hearts, minds, and bodies, to You, God of Life.

Silence

In gratitude for all people in their daily life and work;

We are grateful for our families, friends, and neighbors, and for all your creatures.

In gratitude for this community, the nation, and the world;
We are grateful for all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude for the witness of those who suffer from hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression;
**We are grateful for all who hear the call to honor, nurture, and share,
the gifts of creation and community.**

In gratitude for the perseverance of those in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;
We are grateful for those who walk with us in our sickness, loneliness, and need.

In gratitude for the peace and unity and justice of your communities of faith;
We are grateful for all who listen to your Word, proclaim the Gospel, and seek the Truth.

In gratitude for all who minister;
We are grateful for all whose hearts burn with the Spirit's desire to serve.

In gratitude for (), and the special needs and concerns of this community;
We are grateful for all who teach us how to receive, as well as to give.

In gratitude for () and the blessing of your love;
We are grateful for the boundless grace of the Beloved.

In gratitude we exalt You, our Beloved, the God of Life;
And gratefully praise your Name for ever and ever.

In gratitude for St. Paul and St. Julian of Norwich and () as we remember all who have died;
We are grateful for their life in your eternal kingdom.

Presider: In gratitude for your loving-kindness
that rains down upon all creatures.
In gratitude for your acceptance
of the grateful prayers of your people.
In gratitude for your compassion
upon us and all who turn to You for help.
You are gracious, O God of Life,
and to You we give glory,
now and for ever.

All: **Amen.**

Presider: With the great cloud of witnesses who have placed the trust of their hearts in the living God, we proclaim to the heavens:
Alleluia. Christ lives.

Assembly: **Christ lives indeed. Alleluia.**

Presider: Alleluia. Christ lives.

Assembly: **Christ lives indeed. Alleluia.**

Presider: Alleluia. Christ lives.

Assembly: **Christ lives indeed. Alleluia.**

THE PEACE

Presider: The peace of Christ be always with you.

Assembly: **And also with you.**

HOSPITALITY

Welcoming of Visitors and Guests & Announcements

FEED WITH THANKSGIVING

Presentation Hymn (see hymn board)

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

Presider: The Beloved is with you.

Assembly: **And also with you.**

Presider: Lift up your hearts.

Assembly: **We lift them to the heavens.**

Presider: You are Life, sustaining and beckoning us home.

Assembly: **We sing your praise to the highest heavens.**

Presider: Beloved Creator,
in You the Universe is born,
and manifests your glory from age to age.
You are Life, sustaining and beckoning us home.

Assembly: **We sing your praise to the highest heavens.**

Presider: From You pours forth
the surprising unfolding of life:
from creatures of the sea
to the quasars and black holes

of ever expanding space.

You are Life, sustaining and beckoning us home.

Assembly: **We sing your praise to the highest heavens.**

Presider: Your Spirit permeates all creation
and if the rocks could find voice even they would
cry out in endless gratitude; hearts, minds, and
bodies, all reflect your glory.
Yet, as we grow, your Presence, nearer than our
own breath,
fades and fades;
we grow blind and long for your face to press
against ours once more;
the song of our hearts searches for the Beloved.
You are Life, sustaining and beckoning us home.

Assembly: **We sing your praise to the highest heavens.**

Presider: We fall. We rise. We betray. We reconcile.
All we do is done in You.

You are Life, sustaining and beckoning us home.

Assembly: **We sing your praise to the highest heavens.**

SANCTUS

Presider: You teach us, dear God,
to wait upon You in every present moment
and receive your renewal in our lives.
You redeem us by water and Spirit,
awakening us to know
that because all things are consonant with You,
our souls find You in all things.

Beloved Creator,
may our hearts reverberate with the truth
that You are more in us
than if the sea
could be wholly contained
in a single sponge.

Saturated with your Presence,
we bring before You

these sacred gifts of your earth.
Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit,
for they are the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ
our Lord.

You are Life, sustaining and beckoning us home.

Assembly: **We sing your praise to the highest heavens.**

Presider: On the night Jesus suffers and dies,
your Beloved takes bread,
gives thanks to You, breaks it,
and gives it to the disciples, and says,
take, eat: this is my Body, which is being given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

After supper Jesus takes the cup of wine,
gives thanks, gives it to them, and says,
drink this, all of you: this is my Blood of the new
Covenant,
which is being shed for you and for many for the
forgiveness of sin.

Whenever you drink it, do this for the
remembrance of me.

God of our Ancestors;
God of Noah, Moses, Miriam,
Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Ruth, Naomi,
Paul, Marguerite, Julian; God of Jesus Christ:
Open our eyes to see your Presence unfolding in
the world
and may the grace of these sacred earthly fruits,
bread and wine,
nourish and enfold us forever into one body, one
Spirit, in Christ.

Eternal Font of life, love, and hope,
born of your Spirit and renewed in Christ
we sing forth your praises,
giving You all honor and glory, this day and
always.

You are Life, sustaining and beckoning us home

Assembly: **We sing your praise to the highest heaven.**

Presider: In the Spirit of Christ we now sing,

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Presider: We break this bread
to share in the Body of Christ.

***Assembly:* We who are many are one body,
for we all share in the one bread.**

Presider: The Gifts of God.
All are invited to God's table.

THE COMMUNION

Communion Hymn

Sending Forth

We stand as able.

Presider: Let us pray

***All:* God of abundance,
You feed us
with the bread of life and cup of salvation;
You unite us with Christ and one another;
and You make us one
with all your people in heaven and on earth.
Now send us forth in the power of your Spirit,
that we may proclaim your life-giving love to the world
and continue for ever
in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Presider: God's Blessing be with you,
Christ's peace be with you,
the Spirit's outpouring be with you,
now and always.

***All:* Amen.**

Hymn

Presider: Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Beloved.

***Assembly:* Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Collects are either adapted or written by Kevin G. Thew Forrester, *My Heart is a Raging Volcano of Love for You* (LeaderResources, 2011). © Kevin G. Thew Forrester, 2018.