

Joint Liturgical Group
of Great Britain

*Christ
the first
and last*

**Five Celebrations
for the Easter Season**

The Waters of Salvation

The Easter Garden

The Road to Emmaus

The First Witnesses

From Ascension to Pentecost

Notes

An Ecumenical act of worship for use on the Evening of Easter Day or one of the following Sunday

As an alternative to using one of the local churches this festival may be held in a concert hall or a public meeting place.

A large candle, which may be the Paschal Candle, stands in a prominent place and is lit before the service begins.

The Act of Worship has five Sequences of Readings. The following applies to all of them.

A sequence of Bible readings is selected and interspersed with appropriate carols, hymns, anthems and some periods of reflective silence.

When possible, each reading is read by a different person.

The readings may be read without announcement or conclusion.

One or more of the readings may take the form of a dramatic presentation.

Introduction

- The Easter Greeting
- The Blessing of Light
- Hymn
- Introduction

Sequence of Readings

- First Sequence — **The Waters of Salvation** *or*
- Second Sequence — **The Easter Garden** *or*
- Third Sequence — **The Road to Emmaus** *or*
- Fourth Sequence — **The First Witnesses** *or*
- Fifth Sequence — **From Ascension to Pentecost**

Conclusion

- The Renewal of Baptismal Vows and Profession of Faith
- Prayers at the Easter Garden
- The Final Prayers

Introduction

The Easter Greeting

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Blessing of the Light

Blessed are you, Creator God,
your light dispels the darkness of sin and death.
Christ is risen from the dead
and all creation rejoices in the victory of redeeming love.
The sorrows and wounds of the cross
have been consumed by the glory of the empty tomb.
Out of the darkness of sin you have called us into resurrection light.
Through the deep waters of death you have brought us to eternal life.
May Christ the First and Last
fill our hearts with praise and
bring us to the joy of the new creation.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God forever.

Hymn

The following or some other Easter hymn or song.

Christ the Lord is risen today; Alleluia!
All creation joins to say: Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high; Alleluia!
Sing, you heavens; let earth, reply: Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won; Alleluia!
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal; Alleluia!
Christ has burst the gates of hell: Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted head; Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise; Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies: Alleluia!

Charles Wesley

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- *See what a morning, gloriously bright* — Stuart Townend & Keith Getty
 - *The greatest day in history* — Tim Hughes & Ben Cantelon
 - *or some other Easter hymn or song.*
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Introduction

The leader uses these or similar words

Sisters and brothers, we meet in our Father's presence to celebrate the glory of our Easter faith. In the words of Scripture let us hear again the good news of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Let us offer our Easter thanksgiving to God in our hymns and songs and carols of praise.

Rejoicing with the first apostles and witnesses of the Resurrection let us pray for world over which Christ reigns, for the church on which Christ breathes the Holy Spirit and for the unity and mission of all who profess One Lord, One Faith and One Baptism.

Let us pray for those to whom the risen Christ brings his peace in their need or sickness, in their anxiety or loneliness, in their darkness or their grief.

Let us remember all those we love, all who have asked for our prayers and let us commend to God all who have died in the hope of the resurrection to eternal life.

This our Easter prayer and praise we offer to God our Father in the words that Christ himself has given 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,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**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 for ever. Amen.**

First Sequence of Readings

The Waters of Salvation

Reading 1

Genesis 1.1-10

A reading from Genesis — *the Waters of Creation*

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

Reading 2

Genesis 8.6-11

A reading from Genesis — *the Waters of the Flood*

At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.

Reading 3

Exodus 14.26-29

A reading from Exodus — *the Waters of the Red Sea*

The LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.' So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the LORD tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Reading 4

Jonah 1.17 - 2.10

A reading from Jonah — *the Waters of the Deep*

But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish, saying,

‘I called to the LORD out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.
You cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.
Then I said, “I am driven away from your sight;
how shall I look again upon your holy temple?”
The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around my head
at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me for ever;
yet you brought up my life from the Pit,
O LORD my God.
As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the LORD;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.
Those who worship vain idols
forsake their true loyalty.
But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Deliverance belongs to the LORD!’

Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.

Reading 5

Ezekiel 36.24-28

A reading from Ezekiel — *the Waters of Cleansing*

I will take you from the nations, [says the LORD], and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Reading 6

Romans 6.3-6

A reading from Romans — *The Waters of Baptism*

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized 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.

The Easter Celebration continues on page 14.

Second Sequence of Readings

The Easter Garden

Reading 1

John 20.1-2

A reading from the Gospel of John — *the Dawn of the New Creation*

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the LORD out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.'

Reading 2

John 20.3-5

A reading from the Gospel of John — *the Empty Tomb*

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

Reading 3

John 20.6-10

A reading from the Gospel of John — *the Beloved Disciple believes*

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

Reading 4

John 20.11-18

A reading from the Gospel of John — *the Risen Christ greets Mary of Magdala*

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my LORD, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the LORD'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The Easter Celebration continues on page 14.

Third Sequence of Readings

The Road to Emmaus

Reading 1

Luke 24.13-16

A reading from the Gospel of Luke — *The Risen Christ draws near to the disciples*

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

Reading 2

Luke 24.17-24

A reading from the Gospel of Luke — *On the Third Day*

Jesus said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

Reading 3

Luke 24.25-27

A reading from the Gospel of Luke — *The Scriptures witness to Risen Christ*

Then Jesus said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Reading 4

Luke 24.28-32

A reading from the Gospel of Luke — *The eyes of the disciples are opened*

AS they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

Reading 5

Luke 24.33-35

A reading from the Gospel of Luke — *The Lord has risen indeed*

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The LORD has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Easter Celebration continues on page 14.

Fourth Sequence of Readings

The First Witnesses

Reading 1

John 20.19-23

A reading from the Gospel of John — *the Risen Christ appears to the Ten Disciples*

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the LORD. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Reading 2

John 20.24-29

A reading from the Gospel of John — *the Risen Christ reveals himself to Thomas*

Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the LORD.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My LORD and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Reading 3

John 21.15-19

A reading from the Gospel of John — *the Risen Christ converses with the Apostle Peter*

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, LORD; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, LORD; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'LORD, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

Reading 4

I Corinthians 15.3-8

A reading from Paul's First Letter to Corinth

— *the Risen Christ appears to over Five Hundred at once*

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles — *the Risen Christ appears to Saul of Tarsus*

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the LORD, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' He asked, 'Who are you, LORD?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The LORD said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, LORD.' The LORD said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.'

But Ananias answered, 'LORD, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.' But the LORD said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.' So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, the LORD Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized.

The Easter Celebration continues on page 14.

Fifth Sequence of Readings

From Ascension to Pentecost

Reading 1

Matthew 28.16-20

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew — *the Commissioning of the Disciples*

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Reading 2

Luke 24.50-53

A reading from Gospel of Luke — *the Ascension of Jesus*

Then [Jesus] led [the disciples] out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Reading 3

Acts 1.12-14

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles — *the Disciples devote themselves to Prayer*

Then [the disciples] returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Reading 4

Acts 1.15-17, 21-26

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles — *the Replacing of Judas Iscariot*

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred and twenty people) and said, 'Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.'

So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the LORD Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.' So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, 'LORD, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.' And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Reading 5

Acts 2.1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles — *the Coming of the Holy Spirit*

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.'

The Easter Celebration continues on page 14.

Conclusion

The service may include the renewing of Baptismal Vows and the Prayers at the Easter Garden

The Renewal of Baptismal Vows and Profession of Faith

The congregation gathers at or faces the baptismal water.

Dear friends, through the mystery of the cross and resurrection
we have been buried with Christ in baptism.
To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him.

Therefore I ask:

Do you repent of your sins?

I repent of my sins

Do you turn to Christ?

I turn to Christ.

Let each of us affirm the faith we hold in common:

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life and for whose glory we exist?

I believe and trust in God The Father.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

I believe and trust in God the Son.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and reveals Christ in the world?

I believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit.

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Prayers at the Easter Garden

The service may include a procession to the Easter Garden or the congregation may be invited to turn towards the location of the Easter Garden.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

God our Father,
whose Son has been raised from the dead
in accordance with the scriptures
and to whose glory this Easter Garden has been prepared,
may we and all who look upon it
be strengthened in faith,
know the power of Christ's resurrection
and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God forever.

The Final Prayers

An Easter Collect

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.

An Easter Blessing

May God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Acknowledgements

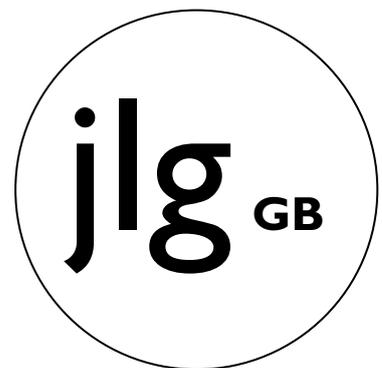
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