

## **April 4, 2026, The Easter Vigil**

Leading Worship: Rev. James Ravenscroft, Rev. Dr. Joanne Mercer,  
Rev. Oliver Dingwell, Amy Dalziel, and Glen Warren  
Ushering: Damien Betts, Jean Thompson, Marilyn Adams  
and Susan Pike

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*Please rise as you are able where there is an \* in the service.  
Print in **bold** indicates that the portion is read or sung by everyone.*

### **GATHERING IN SORROW**

#### **TIME OF SILENT REFLECTION**

*Prior to the opening of the liturgy, the congregation prays in silence,  
joined in solidarity with the first disciples and all who are grieving.*

### **PRAYING IN HOPE**

*Those who can, gather outside for the liturgy of the light. The sound will  
be broadcast inside for those who remain in the sanctuary.*

#### **OPENING WORDS**

#### **KINDLING OF THE NEW FIRE**

*A fire is lit as a sign of the new life that God always brings.*

#### **LIGHTING OF THE PASCHAL CANDLE**

*Personal candles are lit from the paschal candle and light shared.*

#### **SINGING OF THE EXSULTET**

Soloist: Exult and sing! O shining angel choirs!  
Exult and dance, bright stars and blazing suns!  
The first born of creation, Jesus Christ,  
is ris'n in radiant splendour from the dead.

Duo: *Rejoice, O awesome night of our rebirth!  
Rejoice, O mother moon, that marks the months!  
For from your fullness comes, at last, the day  
when sin and death are robbed of all their power.*

Soloist: Arise then, sleepers, Christ enlightens you!  
Arise from doubt and sadness, sin and death!  
With joyful hearts and spirits set aflame,  
draw near to sing this Easter Candle's praise!

**All: We lift our hearts. We lift them to the Lord.  
We praise you, God, for all your works of light!  
We bless you for that burst of fire and flame  
through which you first created all that is.**

*Higher voices: We bless you for the light invisible:  
the fire of faith, the Spirit's grace and truth,  
that light, the source of life, that stirs the heart,  
and shines for ever on the face of Christ.*

Lower voices: This is the night, most blessed of all nights.  
You led your people through the foaming sea,  
in love you led them with a cloud by day  
and as a flaming shaft of fire by night.

**All: O night that gave us back what we had lost!  
O night that made our sin a happy fault!  
Beyond our deepest dreams this night, O God  
your hand reached out to raise us up in Christ!**

## **RECALLING THE TENOUSNESS OF OUR HOPE**

Reading #1: Selected verses from Genesis 1

Response: **Be with us, Holy One, the night is long.  
We trust in you... but can we trust ourselves?**  
*All but those given a number 1 blow out their candles.*

Reading #2: Selected verses of Genesis 7, 8 and 9  
*Candles are relit during the reading of the story.*

Response: **Be with us, Holy One, the night is long.  
We trust in you... but can we trust ourselves?**  
*All but those given a number 2 blow out their candles.*

Reading #3: Selected verses of Exodus 14 and 15  
*Candles are relit during the reading of the story.*

Response: **Be with us, Holy One, the night is long.  
We trust in you... but can we trust ourselves?**

*All but those given a number 3 blow out their candles*

Solo: "Lift Every Voice and Sing"  
*Candles are relit during the last verse.*

Reading #4, Part 1: Ezekiel 37:1-3

Response: **Be with us, Holy One, the night is long  
We trust in you... but can we trust ourselves?**

*All but those given a number 4 blow out their candles.*

Reading #4, Part 2: Ezekiel 37:4-14  
*Candles are relit during the last part of the story.*

Response: **Be with us, Holy One, the night is long.  
We trust in you... but can we trust ourselves?**

*All but those given a number 5 blow out their candles.*

Reading #5: Zephaniah 3:14-20  
*Candles are relit during the last part of the story.*

Song: "Amazing Grace" (*Voices United 266*)

Reading #6: Mark 16:1-8  
*Everyone blows out their candles when the women run away.*

**MESSAGE:** Rev. Dr. Joanne Mercer

\* **HYMN:** "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" (*alternate lyrics*)

**1. Jesus Christ is risen today – Hallelujah  
Death no longer has its way – Hallelujah  
At the dawn the women found - Hallelujah  
Empty tomb and hallowed ground – Hallelujah**

**2. Truth to power Jesus spoke – Hallelujah  
Caesar's wrath he did provoke – Hallelujah  
"Love your God alone" he cried – Hallelujah  
For this he was crucified – Hallelujah.**

**3. Friends then scattered like scared sheep – Hallelujah.  
Mary at his cross did weep – Hallelujah.  
Earth and heaven mourned that day – Hallelujah.  
Brothers, sisters, kneel and pray – Hallelujah.**

**4. But on Sunday – at the tomb – Hallelujah.  
Angel brilliance chased the gloom – Hallelujah.  
“He’s not here,” the angels said – Hallelujah.  
“Be no longer filled with dread” – Hallelujah.**

**5. Let us join those women, strong – Hallelujah!  
Let us share the gospel song – Hallelujah.  
Youth and children, women, men – Hallelujah,  
In us Christ shall live again – Hallelujah.**

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## **CELEBRATING OUR SHARED RESURRECTION**

### **RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL FAITH**

Do you believe in God, who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus the word made flesh,  
and works in us and others through the Spirit?

**I do, by God’s grace.**

Will you follow in the way of Jesus, living with respect  
for all creation, loving and serving others, seeking justice  
and resisting evil? **I will, by God’s grace.**

Will you proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge  
and our hope, and join with others to make known God’s reign?

**I will, by God’s grace.**

Renew your baptism and be thankful!

*The congregation is invited to come to the font and touch the water as a reminder of their baptism. Everyone sings the refrain of “Wade in the Water”.*

**Wade in the water. Wade in the water, children.**

**Wade in the water. God is going to tremble the water.**

## **OFFERTORY**

*We present our gifts and give thanks they will be used in God's service.  
The offering is in support of The United Church Mission and Service Fund.*

\* **HYMN:** "Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ" (VU 468)

## **SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION/PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Christ is risen!           **Christ is risen, indeed! Hallelujah!**  
Open your hearts.   **We open them to God.**  
Let us give thanks.   **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

It is right to praise you, Living God, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us your holy breath, calling us to be your children. Though at times we forgot that call, you remained steadfast, restoring your people and calling them to be a blessing to the nations. Grateful for this abiding love we join your angels and saints in a song of praise:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the One  
who comes in God's name. Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise you Redeeming God, for Jesus Christ. You affirmed him as your child and through his death, and resurrection, gave birth to your Church. Called to embody his love in the world, we remember how on the night before he died, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat. This is my body, given for you." In the same way, he took the cup, saying: "Take, drink. This is a sign of the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you eat and drink, remember me."

We remember, Sustaining God, grateful that on this day we experience the in-breaking of your kin-dom, your new life revealed in resurrection. We proclaim the mystery of our faith:  
**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

We pray, Gracious God, that you animate your Spirit in us and these gifts, that all who share this living bread and saving cup may be

renewed in your grace, affirmed in your love to share what it means to be your children, a blessing to the nations.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, Holy God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **THE PRAYER OF JESUS** (*Voices United* p. 921)

### **SHARING IN COMMUNION**

This is the bread of life, **Christ shared in hope for the world.**

This the fruit of the vine, **Christ shared in openness and joy.** This is the banquet of blessing, **Christ inviting everyone in love.**

*Everyone is welcome to share communion – all ages, beliefs, identities and life experiences. There is a centre station to receive the bread and two side stations to receive non-alcoholic juice in small glasses. Consume the bread and juice before returning to your pew. A gluten free option is available on request. If you're unable to come forward, someone will bring communion to you once everyone has received. As people receive communion, they again relight their candles.*

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION** (in unison):

Holy God, **here at this table we tasted your promise of new life and welcomed you into our lives. Strengthened by this gift, send us to proclaim the light of resurrection. In the renewing grace of Jesus' love we pray. Amen.**

\* **HYMN:** "Christ Is Alive" (*Voices United* 158)

### **BENEDICTION AND SENDING FORTH**

Risen with Christ: **we know the reassurance of God's presence.**

Risen with Christ: **we accept the challenge to walk God's way.**

Risen with Christ: **we are proof God's life will never die.**

Go forth in joy, in the blessing of God: Abba, Christ and Spirit!

Go, for Christ is Risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!**

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## St. James United Church

|                            |                        |
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