

The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia  
**The Three Days and Eastertide: *Another* Season of Creation**

One need only read the text of the Easter Vigil's *Exultet* to recognize that the Easter Vigil and the entire Easter Season speak to the restoration of God's creation. As we prepare to preach, pray, sing, renew baptismal promises, welcome new Christians through Holy Baptism, and feast at the Supper of the Lamb, there is ample opportunity to expand our understanding of the Easter Mystery from the personal to the ecological.

The following calendar narrative indicates the ways in which the creation is present the Three Great Days (the Triduum) and the Easter Season. Viewing the year with an *ecological lens* thus invites our parishes and their leaders to recognize what has been frequently overlooked in the past: the presence of the earth, God's creatures, and natural seasons in keeping the year of grace.

**What will you find here?**

- Short introductions to the Paschal Cycle, the Three Days, and the Easter Season, including brief reflections on the colors of the natural world that appear in the liturgy
- Elements of the creation present in the lectionary readings of the three cycles, recognizing that we are in Cycle C, Gospel of Luke.
- Suggested creation hymns from parish musicians
- Liturgies during the Easter Season from *The Book of Occasional Services 2022*

**The Paschal Cycle**

*God promises the restoration of God's creation*

This cycle focuses on the preparation, celebration, and flowering of the paschal mystery, the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. For early and contemporary Christians, this time is devoted to baptismal preparation, the celebration of Holy Baptism and Holy Eucharist, and reflection on the significance of initiation into the Body of Christ alive in the world. The promise of resurrection extends to the whole creation: "Rejoice, now, *all heavenly powers!* Sing, choirs of angels! Exult, *all creation* around God's throne! Jesus Christ is risen! Celebrate the divine mysteries with exultation; and for so great a victory, sound the trumpet of salvation. Rejoice, *O earth*, in shining splendor, radiant in the brightness of your king!" (The Easter Exultet).

In the northern hemisphere, the Paschal Cycle takes place as daylight grows greater in length, as the first green shoots begin to appear in the earth, as crops begin to grow and herds give birth. While the last days of Jesus took place during Passover with its use of roasted lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and wine, Christian practice welcomes incense, leavened bread, wine, palm, olive, and other branches, scented olive oil (chrism), a wooden cross, a towering beeswax candle, many smaller candles, fresh water, a new tabernacle/aumbry candle, and an appropriate measure of flowers (drawn from local gardens). In some parishes, honey, milk, and eggs are blessed at the conclusion of the Easter liturgy and then taken home (See below, *The Book of Occasional Services 2022*).

## The Paschal Triduum

### *The celebration of a new creation in Christ*

It is now a bit anachronistic to speak of “Holy Week” in light of the reform of the calendar, lectionary, and liturgical practices accepted among Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Lutherans in the *Roman Missal*, *The Book of Common Prayer 1979*, and *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. The season of Lent extends from Ash Wednesday to sunset on Maundy/Holy Thursday. With sunset, the Paschal or Sacred Triduum (“Three Days”) begins: the institution of the Lord’s Supper on Thursday, the triumph of the cross on Friday, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Saturday (with the Vigil beginning after sunset: *not* as a sunrise service on Sunday). An earlier keeping of these days tended to focus solely on humankind, an androcentric emphasis. Yet careful study of the lectionary readings and the sacramental practices of the church, in which the gifts of the earth are abundant, now leads us to see the cosmic dimension of this short yet primary season of the year. Indeed, in the midst of the creation’s current degradation, these days invite our resistance to human folly as we welcome the promise of a new creation in Christ.

The color **red** appears in the Three Days: a deep red, close to scarlet, is the oldest recorded color painted by human beings. It easily catches the eye and thus has been seen as a color of dominance (triumphant Roman generals and admirals covered their bodies in red paint). For Christians, however, it is the color of oxygenated blood and thus is associated with martyrdom: Jesus as the “first” martyr and those others who, in refusing to forsake their loyalty to him, were put to death. A red tinted with orange is used at Pentecost, a reference to fire.

The color of Easter is **white**, the lightest color, often associated with sunlight, with clouds, stars, and the moon. Persons, objects, clothing, and natural elements that are white reflect and scatter all the visible wavelengths of light: white radiates and shines forth. White is the church’s color: not the pale pastels of greeting cards and candy Easter eggs.

**Maundy Thursday:** ABC: take a lamb on the fourteenth day of the month of new beginnings; blood on doorposts; roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs; with the blood, no death; the psalmist lifts the cup of salvation; the apostle recounts the Lord’s supper with bread and cup; disciples’ feet are washed with water; wash each other’s feet, says Jesus.

**Good Friday:** ABC: the servant of God: a young plant, a root in dry ground; sheep have gone astray; the servant is led like a lamb to slaughter, like a silent sheep before his shearers; the psalmist laments: I am a worm, scorned and despised; bulls encircle, ravaging lions; I am poured out like water; a pack of dogs encircle me; save me from the lion’s mouth, from the horns of wild bulls; all the ends of the earth shall turn to the LORD, all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship; our bodies are washed with pure water; Jesus enters a garden in the Kidron valley; a cock crows; a crown of thorns and a purple robe; Jesus carries the wood of the cross to the Place of the Skull; sour wine on hyssop; myrrh and aloes and spices; a new tomb in a garden.

**Holy Saturday: The Easter Vigil:** ABC: *Genesis 1*: a formless void, darkness over the deep, a wind over the waters; light/Day separated from darkness/Night; waters separated from a dome/Sky; water separated from dry land: vegetation, seeds, fruit trees; lights in the sky as signs for seasons: sun, moon, and stars; swarms of living water creatures, birds in the sky; cattle, creeping things, and wild animals; humankind made in God’s image; be fruitful and fill the earth; green plants for food; rest for God, humankind, land, and, animals; the *psalmist* praises God as the one who has made the heavens, spread out the earth, created great lights with sun to rule the day, moon and

stars the night, who feeds all creatures; though earth moves, mountains topple, waters rage, the *psalmist* praises God our refuge; a river makes glad God's city; *Genesis 7-8*: rain for forty days and nights; Noah's ark with every animal, wild and domestic, creeping things, and birds; raven, dove, olive leaf; dry land; a bow in the clouds; *Genesis 22*: Abraham cuts wood for a fire; there is no lamb for the offering; the son lives, a ram dies; offspring as numerous as stars and sand; *Exodus 14-15*: with Moses' hand outstretched, the sea divides, becomes a dry path; a pillar of cloud defends the people; the returning sea drowns the Egyptian army; *Exodus 15*: Miriam praises God who flung the army into the sea, into a fathomless deep; *Isaiah 55*: come to the water, the wine and the milk; as rain and snow water earth making it sprout, bringing forth seed for the sower, bread for the hungry, so the word of God is fruitful; *Baruch 3*: the writer praises God who prepared the earth and filled it with creatures; who sends forth light and shining stars; Wisdom appeared on earth; the *psalmist* announces that the heavens declare God's glory, the firmament show forth God's handiwork, their sound goes forth to all lands; *Ezekiel 36*: God sprinkles clean water on the people; the *psalmist* announces that as deer thirst for water brooks, so the soul longs for God; cataracts, rapids, and floods; the *psalmist* asks for light to lead to God's holy hill; *Ezekiel 37*: a valley of dry bones; the LORD will bring bones to life; the four winds breathe life into bones and sinew; God will open earthen graves and bring the people to their own soil; the *psalmist* praises God who does marvelous things: let sea and land make noise, rivers clap their hands, hills ring out joy; *Romans 6*: buried in the waters and raised from them with Christ; *A*: at dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to the tomb; earthquake, angel appearing like lightning; Jesus meets them: go to Galilee; *B*: Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome bring spices; with sunrise, they go to the tomb; young man in a white robe: Go to Galilee; *C*: early dawn, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary mother of James, and other women; two men in dazzling clothes: he has been raised from death.

## Easter

### *The Paschal Mystery flows into Fifty Days*

The beginning of the barley harvest marked the commemoration of Passover, followed fifty days later by the ingathering of the wheat harvest, Shavuot (Hebrew), Pentekoste (Greek). The Acts of the Apostles reports that on the harvest festival of Shavuot/Pentecost, the followers of the risen Christ were empowered by the Spirit to extend the witness of his life into the world: an ingathering for the purpose of dispersal. Among early Christians, these Fifty Days were devoted to reflection on the significance of the water-washing, anointing, and communing that came to be called the rites of initiation. In the Easter Vigil and Fifty Days, there is the promise of a new creation. In the northern hemisphere, we witness this promise in the land's greening, greater light, and warmer temperatures, what early and medieval Christians understood to be the *opus dei*, the work of God.

**Easter Day:** *A*: Peter preaches; he was hung on a tree but God raised him; you shall plant vineyards on the mountains, planters will plant and enjoy the fruit; the *psalmist* sings that the rejected stone becomes the cornerstone; *A*: first day, darkness; a gardener? At dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to the tomb; earthquake, angel appearing like lightning; Jesus meets them: go to Galilee; *B*: the Lord's mountain; a feast of rich food and well-aged wines; death will be swallowed; disgrace of the earth taken away; the *psalmist* sings that the rejected stone becomes the cornerstone; Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome bring spices; with sunrise, they go to the tomb; young man in a white robe: Go to Galilee; *C*: God will create a new heaven, a new earth; they will plant vineyards; wolf and lamb, lion and ox shall eat together: the serpent eats dust; no hurt on God's mountain; all died in 'adam, the first earth creature, and all

made alive in Christ, the second *'adam*; early dawn, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary mother of James, and other women; two men in dazzling clothes: he has been raised from death.

**Easter Evening:** ABC: the Lord's mountain; a feast of rich food and well-aged wines; the psalmist sings that seas fled, the Jordan turned back, mountains and little hills skipped, earth trembled: God turned hard rock into a pool of water, flint into a flowing spring; yeast leavens the dough; the paschal lamb has been sacrificed; walking to Emmaus; breaking bread at table; broiled fish.

**Easter II:** A: the psalmist gives thanks for pleasant land; Jesus breathes the creating Spirit on the disciples; B: disciples who own lands sell them to share proceeds with others; the psalmist sings of oil running down the beard, the dew of Hermon; God is light – then walk in the light; C: the psalmist sings of the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone.

**Easter III:** A: many washed in water; the psalmist lifts the cup of salvation; Christ the lamb without defect; born anew from imperishable seed; walking to Emmaus; breaking bread at table; broiled fish; B: Jesus the author of life; the psalmist says, Lift up your light, Lord; broiled fish; C: a light, a voice from heaven speaks to Paul; the psalmist sings that dust cannot praise God; at the Sea of Tiberias, the risen Christ directs disciples to a catch of fish; he gives bread and fish to astonished disciples; to Peter: tend and feed my sheep.

**Easter IV:** A: the shepherd guides, revives, and feeds; Jesus: shepherd and guardian of souls; Jesus: the shepherd and sheeppate; B: Peter announces that the rejected stone is the cornerstone; Jesus: I am the good shepherd with one flock; C: a great multitude with palms and four living creatures surround the Lamb, shepherd of martyrs; the sheep who hear Jesus follow him.

**Easter V:** A: O Lord, be a strong rock; come to the living stone, walk in his light; Jesus says: I am the way; B: a eunuch is baptized in water; the ends of the earth turn to the LORD; Jesus says, I am the vine with many branches; C: Peter's vision of a sheet with many "clean" animals, birds, and beasts; the psalmist calls all creation to praise God; the Seer sees a new heaven, new earth.

**Easter VI:** A: Paul: God is Lord of heaven, earth; Jesus is at the right hand of God; B: the psalmist invites sea and land to make noise, rivers to clap their hands, hills to ring out joy to the Lord; Jesus says, Go and bear good fruit; C: Paul baptizes Lydia in a river; the earth brings forth her increase; the Lamb is in the new Jerusalem where a river flows, a tree of life with healing leaves.

**The Ascension of the Lord:** ABC: Jesus ascends into the heavens; God is Ruler of the earth; the waters lift up their voice to the LORD who is king; God has put all things under the feet of Christ.

**Easter VII:** A: God rides on the heavens; earth shakes, skies pour rain; be alert to a roaring lion; disciples are in the world; B: the righteous: like trees planted by water streams; disciples are in the world; C: an earthquake frees apostles from prison; clouds and darkness, fire, and lightnings surround the LORD who is king; Jesus: root of David and bright morning star

**Pentecost:** A: violent wind, tongues of fire: the creating Spirit; earth is full of God's creatures; the Spirit renews the face the earth; B: dry bones brought to life; God feeds all creatures; the creation groans in labor pains; C: in wisdom, God created all things; the creating Spirit abides in you.

## Hymns for the Season

These hymn selections are drawn from Episcopal musical resources as well as the newly-published ELCA hymn supplement, *All Creation Sings*, the 2006 *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, and two hymn collections written by Susan Palo Cherwien.

ACS	All Creation Sings	Evangelical Lutheran Worship Supplement	Augsburg Fortress
ELW	Evangelical Lutheran Worship		Augsburg Fortress
H82	Hymnal 1982		Church Publishing
LIW	Living in Wonder	Hymns of Susan Palo Cherwien	Augsburg Fortress
OBS	O Blessed Spring	Hymns of Susan Palo Cherwien	Augsburg Fortress
VF	Voices Found	Women writers/composers	Church Publishing
WLP	Wonder, Love & Praise A Supplement to The Hymnal 1982		Church Publishing

### Easter Season

VF 141	Christ, the Vine		Easter 5B
	<i>Text: Edith Sinclair Downing</i>	<i>Music: Alfred V. Fedak</i>	
WLP 738	Day of Delight and Beauty Unbounded		
	<i>Text: Delores Dufner</i>	<i>Music: IN DIR IST FREUDE</i>	
LIW p 54	Draw Us, O God into Your Holy Future		Easter 5B
	<i>Text: Susan Palo Cherwien</i>	<i>Music: David Cherwien</i>	
ACS 937	Earth, Earth, Awake!		
	<i>Text: Herman Stuempfle, Jr</i>	<i>Music: Sally Ann Morris</i>	
Anthem	Earth, Earth, Awake!		GIA Publications, Inc.
ACS 1064	Earth Is Full of Wit and Wisdom		Vigil of Easter
	<i>Text: Adam M L Tice</i>	<i>Music: W Moore</i>	
ACS 1063	God of the Fertile Fields		
	<i>Text: Georgia Harkness</i>	<i>Music: Felice de Giardini</i>	
ACS 1091	Hallelujah! Sing Praise to Your Creator (Ps 148)		Easter 5C
	<i>Text: Tilly Lubis</i>	<i>Music: Batak melody</i>	
LIW p 66	Infinite Beauty		Vigil of Easter/Lect 12B
	<i>Text: Susan Palo Cherwien</i>	<i>Music: David Cherwien</i>	
OBS p 74	O Sacred River		
	<i>Text: Susan Palo Cherwien</i>	<i>Music: Mark Sedio</i>	
LIW p 70	O Sing a New Song of Glory to God		Easter Day/Easter 5B, 5C, 6C
	<i>Text: Susan Palo Cherwien</i>	<i>Music: David Cherwien</i>	

H82 176	Over the Chaos <i>Text: A Monastic Breviary</i>	<i>Music: Hank Beebe</i>
H82 211	The Whole Bright World <i>Text: Friedrich von Spee</i>	<i>Music: Richard Wayne Dirksen</i>
Anthem	To His Garden <i>Text: Kentucky Harmony</i>	St. James Music Press <i>Music: arr. Susan Matsui</i>
<b>Day of Pentecost</b>		
Anthem	A Song of Judith <i>Text: Canticle J</i>	Enriching Our Music 1 <i>Music: Michael Sitton</i>
ACS 1072	Abba, Abba, Hear Us <i>Text: Andrew Donaldson</i>	<i>Music: Korean traditional</i>
ACS 943	As the Wind Song <i>Text: Shirley Erena Murray</i>	<i>Music: Lim Swee Hong</i>
Anthem	As the Wind Song <i>Arranger: Helen Kemp</i> <i>Arranger: Carol Lynn Mizell</i>	Choristers Guild Choristers Guild
VF 59	Breath of God <i>Text: Carl P. Daw</i>	<i>Music: Dorothy Howell Sheets</i>
VF 56	God of Flowing Light <i>Text: Mary Louise Bringle</i>	<i>Music: CCW Sparks</i>
VF 96	Healing River of the Spirit <i>Text: Ruth C. Duck</i>	<i>Music: BEACH SPRING</i>
H82 428	O All Ye Works of God, Now Come <i>Text: par. of "A Song of Creation"</i>	<i>Music: Irish melody</i>

### **The Book of Occasional Services 2022**

A number of blessings, prayers, and ritual actions pertain to the creation in the BOS.

**Blessings Over Food at Easter.** This practice, dating from the early church, gives thanks to the Holy Three for the gifts of bread, wine, lamb, eggs, and other foods. What is missing is a blessing for milk and honey – a mixture of which was given to the newly-baptized and also consumed on Easter Day in the homes of Christians.

**Rogation Procession.** Rogation Days have been kept on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before Ascension Thursday. In some parishes, the Rogation Procession takes place at the end of

the principal Eucharist: an occasion to ask God's blessing on the natural world in which the parish is located but also the opportunity to bless water and/or soil for parishioners to take home for use in their garden or apartment plants. Rogation Days in 2025 are May 26, 27, and 28. The procession includes blessing for water, the air and those who work to ensure clean air, public safety works, and at places where trash, compost, and recycling takes place. There is another opportunity to be seen in public as a community committed to care for the earth. In addition to incense, crucifix and candles leading the procession, parishioners can make signs expressing parish concern for the natural world.

**Prayers for Rogation Days: A Rite for the Blessing of a Garden.** While this set of prayers suggests that it takes place at the church, it can be easily adapted and printed for use in parishioners' homes.

**Liturgical Materials Honoring God in Creation.** This is a larger collection of texts not composed for the Easter Season but certainly adaptable to it. The materials include Collects concerning care for the creation, intercessions for The Prayers, a Confession of Sin, and Litany for the Planet. A collect or the litany could be made available to parishioners for prayer in the home.

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Musical materials collected by Sheila Bristow (St. Barnabas Bainbridge Island) and Shari Shull (Agnus Dei Lutheran Gig Harbor). Introductions to the seasons and lectionary creation themes created by Fr. Samuel Torvend (St. Paul's Seattle).