

**The Great Vigil of Easter
A Collaborative Celebration
2026**

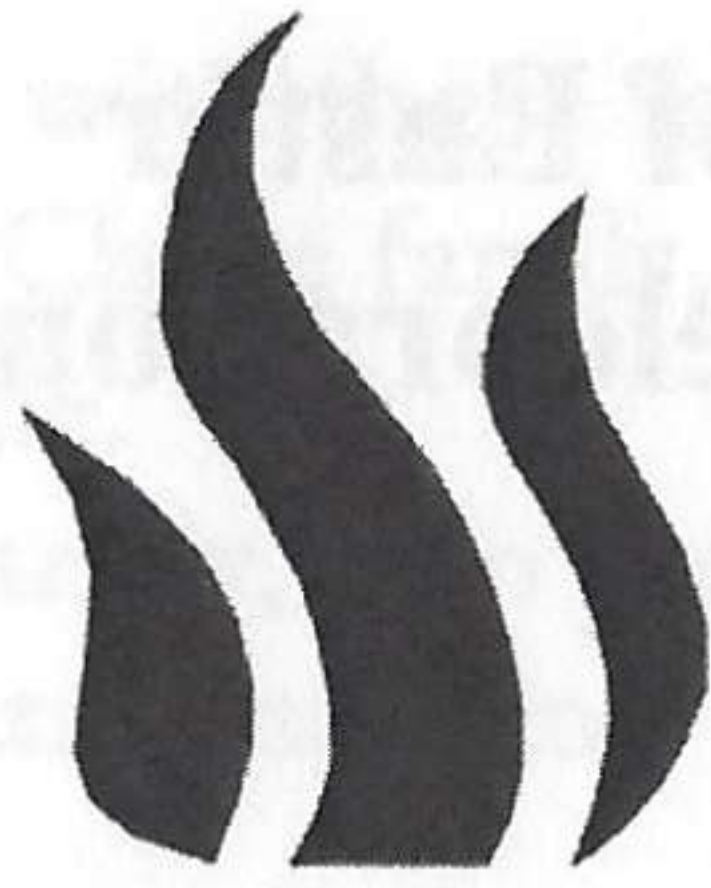


May Christ, the Morning Star, rising from the grave,
shed light on the whole human race.
And we pray, O God: preserve and protect your church,
giving us peace, in this time and forever.

Amen

*The Campus of Downtown Churches:
Cathedral of the Beloved, First United Methodist Church,
First Baptist Church of Pittsfield, Price Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church,
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, United Church of Christ,
and Zion Lutheran Church*

FIRE



In the front lawn of St. Stephen's, Pittsfield, we gather to witness the kindling of the new fire of Easter and lighting of the Paschal Candle.

Presiders: Rev. Stephen Dale, FUMC and Rev. Steven Canfield, First Baptist Church

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Family in Christ, on this most holy night when our Savior Jesus Christ passed from death to life, we gather with the church throughout the world in vigil and prayer. This is the passover of Jesus Christ. Through fire, word, water, bread and wine, we proclaim Christ's death and resurrection, share Christ's triumph over sin and death, and await Christ's coming again in glory.

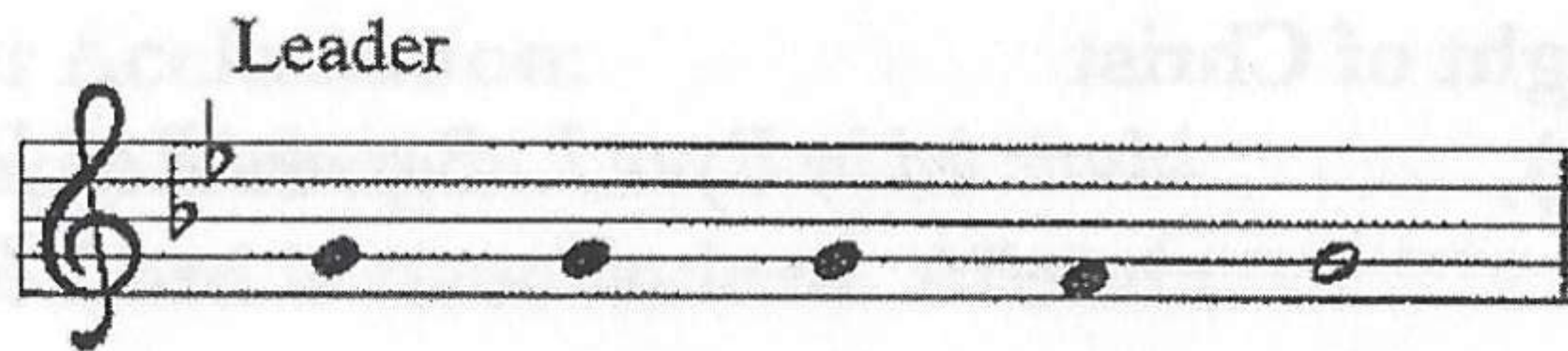
Welcome

Blessing the New Fire

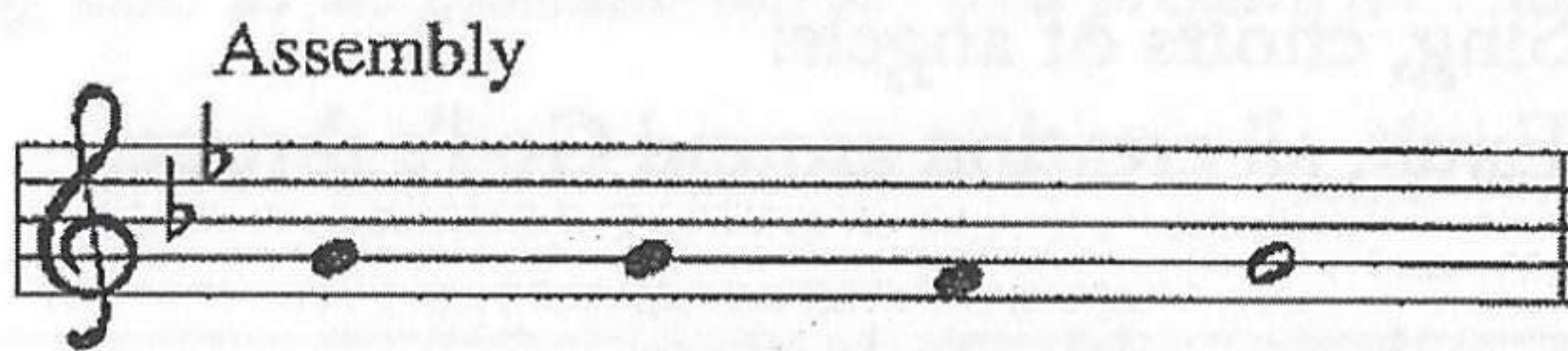
Let us pray.

Eternal God, in Jesus Christ you have given the light of life to all the world. Bless this new fire, and increase in us a desire to shine forth with the brightness of Christ's rising, until we feast at the banquet of eternal light; through the Sun of righteousness, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

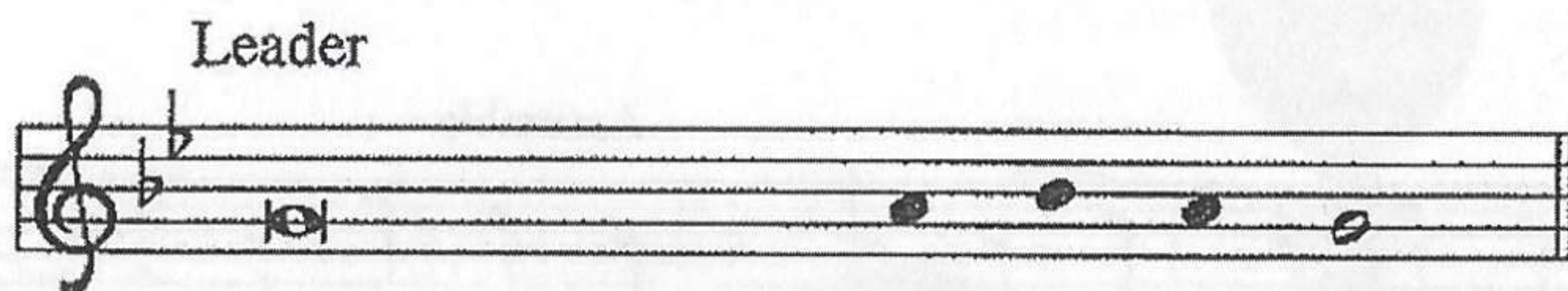
Christ, yesterday and today, the beginning and the ending.
To Christ belongs all time and all the ages;
to Christ belongs glory and dominion now and forever.
Amen.



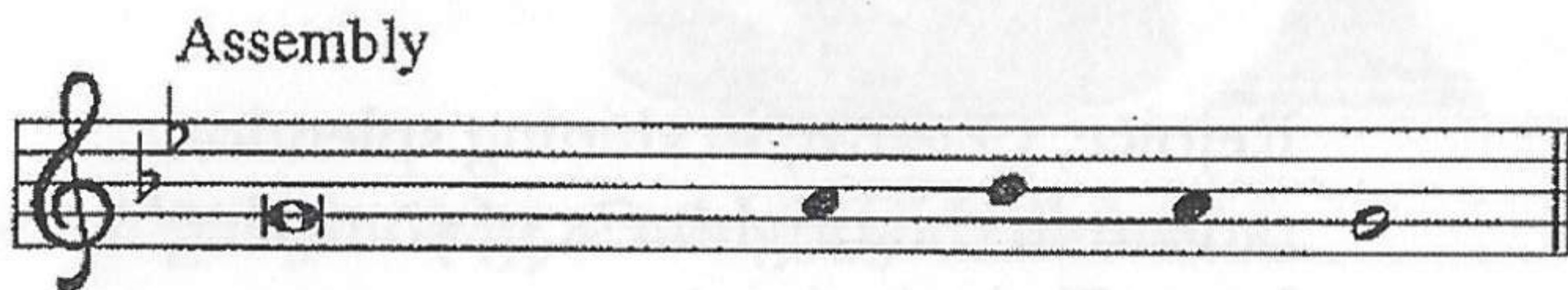
The Lord be with you.



And also with you.



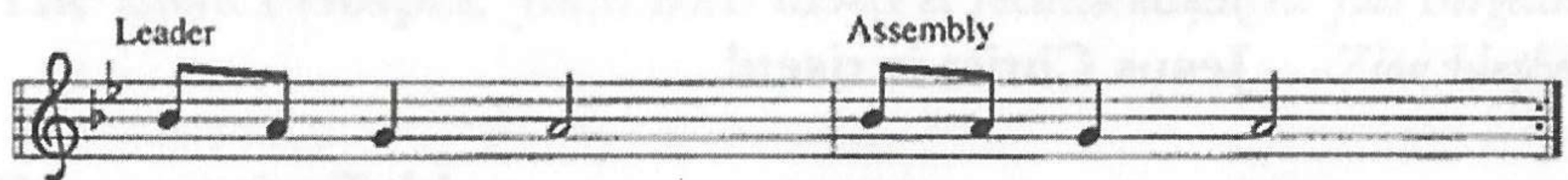
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: It is indeed our right, our duty and our joy ...

Periodically through the proclamation, the assembly is invited to repeat this acclamation after the leader:

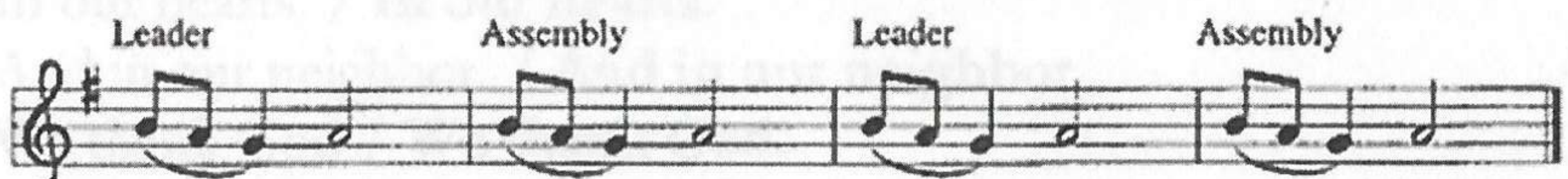


This is the night, this is the night,

The proclamation ends:

Leader:

... lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



A - men. A - men. A - men. A - men.

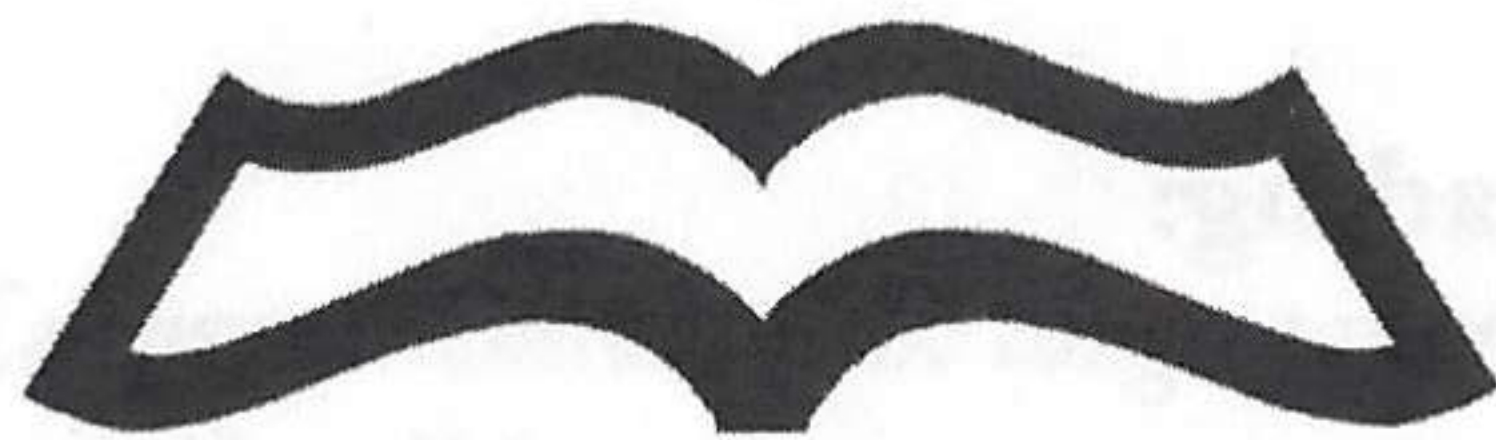
Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

O God, you are the creator of the world, the liberator of your people, and the wisdom of the earth. By the resurrection of your Son free us from our fears, restore us in your image, and ignite us with your light, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Procession into the sanctuary space, and the paschal candle is lit from the new fire of Easter.

STORY



Presiders: Rev. Mike Denton and Becky Crane, United Church of Christ

Invitation to the word:

Dear friends in Christ, let us now listen attentively to the word of God, recalling how he saved his people throughout history and in the fullness of time, sent his own Son to be our Redeemer.

First Reading: The Story of Creation, *adapted from James Wheldon Johnson's "God's Trombones," Genesis 1:1—2:2a*

Reader: Word of God, word of life.

All: Thanks be to God.

Collect

A moment of silence

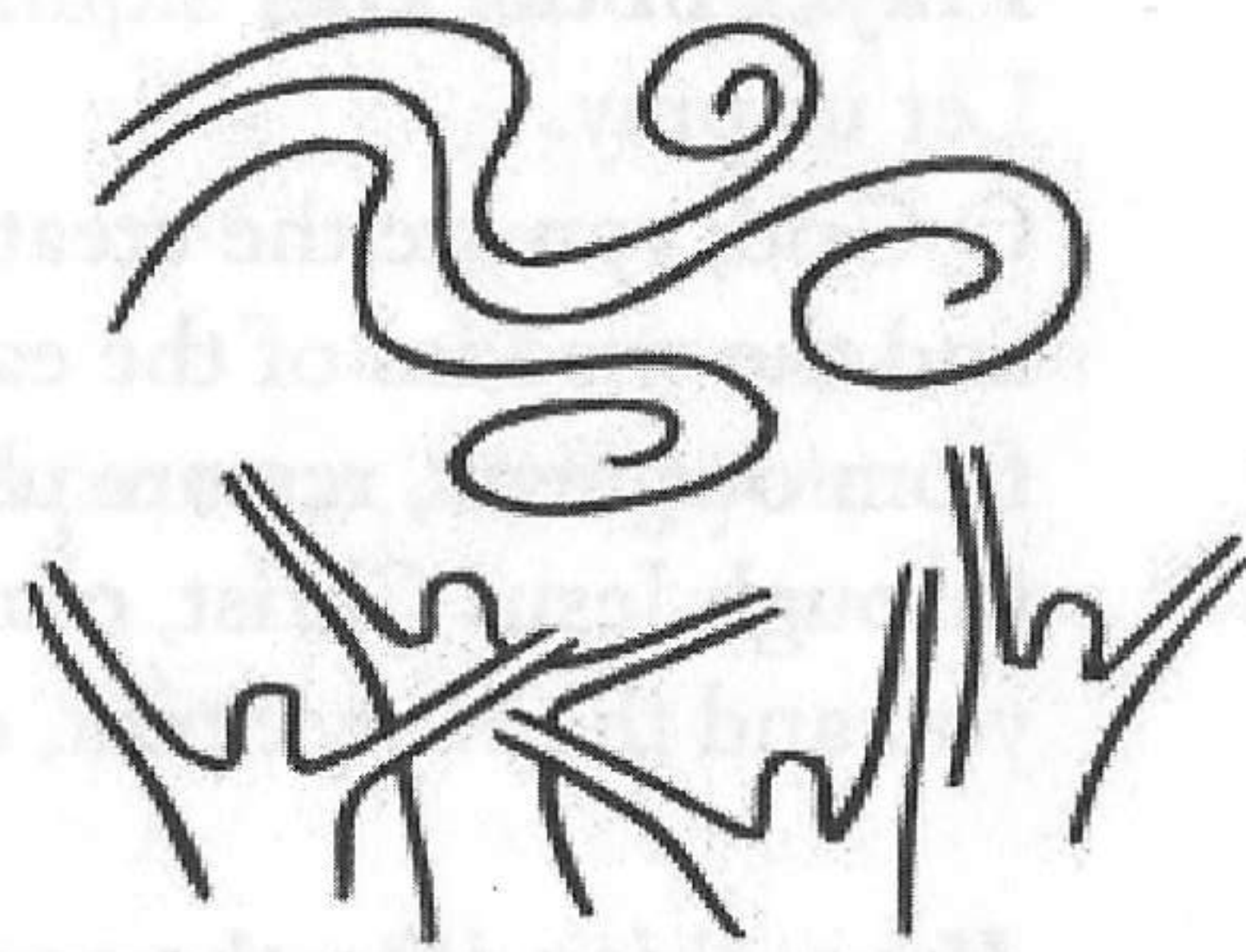


Second Reading:

The Valley of Dry Bones *the New Living*

Translation,

Ezekiel 37: 1-14



Reader: Word of God, word of life.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Collect

A moment of silence

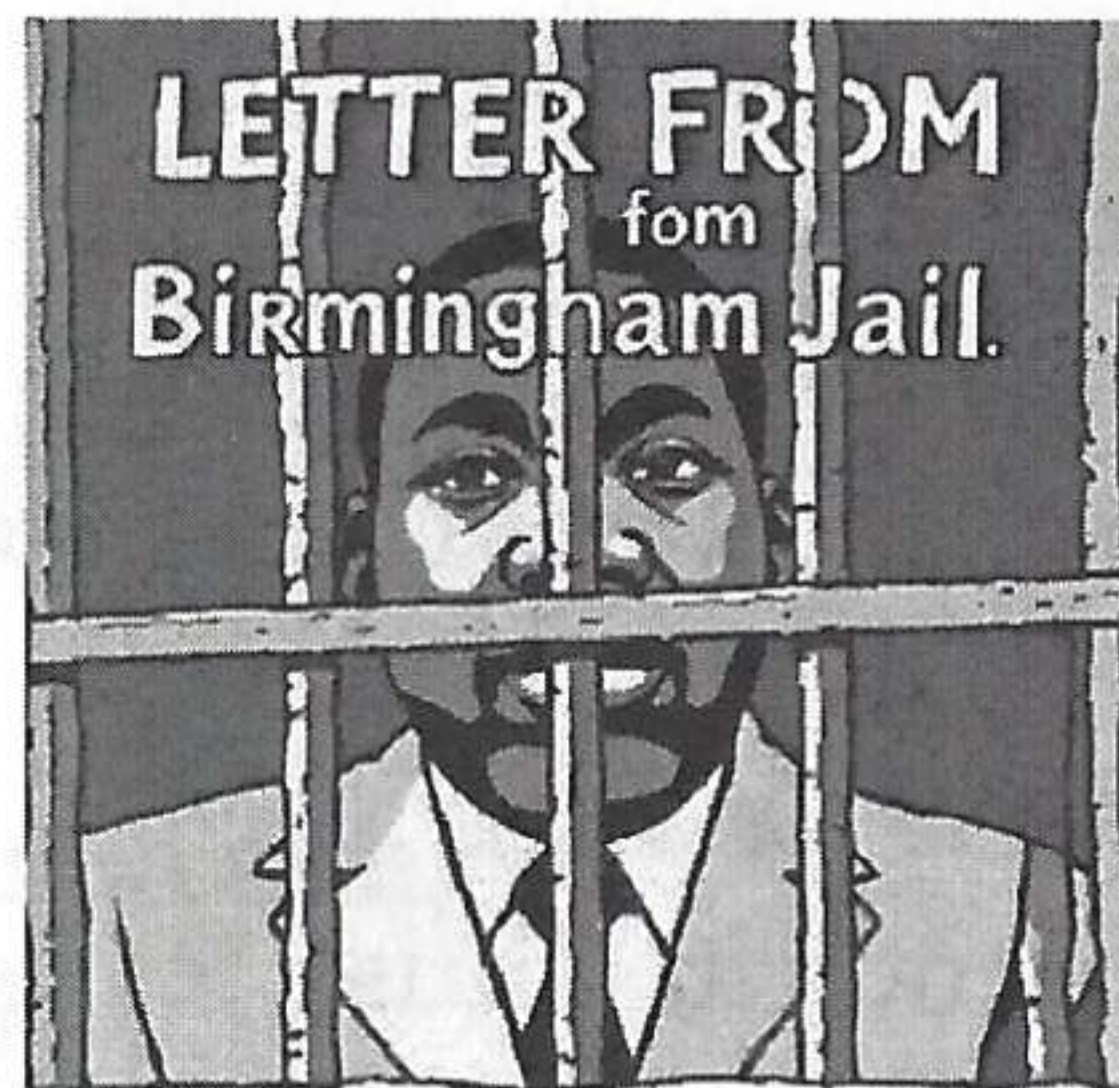
Third Reading:

The Fiery Furnace

A lesson combining Daniel 3:1-29

and Martin Luther King's

Letter from a Birmingham Jail



Reader: Word of God, word of life.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Collect

a moment of silence



Water

Presider: The Rev. Dr. Nina R. Pooley, St. Stephen's

Presentation of the Candidates for Baptism

Presider: The Candidate(s) for Holy Baptism will now be presented.

Parents and Godparents: I present N. to receive the Sacrament of Baptism.

When all have been presented the Celebrant asks questions of the parents and godparents



After all have been presented, the Celebrant addresses the congregation, saying:

Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

People: **We will.**

Celebrant: Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant.

The Baptismal Covenant

Presider: Do you believe in God the Father?

All: **I believe.**

Presider: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

All: **I believe.**

Presider: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

All: **I believe.**

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

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

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

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

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

All: I will, with God's help.

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

All: 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?

All: I will, with God's help.

Presider: Will you cherish the wondrous works of God, and protect the beauty and integrity of all creation?

All: I will, with God's help.

Presider and baptismal candidates process to the font. Bells are distributed to ring at Easter Acclamation

Thanksgiving over the water

Presider: Praise God who made heaven and earth,

All: Who keeps his promise for ever.

Presider: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give thanks and praise.

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ
was baptized in the river Jordan,
we thank you for the gift of water to cleanse us and revive us.
Saving God: **give us life.**

We thank you that through the waters of the Red Sea
you led your people out of slavery
to freedom in the Promised Land.
Saving God: **give us life.**

We thank you that through the deep waters of death
you brought your Son,
and raised him to life in triumph.
Saving God: **give us life.**

Bless this water, that your servants who are washed in it may be made one with Christ in his death and in his resurrection, to be cleansed and delivered from all sin.

Saving God: **give us life.**

Send your Holy Spirit upon them,
bring them to new birth in the household of faith
and raise them with Christ to full and eternal life;
for all might, majesty, authority and power are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.

Saving God: **give us life.**

The Baptism

Each candidate is presented by name to the Presider, who pours water upon the candidate, saying

N., I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

marking on the forehead the sign of the cross using Chrism

N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. **Amen.**

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that by water and the Holy Spirit you have bestowed upon these your servants the forgiveness of sin, and have raised them to the new life of grace. Sustain them, O Lord, in your Holy Spirit. Give them an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works. **Amen.**

Presider concludes with:

We thank you, Almighty God, for our baptism into the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The people are sprinkled with water from the font as a reminder that it was through our baptism that we entered in Christ's fellowship, the Church.

Our Easter Acclamation:

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

ALL: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Join in ringing bells as we proclaim our joy and prepare for Communion.

FEAST



Presider: The Rev. Jennifer Gregg, Cathedral of the Beloved

Our Easter Acclamation:

Presider: Alleluia. Christ is risen.

All: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Collect

The Easter Gospel: John 20:1-18 read by *Rev. Joel Bergeland,*
Zion Lutheran

Prayer at the Table:

Call and response:

God is here. / **God is here.**

In this place. / **In this place.**

In our hearts. / **In our hearts.**

And in our neighbor. / **And in our neighbor.**

We thank God / **We thank God.**

And lift up our hearts. / **And lift up our hearts.**

Because every day / **Because every day**

is a good day / **is a good day**

To praise God / **to praise God.**

The prayer continues, please add your petitions when the Presider asks for our collective prayers for: things in nature;

places in our community;

people who have strengthened our faith;

the new life and resurrection hope dwell deep within us.

Presiders concludes with:

We praise you, all-holy God,
today, tomorrow, and forever.

All: Amen.

Praying together:

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,

forever and ever. Amen.

Distribution of Communion

Blessing

Dismissal: Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia, alleluia!

ALL: Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

We celebrate with these families whose children are baptized:
The McNulty Clarke family, who present Guy Sherwin Elijah, son of Mary and Shane.

The Lamiasi family, who present Luciana Taylor and Alessio Robert, children of Terra and Dina.

A Note from *The Campus of Downtown Churches*

As we gather around the Paschal fire, we stand in a liminal space, God is making all things new. As a downtown community of congregations, God is calling us out of our silos to shine the light of Christ into the world. It is a season that asks us to consider how we can we collectively proclaim that love is stronger than death to the community beyond our doors - at a time of anxiety and grief. Our light is brighter together. We are better together. The disciples were called to share Gods love to the world beyond themselves, and so are we.

While we already collaborate in many ways, Easter Season is a time to ask ourselves - How can what we are already doing be interwoven into a larger whole? How might we be better together in new ways, and create an even healthier community for all? This is the dream and discernment of being a downtown campus. A living organism of people and places going out to be with one another and God's people wherever we find ourselves.

Participants in our Easter Vigil include:

Presiders: Rev. Joel Bergeland; Rev. Steven Canfield; Becky Crane;

Rev. Stephen Dale; Rev. Mike Denton;

The Rev. Jennifer Gregg; The Rev. Nina Pooley

Musician: Ryan LaBoy

Crucifer: Chris Plankey

Greeters: Anne Williams, Nichole Plankey

Lay Eucharistic Ministers: Jim Brennan, Becky Crane

Altar Guild: Marie and Roy Sutton

Reception hosted by Chris and Craig Reynolds and members of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church