



SAINT JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Rooted in God, Growing in Faith

Fire and Faith: Easter Vigil

April 4, 2026 6:00 p.m.

Saint John's Episcopal Church, Concord
576 Concord Rd, Glen Mills 610-459-2994
SaintJohnsConcord.com

The service begins with the congregation gathered around an unlit fire.

Leader: Blessed be our God.

***People:* For ever and ever. Amen.**

Leader: Dear friends in Christ, on this most holy night when our Savior Jesus Christ passed from death to life, we gather with all the Church throughout the world in vigil and prayer. This is the passover of Jesus Christ. Through light and word, fire and stories of our faith, we celebrate the new life that Christ shares with us.

During this prayer, the new Easter fire is lit.

Leader: Let us pray. Redeeming God, source of life and light, bless this new fire, and grant that we who are warmed by the celebration of this Easter feast, may share in the everlasting festival of your radiance, through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. **Amen.**

*The Paschal Candle, or another candle, is lit from the Easter fire
and placed on its stand or table.*

Leader: The Light of Christ!

***People:* Thanks be to God!**

This is repeated three times.

Then a person is appointed, standing near the fire, to say the Exsultet.

Reader: Rejoice now, heavenly hosts and
choirs of angels,

and let your trumpets shout Salvation
for the victory of our mighty King.

Rejoice and sing now, all the round earth,
bright with a glorious splendor,

for darkness has been vanquished by our
eternal King.

Rejoice and be glad now, Mother Church,
and let your holy courts, in radiant light,
resound with the praises of your people.

Leader: The Lord be with you. ***People:* And also with you.**

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

***People:* It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Leader: It is truly right and good, always and everywhere, with our whole heart and mind and voice, to praise you, eternal God. This is the night, when you brought our ancestors, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land. This is the night, when all who believe in Christ are delivered from the gloom of sin and restored to grace and holiness of life. This is the night, when Christ broke the bonds of death and rose victorious from the grave.

Holy Father, accept our evening sacrifice, the offering of this candle in your honor. May it shine continually to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find it ever burning--he who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

Leader: Now, let us open our ears and hearts to hear the wonderful stories of how God has acted powerfully and with love in the lives of all God's children.

The First Story: Creation (Genesis 1 – from *The Message*)

God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Everything was a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!"

And light appeared.

God saw that light was good

and separated light from dark.

God named the light Day,

God named the dark Night.

It was evening, it was morning—Day One.

God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters;

separate water from water!"

And there it was:

God named sky the Heavens;

It was evening, it was morning—Day Two.

God spoke: "Separate!

Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place; Land, appear!"

God named the land Earth.

He named the pooled water Ocean.

God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all plants,

Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."

And there it was. God saw that it was good.

It was evening, it was morning—Day Three.

God spoke: "Lights! Come out!

Shine in Heaven's sky!

Mark seasons and days and years."

And there it was.

God made two big lights, the larger to take charge of Day,

The smaller to be in charge of Night; and he made the stars.

It was evening, it was morning—Day Four.

God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life! Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!"

God saw that it was good.

God blessed them: "Prosper! Fill the Ocean and Sky!"

It was evening, it was morning—Day Five.

God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind: cattle and reptiles and wild

animals—all kinds.”

And there it was.

God saw that it was good.

God spoke: “Let us make human beings
in our image, make them
reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for fish, birds,
cattle, and, yes, Earth itself.”

God created human beings;

God created them godlike: reflecting
God’s nature.

God created them male and female.

God blessed them: “Prosper! Fill Earth! Be
responsible for every living thing that moves
on the face of Earth.”

By the seventh day

God had finished his work.

On the seventh day

he rested from all his work.

God blessed the seventh day.

He made it a Holy Day.

This is the story of how it all started,
of Heaven and Earth when they were
created.

The Second Story: Freedom (Exodus 14)

The Israelites were fleeing Egypt and Pharaoh’s army chased them all the way to the Red Sea. The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, “Weren’t there enough graves in Egypt that you took us away to die in the desert? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt like this?”

But Moses said to the people, “Don’t be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again. The LORD will fight for you.” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to get moving. As for you, lift your shepherd’s rod, stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two so that the Israelites can go into the sea on dry ground.” Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD pushed the sea back by a strong east wind all night, turning the sea into dry land. The waters were split into two. The Israelites walked into the sea on dry ground. The waters formed a wall for them on their right hand and on their left. The Egyptians chased them and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and cavalry. The LORD jammed their chariot wheels so that they wouldn’t turn easily. The Egyptians said, “Let’s get away from the Israelites, because the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!”

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water comes back and covers the Egyptians. So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The waters returned and covered Pharaoh’s entire army that had followed them into the sea. Not one of them remained. The LORD rescued Israel from the Egyptians that day. The people were in awe of the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses.

The Third Story: A New Heart (Ezekiel 36)

God spoke to God’s people, far off in Babylon, “Here’s what I’m going to do: I’m going to take you out of these countries, gather you from all over, and bring you back to your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be cleansed of all your pollution. I will cleanse you of

all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart from your body and replace it with a living one, and I will give you my spirit so that you may walk according to my regulations and carefully observe my case laws. Then you will live in the land that I gave to your ancestors, you will be my people, and I will be your God.

The Fourth Story: New Life (Matthew 28)

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. Look, there was a great earthquake, for an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it. Now his face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow. The guards were so terrified of him that they shook with fear and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Don’t be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He isn’t here, because he’s been raised from the dead, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him. Now hurry, go and tell his disciples, ‘He’s been raised from the dead. He’s going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.’ I’ve given the message to you.”

With great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. But Jesus met them and greeted them. They came and grabbed his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there.”

Closing Prayer

Leader: The Lord be with you. **People: And also with you.**

Leader: Let us pray. Almighty God, you breathed your Spirit over nothingness, calling forth stars and planets, plants and animals, and proclaimed that your Creation was good. You lead your children through the darkness of bondage into a land freedom. Knowing how often we turn away from you, you turned our stony hearts into compassionate flesh. On this holy night you took all that is dark and death-dealing into your own self, and returned resurrected, alive with light and love for the whole world. Eternal God, breathe upon us again with your Spirit and give new life to your people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Leader: Alleluia! Christ is risen!

People: The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Leader: Let us go forth in the name of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!

People: Thanks be to God. Alleluia! Alleluia!

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Join us tomorrow, April 5, for Easter Sunday Services:

7:45 AM - Rite I (traditional Holy Communion) in the church

9:15 AM - Family Worship (30 minutes with Communion) & Egg Hunt afterward

10:30 AM - Rite II (choir music and Holy Communion) in the church

Please note: the church office will be closed on Monday, April 6