



RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

VIGIL OF EASTER

FIRST READING: Genesis 1:1—2:4a

CREATION

A reading from Genesis.

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,
²the 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.

³Then God said,

“Let there be light”; and there was light.

⁴And God saw that the light was good;
and God separated the light from the darkness.

⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.
And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶And God said,

“Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters,
and let it separate the waters from the waters.”

⁷So 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.

⁸God called the dome Sky.

And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹And God said,

“Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place,
and let the dry land appear.”

And it was so.

¹⁰God called the dry land Earth,
and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.
And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said,

“Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed,
and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.”

And it was so. ►

1 GENESIS 1:1—2:4a

Read the story as though telling it for the first time to those who had never heard it. Bring to the reading every available ounce of energy. Take delight in God's every choice for names for the dome, the dry land, the waters and the lights. Help the assembly marvel at the wonder of it all.

¹²The earth brought forth vegetation:
plants yielding seed of every kind,
and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it.
And God saw that it was good.

¹³And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴And God said,
“Let there be lights in the dome of the sky
to separate the day from the night;
and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,
¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.”
And it was so.

¹⁶God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day
and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.

¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth,

¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night,
and to separate the light from the darkness.

And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰And God said,
“Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.”

²¹So God created the great sea monsters
and every living creature that moves,
of every kind, with which the waters swarm,
and every winged bird of every kind.

And God saw that it was good.

²²God blessed them, saying,
“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas,
and let birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴And God said,
“Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind:
cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.”
And it was so.

²⁵God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind,
and the cattle of every kind,
and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind.
And God saw that it was good. ▶

²⁶Then God said,
“Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;
and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,
and over the birds of the air,
and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,
and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

²⁷So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them, and God said to them,
“Be fruitful and multiply,
and fill the earth and subdue it;
and have dominion over the fish of the sea
and over the birds of the air
and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹God said,
“See, I have given you every plant yielding seed
that is upon the face of all the earth,
and every tree with seed in its fruit;
you shall have them for food.

³⁰And to every beast of the earth,
and to every bird of the air,
and to everything that creeps on the earth,
everything that has the breath of life,
I have given every green plant for food.”
And it was so.

³¹God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.
And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

^{2:1}Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.

²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done,
and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,
because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth
when they were created.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26

SECOND READING: Genesis 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13
FLOOD

A reading from Genesis.

¹The LORD said to Noah,
“Go into the ark, you and all your household,
for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.
²Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals,
the male and its mate;
and a pair of the animals that are not clean,
the male and its mate;
³and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female,
to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth.
⁴For in seven days I will send rain on the earth
for forty days and forty nights;
and every living thing that I have made
I will blot out from the face of the ground.”
⁵And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life,
in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month,
on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth,
and the windows of the heavens were opened.
¹²The rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.
¹³On the very same day Noah with his sons,
Shem and Ham and Japheth,
and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons entered the ark,
¹⁴they and every wild animal of every kind,
and all domestic animals of every kind,
and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth,
and every bird of every kind—every bird, every winged creature.
¹⁵They went into the ark with Noah,
two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life.
¹⁶And those that entered, male and female of all flesh,
went in as God had commanded him;
and the LORD shut him in. ►

2 GENESIS 7:1-5, 11-18; 8:6-18; 9:8-13 *Japheth = JAY-fith*

This is a cosmic event and demands a cosmic voice. Rarely has the assembly heard a reading that was “too loud” or “too slow.” Every reader will do well to read half as fast and twice as loudly as first inclined.

¹⁷The flood continued forty days on the earth;
and the waters increased,
and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.
¹⁸The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth;
and the ark floated on the face of the waters.

^{8:6}At the end of forty days
Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made
⁷and sent out the raven;
and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.
⁸Then he sent out the dove from him,
to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground;
⁹but 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.
¹⁰He waited another seven days,
and again he sent out the dove from the ark;
¹¹and 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.
¹²Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove;
and it did not return to him any more.

¹³In the six hundred first year,
in the first month, on the first day of the month,
the waters were dried up from the earth;
and Noah removed the covering of the ark,
and looked, and saw that the face of the ground was drying.
¹⁴In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month,
the earth was dry.
¹⁵Then God said to Noah,
¹⁶“Go out of the ark, you and your wife,
and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.
¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—
birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—
so that they may abound on the earth,
and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”
¹⁸So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. ►

^{9:8}Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him,
⁹“As for me,
I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you,
¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you,
the birds, the domestic animals,
and every animal of the earth with you,
as many as came out of the ark.
¹¹I establish my covenant with you,
that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood,
and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”
¹²God said,
“This is the sign of the covenant that I make
between me and you and every living creature that is with you,
for all future generations:
¹³I have set my bow in the clouds,
and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Psalm 46

THIRD READING: Genesis 22:1-18

TESTING OF ABRAHAM

A reading from Genesis.

¹God tested Abraham.

He said to him, “Abraham!”

And he said, “Here I am.”

²“God” said,

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.”

³So Abraham rose early in the morning,

saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him,
and his son Isaac;

he cut the wood for the burnt offering,

and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him.

⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away.

⁵Then Abraham said to his young men,

“Stay here with the donkey;

the boy and I will go over there;

we will worship, and then we will come back to you.”

⁶Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering

and laid it on his son Isaac,

and he himself carried the fire and the knife.

So the two of them walked on together.

⁷Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!”

And he said, “Here I am, my son.”

He said, “The fire and the wood are here,

but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

⁸Abraham said,

“God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.”

So the two of them walked on together.

⁹When they came to the place that God had shown him,

Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order.

He bound his son Isaac,

and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand

and took the knife to kill his son. ►

3 GENESIS 22:1-18 *Moriah = moh-RY-uh*

Handle this horrific story with care. Allow the first sentence of verse 1 to stand as the headline for the account. A measured reading in volume and pace will help allow the natural tension to develop. Provide the voice of Abraham adequate uncertainty even when—especially when—his statements appear certain. The agony of a man caught between two great loves will emerge.

¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said,
“Abraham, Abraham!”
And he said, “Here I am.”

¹²He said,
“Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him;
for now I know that you fear God,
since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

¹³And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns.
Abraham went and took the ram
and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

¹⁴So Abraham called that place “The LORD will provide”;
as it is said to this day,
“On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

¹⁵The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,
¹⁶and said,

“By myself I have sworn, says the LORD:
Because you have done this,
and have not withheld your son, your only son,

¹⁷I will indeed bless you,
and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven
and as the sand that is on the seashore.

And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies,

¹⁸and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth
gain blessing for themselves,
because you have obeyed my voice.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Psalm 16

FOURTH READING: Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21

DELIVERANCE AT THE RED SEA

A reading from Exodus.

¹⁰As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back,
and there were the Egyptians advancing on them.
In great fear the Israelites cried out to the LORD.

¹¹They said to Moses,
“Was it because there were no graves in Egypt
that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?
What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt?
¹²Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt,
‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians’?
For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians
than to die in the wilderness.”

¹³But Moses said to the people,
“Do not be afraid, stand firm,
and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today;
for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again.

¹⁴The LORD will fight for you,
and you have only to keep still.”

¹⁵Then the LORD said to Moses,
“Why do you cry out to me?
Tell the Israelites to go forward.

¹⁶But you lift up your staff,
and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it,
that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground.

¹⁷Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians
so that they will go in after them;
and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army,
his chariots, and his chariot drivers.

¹⁸And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD,
when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh,
his chariots, and his chariot drivers.”

¹⁹The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved
and went behind them;
and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them
and took its place behind them.

²⁰It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. ►

4 EXODUS 14:10-31; 15:20-21 *Pharaoh = FAIR-oh*

This reading may benefit from two very different sounds. Verses 10-18 might effectively be read as though to be heard over the sound of a raging river, a hysterical mob of escapees, and the chariots, horses, and battle cries of an approaching army. In verses 19-29 the sound might shift to that of an intense narration of the action by an observer. In any event, do not attempt to tame this wild account of the power of God.

And so the cloud was there with the darkness,
and it lit up the night;
one did not come near the other all night.

- ²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea.
The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night,
and turned the sea into dry land;
and the waters were divided.
- ²²The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground,
the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.
- ²³The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them,
all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers.
- ²⁴At the morning watch
the LORD in the pillar of fire and cloud
looked down upon the Egyptian army,
and threw the Egyptian army into panic.
- ²⁵He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty.
The Egyptians said,
"Let us flee from the Israelites,
for the LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."
- ²⁶Then 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."
- ²⁷So 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.
- ²⁸The 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.
- ²⁹But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea,
the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.
- ³⁰Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the Egyptians;
and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.
- ³¹Israel saw the great work that the LORD did against the Egyptians.
So the people feared the LORD
and believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses. ►

^{15:20}Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand;
and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.

²¹And Miriam sang to them:

“Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Exodus 15:1b-13, 17-18

FIFTH READING: Isaiah 55:1-11
SALVATION FREELY OFFERED TO ALL

A reading from Isaiah.

- ¹Ho, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
 come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
 without money and without price.
- ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.
- ³Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.
- ⁴See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
- ⁵See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.
- ⁶Seek the LORD while he may be found,
 call upon him while he is near;
- ⁷let the wicked forsake their way,
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
- ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
- ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways higher than your ways
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- ¹⁰For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
 and do not return there until they have watered the earth, ►

5 ISAIAH 55:1-11 *Isaiah = eye-ZAY-uh*

This is the voice of God. A diminutive "Ho" (verse 1) simply will not do. Bring all the energy and authority possible to the reading. Be alert to the danger lurking in verse 11b. The word at the end of the third line is not *propose* but *purpose*. It is used here as a verb, not a noun, but is pronounced the same.

making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Isaiah 12:2-6

SIXTH READING: Proverbs 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6

THE WISDOM OF GOD

Alternate Reading: Baruch 3:9-15, 32—4:4 (p. 501)

A reading from Proverbs.

¹Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?

²On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;

³beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:

⁴“To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.

⁵O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who lack it.

⁶Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right;

⁷for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

⁸All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

¹⁹“My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.

²⁰I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,

²¹endowing with wealth those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.”

^{9:4b}To those without sense she says,
⁵“Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.

⁶Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Psalm 19

6 PROVERBS 8:1-8, 19-21; 9:4b-6

This is wisdom personified—literally. Picture wisdom as a woman calling out from various locations. Then give her voice and relish the poetic images she offers. Pay close attention to the punctuation, and allow it to establish the pace of each verse. More than most readings perhaps (in part because the images are poetic), this one will suffer badly from inadequate preparation.

SEVENTH READING: Ezekiel 36:24-28

A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

A reading from Ezekiel.

「Thus says the Lord GOD:」

²⁴I will take you from the nations,
and gather you from all the countries,
and bring you into your own land.

²⁵I will sprinkle clean water upon you,
and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses,
and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

²⁶A 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.

²⁷I will put my spirit within you,
and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.

²⁸Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors;
and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Psalm 42 and Psalm 43

7 EZEKIEL 36:24-28 *Ezekiel = eh-ZEEK-ee-el*

“Thus says the Lord God” forces the reader to seek the sound of the voice of God. Give each sentence a quiet strength; each promise, a blessed assurance. This is love like a rock.

EIGHTH READING: Ezekiel 37:1-14

VALLEY OF THE DRY BONES

A reading from Ezekiel.

¹The hand of the LORD came upon me,
and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD
and set me down in the middle of a valley;
it was full of bones.

²He led me all around them;
there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.

³He said to me,
“Mortal, can these bones live?”
I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”

⁴Then he said to me,
“Prophesy to these bones, and say to them:
O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones:
I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.

⁶I will lay sinews on you,
and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin,
and put breath in you, and you shall live;
and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

⁷So I prophesied as I had been commanded;
and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling,
and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

⁸I looked, and there were sinews on them,
and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them;
but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then he said to me,
“Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:
Thus says the Lord GOD:
Come from the four winds, O breath,
and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”

¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me,
and the breath came into them,
and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. ►

8 EZEKIEL 37:1-14 *Ezekiel = eh-ZEEK-ee-el prophesy = PROF-uh-sigh*

The high drama, frightening sounds, and fantastic images of this account will be diminished if the reader fails to distinguish between the verb *prophesy* and the noun *prophecy*. It is the verb that is used here. Get that right, then let the reading rip!

¹¹Then he said to me,
“Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel.
They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost;
we are cut off completely.’
¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them,
Thus says the Lord GOD:
I am going to open your graves,
and bring you up from your graves, O my people;
and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.
¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD,
when I open your graves,
and bring you up from your graves, O my people.
¹⁴I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live,
and I will place you on your own soil;
then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,”
says the LORD.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Psalm 143

NINTH READING: Zephaniah 3:14-20

THE GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

A reading from Zephaniah.

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter Zion;
shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵The LORD has taken away the judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies.
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more.

¹⁶On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Do not fear, O Zion;
do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a warrior who gives victory;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
he will renew you in his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing
¹⁸as on a day of festival.

I will remove disaster from you,
so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹I will deal with all your oppressors
at that time.

And I will save the lame
and gather the outcast,
and I will change their shame into praise
and renown in all the earth.

²⁰At that time I will bring you home,
at the time when I gather you;
for I will make you renowned and praised
among all the peoples of the earth,
when I restore your fortunes
before your eyes, says the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

or

Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Psalm 98

9 ZEPHANIAH 3:14-20 *Zephaniah = zef-uh-NY-uh*

The voice of the prophet has the cadence of a sermon by the sainted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. While the readings in this lectionary are laid out by sense lines, you need not necessarily pause at the end of every line. Read the text aloud a number of times before the assembly gathers. Capture its flow. Then rejoice and let the reading sing!

TENTH READING: Jonah 1:1—2:1

THE DELIVERANCE OF JONAH

A reading from Jonah.

¹Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying,

²“Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.”

³But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish;

so he paid his fare and went on board,

to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

⁴But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea,

and such a mighty storm came upon the sea

that the ship threatened to break up.

⁵Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god.

They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them.

Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship

and had lain down, and was fast asleep.

⁶The captain came and said to him,

“What are you doing sound asleep?

Get up, call on your god!

Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish.”

⁷The sailors said to one another,

“Come, let us cast lots,

so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us.”

So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

⁸Then they said to him,

“Tell us why this calamity has come upon us.

What is your occupation?

Where do you come from?

What is your country?

And of what people are you?”

⁹I am a Hebrew, he replied.

“I worship the LORD, the God of heaven,

who made the sea and the dry land.”

¹⁰Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him,

“What is this that you have done!”

For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD,

because he had told them so. ►

10 JONAH 1:1—2:1 *Amittai = uh-MIT-eye*

This is a wonderfully detailed, dramatic story that will remind many of other storm-stilling stories in the Bible. Try hard to convey the sailors' fear of the storm and, later, of God. Lean into verse 17—it is a sign of the resurrection.

¹¹Then they said to him,
“What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?”
For the sea was growing more and more tempestuous.
¹²He said to them,
“Pick me up and throw me into the sea;
then the sea will quiet down for you;
for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.”
¹³Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land,
but they could not,
for the sea grew more and more stormy against them.

¹⁴Then they cried out to the LORD,
“Please, O LORD, we pray,
do not let us perish on account of this man’s life.
Do not make us guilty of innocent blood;
for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.”
¹⁵So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea;
and the sea ceased from its raging.
¹⁶Then the men feared the LORD even more,
and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

¹⁷But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah;
and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

^{2:17}Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Jonah 2:2-3 [4-6] 7-9

ELEVENTH READING: Isaiah 61:1-4, 9-11

CLOTHED IN THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION

A reading from Isaiah.

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

The word of the Lord. or Word of God, word of life.

11 ISAIAH 61:1-4, 9-11 *Isaiah = eye-ZAY-uh*

This is a proclamation of unalloyed joy. The greatest challenge will be pacing and tone so that there is some ebb and flow to the reading. Again, practice will help.

RESPONSE: Deuteronomy 32:1-4, 7, 36a, 43a

TWELFTH READING: Daniel 3:1-29
DELIVERANCE FROM THE FIERY FURNACE

A reading from Daniel.

¹King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits;

he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

²Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent for the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to assemble and come to the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

³So the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

When they were standing before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up,

⁴the herald proclaimed aloud,

“You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

⁵that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

⁶Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.”

⁷Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁸Accordingly, at this time certain Chaldeans came forward and denounced the Jews.

⁹They said to King Nebuchadnezzar,

“O king, live forever!

¹⁰You, O king, have made a decree, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble, ►

12 DANIEL 3:1-29 *Nebuchadnezzar = neb-uh-kud-NEZ-ur satraps = SAY-traps trigon = TRY-gon Chaldeans = kahl-DEE-unz Shadrach = SHAD-rak Meshach = ME-shak Abednego = uh-BED-nih-go*
This delightful account with its tongue-twisting, often repeated phrases, and frantic pace will give up its wonders only to those who are ready to practice, practice, practice! The list of instruments, in particular, has potential for humor. The whole has the feel of a holy children's story. Read it with energy, delight, and unbounded enthusiasm.

shall fall down and worship the golden statue,

¹¹and whoever does not fall down and worship
shall be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire.

¹²There are certain Jews

whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon:
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

These pay no heed to you, O king.

They do not serve your gods

and they do not worship the golden statue that you have set up.”

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage

commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought in;
so they brought those men before the king.

¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar said to them,

“Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,
that you do not serve my gods

and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up?

¹⁵Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre,
trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble
to fall down and worship the statue that I have made,
well and good.

But if you do not worship,

you shall immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire,
and who is the god that will deliver you out of my hands?”

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king,

“O Nebuchadnezzar,

we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter.

¹⁷If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us
from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king,
let him deliver us.

¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king,

that we will not serve your gods

and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.” ▶



¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage
against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
that his face was distorted.

He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary,
²⁰and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army
to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

²¹So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics,
their trousers, their hats, and their other garments,
and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire.

²²Because the king's command was urgent
and the furnace was so overheated,
the raging flames killed the men
who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

²³But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,
fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire.

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly.
He said to his counselors,

“Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?”

They answered the king, “True, O king.”

²⁵He replied, “But I see four men unbound,
walking in the middle of the fire,
and they are not hurt;
and the fourth has the appearance of a god.”

²⁶Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire
and said,

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,
servants of the Most High God,
come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.

²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors,
and the king's counselors gathered together
and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men;
the hair of their heads was not singed,
their tunics were not harmed,
and not even the smell of fire came from them.

²⁸Nebuchadnezzar said,

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ►

who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him.
They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies
rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

²⁹Therefore I make a decree:

Any people, nation, or language that utters blasphemy
against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
shall be torn limb from limb,
and their houses laid in ruins;
for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

RESPONSE: Song of the Three 35-65

NEW TESTAMENT READING: Romans 6:3-11

A reading from Romans.

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

⁴Therefore 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.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

⁶We 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.

⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin.

⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

NEW TESTAMENT READING

In these few verses St. Paul makes sense of all the preceding stories about drowning and dying, faithlessness and repentance. A voice of loving admonition will bring this truth to vigilant hearts.

GOSPEL: John 20:1-18

The holy gospel according to John.

¹Early 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.

²So 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.”

³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.

⁴The two were running together,
but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there,
but he did not go in.

⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb.
He saw the linen wrappings lying there,

⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head,
not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first,
also went in, and he saw and believed;

⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture,
that he must rise from the dead.

¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;

¹²and 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.

¹³They 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.”

¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there,
but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵Jesus said to her,

“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him,

“Sir, if you have carried him away, ►

GOSPEL *Cleopas = KLEE-uh-pus*

This is a lot of gospel! The issues demanding the reader’s attention are several: (1) it is a long reading—avoid the tendency to hurry it; (2) the deep sadness and discouragement of the disciples must be given genuine voice; (3) the changes of scene will be clarified by substantial pauses in the reading; (4) the sound of the voice of Jesus will be varied depending on the circumstances, the surroundings, and the nature of the words themselves.

tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

¹⁷Jesus 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.’”

¹⁸Mary 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 gospel of the Lord.