KEEPING VIGIL

Simple Songs for the Vigil of Easter Responses

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About These Songs

The Vigil of Easter is a night of new fire and old stories, the liturgy at which the ancient church welcomed new members through baptism. This is the night when “alleluia” awakens from its Lenten repose, when holy spaces are made to look, sound, and smell resplendent—all to affirm and celebrate the passover from death to life.

An important part of the service are the twelve appointed Vigil readings from the Old Testament, some of the most dramatic stories of salvation from the Hebrew Bible. They are:

1. Genesis 1:1—2:4a* (Creation)
2. Genesis 7:1–5, 11–18; 8:6–18; 9:8–13 (Flood)
5. Isaiah 55:1–11* (Salvation freely offered to all)
8. Ezekiel 37:1–14 (Valley of the dry bones)
10. Jonah 1:1—2:1 (The deliverance of Jonah)
11. Isaiah 61:1–4, 9–11 (Clothed in the garments of salvation)
12. Daniel 3:1–29* (Deliverance from the fiery furnace)

In most cases, each reading is followed by a sung response and a prayer. Some congregations use all twelve readings; some use only the four primary readings, those marked with an asterisk (*) in the above list.

Although Vigil observances in homes may not provide the same sensory immersion as those in churches and cathedrals, the new fire can still be lit—a bonfire outdoors or a candle indoors—and any of the twelve Old Testament lessons and their responses can be read or sung by individuals or groups.

The songs in this collection are intended for use in the home, and have been designed for an array of musical abilities and forces. The music that is printed on the following pages is only a guide: all parts may be truncated, adapted, or expanded to suit what is needed in any given context. Choose a few songs that will work in your setting, and, if it suits your context, ask family members or friends to prepare some of the parts in advance.
Copyright Information

This collection has attempted to avoid reprinting copyrighted material, though citations for scriptural translations and adaptations have been given where appropriate. Teaching materials may be fashioned from its contents, but the songs, preferably, should not be used to facilitate the production of pre-recorded or live-streamed liturgy broadcasts: they are meant to be learned and sung in the home, not merely observed through audio-visual means.

Preparing to Sing

Begin by gathering instruments from around the home that may help provide pitch and rhythm such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch</th>
<th>Rhythm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ A bell</td>
<td>❑ Small rocks or sticks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ An empty bottle—blowing across the top produces a tone</td>
<td>❑ A large bucket and something with which to strike its lid or bottom (when upside down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ If you have more than one empty bottle, see if you can make the other sound a different tone by adding water</td>
<td>❑ You can also download various <a href="#">hand drum</a> or other percussion tools for phone or tablet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ You can also download an electronic shruti box, a drone instrument, for a phone or tablet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surely you can think of more: be creative, have fun, and improvise! Sing a few of the songs, or all of them. Write new ones. Sing holy songs around new fire as the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) proclaims:

Therefore, in this night of grace, receive, O God, our praise and thanksgiving for the light of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God bless your worship and your singing.

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Birmingham, Alabama
Sunday of the Passion
5 April 2020
First Response | Creation

Psalm 136:1–9, 23–26

After reading Genesis 1:1—2:4a

The first half of each appointed psalm verse can spoken or chanted to the following tone:

Respond by singing the second half of each verse:

for God’s mercy endures forever.

A drone can be used throughout:

A single bell or bell cluster can be rung between each verse.
Second Response | Flood

After reading Genesis 7:1–5, 11–18; 8:6–18; 9:8–13

This song contains layers that can be added and subtracted depending on how many are singing and what instruments are available.

The first layer is a two-part segment that can be repeated many times:

At the very end of the song, add this:

An instrumental melody can also be added to the ostinato:

For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes

For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets
For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone

For bass instruments such as trombones or cellos

During the repeated portion, a soloist or group can sing:

God is our refuge and strength, a sure help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear for God is always with us.

God is with us.
This song can be sung by a single person, or by groups in a call-and-response dialogue. Follow the directions of the leader—if they sing soft, loud, or include hand motions!

The song can also be used as a refrain after verses 4, 8, and 11 of the psalm. The verses can be spoken or chanted to a tone:

Make up a percussion rhythm for the refrain!
Fourth Response | Deliverance at the Red Sea

Exodus 15:1b–13, 17–18

After reading Exodus 14:10–31; 15:20–21

This is another song for many layers, and can be made as simple or as complex as desired. First, try some basic percussion rhythms such as:

For a drum

![Drum pattern]

For a tambourine

![Tambourine pattern]

Shake the tambourine anytime someone sings the words “strength” or “might”!

A guitar or piano can also be used for rhythm and harmony, perhaps in this pattern and with these chords:

![Chords]

Once the rhythmic and harmonic pattern is established, sing:

The melody can also be sung in a two-measure round beginning at the asterisk (*)

![Melody]

I will sing unto the Lord; God is my strength and might!
An instrumental melody can also be added to the ostinato:

**For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes**

![Musical notation](image1)

**For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets**

![Musical notation](image2)

**For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone**

![Musical notation](image3)

**For bass instruments such as trombones or cellos**

![Musical notation](image4)
Fifth Response | Salvation freely offered to all

Isaiah 12:2–6

After reading Isaiah 55:1–11

This layered song can also function as a refrain to be sung after verses 3 and 6 (see below).

First, an optional repeating segment for up to three voices:

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\[\text{Shout aloud, sing for joy!}\]
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An instrumental countermelody can also be added, though note that it is twice as long as the segment above:

For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes

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\[\text{For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets}\]
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For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone
For bass instruments such as trombones or cellos

Like the instrumental parts, the main idea of the refrain fits over the repeated segment:

In the resources for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the verses for this response are “pointed” like psalm texts so that the text can be sung to a tone:

2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
    for the Lord God is my strength and my might, and has become my salvation.  
3 With joy you will draw water  
    from the wells of salvation. *Refrain*

4 And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on God’s name;  
    make known the deeds of the Lord among the nations; proclaim that this name is exalted.  
5 Sing praises to the Lord, for [the Lord] has done gloriously;  
    let this be known in all the earth.  
6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
    for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. *Refrain*
SIXTH RESPONSE | The wisdom of God

After reading Proverbs 8:1–8, 19–21; 9:4b–6

or

Baruch 3:9–15, 32—4:4

This short dialogue is adapted from the “instructional” half (vv. 7–14) of Psalm 19. A bell, bell cluster, or other sound can be played between each line of the dialogue, and the singing can be supported by a drone:

The first half of the dialogue can be chanted freely, and the second half in a faster rhythm:

The teaching of the Lord is right, and revives the soul.
The decrees of the Lord are true, and instruct the mind.
The precepts of the Lord are just, and rejoice the heart.
The commands of the Lord are clear, and give light to the eyes.
Here is another modular piece with several building blocks that can be used as a refrain for the two psalms, or as a standalone song.

First, a cello, piano, or other low instrument can begin with a repeated segment:

To this, a repeated segment for voices can be added:

Above this can be sung a refrain:
And a countermelody for treble instruments can be added, too:

*For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes (adjust the octave as needed)*

*For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets (adjust the octave as needed)*

*For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone*
The verses of both psalms can be spoken or chanted using the following tone:

Note that this is a double tone, meaning that it can be used for pairs of verses (vv. 1–2, vv. 3–4, and so forth). Because Psalm 42 has eleven verses, the final verse can be paired with the first verse of Psalm 43. Then, Psalm 43 continues with pairings of remaining verses (vv. 2–3 and, finally, vv. 4–5). If the song is used as a refrain, sing it four times:

1. After verse 4 of Psalm 42
2. After verse 8 of Psalm 42
3. After verse 1 of Psalm 43
4. After verse 5 of Psalm 43

If desired, the treble instruments can also help lead the psalm tone’s melody:

For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes

For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets

For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone
This response is a study in rhythmic contrast, and can be repeated several times at gradually increasing dynamics. The underlying rhythm—which should propel the song with vigor—alters between triple and duple divisions of the measure:

Once this pattern is established, the voice parts can begin to stack, ideally building from the lowest to the highest:

Revive me, O Lord. Revive me, O Lord. Revive me for your name’s sake. (Re)
If desired, the treble instruments can add (and improvise around) a countermelody:

For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes

For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets

For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone
Ninth Response | The gathering of God’s people

Psalm 98

After reading Zephaniah 3:14–20

This refrain (written in the style of the Lutheran composer Heinrich Schütz) can be sung as a melody or in parts after verses 2, 6, and 9 of the psalm:

Sing a new song to the Lord;

lift up your voice, rejoice and sing.

Instruments can double the voice parts in their respective transpositions:

For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes (reading the upper or lower lines)
For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets (reading the upper or lower lines)

For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone (reading the upper or lower lines)

For bass instruments such as trombones or cellos

Consider adding light percussion (such as a triangle) on beats 1 and 3. The verses of the psalm can be spoken or chanted with this tone:
Tenth Response | The deliverance of Jonah

After reading Jonah 1:1—2:1

A drone may be used to begin:

Then, add this repeated segment for voices:

And, finally, a repeated melody:

De - liv’rance be - longs to the Lord. (De)
Or, instead of singing, listen to this movement of the oratorio *Jonah* by Giacomo Carissimi, 1605–1674: [https://youtu.be/c0IrjSugufg](https://youtu.be/c0IrjSugufg). In this movement, the character of Jonah sings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Iustus es Domine et rectum iudicium tuum;</em></td>
<td><em>You are righteous, O Lord, and just is your wisdom; you are almighty and no one can resist your divine will.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>potens es, et voluntati tuae non est qui possit resistere.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Proiecisti me in profundum maris, et fluctus tui super me transierunt.</em></td>
<td><em>You hurled me into the deep, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Iustus es, Domine, et rectum iudicium tuum;</em></td>
<td><em>You are righteous O Lord, and just is your wisdom; but after the fury, you remembered your mercifulness.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sed cum iratus fueris, misericordiae recordaberis.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Placare Domine, ignosce Domine, et miserere.</em></td>
<td><em>Subside your anger, Lord, forgive and have mercy.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Abiectus sum a conspectu oculorum tuorum,</em></td>
<td><em>I have been banished from your sight; your fury has been lit, a wild storm came against me and the winds shook all and the engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me and a whale swallowed me.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>accensus est furor tuus et contra me tempestas orta est,</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>et in fremuerunt venti, et fluctus intumuerunt, vallavit abyssus,</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>et cetus deglutivit me.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Numquid in aeternum proiecisti servum tuum?</em></td>
<td><em>Why have you abandoned your servant forever?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Placare Domine, ignosce Domine, et miserere.</em></td>
<td><em>Subside your anger, Lord, forgive and have mercy.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Angustiata est in me anima mea,</em></td>
<td><em>My soul in me is anguished and as my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord my God.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>in afflictione multa recordatus sum Domine, Deus meus.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bonum est obedire mandatis tuis a facie tua non declinare,</em></td>
<td><em>It is good to obey your commandments and not hide from your sight. Here am I, send me and I shall obey you:</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ecce ego, mitte me, et obediam tibi:</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>audi verba mea,</em></td>
<td><em>listen to my prayer and grant my request, in my distress, I trust in your name.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>et exaudi me in angustiis confitentem nomini tuo.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Placare Domine, ignosce Domine, et miserere.</em></td>
<td><em>Subside your anger, Lord, forgive and have mercy.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eleventh Response | Clothed in garments of salvation

Deuteronomy 32:1–4, 7, 36a, 43a

After reading Isaiah 61:1–4, 9–11

This call and response also alternates between free, chant-like sections and a more rhythmic response that can be supported by a drum. Add a drumroll, or shake the bells and tambourines anytime there is a fermata symbol!

I will proclaim the name of the Lord:

Great is our God, the Rock,

whose work is perfect,

whose ways are just.
In the resources for *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the verses for this response are “pointed” like psalm texts so that the text can be sung to a tone, with the refrain after verses 4 and 43a:

1Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;  
   let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

2May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew;  
   like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth.

3For I will proclaim the name of the Lord;  
   ascribe greatness to our God!

4“Great is our God, the Rock, whose work is perfect, whose ways are just:  
   a faithful God, without deceit, just and upright.” *Refrain*

7Remember the days of old,  
   consider the years long past;  
   ask your [parents], and [they] will inform you;  
   your elders, and they will tell you.

36aSurely, you will vindicate your people,  
   and have compassion on your servants.

43aRejoice with the Lord, you heavens;  
   bow down in worship, all you gods! *Refrain*
Twelfth Response | Deliverance from the fiery furnace

During the reading of Daniel 3:1–29

When the reader refers to the “sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble” (vv. 5, 7, 10, 15), play your instrument(s)!

After reading Daniel 3:1–29

Finally, a many-layered song to conclude the set of Vigil stories. Begin with one or two percussion rhythms:

Next, add a repeated segment for voice(s):

Higher voices can also add another repeated segment:
If desired, instruments can add (and improvise around) a countermelody:

For higher C instruments such as flutes, violins, and oboes (reading the upper or lower lines)

For treble B-flat instruments such as clarinets and trumpets (reading the upper or lower lines)

For treble E-flat instruments such as the alto saxophone (reading the upper or lower lines)

For bass instruments such as trombones or cellos
When you are ready to end the song, all can find a part to play for the ending:

*The drums, bells, shaking and rattling things, and anything that makes a joyful noise can be added at the end!*

Bless the Lord forever!
Acknowledgments

Psalm refrains adapted from the following resources:

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (Minneaplis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006)
Lutheran Service Book (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006)

Additional texts adapted from:

Revised Common Lectionary, © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts, admin Augsburg Fortress.

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