**Reopening Churches following the Coronavirus Restrictions:**

**Two Liturgies**

**LITURGY A: FOLLOWING THE CRUCIFIED, RISEN CHRIST**

**Introduction**

*This liturgy is offered for churches wishing to mark, through a distinctive rite, the reopening of their buildings following the coronavirus restrictions. It is offered as a supplement to the existing liturgy of the Church in Wales and so could be used within the context of a Sunday morning Eucharist as much as Evening Prayer. However, some adaptation will be needed if the officiant is not a priest.*

*This liturgy is marked both by praise and lament and, for families and communities severely affected by the coronavirus, there will be particular poignancy. Our Christian faith teaches us that we can face these challenging circumstances because our Lord has first faced suffering and death with us and for us.*

*Coming together face-to-face for the first time following the lockdown allows Christian communities to reflect upon these words and actions in the light of recent events. In particular, lockdown prevented the Church from celebrating liturgically the events of the Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus this year, so the rite which follows echoes in places the liturgy which would normally be celebrated during the great three days of the Triduum. They are included not as a ‘liturgical catch-up’ but from the profound conviction that the challenging experiences of recent months are held within the redeeming love of the One who came among us to serve, to give his life as a ransom for many and rise again triumphant.*

**The Opening Rite**

*Where appropriate and feasible, it is recommended that this opening rite be celebrated outdoors.*

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people,

in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him

who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

*1 Peter 2:9*

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father

and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son, in truth and love.

**And also with you.**

People of God, we gather with joy to mark the reopening of this church building following several months of closure and the recommencement of the worshipping life of the Christian community in this place. Restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic have prevented us from gathering in the Lord’s name to offer our sacrifice of praise and so today we are glad to come together. Yet our rejoicing is muted as we recall the anguish and hardship endured by many over recent months. Some have lost their lives; others have borne physical pain and mental anguish; yet others have been isolated and lonely; some, for whom home represents danger, have sustained violence and abuse; some groups in our society have suffered disproportionately; many have undergone disruption in education and work; employees and business owners alike have had to adapt to challenging economic conditions. In varying degrees, all of us have had our liberty curtailed for the sake of our nation’s health and well-being.

As people of faith, we humble ourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, praying that, in due time, he may exalt the victims of this devastating virus. Confident in his steadfast love and endless mercies, which are new every morning, we cast all our anxieties on him, trusting that he cares for his people who are broken by sickness, racked with grief and enveloped by perplexing darkness. We proclaim Christ who himself suffered agony, dereliction and death and abides with his people in his restorative risen power. Here, today, we encounter him as he speaks peace to the fearful, announces forgiveness to sinners and sends out his disciples as heralds of unconquerable hope. In his name and in the power of his Spirit, we commit ourselves anew to this vocation to be ambassadors of his kingdom where love shall reign triumphant.

*(cf. 1 Peter 5:6-7; Lamentations 3:22-23).*

*The holy oils, blessed by the Bishop, are presented.*

God of grace and power,

your Son was anointed at his baptism with the Spirit’s divine power

that he might heal your broken people

and with the fragrant love of human devotion

in preparation for his suffering and burial.

In your mercy, hear our prayer as we welcome these holy oils:

anointed with them,

*(the oil of the sick is elevated),*

may the sick receive the healing, consoling presence of Christ,

*(the oil of the catechumens is elevated),*

the catechumens be strengthened by him to resist the temptations of sin and evil

*(the Chrism is elevated),*

and those baptised and confirmed be conformed to him through the Spirit’s power.

In these anxious times, anoint your Church anew

that your people may be signs of your restoring power

and witnesses to your extravagant love

poured out through your Christ

who lives and reigns with you

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*A bowl of water and a towel are presented.*

Gentle, steadfast God,

your Son knelt to wash his disciples’ feet

and gave your Church the new commandment

that we should love one another as he had loved us.

We give thanks for all those who serve with great skill and compassion,

seeking the well-being of the afflicted

and allowing Christ’s lowly compassion to be revealed in them.

Bless them in their vocation

and grant them the needful gifts of your Spirit

that through them others may encounter your Son,

who had compassion on the needy

and brought them the fullness of your healing,

even Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*A crucifix or cross is lifted up.*

God of boundless mercy,

for us and for our salvation

your Son emptied himself,

and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

May those who feel exhausted by pain be held secure in his suffering embrace,

those drained through sharing the anguish of loved ones know his renewing grace

and those called to lead be filled with the power and wisdom

of the one once deemed weak and foolish.

As we behold the cross on which hung the Saviour of the world

so fill our hearts with gratitude for his love beyond measure,

open our eyes to recognise him in your sorrowful people

and equip our hands to minister in his name,

who came among us to serve

and give his life as a ransom for many,

Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

*The paschal candle is lifted up and lit.*

God of unconquerable life,

out of the abyss of death’s most cruel night

you have raised your Son to the radiant glory of the new creation’s dawn.

Standing among his lifeless disciples, frozen by fear,

he shows them the marks of love in his wounded, glorious body,

speaking peace,

breathing his Spirit

and sending them out to proclaim forgiveness in his name.

Enable us, your people, to live the mystery of Easter,

that the light of Christ, rising in glory,

may dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds,

for he is the beginning and the end,

Alpha and Omega,

to whom all time belongs,

and all ages;

to him be glory and power,

through every age and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The paschal candle is then carried in procession into the church.*

*The service then continues according to the usual liturgy. If desired, the vows of baptism may be renewed using the form prescribed in the Liturgy of the Easter Vigil.*

**The Sending Out**

*If the service is a Eucharist, the usual post-communion rite is used. The following form of blessing may be included.*

The Lord be with you:

**and also with you.**

God the Father,

who led his chosen people from slavery to freedom,

enable you to testify to his liberating power. **Amen.**

God the Son,

who trod the sorrowful path of suffering

and pioneered the way of glory,

reveal himself to you as your faithful companion. **Amen.**

God the Spirit,

through whom the disciples were empowered.

breathe the life of the new creation deep within you. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

be with you, those you love

and those you pray for,

this day and for ever.

**Amen.**

**LITURGY B: A SCRIPTURAL LITURGY OF PRAISE AND LAMENT**

**Gathering**

Although our Church is dispersed,

we meet together in the name of the Father,

and of the Son,

and of the Holy Spirit,

**Amen.**

**Welcome**

*Informal words of welcome - to include acknowledgement that this is an interim liturgy of praise and lament: delight to be worshipping together, but sadness that not all will be able to come to church yet, and some will be ill or have died from Covid 19.*

We light this candle to remind us that the light of Christ is always with us.

**Christ is our light and our salvation.**

*A Short Time of Silence*

**Praise**

Loving God,

from the beginning your Spirit has moved over all Creation,

constantly challenging us, shaping us and calling us to new birth.

Rejoicing that your Spirit is with us forever,

and delighting that we can worship in our church buildings again,

we say together

**Praise to you, O Lord!**

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! *(Ps 84.1)*

**Praise to you, O Lord!**

Praise the Lord, all you nations! Extol him, all you peoples! *(Ps 117)*

**Praise to you, O Lord!**

For great is his steadfast love towards us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever *(Ps 117)*

**Praise to you, O Lord!**

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak *(Isa. 40.29)*

**Praise to you, O Lord!**

Heavenly Father, during these strange times and challenging times, we acknowledge that we’ve learnt new skills, we’ve worshipped in new and different ways, we’ve considered our well-being, we’ve heard the birds sing and allowed creation to speak to us. We give thanks for blessings received!

**Praise to you, O Lord!**

Almighty God, merciful Father, source of all holiness and grace,

we thank you for your goodness and unending love to us and all creation.

We thank you for making and sustaining us and surrounding us with your blessings;

but of all your gifts we thank you most that in your love,

beyond our power to express,

you gave your Son our Lord Jesus Christ to restore and heal the human race.

We praise you, Father, for all the channels of your grace,

and for the hope of sharing your glory.

Enlighten our hearts and minds and show us the greatness of your love,

that our gratitude may be sincere: not only the praise of our lips

but the offering of our lives,

dedicated and righteous in your service.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord,

with you and the Holy Spirit one God, now and ever.

Alleluia. Amen.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious;

**his love is everlasting**. *(1 Chronicles 16.34)*

**Amen.**

**Lament**

Loving God,

who hears us when we cry to you,

and who,

through the death of your Son, Jesus Christ,

knows the pain of body, mind and spirit,

we remember in silence those who have lost their lives

and those who have lost their livelihoods during this lockdown period,

in this *town* and across the whole world.

*Silence*

In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. *(Ps. 18.6)*

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.** *(Ps. 25.1,2)*

The Lord is good, a stronghold on a day of trouble. He protects those who take refuge in him. *(Nahum 1.7)*

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.**

Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die will live.’ *(John 11:25)*

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.**

Jesus said, ‘Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.’ *(John 14:27)*

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.**

Jesus said, ‘I am with you always, to the end of the age.’ *(Matthew 28. 20b)*

**To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust.**

**Amen.**

Heavenly Father,

over the past months we have faced new challenges and realities.

The coronavirus has spared most,

but taken many,

and bruised us all.

We are thankful for our safety,

yet are mindful of the bereaved.

We have kept the faith,

yet there have been times of doubt;

we have trusted you,

yet there have been times of terror;

we have kept ourselves safe,

and others have risked all for us.

We have been neighbourly from a distance,

mindful of the rules of lockdown.

We come together as broken people

who seek your wholeness once again,

and who dare to ask for the strength

to sing a very new song.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

**Absolution**

Almighty and most loving God,

who forgives all who truly come to him

for a new beginning,

pardon you of all your shortcomings,

both real and imagined,

and make you whole again

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Gloria**

**We praise you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit**

**with all the saints and angels**

**in heaven and on earth,**

**and we worship you in sincerity and truth**

**for you are the Holy One,**

**the Lord, the Most High. Amen.**

Loving God, in you alone we find our hope and salvation,

in you alone we find our wholeness,

As we look forward to the time

when all members of your Church in this *town*

can worship together again, face to face,

and share in the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ,

we offer our worship, our sadness and our praise. **Amen.**

**(Readings of the day.**

**Sermon)**

**A Creed** *or this alternative, informal affirmation of faith may be used*

**We believe and trust in one God.**

**We believe and trust in God, the Father, the Creator.**

**We believe and trust in God, the Son, the Saviour.**

**We believe and trust in God, the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier.**

**We believe and trust in one God.**

**We believe.**

**We trust.**

**Amen.**

**The Peace**

The Lord gives strength to his people. The Lord blesses his people with peace. (Ps 29.11)

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

We offer one another the words of peace.

*The words of peace are shared together.*

**The peace of the Lord be with you, my friends in Christ.**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Together, we pray in confidence as our Lord has taught us…

**Our Father…**

**The Blessing:**

Christ the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for his sheep,

bring us and all who respond to his voice into one fold,

and the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

be with you, those you love

and those you pray for,

this day and for ever.

**Amen.**

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