



Resource Centre

From our Churches

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The Promise

A Christmas Eve Service
For storyteller, readers and choir/congregation

- **Processional**

Storyteller:

I welcome you to this place, and to this time. I welcome you to this celebration of the story, the story of the promise of the people of God. Tonight, in mind's eye, we will travel through our story as it leads us to stable and salvation, manger and Messiah. May this time be filled with worship. May this place be dedicated to God, Author of our story, Giver of our promise. May we all together celebrate the love of our God. Amen.

- **Carol (Introductory)**

Storyteller:

People of God, we have a tremendous story to share with each other and the world. It has a great and greatly auspicious beginning: We were created by God, and walked with God in the Garden. We saw God. We spoke with God, face-to-face, and lived. We had Paradise around us, and we were loved. And yet..., and yet, although we knew God, knew God's will, we chose to listen to the serpent. We chose to trade innocence and Paradise for Evil's promise of "knowledge." And by that choice, we also chose to be banished from God's sight. Banished. Yes, but in mercy, we were given a promise to give us guidance and hope, a promise that one day, one of us would give Evil a deathblow.

- **Reading I:** Genesis 2:4-7, 3:8-15

- **Carol I**

Storyteller:

And so we waited. We waited and hoped. There were times when we almost forgot the promise God had given us, and we all but despaired. But God did not forget us: whenever we were lost and distant from God and from the promise, someone rose up from among us. Someone from the rank of the ordinary would stand forward, touched by God, to speak hope to us. Someone would rise and tell us again of the Promised One, tell more about our coming Deliverer. In a time when our world was full of

injustices and the threats of war, those touched by the vision of God proclaimed the coming of the Promised One, the Just Ruler, the Bringer of Peace.

- **Reading II:** Isaiah 9:2-7

- **Carol II**

Storyteller:

Deep in our long nights, with only our promise to guide us, we listened to those among us touched by God for news of the God we loved and could not approach. We listened to those among us with God's vision to see where Evil crept among us, that we would not trust its words again. We listened, unless it was too painful, or we had been too touched by Evil to wish to listen. We listened; we relied on the truth of the words; we learned more and more about our loving God through the space between us and the visions we heard about the loving, caring, comforting Promised One of God. We listened; it could not be much longer now.

- **Reading III:** Isaiah 11:1-9

- **Carol III**

Storyteller:

The Promised One was near, although none of us knew it. None of us but a few living in a tiny village, far away from anywhere. The Promised One and our deliverance from Evil were not far away anymore, yet for such an event, for the fulfilment of a promise and a hope held for years, it was a quiet beginning. One small, quiet woman. One small quiet woman, face to face with an angel, and the message that her child would bear the name and aspect of the Promised One. Perhaps she did not realize at that moment that the wait for the deathblow to Evil was almost at an end. Perhaps she did not realize until much later. But in that quiet, almost frightening beginning, the Promised One was near.

- **Reading IV:** Luke 1:26-38

- **Carol IV**

Storyteller:

The fulfilment of the promise could not have been easy. And it was not. The culmination of our long years of waiting came painfully and messily; the Promised One came to us in the cloak of childbirth, entangled in that most human experience. A newborn, the fulfilment of the promise. It was not what we had expected in our generations of waiting. No one has even heard of the Child's parents, and no one has yet been told of their new joy. It was not what we had expected. And yet, who may ever say, and know, what an infant may become?

- **Reading V:** Luke 2:1-7

- **Carol V**

Storyteller:

But now, this night, the word spread, in a completely unexpected and stoppable way. In the darkness appeared a sudden blaze of radiance, and the angels, the purest of creation, brought the first news to those whom we deemed the lowest. Shepherds. The first to hear of the end of our waiting and the beginning of our Promised One were the smelly, lowly shepherds. They, and they only, received the firsthand news of the end of our waiting. Yet perhaps they were the best, and the only, choice from among us. For they heard. They went. They saw. They believed. And they spoke of this wonder, and spoke, and spoke, and spoke, and spoke to everyone they met, of high or low esteem, rejoicing in the news they spread. Children of God, in that place and time, which of us could have the faith and courage to do so?

- **Reading VI:** Luke 2:8-18

- **Carol VI**

Storyteller:

The Promised One has come. But where were the lights and the flags and the banners? Where were the noble admirers of our long-awaited ruler? They are there: a travel-marked, weary cavalcade of foreigners. “Wise Ones”, they called themselves, making a long journey of unknown length and destination. And the lights? Just one. One star in the sky. A single star and a handful of foreigners were all the great celebration our Promised One would receive by way of public celebration. The old king in Jerusalem had not even heard of the birth, and would not join in their search. It was just a handful of foreigners who came to worship the Child who was promised, promised to all the world. It was a single star, a star that came to stand over the place of the ruler of the Universe.

- **Reading VII:** Matthew 2:1-11

- **Carol VII**

Storyteller:

Evil’s conqueror came to us. The One from among us who would crush the head of evil had come to us, and the fulfilment of the promise was greater than we could ever have hoped. The Promised One was not only one of us, come to free us from the evil we chose to release on the world. The Promised One was God, God in our form, God come to us in a way we could understand. The God from whom we had banished ourselves and our descendents, at the beginning of our story, came to us, in our guise, in our skin, to love us and reverse our banishment. Our great story and our great mystery: the love of God, poured into a human body, to fulfill the promise, to crush the head of evil and set us free.

- **Reading VIII:** John 1:1-5, 9-10, 14

- **Carol VIII**

Storyteller:

Children of God, our Promised One has come to us again this night, in the retelling and reliving of our story. Our Promise and our Promised One, Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, has guided us this far, to this place and this time. He guides us and will guide

all who ask, for the love of God, which lived for a little time in a human body, is a gift for all who ask for it. And the love of God will again be poured into a human body, the body of those who ask for it, in whatever measure they can hold, and banishment from God's presence will be ended. This is our promise; this is the promise to the world. And we, the children of God, are guided and called to share the promise, to share the Promised One with the world.

[Closing prayer and Benediction] Our God, we thank you for your presence in this place tonight. We thank you for your promise and your guidance, the greatest gifts we have ever received. As we go out into the greater world, give us the remembrance of the promise and the courage and words to share it, to share the Promised One with the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, the promise and the fulfilment. Amen.