

# Anticipating the Promise

## Stories for the Easter Vigil

By Kevin P. Kern

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**DEDICATION**

*For Joe and Shana Kern, who first told me the stories.*

**STORY OF THE PLAY**

Celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus with this Easter vigil play. A cast of four readers brings the Bible to life, and into our modern lives. A troupe of players move among the readers, illuminating the text with movement and pantomime. Six individual Bible stories are dramatically portrayed, including Creation, Abraham and Isaac, Noah and the Flood, Crossing the Red Sea, The Promise of an Abundant Life, and The Three Men in the Fiery Furnace. *Anticipating the Promise* reminds us that these ancient stories still matter to a modern audience.

Flexible cast of 4, no gender requirements.

Run time 15 minutes.

**Premiere Performance**

*Anticipating The Promise* was first presented at Abiding Savior Lutheran Church in Alliance, Ohio, March 2013.

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**CASTING:**

*(4 readers and ensemble of players)*

The script makes use of 4 readers, identified in the text as A, B, C, and D. This work is best presented when there is a balance of voices, including young, old, male and female. The script also refers to the action of an ensemble identified as players. Variety seems to work well when casting the ensemble.

**STAGING:**

The Readers may be staged anywhere, although ideally they are placed where they can be seen by the audience.

This piece can be done in the round or in a thrust configuration to provide as intimate a setting as possible, although any space may be used.

The playing area starts off empty, except a 2' x 2' x 6" box with sand, which sits in the middle of the space. One large candle is in the sand. Long pieces of blue, red, and brown fabric encircle the sandbox.

**LIGHTING:**

The lights are dim. The Players enter the space in silence with lighted candles, which they place in the sand, around the large candle to create a campfire illusion.

**ACTION:**

The action should transition more or less seamlessly from one story to another, although the titles may be listed in the bulletin or program.

**I. THE CREATION**  
**GENESIS 1:1 – 2:2**

**A:** “A need to tell and hear stories is essential to the species . . . second in necessity apparently after nourishment and before love and shelter. Millions survive without love or home, almost none in silence.” *(Pause.)* Reynolds Price.

**B:** Tonight is the vigil, the name we take from the Latin word *vigilia*, meaning wakefulness. Tonight we stay awake, in anticipation of the morning.

**C:** But as we keep our gaze forward, we let our hearts turn to the stories of the past.

**D:** Tonight, we tell the old stories. Stories of water and earth and fire.

**ALL:** Stories of life, stories of promise.

**A:** We tell the stories in preparation.

**B:** We tell the stories in anticipation.

**C:** We tell the stories because we need to hear them.

**D:** We tell the stories because we need to tell them.

**A:** We begin with the first story ever told.

**ALL:** Creation.

*(The PLAYERS arrange the fabric so that blue covers all others. They move the blue fabric so it shimmers lightly.)*

**A:** In the beginning.

**B:** The world was without form, and there was a great void.

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**A:** In the beginning.

**B:** Darkness covered the Earth.

**A:** In the beginning.

**B:** In the beginning.

**C:** In the beginning.

**D:** The spirit of God moved over the face of the water.

**C:** In the beginning.

**D:** God commanded that there be light.

**C:** In the beginning.

**D:** There was light.

**C:** And God looked and saw that it was good.

**ALL:** And there was evening and there was morning.

**C:** And this was the first day.

**A:** And then God divided the water from the dry land.

*(The PLAYERS separate the blue and brown fabrics.)*

**B:** And the dry land was called Earth.

**A:** And above the Earth was sky.

**ALL:** And there was evening and there was morning.

**B:** And this was the second day.

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**C:** And then God commanded that the Earth bring forth fruits.

**D:** And that the Earth bring forth grains.

**C:** And God looked at all of this and saw that it was good.

**A:** And as time passed God set lights in the sky.

**B:** And the animals were made to roam the earth.

**A:** And fish to inhabit the sea.

**B:** God gave motion to the air and created wind.

**A:** And moved the water to create tides.

**B:** And birds flew, and comets shone, and volcanoes erupted, and trees pierced the sky.

**A:** And God looked and saw that it was very good.

**C:** And then...

**D:** And then...

**C:** And then, from the dust God made man.

*(Two PLAYERS move together and touch, palm to palm.)*

**D:** From the rib of that man he made woman.

**C:** We were created in the image of God.

**D:** Created in the image of God.

**C:** And that is why we say...

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