Narrative Lectionary

September 13-September 27

**Promises Kept**

September 13

Genesis 2:4b-7, 15-17; 3:1-8

*This liturgy can be adapted to done responsively if worshiping online or you may choose to use it with just one reader/speaker for in-person worship.*

**Call to Worship**

Welcome to this space where the ordinary is sanctified

Where the unexpected is to be expected

Where diversity is celebrated

And life is revered

Come into this space where perfect has no place

where pain is not ignored and potential is recognized

where everybody is somebody

and Jesus is Lord

Come into this place where God calls us in and sends us out

Where laughing and running are not hushed and stilled

but celebrated and delighted in.

Come and worship God.

**Prayer of Confession/Reconciliation/Telling the Truth**

Adam and Eve realized that they were naked before God—that everything about them was laid bare before the one who created them. That is our constant state of being. There is nothing about us that is hidden from God. So we are free to be open and honest about the places in our lives where we falter and fail.

Let us pray.

Creator of all, we confess that we would LOVE to have the power to make the world work for our needs, instead of working for the needs of the world that You have created. We seek comfort in the false illusion that we are in control. Help us to quit putting our trust in the things of this world that fail us every time. Lead us in Your ways that seek the well-being of all of Your creation. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen

**Worship Inspo**

The late humorist Lewis Grizzard used to say that the difference between being nude and being nekkid is that nude just means you don’t have any clothes on. Nekkid means you don’t have any clothes on and you’re up to something! Adam and Eve were most definitely nekkid.

*On Not Leaving it to the Snake* by Harvey Cox

If they were casting this story as a movie today, the snake would most likely be replaced by a compilation of every bad guy who ever appeared in a 1980s John Hughes movie. A cross between a spoiled rich kid and a burned-out principal would be the one tempting Eve to eat the apple in a move that would be half-seduction/half-intimidation.

Of course, after both Eve and Adam have eaten the forbidden fruit and gotten caught by God, Adam blames Eve. She *gave* me the apple (probably more like a pomegranate). He knew it was a dick move the moment the words came out of his mouth, but by then, it was too late to take it back. The damage had been done. They realized they were naked. They were terribly ashamed. Paradise was lost.

This is often called the story of original sin, but perhaps it is better thought of as the story of original shame. The moment shame entered our world. The moment that humans begin to feel that we are unworthy.

And we’ve been wandering in the wastelands ever since, bearing the shame we’ve been trying to shed since time begin—despite the efforts of THE God to offer us the Way home.

**Location Ideas:**

If you’re doing remote worship, consider delivering your message from under a tree. If you have access to a fruit tree, that would be amazing!

If you want to get really fancy, record the reading of the scripture in a lush setting but deliver your message in a desolate place to demonstrate the stark reality Adam and Eve had to face.

**Song Suggestions:**

I don’t delineate between sacred and secular music. Many different styles of music have the power to touch, heal and transform people. That all seems pretty holy to me. (I’ve starred the pieces you should be sure to check out if you don’t already know them.)

**Pop Music**

[Adam and Eve](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPpk2l9HdlI)—Bob Seeger

[Cold Hearted Snake](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7aShcmEksw)—Paula Abdul

[Forbidden Fruit](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8MYiyNwGy4)—Nina Simone

[Dem Bones Gonna Rise Again](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jq0fzHmYZjQ) (Kid’s Song)

**Contemporary Christian**

[God of Wonders](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CBNE25rtnE)—Third Day

[\*Good (Adam and Eve)—](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bf-x-cqNQ-k)Matthew West and Leigh Nash

**Traditional**

How Great Thou Art

All Creatures of Our God and King

All things Bright and Beautiful

God of the Sparrow

**Abraham—You’ll Be Counting Stars**

Narrative Lectionary

September 20

Genesis 15:1-6

*This liturgy can be adapted to done responsively if worshiping online or you may choose to use it with just one reader/speaker.*

**Call to Worship**

God’s promise is written in the stars

A bold promise to an old man

We see ourselves in the stars

Descendants of Abraham

We are the fulfillment of the promise God made

We are the promise

Full of potential

Full of possibilities

Part of an ancient covenant

Still in place today.

We come to worship as a community of the covenant

Ready to trust in the promises to God.

Ready to live out God’s Word.

**Prayer of Confession/Reconciliation/Telling the Truth**

God of the Covenant, we confess that we do not always lean on Your promises. We are far more willing to lean on what’s in our bank account and our own abilities to dig ourselves out of whatever hole we end up in. Forgive our impatience and our impertinence, O God. We are fallible and faulty people who want to be more faithful. Lead us in your way, and when we falter, pick us up, dust us off and push us back on the path toward You. Amen.

**Worship Inspo**

Consider sending out a request that people head outside the night before your worship service and spend a little time star gazing. Ask them to try to count the stars.

Send out a pdf of the star pattern (see below) and have your members download it, cut out stars for every member of the family and cut out and paste a picture of each person to place in the center. Encourage them to display the stars in a visible place in their home to remind them that they are part of God’s covenant.

This is where the Bible turns things around. Look at how it all gets started: Adam and Eve blow it in the Garden of Eden and Paradise is Lost. The humans God has created are so toxic that God has to flood almost all of them out and start over. THEN, the people get the crazy notion to build a tower so that they can be as great as God. We end up with God’s people scattered and confused by the end of the 11th chapter of the first book of the Bible. We’re finally introduced to Abraham, but we learn that he is old and that his wife is barren—so we’re not pinning any great hope on them either. Then comes the covenant. The promise of something more…something pretty spectacular.

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**Location Ideas:**

Consider filming at least part of the worship at night. Most of us don’t have a high tech camera that will really capture stars (or even live in a place where you can see stars at night), but the image of the night sky and the idea of stars can be really powerful here.

**Song Suggestions:**

I don’t delineate between sacred and secular music. Many different styles of music have the power to touch, heal and transform people. That all seems pretty holy to me.

**Pop Music**

[Counting Stars---](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT_nvWreIhg)One Republic

[I Sing the Body Electric](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tG-wl2qqD7Y)—Soundtrack of Fame

**Contemporary Christian**

[Indescribable](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IlVfkY5q54)—Jesse Reeves, Laura Story

[Touch the Sky](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1RQciil7B0)—Dylan Thomas, Joel Houston

[El Shaddai](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bon1XtAdzD0) (has this morphed into traditional by now?)—Michael Card

**Traditional**

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Take My Life

The God of Abraham Praise

**Star Pattern**

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**God’s Gonna Turn it Around**

September 27

Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21

*This liturgy can be adapted to done responsively if worshiping online or you may choose to use it with just one reader/speaker.*

**Call to Worship**

We gather as people who know what it is to have days, weeks and even years when nothing is going right.

We gather as people who know what it is to be discouraged.

We gather as people who know how hard it can be to hope.

We also gather as people who believe in a God more powerful than we can imagine.

We gather as people of Jesus Christ—the one the tomb could not hold.

We gather as people of the Holy Spirit who swoops in and upends our lives with joy and newness at the most unexpected times.

We gather to lift one another up

To encourage each other along the way

To remind one another just Whose we are.

We gather to worship to God.

**Prayer of Confession/Reconciliation/Telling the Truth**

Almighty God, we confess that we sometimes feel helpless and hopeless in the face of tragedies and travesties in our lives and in our world. We begin to wonder where You are and what You are doing. Help us to turn toward You, rather than run away from you, when we are hurting and in need of healing. Lead us beside Your still waters. Restore our souls. Energize and equip us to be agents of change and transformation as Your people in Your world. Amen.

**Worship Inspo**

This is the ultimate story of a dysfunctional family. I have found that people from dysfunctional families tend to think that their story is unique (which makes it feel all the more shameful). Highlighting what God does with this particular dysfunctional family and talking about how they’re not unlike a lot of families will be straight up pastoral care for many on your congregation.

If God can turn this situation around, God can turn our situations around. It’s a message everyone needs to hear in this time when it seems like nothing is EVER going to turn around. This is a great story of hope for this time.

**Location Ideas:**

Consider leading part of the worship service from in front of a jail or prison.

You could go the extra mile and dig a really deep pit and film from inside of it. If that seems a little too extra, you can get someone to film part of the message or the scripture reading from above—for instance, standing out on a balcony of a house or in your sanctuary (if you have one)—while you look up at the camera.

**Song Suggestions:**

I don’t delineate between sacred and secular music. Many different styles of music have the power to touch, heal and transform people. That all seems pretty holy to me. (I’ve starred the pieces you should be sure to check out if you don’t already know them.)

**Pop Music**

[Things Can Only Get Better](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OO9LloDSJo)—Howard Jones

[Coat of Many Colors](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_-YbWHs6DE)—Dolly Parton

[Close Every Door](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0w4maOLUfFk)—Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

**Contemporary Christian**

\*[Chainbreaker](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WtV1XtqsW0) –Zach Willams

[This is Amazing Grace](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFRjr_x-yxU)—Phil Wickham

**Gospel**

[God’s Gonna Turn It Around](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07RkkfK_B3A)—The Rance Allen Group

[Turn it Around](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxAn2ujwUkg)—Israel and the New Breed

**Traditional**

There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy

God of Grace and God of Glory

*If you’ve received this free resource, you’ll also receive info on how you can subscribe to the same kind of narrative lectionary resources for the fourth quarter of the year (taking you through Christmas). It will also include graphics for the theme “Promises Kept,” weekly graphics for each week’s scripture to use on social media and a theme and graphics for Advent. Fourth quarter resources and graphics (including graphics for the weeks above) will be available September 6. If you don’t receive more, please email me at* [*anne@doubtingbeliever.com*](mailto:anne@doubtingbeliever.com)*.*