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Prepared by the Consultative Panel on Lutheran–Jewish Relations of the office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Your ideas about these topics are very welcome and will be considered by the Panel in its further work. To submit personal reflections or the results of a group discussion, please use the accompanying Response and Evaluation form or simply send a letter to the ELCA office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations at the address below, or send an email to [erinfo@elca.org](mailto:erinfo@elca.org).

Further information on Jewish-Christian relations, including a downloadable form of these “Talking Points,” may be found at [www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Christian-Jewish-Relations/Talking-Points.aspx](http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Ecumenical-and-Inter-Religious-Relations/Inter-Religious-Relations/Christian-Jewish-Relations/Talking-Points.aspx). See also the comprehensive set of resources on the ecumenical web site [www.jcrelations.net](http://www.jcrelations.net).

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## TALKING POINTS

#4

### TOPICS IN CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

#### PROMISE AND FULFILLMENT

Christians affirm that God’s promises to Israel are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in the life of the church. We need to be aware that Jews also have experienced God’s continuing faithfulness in rabbinic Judaism and in the contemporary reality of Jewish faith and life.

The writers of the New Testament speak of Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. In doing so, they build upon a well-established pattern of promise and fulfillment that characterizes God’s actions in the Old Testament (promises of offspring and land to Abraham and Sarah; promise of a dynasty to David). Using richly diverse images from Israel’s heritage – Jesus as the New Moses, the Son of David, the Son of Man – they bequeath this pattern to Christian thought. What we experience in Christ is a fulfillment of the expectation God has given us through the Torah and the prophets.

God’s promises are often fulfilled in unexpected ways, however. Even as the church found in Jesus the fulfillment of Messianic hope, it described his role and actions in bold and distinctive combination with other scriptural themes. The new Moses is also the Suffering Servant; the Son of David is also the Paschal Lamb.

We also believe that God has yet more to accomplish in the redemption of humanity and of all creation; we still live in

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“Talking Points” is a set of eight leaflets issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America’s office of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations to set forth propositions for discussion and debate on topics in Christian-Jewish relations. These “Talking Points” are not intended as position papers, but as discussion starters, with the hope of eliciting a broad range of responses to the point as stated in the box above. See back page for information on how to offer feedback.

*KNOW THEREFORE  
THAT THE LORD YOUR GOD IS GOD,  
THE FAITHFUL GOD  
WHO MAINTAINS COVENANT LOYALTY  
WITH THOSE WHO LOVE HIM  
AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS,  
TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS.*

DEUTERONOMY 7:9

*HOW CAN I GIVE YOU UP, EPHRAIM?  
HOW CAN I HAND YOU OVER, O ISRAEL?*

HOSEA 11:8

anticipation, praying, “Thy kingdom come.” As we are grateful for what God has already done and at the same time look forward in hope to what God yet will do, we have much in common with faithful Jews. They, too, rejoice in the blessings of the covenant while still looking forward to the fullness of redemption.

God has more than one way of being faithful to God’s promises. The promise and fulfillment pattern should not imply that Christianity and Judaism are mutually exclusive fulfillments. Rather, each faith community has experienced God’s grace and guidance in ample measure.

Promise and fulfillment is not a once and for all event, but rather a recurring pattern of God’s action. Both the life of the church and the vitality of contemporary Judaism are vivid testimonies to God’s power and constancy. In every generation, church and synagogue are mutual tokens of God’s faithfulness. Together we await the ultimate fulfillment of all God’s promises.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Of the various images used in the New Testament to depict Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises (such as those mentioned above), which are the most meaningful to you?
2. Can a promise find fulfillment in more than one way? What are some examples?
3. Can God, or can a person, make the same promise to different people, and fulfill it differently?
4. What do you think of the idea that contemporary Judaism, in its own way, fulfills God’s promises to ancient Israel?