

Worship Material
God's good news of a covenant
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 18th February

Begin with an opening prayer

Eternal God,
your love draws us in and your promises fill us with hope;
your covenant secures our future and undergirds our faith;
your grace enriches and colours our relationships and our lives.
And so, on this new day, we join our voices to sing your praises.
We open our hearts to hear your word
and celebrate all that you have done for us and for all creation.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Read Genesis 9.8-17

Bible notes

The stories in the early chapters of Genesis set out the ancient Israelite understanding of the relationship between God and creation: God is the source of all creation; creation is good; creation is ordered; humankind is made in God's image and tasked with caring for God's creation; living in a way that is out of step with God has disastrous results.

Many ancient cultures have flood stories that, in one way or another, are the judgement of the gods on the wayward human population. In this version, Noah is the one bit of light in an otherwise dark world. The widespread destruction caused by the flood enables a reset, a fresh start for creation, led by the one family that had remained in step with God. The months spent in the ark, while quickly read, were no brief moment and would have been a character-forming time!

On release from the ark, Noah's first response is to make an offering to God, perhaps out of gratitude, perhaps as an act of dedication. God makes several promises that give future security to humankind. These promises are sealed with the covenant set out in today's reading: a contract, a formal agreement between two parties, in this case between God and humankind – present and future. While such a contract would normally have responsibilities on either side, this covenant has no conditions attached. God's love for God's creation is such that, having enabled this fresh start, humankind will never again

experience such a judgement. Never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth and all humankind. The rainbow is a memory-trigger: when we see it, we see a thing of beauty, a reminder of God's faithfulness, a promise of a future.

Prayer

A prayer of praise

Response after each phrase: **We praise you.**

Living God, with the crescent moon and the rising sun:

We praise you.

with the singing birds and the roaring waves:

We praise you.

with your creatures in the forests and the creatures in the fields:

We praise you.

with our friends and family around our tables and our brothers and sisters around our world:

We praise you.

for your promises, your love and your faithfulness:

We praise you.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

God of new beginnings,
your undying, tender love is truly amazing.
You sustain the whole universe with what is needed for life.
You trust us humans to care for that life.
We often fail,
but your love reaches out a hand to pick us up,
to help us start again.
Thank you. Amen.