

# The First Sunday of Lent

Saint Paul's Episcopal Church

February 21, 2021

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We acknowledge that we are on the traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples who have reserve treaty rights to this land, including the Upper Skagit and Swinomish Tribes.

We thank these caretakers of this land, who have lived, and continue to live, here since time immemorial.

We are at the First Sunday of Lent in the cycle of the church year. We begin the season with a covenantal statement by God with Noah and all of creation, in the next two weeks we will hear covenant statements with Abram and Moses. Today's covenant is with Noah, his family, the last surviving humans on earth, all of creation and God. "[T]he covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations" God promises not to bring another all destructive flood and there is no call for reciprocity from the creation.

The story of the flood tells of God doing some very unexpected things. In chapter six we hear a lament from God "The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." (Gen 6:5) so God rebooted creation with a flood. But God setup a restoration plan "Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord." (Gen 6:8) Noah was directed to take his family "And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you...every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them"

Chapter eight brings an end to the flood and Noah makes an offering and God is pleased and said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, for the inclination

of the human heart is evil from youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. As long as the earth endures,' (Gen 8:21) God, which many believe is an omnidirectional, unchangeable One—changes God's mind and perhaps it may be said, repents and returns to the relationship with creation.

The verses before today's reading lay out creation's responsibility, not unlike at the beginning. They are:

To be fruitful and multiply (9:1)

Reaffirmation of humanity's stewardship over the creation (9:2)

Given God's permission to eat meat, but not the blood (9:3-5)

To condemn the shedding of human blood (9:6)

And a repetition of the command to be fruitful (9:7)

God regrets the action of the flood and grieves the results. God always desires relationship and is moved by the suffering and groaning of creation, showing God's incarnational side in the Old Testament. God truly desires to be in relation with God's creation.

In this covenant "the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh." God places a bow, and it is a war bow in the sky as "the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." Choosing to trust that humankind, for all its wickedness and every evil inclination of heart will strive, at some point, to return to the relationship with God and each other. With each vain attempt by humanity to be like god, God must be looking at the rainbow.

We are in Lent, a time of preparation, reflection, simple living, fasting and/or taking on a spiritual practice, and one might add looking at rainbows and contemplating what that sign signifies. There are many, many ills in this world and the more one pays attention the more one finds pain, suffering and a need for repentance. The people researching non-profits and programs for Participation in Healing have discovered a myriad of organizations that they did not know existed in Skagit County and around the world, trying to meet some need or other

that have their foundations in the way we treat one another. God must be looking at the rainbow!

The people working with Underground Ministries on the One Parish One Prisoner ministry are learning about the treatment and regulation of those we judge and punish in this society. How society denigrates their humanity and keeps them from reengaging life outside the walls. God must be looking at the rainbow!

Remembering that God promised never to “destroy the earth.” But God has left that option, at least for the carrying capacity, in human hands. We may not be able to destroy the world, at least not yet, but we seem to be well on our way to making occupancy of the world difficult. So, I am going to offer a way of discerning and stewardship of the environment. A way to reflect on our carbon foot print and discern what that foot print means to those who will follow after us. What kind of ancestor do we want to be?

The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Olympia has partnered with a carbon tracking group called We Renew at <https://www.sustainislandhome.org> to join in as a community way of tracking the impact of our lifestyle on the amount of carbon being used and going into the air and what we have succeeded in doing to mitigate that carbon. This online tool, brought to you through The Episcopal Church and The Diocese of California makes it easy for Episcopalians and others to learn about how their households and daily lives affect that carbon footprint and how taking action can lower their carbon footprint while saving energy and money.

40% of United States emissions (5% of global climate emissions) come from 5 basic household activities in the United States We now have solutions that make it easy to lower these emissions and make a big difference! These actions also save money, improve air quality and create local jobs. In addition, there are actions on talking about climate change and advocating for policy change. You are probably already doing some of these actions and you can record this as well. The tool also adds up all the actions by church, diocese and across the

Episcopal Church - so we can see how, together, we are making a difference in living more gently and sustainably on the earth.

As Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's Episcopal Creation Care Pledge reads;

As the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement, we long to grow loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with the whole of God's Creation. Together, we pledge to protect and renew the Earth and all who call it home. Together, we are living the Way of Love and make this commitment to specific actions. Learn more about our shared call at [www.episcopalchurch.org/creation](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/creation).

Loving: We will share our stories of love and concern for the Earth and link with others who care about protecting the sacred web of life.

Because I want to share my strong love of God and God's Creation, I will...

Promesa episcopal sobre el Cuidado de la Creación

Como la rama episcopal del Movimiento de Jesús, anhelamos desarrollar una relación amorosa, liberadora y vivificadora con toda la creación de Dios. Juntos, prometemos proteger y renovar la Tierra y a todos los que la llaman su hogar. Juntos, vivimos el Camino del Amor y nos comprometemos con acciones específicas.

Amorosa: Compartiremos nuestras historias de amor y preocupación por la Tierra y nos vincularemos con otros que se dediquen a proteger la red sagrada de la vida.

Porque quiero compartir mi profundo amor de Dios y de la creación de Dios, yo...

I will be inviting you to give up some of your Facebook or Twitter time and join with me in exploring ways to reduce our carbon footprint on an app connected with The Episcopal Church, at [SustainIslandHome.org](http://SustainIslandHome.org). So, watch for an invitation to a Zoom meeting, If you are interested now one can always sign up at Sustain Island Home <https://www.sustainislandhome.org/>

As Katherine Hayhoe, PhD an evangelical, atmospheric scientist and professor of political science at Texas Tech University, has called climate change a force multiplier, a military term. of all the ills that plague creation. Climate change makes everything worse, the fire hotter and bigger and longer fire season, the flood larger, stronger and greater season, the hurricane more destructive and wet, and pollution more concentrated and the environment and those on the margins more vulnerable. “The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” (Gen 6:5-6)

God must be looking at the rainbow!

Remember the rainbow, interpreted as God's weapon laid aside, stands between us and God as a sign of the covenant that reminds us of the mutuality of covenant: that there are two parties, both of which are in this together. God remembers, God is faithful, and God continues to be in covenant, to be in relationship with us. And that is good news.