

Gen. 9:8–17

Ps. 25:1–10

1 Pet. 3:18–22

Mark 1:9–15

Rainbow Promise

Goal for the Session

Tweens will begin Lent by recognizing God’s love and desire for relationship with humankind, as shown through the story of Noah.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Genesis 9:8–17

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Dianne Bergant

Several important aspects of this covenant should be noted. First, it was made with all of creation. Second, it was multigenerational, made not only with Noah and those present, but with all who would come in the future as well. The biblical flood narrative contains a story of deliverance and of relationship with God. God directed Noah, the only one who found favor with the Lord, to build an ark so that he and his family and some of the animals might escape the punishing waters of the flood. From this small community God then fashioned a new human family and established a covenant with that family and with the world as a whole. This is a story of deliverance and new beginnings.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Wm. Loyd Allen

The God revealed here is adaptable, touched to the heart by creation, and willing to accept hurt to keep hope alive. The God of this covenant is unchanging only in refusing to give up on creation. God keeps the future open by self-limitation when humanity threatens to close off hope by unlimited repeat offenses. God takes this risk because God’s heart is touched by creation’s suffering. The God declaring this covenant is not an objective judge meting out a just sentence, but a lover grieved to the heart at the beloved’s violence, yet still seeking reconciliation. Readers will find divine regret throughout this covenant, but will look in vain for anger.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Jane Anne Ferguson

The creatures made in God’s image may always resist God. Yet God lays down God’s weapons against creation, against humankind. God puts the undrawn bow in the clouds as a personal reminder “never again” to destroy creation with a flood. In the light of that bow, the rainbow, humanity can see God as “One Who Remembers,” even in the midst of chaos, even in the midst of rebellion by creation and its creatures.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” David J. Lose

The self-limitation and willingness to sacrifice divine freedom that this passage describes reach their climax in the passion of Jesus Christ, for which Lent prepares us. This passage invites us to reconsider our relationships with each other and, indeed, all creation. If God, who alone has the right to despair, judge, or destroy, surrenders the divine prerogative from covenantal commitment, might not we who have tasted this mercy look upon all persons and all things as inherently worthwhile, that is, as those things that God has called worthy?

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Genesis 9:8–17

Focus on Your Teaching

Often tweens are hungry for relationships with others and want to connect at a deeper level. This week, we have the opportunity to explore the idea that God desires relationship with us. Most tweens are starting to make the shift from concrete to abstract thinking. They are able to grasp, in theory, that God wants to have a relationship with them, but may not recognize how that is possible. As you prepare for the session, think about how you experience relationship with God and be ready to share your wisdom.

Faithful God, send your Spirit to guide me as I teach about your unconditional love. Deepen my understanding of what it means to be your beloved child. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- ❑ purple cloth
- ❑ large white battery-powered candle
- ❑ copies of Resource Sheet 1
- ❑ Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 31
- ❑ colorful fresh fruit
- ❑ knives, cutting board
- ❑ napkins, toothpicks
- ❑ colorful balloons
- ❑ *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- ❑ permanent marker
- ❑ 20" piece of wide purple ribbon

For Responding

- ❑ option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, sticky notes, markers
- ❑ option 2: embroidery floss in rainbow colors, scissors, tape
- ❑ option 3: face paint in rainbow colors, paintbrushes

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Greet tweens as they arrive and introduce any newcomers. Ask volunteers to arrange the purple cloth in the middle of your meeting area, and place the candle and Color Pack 1 on it.

Gather the group and explain that the Christian church has entered the season called Lent. Lent lasts for 40 days (excluding Sundays), and is a time to think about our relationship with God and how it might change the way we live. It is a time for questions: What does God want us to learn? How might we need to change the way we live? The color of Lent is purple, the color of repentance.

Ask a volunteer to light the candle. Offer this opening prayer:

Faithful God, open our minds to hear your promises of love and let it change our hearts. Amen.

Extinguish the candle. Introduce the session focus by having some conversation about promises:

- ✪ What does the word *promise* mean?
- ✪ What promises have people made to you? What kinds of promises have you made?

Comment that the Bible story for today is about a time when God made a promise.

EXPLORING

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (The Story of Noah). Ask for volunteers to play the roles of Narrator and Voice, and have the rest of the group form the chorus.

Many tweens will be familiar with this story. Show Color Pack 2 and invite tweens to tell what this painting adds to their understanding of the story. Distribute Bibles and turn to Genesis 6–9. Explain that the book of Genesis contains our oldest faith stories. They were

written down so the people would have a record of how God created the world and how they became God's people.

Display Color Pack 3. Turn to Genesis 9:8–17. Ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Discuss the passage:

- ✧ What did God promise?
- ✧ Who or what is included in the promise?

If tweens don't make the connection, point out that we are all descendants of Noah, so God's promise is for us, too.

Explain that making agreements and promising to keep them was an important act in Noah's time. These agreements were called *covenants*. The most important covenants were the ones that God made with the people. There are a number of them recorded in the Bible.

- ✧ What symbol did God give as a reminder of this covenant?

Being mindful of allergies, invite tweens to prepare a rainbow-colored snack by cutting up the fruit and arranging it on a board in the shape of a rainbow. Provide napkins and toothpicks. Eat the snack as you talk about the symbol of the rainbow. Point out the shape of the bow. Explain that at the time of Noah, the bow was a weapon of war and destruction. Hanging up a bow was a sign that the war was over and creation could rest in peace. Draw attention to Genesis 9:13. Point out that God has hung up a weapon of destruction and turned it into something beautiful. Ask:

- ✧ What does this tell us about God?

Accept all answers, and if no one else says it, comment that God must really love us to make such a promise.

Give one balloon to each person to inflate and tie. Next, use a permanent marker to carefully write one or more words of Genesis 9:11 on each balloon. (If you have a large group, print one word per balloon. If you have a smaller group, print several words on each balloon.) Have tweens bat the balloons to each other, trying to keep all the balloons in the air. When a balloon hits the ground, shout, "Rainbow!" Each player must grab a balloon, check the word(s), and line up in order so the balloons spell out the verse. Say the verse together. Repeat the game several times over. Be prepared to replace burst balloons.

Gather with tweens in a circle and discuss:

- ✧ What do you think God wants us to learn from the story of Noah?
- ✧ How might this story change the way we treat other people and creation?
- ✧ How might this story change the way we relate to God?

EASY
PREP

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Sticky Notes** The story of the rainbow covenant challenges us to think about how we will respond to God's love. Pass out copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Rainbow People) and ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Invite lively discussion of all the questions, affirming each learner's contribution. Follow the instructions for making sticky notes. Tweens may also like to write the words of God's promise (Genesis 9:11) on a sticky note as a reminder of God's love for them.
- 2. Wristbands** The rainbow is a reminder of God's solemn promise to all creation. To make rainbow wristbands, gather six strands of embroidery thread in rainbow colors, each 24 inches long. Hold the strands together and tie a knot 1 inch from the end. Tape the knot to a tabletop. Working from the free end, twist the group of threads repeatedly in the same direction until they are tightly wound. Hold the twisted band in the center and fold it in half so that the free end matches up with the knotted end. Release the center, and the band will twist together. Secure the band on the wrist with a knot and trim long ends. Encourage tweens to wear their wristbands as a reminder that they are recipients of God's promise.
- 3. Face Painting** We are all heirs of God's rainbow promise. Invite tweens to use face paint to decorate each other's faces or arms with small rainbows. They might draw a traditional bow, or have the rainbows rippling down across the face or snaking around the arms. Encourage creativity and imagination. Together, have them plan what they will say when others in church ask about the rainbows.

CLOSING

Gather the group around the candle and light it. Invite tweens to take a moment to quiet themselves as you play "Dona Nobis Pacem" (Color Pack 31, [Singing the Feast](#)). Invite tweens to sing it as you drape a 20" length of wide purple ribbon over the cloth. Ask:

✠ What word, phrase, or image from today's story will you remember, and why?

Use a permanent marker to print tweens' responses on the ribbon.

Offer this prayer:

Faithful God, we thank you for the promise you made to Noah, to his family, and to us. Help us to live in that promise day by day. Amen.

Speak this blessing to each tween:

(Name), journey into life strengthened by the promise of God's love for you and all of creation.

Extinguish the candle. Thank tweens for coming and for positive contributions they made to the session.

Dona Nobis Pacem

Dona nobis pacem, pacem.
Dona nobis pacem.

During Lent you will add a ribbon to the worship space each week, creating a rainbow by Easter. Keep these wide ribbons to use in upcoming weeks.

The Story of Noah

Narrator: God looked at the earth and saw evil everywhere.

Chorus: Evil, evil, evil—morning, noon, and night.

Narrator: God said, “I will wipe out everything I have made. I’m sorry I ever created them.”

Chorus: Uh-oh!

Narrator: But Noah was different. Noah followed God’s ways. God was pleased with Noah.

Chorus: *(cheers, whistles, applause)*

Narrator: God said to Noah, “I’ve had enough. I am going to destroy humankind completely.”

Voice: Yikes!

Chorus: *(gulping noises)*

Narrator: God told Noah to build an ark—a huge boat with rooms in it. God gave Noah all the measurements for the construction. It was massive!

Voice: That’s some building project.

Narrator: Noah and his family built the ark just as God told Noah.

Chorus: *(construction noises)*

Narrator: When the ark was ready, God told Noah to put his family on board and to bring two of every kind of animal to live on it. A massive storm was in the forecast.

Chorus: All the animals, from anteaters to zebras, came on board.

Narrator: When all the animals were on board, Noah closed the door and it began to rain.

Chorus: *(Make rainstorm noises: Start with rubbing fingertips, snapping fingers, and stomping feet, and then repeat the noises in reverse order.)*

Voice: Whoa, that was some storm!

Narrator: The whole earth was flooded.

Chorus: Everything was gone.

Narrator: The ark floated for 150 days.

Voice: That’s over five months!

Narrator: The sun came out and the winds blew.

Chorus: *(blowing sounds)*

Narrator: Eventually, the floodwaters went down. The ark landed on dry land and everyone got out.

Chorus: *(Stretch.)* Ahhh!

Narrator: Noah built an altar, so he and his family could give thanks to God. Then God said, “Never again.”

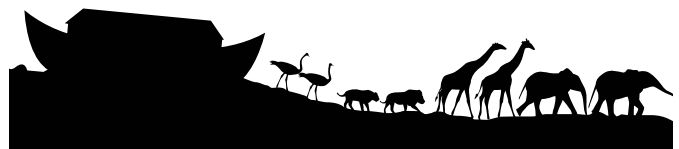
Chorus: Never, ever again.

Voice: What never?

Narrator: God said, “Never again will I curse the earth because of the people. I know that they will do evil once again, but I’ll never destroy everything as I’ve just done. The rainbow will remind me of my promise.”

Chorus: It was a fresh start.

Voice: A new beginning.



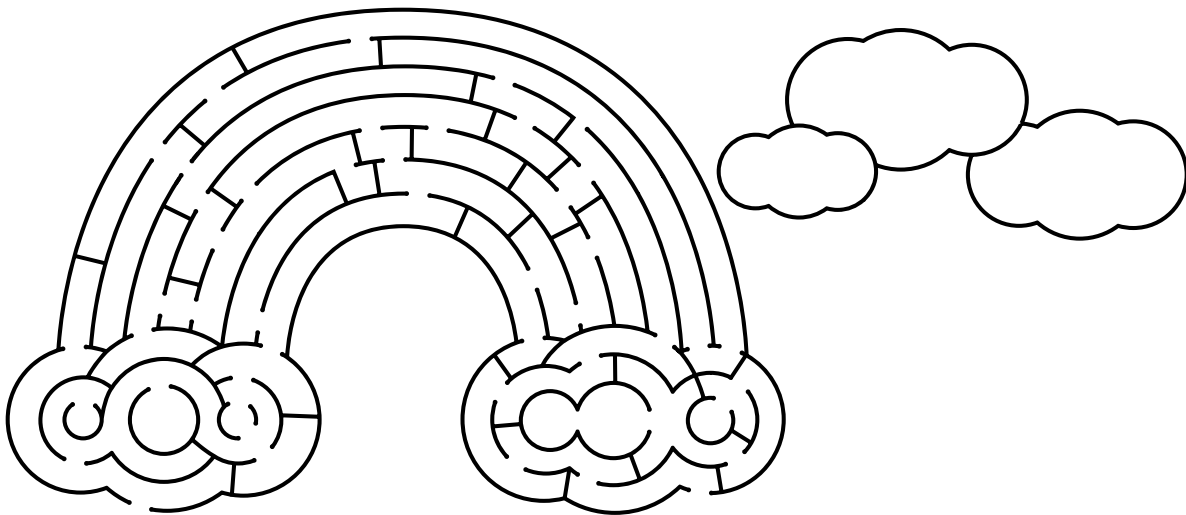
(The story of Noah is found in Genesis 6:5–9:17.)

Rainbow People

One day a young mother was taking a walk with her small son and they saw a rainbow. The four-year-old boy looked up in wonder and said, “Mommy, can we take that home and put it in our house?” His awestruck question prompted the mother to write a poem she titled “A Rainbow in My House.” She took her son’s question literally, imagining what it would be like to have a rainbow in their house, on their walls, emanating from the windows and doors, coming out the chimney. The house was transformed, and it could not contain the glory of the rainbow and its colors.

What does the body of Christ look like in the light of the rainbow? What would it mean for a Christian community to put God’s “rainbow in their house”?

—Excerpted from Jane Anne Ferguson (*Feasting on the Word, Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B, Volume 2*. Westminster John Knox, 2010, 26)



✿ So what might we be saying and doing to make the promise of God’s rainbow part of our daily lives?

- What kinds of things can we do to help our relationship with others?
- What kinds of things can we do to help our relationship with creation?
- What kinds of things can we do to help our relationship with God?

Choose three suggestions, and write each one on a sticky note. If you like, decorate the edges of the notes with rainbow colors. Take the notes home and put them up where you will see them every day. Try to include these suggestions in your daily life.