

Prayer:

Faithful God, living up to your image is sometimes hard to do. Forgive us when we don't follow your lead in helping partner in restoring your beautiful creation. We give thanks for your everlasting covenants and that your steadfast love created all things, including us! May we be a blessing to others! Amen.

Genesis 8:15-22; 9:1, 8-13

¹⁵ Then God said to Noah,¹⁶ "Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you.¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."¹⁸ So Noah went out with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives.¹⁹ And every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out of the ark by families.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.²¹ And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor, the Lord 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.

²² As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

^{9:1} God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him,⁹ "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you,¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark."¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."¹² God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:¹³ I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

I'm Krehl Stringer, chaplain at Pioneer Care retirement community in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

I've begun a more careful study of the everlasting covenants in the Scriptures. Those decisive Kairos moments when God's determination to exercise steadfast love takes precedence over all other considerations. God says "As for me, this is the way it's going to be." Which, of course, is how all things came to be in Genesis, chapter 1. The fact is, God created everything out of steadfast love. The earth is good. It is beautiful, and God made us beautiful, too. Created in God's loving image, to serve and preserve the earth, to be a blessing to all people and all creation. But living up to God's image isn't always that easy.

Video from Lutherans Restoring Creation

Out of steadfast love, God sent his son Jesus and the Holy Spirit to sustain us in this saving work: for healing damaged and broken relationships; for mending and tending the delicate web of life; and restoring the beauty of the Earth.

The first explicit mention of an everlasting covenant in the Bible comes up in Genesis, chapter 9.

After the flood, Noah and his family exit the ark along with all the other families of creatures and all of them experience it for the first time. The precious blessing of the good earth they had all been missing in the ark; the fruitful soil, the life-giving waters, the uplifting breezes, the trees of life. They marvel again at earth's teeming biodiversity, just appreciating the magnificent symbiotic beauty of it all.

Of course, God already knew it was all very good, but it seems the diluvian disaster helped everyone, creatures and the creator, see what they all stood to lose.

Noah, sensing the significance of the moment, erects an altar to the Lord and offers up a thank offering. Upon smelling it, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, nor will I ever again destroy every living creature, as I have done. This is an astounding Kairos moment between creatures and Creator, a convergence of mutual longings, prompted by ecological crisis and fragile beauty. The great congregation, including God, takes notice; the earth is good, and it is worth saving.

The rainbow of God's steadfast love bends gently round the sanctuary of earth over the great congregation of earth's creatures. Accompany us, Lord, in becoming the hands, feet and voice of Christ, that our kin at the farthest bounds might be awed by your signs that every creature on earth might shout for joy at the God of our salvation, and that through us, you might finally save what you love for the beauty of the Earth, to the praise of your glory. Amen.

Thanks for coming along and blessings on your journey.