

# Signs of Promise

Water and God's promises are key themes that weave through this week's passages. After a great flood, God promises to safeguard the world and to be in deep relationship with all creation. A psalmist trusts in God's promises, and water is a sign of God's promise and protection in the first letter of Peter. As Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism, God's spirit rests on him – a sign of God's promise.

## Focus scripture: Genesis 9:8–17

Genesis 9:8–17 follows just after the well-known story of Noah who is best known for building a large boat on which he, his family, and representatives of all land animals would be saved from the floodwaters.

In this week's passage, God promises to protect and never destroy the earth, and makes a covenant with all creation. A rainbow is a sign, a reminder, of the promise. God wants to be in a deep and mutual relationship with all of creation.

Although God promises there will never be a flood that destroys earth, today there are many devastating disasters. Tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, and other storms have resulted in a loss of life and significant damage to property and creation. How do we reconcile this promise with our modern-day realities? One way might be to continue to believe that God does not bring about this suffering. Rather, it is people's apathy about creation and human choices that destabilize the environment.

This Season of Lent could, therefore, be a time to re-orient and reflect on how humans have failed God's good creation. While humans may have destroyed parts of the environment, we may not be able to clean up the environment with only human wisdom – we need to rely on God's wisdom to change our ways. Lent is a time of reflection, of becoming closer to God and reflecting on God's promises.

The story of Noah is often told to children, and we might wonder where is there good news in the destruction of a people? Perhaps this story is more about God's promises, new beginnings, and creation care. Young children could likely relate to themes of being sorry for

something they did, for doing something new or doing something to take care of the earth. The story offers an opportunity to explore more about God-promises, regrets, and care for all of creation. God of the promise invites our trust.

The writer of **Psalm 25:1–10** trusts God and seeks to orient their whole self to God. They make requests of God to teach, forgive, and not to remember their past sins. This, too, is a story about being in relationship with God and relying on God's help.

Overwhelmed by violence and being threatened, the people of **1 Peter 3:18–22** also rely on God's help. The writer makes a clear connection between the waters of the flood and the waters of baptism, and reminds us that water is a sign of God's promise and protection. Baptism is a symbol of new beginnings.

Baptism that signifies cleansing and new beginnings is a central theme in **Mark 1:9–15**. As Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism, God's Spirit comes as a sign of peace and promise. This same Spirit also urges Jesus into the wilderness. While Jesus struggles in the wilderness, he is not alone.



Trusting and relying on God's promises – even when life is difficult – is a key theme in these Bible passages. Trust and reliance on God are invited, even after a devastating disaster, while waiting on God's help during times of violence and during times of temptation. In all times, God invites us into a deeper relationship. During this Lenten season, how might you work to be closer to and more reliant on God?



## Focus scripture Genesis 9:8–17

Additional scriptures  
Psalm 25:1–10  
1 Peter 3:18–22  
Mark 1:9–15

**God, who has created all things, draw us into a closer relationship with you. When life's waters threaten to overwhelm us, help us to trust that you are with us at all times. Re-orient us away from our poor choices and help us to choose life with you. Amen.**

## Lectio Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) and click on the link.

## The Focus for Ages 5–12

The story of Noah and the ark is probably a familiar one for children. It is found in more storybooks and toys than any other story from the Hebrew Scriptures and children never seem to tire of hearing it. For the younger children, there are the animals. Imagine living on a boat with a whole zoo! For older children, the promise or covenant from God with the rainbow symbol may hold more power. For all of them, this is a story of great import, the first of God's promises that they will explore during this Lenten season. The resource sheet "God's Promise" provides more of the story than is found in the focus scripture so children can hear about the whole story to help put God's promise in context.

Some children in your group are probably beginning to wonder whether a story like this is true. Encourage those children to focus on the truth that comes from the story: that God desires a new relationship with all people. For those who raise this question, you have a wonderful opportunity to help them understand that the Bible contains many types of literature and that these early stories in Genesis were told to present truth about God rather than as a description of an historical event. Pray that children will be encouraged to participate in God's promise of renewal for all creation, and see themselves as part of this promise.

## Prepare

### Before the session

- Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Genesis 9:8–17, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 3).
- Review "[About this Lent and Easter](#)" (p. 1) and "[This Lent, Easter for Ages 5–12](#)" (p. 2).
- Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, and a Bible with a purple bookmark placed in this week's focus passage.
- Bring matches, offering basket, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), Bibles, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).
- Review resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)" (p. 110); prepare a stepping stone pathway with rainbow-coloured circles.

### Gather

- Bring a copy of resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)" (p. 110) and a rainbow-coloured object.

### Engage

- Bring this week's resource sheet "[God's Promise](#)."
- Covenant group:** copies of the "Covenant group" section on resource sheet "[God's Covenant](#)," drawing paper,

coloured pencils

- Art group:** copies of the "Art engagement group" section on resource sheet "[God's Covenant](#)," a photograph or other image of a rainbow, drawing paper, pastels

### Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- Prayer zone:** wide purple ribbon, pieces of purple paper; make a sign on poster board: "Our Lenten Prayer Wall"
- Craft zone:** supplies and instructions for "Rainbow bracelet" from resource sheet "[Rainbow Reminders](#)"
- Art zone:** supplies and instructions for "Rainbow posters" from resource sheet "[Rainbow Reminders](#)"
- Earth zone:** supplies and instructions for "Rainbow planters" from resource sheet "[Rainbow Reminders](#)"
- Outreach zone:** information about congregational Lenten offering project, small boxes, used magazines

### Bless

- Bring rainbow stickers, and the "Blessing song" (on resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)," p. 110).
- Bring copies of the family letter "[Lent–Easter 2021](#)" (p. 109).



# Signs of Promise

## Scripture

Genesis 9:8–17

**FOCUS** To discover ways to take part in God's promise of renewal for all creation

## Gather

**Welcome** the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers.

### Opening ritual

**Call to gather** Invite children to follow the rainbow-coloured stepping stones to the worship area. Gather around the worship table and explain that today is the beginning of a new season in the church year. Point out the purple cloth, which is the colour we use for the Season of Lent. Explain that Lent is a time to learn about God's promises and to explore what it means to live in God's way. The colour purple reminds us

that this is a time when we say to God that we are sorry for all the times we do not live in the light of God's promises.

**Prayer** Invite two volunteers to lead the "Lent 1" prayer on the resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)" (p. 110), lighting the candle and placing the symbolic object. Invite the whole group to say the last line together.

**Sing** the song "[Gathering Song](#)" (on p. 110).

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

### Connecting with the focus

Invite children to offer their understanding of the word "promise."

- **What kinds of promises have others made to you?**
- **What kinds of promises have you made to others?**
- **What does it mean to keep a promise?**
- **How does it feel when someone breaks a promise made to you?**

Suggest that they listen for the promise in today's Bible story, and who makes that promise.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the purple bookmark to open it to this week's focus passage. Point out that today's story comes from the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. The word "genesis" means beginning. Invite older children to share what they remember about the biblical story of Noah and the ark. Explain that there are similar stories about floods in many ancient cultures. These stories were told from generation to generation for thousands of years before being written down. Show the group where the whole story is found in Genesis 6–9.

### The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[God's Promise](#)" to tell the story based on **Genesis 9:8–17**, encouraging children to participate by creating some sound effects. After the story, invite children to talk about what they liked about the story and some of the things they wonder about this story. Discuss with the group some or all of the following questions:

- **In this story, what promise does God make to Noah and to all living things?**
- **If you were one of Noah's children, what questions might you ask about God's promise?**
- **What sign or symbol was given as a reminder of God's promise?**

■ **Why do you think people needed a reminder about this promise?**

■ **What do you learn about God from this story?**

Explain that there isn't just one answer for this question. We all hear different things in stories and there are many things to learn about God in the stories from the Bible.

**Exploring the story further**

*(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)*

**Covenant group** The children in this group have the opportunity to explore other versions of the words of God's covenant in **Genesis 9:9–13** and to write it in their own words. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "God's Covenant," drawing paper, coloured pencils, and Bibles and invite participants to work as a group to follow the instructions in the "Covenant group" section of the resource sheet.

**Art group** The children in this group have the opportunity to talk about rainbows and make their own paintings of rainbows. Display the pho-

tograph or other image of the rainbow. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "God's Covenant," drawing paper and pastels, and invite participants to work as a group to follow the instructions in the "Art engagement group" section of the resource sheet.

**Reporting** Invite the covenant group to share their versions of the words of God's promise and invite the art group to display their drawings of rainbows beside the photograph or image.

**The Bible story and us**

The rainbow is a reminder that God promises to love us and always take care of the earth and all living things. Invite children to share stories of times when they have seen a rainbow: Where were they? What did the rainbow look like? Do all rainbows look the same?

■ **How do you feel when you see a rainbow?**

The rainbow is also a reminder that we can help to take care of the earth and all living things.

■ **What can we do to take part in God's promise to all creation?**

**Respond**

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Prayer zone: Lenten prayer wall** Lent is a special time to pray. Invite children to create a rainbow of prayers, adding prayers to a different strip of ribbon each week. Designate a space in the room and post the sign: "Our Lenten Prayer Wall." Tape a purple ribbon to the sign and provide purple squares of paper for the children to write or draw a prayer for all living things. Tape or pin these prayers to the ribbon and read aloud together.
- **Craft zone: Rainbow bracelets** God's rainbow is a reminder of God's covenant. Distribute supplies and review the instructions for making bracelets from the resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders." Invite each child to make a bracelet for themselves and extra bracelets to give away to friends or family members.
- **Art zone: Rainbow posters** In the story from Genesis, God makes a covenant with all creation. Invite children to create rainbow posters to remind them of God's covenant. Distribute supplies and review the instructions for creat-



- ing the posters from the resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders." Older children can write ideas for caring for creation beside each of the bands of their rainbows.
- **Earth zone: Growing seeds** We are called to work with God to help care for the earth. Distribute supplies and review the instructions for decorating plant pots from the resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders." Invite children to plant seeds or bulbs, take these home, and care for their plants as reminders of their call to care for creation.
- **Outreach zone: Lenten offering** Many congregations have a special offering during Lent. Let the children know about the offering and what it is for. Invite children to decorate small boxes with magazine pictures and words and use these to collect offerings at home during the season. Discuss things children might do to raise funds to contribute to the offering. Have them return the boxes on Palm/Passion Sunday to place in the offering plate during the worship service.

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## Bless

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**Gather** in the worship space and relight the candle. Distribute rainbow stickers and invite children to place these on the worship table near the Bible as they share ideas of how they can help to look after God's world.

**Pray** the following prayer or one of your own:

God, we thank you for the promise  
you made to Noah and his family.  
Help us as we care for the Earth too. Amen.

**Sing** the "[Blessing song](#)" (p. 110).

**Blessing** Send each child out saying, "*(Name)*, remember that God loves you. Let your life shine like a beautiful rainbow."

Distribute copies of the family letter on the resource sheet "[Lent-Easter 2021](#)" (p. 109) for children to take home.

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## Reflect

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Some children may have had experiences of broken promises. In what ways did this session offer all children the assurance of God's constant love and care? How might you support children during this Season of Lent?





# God's Promise

(based on Genesis 9:8–17)

Providing a way for the children to participate helps them to remember the story.

People have told the story of Noah and the ark and the rainbow for many years. This story helps us remember God's promise to Noah and all living creatures. This promise is also called a "covenant." Listen to the story for the promise that God made to Noah, his family, and all living creatures.

Rain, rain, and more rain! (*Invite children to make rain sounds by rubbing hands together.*) Noah and his sons were glad they had built the big ark. Their neighbours laughed when they hammered on the big boat. (*Invite children to make hammering sounds by drumming on a table.*) There was no water anywhere around, so why were they building such a big boat? But now it had been raining for weeks and Noah and his family were glad to have the shelter of the boat. Well, it was a bit crowded with all the animals God told them to bring – two of every kind. Ants and zebras, kangaroos and coyotes, polar bears and ostriches. (*Invite children to make some animal and bird sounds.*)

After 40 days, the rain finally stopped. When Noah's family looked north they saw water. (*Invite children to shield eyes and look around.*) When they looked south, they saw more water. When they looked west, more water; when they looked east, even more water. Water was everywhere. For days and days, all they could see was water.

But God had not forgotten Noah, his family, and all the animals and birds and reptiles on the ark. God sent a wind to blow over the water. (*Invite children to make blowing sounds.*) The wind blew and blew and the waters started to go down. One day Noah could see the top of a mountain. Days went by and the waters went down and down. Finally the ark stopped floating and rested on dry ground. Finally it was time to get out of the ark – Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives, and all the animals and birds and reptiles. (*Invite children to make some animal and bird sounds.*)

Just then a beautiful rainbow appeared in the sky. (*Invite children to make an arch with their hands.*) "This rainbow is the sign of my promise, my covenant," said God. "I have set a rainbow in the sky because I'm reaching out to you and every living creature in love. This covenant will be with you and your children, and your children's children, and your children's children's children. And with all living creatures, forever!"

Then God said, "That's my part of the covenant. Here's your part. You can also reach out in love to the people of the world. And you can help to take care of the birds that fly in the air, and the animals that walk on the ground, and the fish that swim in the sea, and the grass and the flowers and the trees. Everything. It's yours to take care of."

So, every time we see the sun shine through the rain to make a rainbow, we can remember God's promise of love to every person and every living creature. And we can think about how we can help God to care for the earth today.



# God's Covenant

## Covenant group

### Instructions

1. Read the two translations of **Genesis 9:9–13** below. Read those same verses in your Bibles, if you have different versions.
2. Work with the others in your group to draw a rainbow on a piece of paper and write God's promise in your own words on the arches of the rainbow.

"I am going to make a solemn promise to you and to everyone who will live after you. This includes the birds and the animals that came out of the boat. I promise every living creature that the earth and those living on it will never again be destroyed by a flood. The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will remind you that I will keep this promise forever."

*From the Contemporary English Version © 1995 American Bible Society*

"I'm setting up my covenant with you, including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you – birds, farm animals, wild animals – that came out of the ship with you. I'm setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth."

God continued, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I'm putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth."

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## Art engagement group

### Instructions

1. Look at the photograph or image with the rainbow.
2. Use some or all of the following questions to explore this image:
  - **What do you notice about the rainbow?**
  - **Which colours seem warm? Which colours seem cool? Why?**
  - **Where would you like to be standing in this image? Why?**
  - **How does the image make you feel?**
3. Use the pastels to create your own rainbow picture to remember God's promises.



# Rainbow Reminders

## Rainbow bracelet

**Materials needed:** elastic thread, coloured beads

### Instructions

1. String beads onto a length of elastic in the following order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple.
2. Measure around the wrist, tie the ends of the elastic in a secure knot and snip the loose ends.
3. Wear as a reminder of God's rainbow promise.

## Rainbow posters

**Materials needed:** white or black poster board, cut in half (one piece per child); red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple tissue paper

### Preparation

1. Cut each piece of poster board in half.
2. Draw an outline of a rainbow shape with six arches on each piece of poster board.
3. Cut tissue paper into small squares and place each colour in an open container.

### Instructions

1. Create a rainbow by covering each arch with glue and adding overlapping layers of tissue paper.
2. Begin with purple on the bottom and end with red on the top.
3. Display the poster as a reminder of God's rainbow promise.

## Rainbow planters

**Materials needed:** plastic plant pots, squares of tissue paper in rainbow colours, paintbrushes, pebbles, potting soil, flower seeds or bulbs

### Instructions

1. Prepare containers of white glue thinned with water.
2. Decorate containers by covering with a layer of glue, using the paintbrushes, adding tissue paper squares, and painting another layer of glue over the paper.
3. Place a layer of pebbles in the bottom of the pots, add soil, and plant seeds or bulbs.



# LENT – EASTER 2021

Dear Families,

**During the Season of Lent** the children will be hearing stories from the Hebrew scriptures (also known as the Old Testament). These stories are about promises from God to Noah and his family and to Abraham and Sarah as well as the promises spoken through the Psalms and by the prophet Jeremiah. The Season of Lent is 40 days long (not counting the Sundays, which are all considered “little Easters”).

Here are the Gathering and Blessing songs that we will be using during this season. You might like to use them at home for family prayer times as well.

## Gathering song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

God is with us. **God is with us.**  
Every day. **Every day.**  
God will always love us.  
**God will always love us.**  
Thank you, God. **Thank you, God.**

## Blessing song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

May God bless you.  
**May God bless you.**  
Keep you safe. **Keep you safe.**  
May God’s love surround you.  
**May God’s love surround you.**  
Go in peace. **Go in peace.**

**On Palm/Passion Sunday** (March 28) children may bring home a “Holy Week Calendar” of readings and reflections which your family might do together.

**Following Easter Sunday** (April 4) we move into the Season of Easter. This season is 50 days long and the focus will be on Bible stories from the New Testament. Our group will explore stories in the gospels about Jesus’ appearances to the disciples after the Resurrection, and the ways in which Jesus’ friends and followers shared the good news of the risen Christ. During the Easter seasons we will learn from Jesus’ teachings and the witness of the disciples how we too can live as a faithful community of people who share God’s way of love.

You might like to read to read these stories together at home: John 20:19–31, Luke 24:36b–48, John 10:11–18, John 15:1–8, John 15:9–17, and Acts 1:15–17, 21–26. Reading the Bible together suggests that these stories are important to you.

**We celebrate Pentecost Sunday** on May 23, marking the end of the Season of Easter. This is a day to celebrate the Spirit of God and the growth of the Christian community.

We will be praying for each child in our group during these seasons. We ask that your family also include us in your prayers as we prepare for and lead the sessions each week. May these Lenten and Easter seasons be times of spiritual nurture and growth for our group and for your family.

Sincerely,



# Rituals for Lent

## Lenten rainbow pathway

Create a pathway of “stepping stones” using large circles cut from coloured construction paper: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Cut several circles of each colour to make the pathway connect from the doorway of your meeting space to the worship area. During Lent the children will follow this rainbow path of stepping stones to gather in the worship space during the opening ritual each week.

## Gathering prayers

Choose two volunteers to read the opening prayer each week: one will light the candle and the other will place an object (symbolizing the focus scripture theme) beside the candle. These symbols can remain in the worship space with all five displayed on the fifth Sunday. There are only five prayers included on this page because there will be a special all-ages gathering on Palm/Passion Sunday.

### Gathering song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

*(Children repeat the bolded lines.)*

God is with us. **God is with us.**

Every day. **Every day.**

God will always love us. **God will always love us.**

Thank you, God. **Thank you, God.**

### Blessing song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

*(Children repeat the bolded lines.)*

May God bless you. **May God bless you.**

Keep you safe. **Keep you safe.**

May God’s love surround you.

**May God’s love surround you.**

Go in peace. **Go in peace.**

## Lent 1

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. *(Light the purple candle.)*

**Two:** On this first Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”  
for the rainbow which is a sign of God’s love.  
*(Place a rainbow-coloured object beside the candle.)*

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All: Thank you, God. Amen.**

## Lent 2

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. *(Light the purple candle.)*

**Two:** On this second Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”  
for all the stars in the sky that remind us of God’s love. *(Place a star beside the candle.)*

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All: Thank you, God. Amen.**

## Lent 3

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. *(Light the purple candle.)*

**Two:** On this third Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”

for all the wonderful things in creation. *(Place an object from nature beside the candle.)*

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All: Thank you, God. Amen.**

## Lent 4

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. *(Light the purple candle.)*

**Two:** On this fourth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”  
for giving us hope when times are hard. *(Place a stone beside the candle.)*

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All: Thank you, God. Amen.**

## Lent 5

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. *(Light the purple candle.)*

**Two:** On this fifth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”  
for your love that is deep in our hearts. *(Place a heart beside the candle.)*

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All: Thank you, God. Amen.**

