

# Reflections for 25<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

### The rainbow in the clouds

People often think of the story of Noah and the ark as a lovely story for children – I suppose because of the animals, and the boat – and we are using it for our video story this week. But there is more to it than just that, because the whole story, which is spread over four chapters of the book of Genesis, also includes a strong element of challenge and judgement, before it ends with a promise. Using the lovely image of a rainbow appearing out of the clouds and rain, the story ends with God's promise for his people, and all creation:

Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you (Genesis 9. 14-15)

At some of our services in church we express our faith by using the questions that are asked of the candidates (or their parents and godparents) at baptism. It can be good to renew those baptism promises from time to time, and to re-affirm our commitment to follow the way of Jesus, because, however much we mean our promises, we fail, we fall short, and we get things wrong. And we are able to renew our promises because God is always ready to start again with us, when we know we need that new start.

The good news at the heart of our faith is that God loves us first, God loves us always, and God is always ready to meet us in forgiving love, and to work with us to help us begin again. That is God's promise, that runs through the books of the Bible, from the story of Noah, to the words of Jesus in this week's gospel reading, that offers us good news with a perhaps familiar image of comfort and hope:

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me ... and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10. 14, 15)

Revd John Waller

Merciful Father,  
you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd,  
and in his love to lay down his life and rise again:  
keep us always under his protection,  
and give us grace to follow in his steps;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings: Genesis 9. 8-17; Acts 4. 5-12; John 10.11-18

Story: 'A Special Promise' The story of Noah (based on Genesis chapter 6-9)