

A sign of promise and hope



Richard Greatrex *reflects on* Genesis 9:8-17

The theme of covenant runs throughout the Old Testament readings in Lent, beginning here with the aftermath of the flood, where it is mentioned seven times by God. Noah and his family have survived the cataclysm and God, who has previously told them to be fruitful and multiply, now sets the ground rules for the future relationship between heaven and earth. A key detail is that God does not simply make this covenant with Noah and his sons, who will be the progenitors of all subsequent people, but also with every living creature – all nations and all creation are of equal value in God's eyes. Twice God mentions that the bow (the divine martial weapon of

great annihilation) will hang in the clouds as a reminder to God, not us, to be merciful, not destructive. Indeed, although a covenant should involve two parties equally, God holds the initiative here: God does all the talking, freely and graciously offering to be responsible for this new cosmic relationship.

In Jesus we see God's ultimate act of accountability, alone taking on all risks to restore and remake the covenant with creation, broken time and again by rebellious individuals and nations. Lent gives us an opportunity to acknowledge our part in its unravelling, to reflect on the changes we need to make and to recommit ourselves to being agents of restoration. ☺

Almighty God, wash us clean of all that holds us back from rushing into your ever-open arms. Restore our trust in your covenant, that we may reach out and draw all creation into the heart of your constant, generous love. Amen.

Poet in lockdown

Poet in exile

by Julia McGuinness

What is a poet-in-residence when the residence is off limits? I live six miles from Chester Cathedral, but have not seen it since lockdown began, weeks ago. What do I want to build in words, now this building is shut? What exactly do I miss? Architecture? Community? The predictable rhythms of work and worship?

My daily walk brings me again across the park to a small wood blooming with bluebells. My parents' ashes are scattered in a bluebell wood several hundred miles away, but coming here somehow connects me to them. I wonder what constitutes presence and what it means.

Today, as I enter a favourite bluebell glade, I'm surprised to find myself feeling connected with the cathedral. This contained space covered by trees offers shelter without constraint. The trees pre-date me and will outlive me. I feel stillness in the present moment, freedom from expectation, cherished. The veil between seen and unseen trembles. Later, I write of where air drifts in an incense of silence. ☺

“ If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

1 Corinthians 13:1

International Mother Language Day

by Christine Clark

Today is International Mother Language Day, promoting the preservation of all languages worldwide. Of the six thousand spoken languages in the world, 34% are endangered. Incidentally, of the six thousand, the full Bible is translated into

only 698 languages and the New Testament into 1,548.

When a language is lost, it is not only its writings, expressions, modes of thinking, traditions and history that go. It is also a sign that its people – its native speakers – don't matter: that the loss of its history and culture is just collateral damage in today's fast-moving, streamlined, multinational world.

By keeping a language alive we are showing we value its people: we are meeting them where they are. It shows that we accept and love them now, not how they might be changed. Just as Jesus did. ☺