

Of Floods and Covenants

*The Lord said to Noah, "There's gonna be a floody, floody!"
The Lord said to Noah, "There's gonna be a floody, floody!"
"Get those children out of the muddy, muddy, children of the Lord."*

The words of that children's song are imbedded in me from days on the playgrounds in Pittsfield. I only had to look up one word of the verse, too. Research has shown that if you put something to music, you are most likely to have it in your brain for a lifetime. If you have been a Westfield and/or Southwick resident for a long time, you have been around to see some of the floods in the area. A little research told me that there were recorded floods 1826, 1854, December 10-11, 1878, November 4, 1927, and in August (11 and 18), 1955. Later flooding happened in 2007 and 2011. Did you know that the Westfield Home Depot has flood doors to protect the inside of the store from damage? The Caldor that was there ahead of the Home Depot also had them. The flooding in 2011 is the only time that they had to be used (at least to the best of my knowledge.)

The memory that would hold firm for our senior residents would be in August of 1955. Two hurricanes deposited 6 inches of rain and

then 20 inches of rain over a three-day period. “The storm broke communications and power, main highways were impassible and the city was cut into three sections by the resulting flooding. Powder Mill Brook near Notre Dame Street broke its banks and cut off the north section of the city, wrecking the bridge at the bottom of Clay Hill. Buildup of water under the railroad viaduct blocked traffic across the Great River Bridge and the Cowles Bridge on South Maple Street was closed when a portion of Crane's Pond Dam collapsed. Boats were seen on Broad Street and water poured through a few hundred feet from the Park Square green.

Without power or natural gas, citizens resorted to cooking outdoors, drinking water became a problem. Seventy-six businesses and homes were condemned, with a total of six hundred-fifty homes, fifty businesses, seven industrial firms and sixteen farms experiencing flood damage. Nine bridges were washed away or damaged and an estimated six hundred automobiles were damaged. Losses were estimated at some five to eight million dollars.”

Hurricanes Connie and Diane hit landfall in North Carolina and caused millions of dollars in damage. People at least had some knowledge of what was to come; with the advances made in the study of meteorology, we can be warned and make plans to be safe well in advance. Our study of meteorology has advanced us to the fact that we now know from where the rains came and that God was not trying to punish the people of the greater Westfield area.

Thousands of years ago, people were not as fortunate. They had no idea when an epic rain storm would come. They learned how to read the clouds and other types of patterns from animals as well as plants. This gave them some idea of what was to come. They couldn't explain why things would happen so they turned to an idea that God was angry with them. Hence, we have the story of Noah and the ark.

Should we concern ourselves with every detail in the account of the flood and the ark? I don't think so. We know that it probably rained a lot, a flood happened, crops were ruined, people and animals perished, and chaos resulted. There may have been a feeling of unrest in the area before the rains came. But, when the rain stopped and the sun came out,

there was a beautiful, colorful “bow” in the sky that could not be explained.

Today we know that “A rainbow is caused by sunlight and atmospheric conditions. Light enters a water droplet, slowing down and bending as it goes from air to denser water. The light reflects off the inside of the droplet, separating into its component wavelengths--or colors. When light exits the droplet, it makes a rainbow.” (NOAA Scijinks.gov) But thousands of years ago, that knowledge did not exist.

What does that rainbow do? It still serves to as a remind of that covenant. We know from an earlier sermon that a covenant is when two different parties agree to take care of each other. What’s clearly important in this story are two things: (1) the promise not to destroy all life by water again and (2) that those bound together by the covenant are God, Noah (and his descendants), and all of life on earth. We must stay mindful of our responsibility to be good stewards of what God has given to us! Having a faith that is truly centered on God and has concern for all of Creation would compel us to rethink much of our lives and our

economies. It would cause us to be radically humble and accepting of limits on what we do for the good of all life on earth.

So, when you see a rainbow, think about how God has promised to care for us. Think about how we are called to be good stewards of creation. Think about how we are called to be good stewards to each other. Let us give praise to our God!

Rise and shine and give God your glory, glory!
Rise and shine and give God your glory, glory!
Rise and shine and (clap once) give God your glory, glory!
Children of the Lord.