Noah

This month we are thinking in assembly about different animals from the Bible.

We are going to hear stories about sheep and donkeys and whales in the coming weeks but this week we are going to hear one of the most famous stories from the Bible about animals – Noah’s ark. Hands up if you have heard that story before? Hands up if you ever played with a toy Noah’s ark.

This is a story which has been told for thousands of years, a story Jesus would have heard when he was a boy, a story told long before the time of Jesus. Some of these oldest stories from the Bible were told long before there were books and of course long before TV or tablets. I can imagine mums and dads telling stories to their children, storytellers telling stories around campfires on cold evenings. They are ancient stories

But the story of Noah’s ark isn’t just about animals – it is about people, people who followed God and people who didn’t. It ends with a message of hope….but I’ll come back to that.

One day as God was thinking about the people on earth his heart became very sad.  He could see that all the people had become very bad, so bad that they stopped thinking of anything good. God was so sad and hurt that he wanted to get rid of every person and all the creatures that He had made.  But God remembered Noah. Noah did things right.

So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all the people because the earth is full of fighting because of them.  I am going to destroy them and the earth." God then gave Noah instructions on how to make the boat.  He told him what kind of wood and how big to make it.  He also told him to put a door in the side of the ark and to make it with three floors.

The Bible says that next God told Noah that he would make a covenant with him.  A covenant is an agreement with a promise.  He would save Noah, his wife, and his three sons and their wives.  They would be safe in the ark because God was going to flood the whole earth and everything else would die.

God told Noah to bring two of all living creatures male and female and two of every kind of bird and every creature that moves along the ground and food for the animals into the ark. They would all be safe.

When the ark was ready God gave Noah 7 days warning before the flood to get all the animals and food on board, and told him that He would send rain for 40 days and 40 nights. When everyone was in the ark God shut the door.

Then the rain started.  The Bible makes it sound like the rain came from the clouds and that there was also water coming up from the ground.  So everything probably was covered pretty quickly. The floods kept coming for 40 whole days!  The ark floated on the water and all the high mountains were completely covered with water. When it stopped Noah and the animals couldn't just leave the ark.  There was too much water and no land for them to walk on, everything was covered.

The story says that Noah let a bird called a raven out to see if it could find somewhere to land, No luck. He waited a few days. Then he sent out a dove but the dove couldn't find any place to go.  He waited a week and then sent the dove out again.  This time the dove came back with an olive leaf which meant the waters had gone down.  He waited one more week and let the dove out again and this time it didn't return. It had found dry land.

When Noah and his family left the ark he thanked God for keeping them safe. God promised never to flood the earth again. He gave Noah and his family a special sign of hope. A rainbow – when they saw and when we see a rainbow that’s a special sign of hope that after the rain comes sunshine.

So when you see a rainbow you can think of sunshine after floods, about Noah and how he was loyal to God and how God cared for him and how God cared for all the animals.

Our assembly started with animals. I wonder what your favourite animal is? I wonder if there’s an animal you don’t like at all. In our prayer I am going to leave a small gap and when I do that you can think of your favourite animal and say its name in your head.

We thank you God for the wonderful things you created:

for the animals, big and small especially the ………………….

for the oceans, deep and blue,

for the land, green and fertile,

for the sky and all the birds of the air,

for the sun that shines and cheers us up.

for the people that God made,

Help us look after this wonderful earth. Amen.

This is eco-month in our churches and we think about caring for our world. Here’s a prayer thanking God for the amazing world we live in with all the variety of habitats.

Thank you God for biodiversity,

Thank you for the amazing variety of living things.

Help us to care for biodiversity.

Help us to care for the tiniest insects to the largest mammals.

Help us to care for all habitats -

the rain-forests and the oceans, the woodlands and the rivers,

the desert and the beach, the playground and the farm.

Help us to understand that we need biodiversity for food, medicine, air, clothes and fun.

Help us to appreciate and care for all that's good in biodiversity. Amen.

And finally a prayer for this new day

Dear God,thank you for being with us as we start this new day.

Help us start the day with a fresh beginning.

We ask you to help us to work honestly, to play fairly and to support each other.

Help us to appreciate the talents you have given us and to use them for the good of others.In Jesus’ name we pray*.* Amen.