

## **“L’Arche - A Symbol of Symbiosis”**

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New Hope UC-York Pines UC  
Rev. Padre Andrew K. Lee

### **Prayer for Illumination**

God of eternity, by the power of your Spirit, speak your Word to us this day so that by hearing, we may know your truth and live ever more faithfully for you. In Jesus’ name we pray, **Amen.**

### **Scripture Reading:                   Genesis 9:1, 8-17**

<sup>1</sup> God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” .... <sup>8</sup> Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup> “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you <sup>10</sup> and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. <sup>11</sup> I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” <sup>12</sup> God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup> I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup> When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup> I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup> When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” <sup>17</sup> God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

This is the Word of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## <Reflection>

One of the most influential trends in theology in the twenty-first century is ecotheology. Ecotheology argues that divine providence operates in sustaining the universe, particularly the ecosystem on Earth. Among the topics and agendas in ecotheology, one of the core words is sustainability. The word sustainability has become a well-known word, even in public school curricula. This core word, sustainability, earns more theological and life-giving debates, and today, I'd like to introduce a more profound word, "symbiosis." The term is a combination noun: Symbiosis has two meanings. The Greek words "syn" (together) and "bios" (life). Therefore, it means "living together."

Symbiosis highlights the interconnectedness of life and the various ways organisms depend on one another for survival and prosperity. Biology and ecology take this term seriously. Now, ecotheology also takes the concept of symbiosis seriously.

Symbiosis, living together, is not a very new concept for Christians because we believe God gives us the power

and authority to care for God's creation. We all understand and agree that God's intention and purpose in caring for God's creation is not destruction and exploitation but sustainable use and preservation.



Here is a well-known scene in the painting. The artist is Edward Hicks, who painted it in 1846. The

title is? – Yes, Noah's Arc. The Bible has many ecotheological insights from Genesis to Revelation, and I picked just one scene that may phenomenally be presented as a symbol of symbiosis.

Although the story starts with humans' unfaithfulness and wickedness and includes the judgment of the land and life on Earth, it also has a significant metaphor for symbiosis. God commands Noah to gather the animals to the arc, and after the great flood, God makes a covenant with all the people and the land. The sky embraces the rainbow, the symbol of the divine covenant.

We easily presume that God makes us God's children and saves our souls and our families, and this is the one and only purpose that Jesus was crucified on the cross. Is it right? Last week, I happened to read a sermon saying God is all about my family and that it is the most meaningful part of believing God. God became so simplified in that sermon, a happy-making Aladdin's magic lamp. If we understand God in that narrow perspective, we cannot grasp the width and depth of divinity that sustains the universe. Yes, God is both personal and communal. And it is not my claim but the Bible. Let's take a look at the Bible. Today's passage, Genesis 9:12,

**12** God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:

God is making the covenant with whom? God is making a covenant with not just humans but every living creature, and that covenant is for all future generations to come.

Even living creatures are important counterparts of God's covenant. It has a profound significance in sustainability and symbiosis, living together. We only read Genesis in the Old Testament, but in Romans chapter 8 in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul writes about the redemption of both humans and creation.

The Bible envisions a future that is sustainable, symbiotic, and has redemption of all life and creation. The scene of Noah's Ark recalls Christians' responsibilities towards ourselves and others as agents of God's covenant. That profound truth of symbiosis has been shared with the teachings of Indigenous tradition and philosophy.

Sisters, brothers, and friends! Modern Christianity, ecotheology, and the practice of Indigenous tradition come across each other, celebrating the omnipresence of divinity in the universe. While having a summer break, I hope we may have chances to be exposed to the depth and heights of God's Providence in our faithful journey. Let us pray silently.