[Yesterday, we traced the story of God’s love right back to the very beginning of the world. This story is also very ancient, because it is from a time when the world was much newer than it is now.]

This is the story of a great disaster and a new beginning. Noah lived at a time when people were violent, cruel and unkind. Most people on the earth had forgotten God and the story of how he had made the world and the story of Adam and Eve living in the garden of Eden. People were not interested in God nor in how God wanted them to live. They were selfish and kept on hurting each other. God was sorry that he had ever made the world in the first place and he decided to destroy it — or nearly destroy it.

Noah and his family were faithful to God, so God spoke to Noah and explained that he was going to flood the earth. God told him to build a huge ship called an ark. There was to be room for Noah and his sons and their families, and also room for a few animals and birds of every species on the earth. These few people and few animals would be saved from the flood.

Noah built the ark. It was as big as a football pitch and it had three decks. Noah covered the wood with sticky black stuff called ‘pitch’ to make it waterproof. The animals and the birds came to Noah and he took them into the ark. When the animals and the birds and Noah’s family were all inside, Noah sealed the door. The rain began to fall and the water began to rise. The water came higher and higher until it seemed as if the whole earth was water. Even the tops of the mountains were covered. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights. Then the rain stopped and everything was quiet.

Noah went out onto the deck. There was water everywhere, in front of him, behind him, to the left and to the right; only water and sky for as far as he could see. He sent the raven to fly out and find dry land, but it just kept flying backwards and forwards. Noah sent out a dove, but it came back to him exhausted because it could not find a dry branch to perch on. A week later, Noah sent the dove out again, and this time it came back with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Somewhere near, there was a tree growing. They were saved!

After many more days, the water went down so that the ark came to rest on dry land. Noah and his family came out of the ark and they let the animals out to find new homes and to spread out across the earth. Noah and his family began their new life with prayers to God. God decided to make a special promise called a covenant with Noah and his family and
also with all the animals and birds and living things on the earth. God promised never again to flood the whole earth, even when people were cruel and selfish.

A huge and brilliant rainbow appeared in the sky and God said that this was the sign that he would keep his covenant. It was as if God had a huge bow for firing arrows, and now he was laying it down in the sky as a sign of peace. Noah and his family enjoyed the brilliant colours of the rainbow in the sky and, when you see a rainbow, you can remember this story.

[We hang this symbol of the rainbow on the tree to remember that God has made a covenant, a solemn promise, with every living creature on the earth. Noah and his family had a new start and from this new beginning grows all the other life stories on this tree.]

A moment to wonder

Do you think that it was hard for Noah to keep going and finish building the ark?

A prayer

As green as a healthy tree, the story of God’s love keeps growing.
We remember Noah, who built the ark.
We pray for everyone beginning new projects to help the world.
Amen.