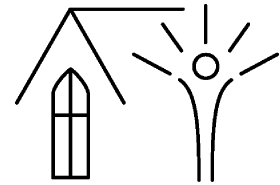




ROSELLE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

206 S. Rush Street
Roselle, IL 60172
(630) 529-1309
www.RoselleUMC.org



Our Mission Statement:

*“To Know Christ,
To Grow in Christ,
To Show Others Christ”*

March 5, 2006 **“God’s Heifer Project: A Rainbow”**

Genesis 9:8-15

Reverend Thomas Kim

An Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook carries the incredible true story of Bryan Heiss and one incredibly bad day in his life. Here’s how it started:

When Bryan woke up, he found a leak in his apartment ceiling. As he ran to get a water vacuum to clean up the mess, he discovered that his car had four flat tires. He ran back inside to call someone, and was knocked backwards by an electrical shock from the phone. He went back downstairs, only to discover that his car had been stolen (Bryan’s car was recovered later that day).

That evening as Bryan headed to his ROTC graduation ceremony, he accidentally sat on his bayonet and required immediate surgery for his injuries.

While he was at the hospital, part of the roof fell in at home and killed his pet canaries. As he ran across the room to check on his canaries, he slipped and injured his back, necessitating another trip to the hospital. A news reporter who had caught wind of Bryan’s story asked him to explain how so much could happen to one person in one day. Bryan replied, “It looks like God was trying to kill me, but He kept missing.” (Ziglar, Zig. OVER THE TOP, pp. 222-223.)

God wasn’t trying to kill Bryan, but you can see why he felt that way. Life does that to us sometimes. We think we are headed toward Europe and we end up in Antarctica. We try to do what God wants us to do and we end up sailing with a boat load of animals toward a world we cannot even imagine. Storms come. Waters rise. This is Noah's story but it is also our own. What do we do when the waters are rising and the world around seems dreadfully frightening? But then a rainbow appears.

We are all familiar with MURPHY’S LAW, “*If anything can go wrong it will.*” Murphy's Law is the inspiration for a book by Paul Dickson, titled THE OFFICIAL RULES AT HOME. Here is a sample of laws, rules, and observations collected by Dickson:

Rabbe's Rule of the Bedroom: *The spouse who snores louder always falls asleep first.*

Dickson's Gardening Discovery: *When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.*

Dorothy's Dilemma: *The heavier the package and the farther you must carry it, the more your nose itches.*

Todd's Rule of Bar Code Malfunction: *The bar code in the checkout line won't work on items you're embarrassed to be buying.*

Rosenbaum's Rule: *The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement. (READER'S DIGEST, Sept. 1996, p. 90.)*

Some people say Murphy was an optimist. It is amazing how wrong things can go sometimes. For one thing, we recognize that beyond the rising water is a rainbow. Storms do not last forever. Grief subsides and time heals. Most people who lose their jobs do find another. Single moms do make it through somehow. Most of our troubles are temporary. Somehow we do muddle through. It probably seemed like a lifetime to Noah being cooped up on that ark. But eventually the waters receded. And a rainbow appeared in the heavens. The rainbow was a symbol of God's promise to Noah that never again would the waters overwhelm him— or us. We also have God's promise and covenant.

A list has been circulating on the Internet in various versions which someone has dubbed EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM NOAH AND THE ARK. Among the items on the list are:

Plan ahead . . . It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark

Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone might ask you to do something REALLY big.

Don't listen to critics--do what has to be done Speed isn't always an advantage. The cheetahs were on board but . . . so were the snails

Remember that the ark was built by amateurs and the Titanic was built by professionals.

Remember that the woodpeckers INSIDE are often a bigger threat than the storm outside.

And last but not least: No matter how bleak it looks, *there's always a rainbow on the other side.*

Today's Bible lesson from Genesis is the story of Noah and the Ark which many of you heard as children. God had Noah build an ark. Then God sent the rains, 40 days and 40 nights of rain, hour after hour, rain until the whole world was flooded. After seeing the devastation from just a few days of rain in New Orleans last summer from Hurricane Katrina, it might be easier to visualize what 40 days of such rain could mean.

For a year Noah, his family and the animals, two of every living species on the earth, lived in that great Ark until finally the earth was dry and the Lord told Noah to go forth and repopulate the earth. A rainbow appeared in the heavens and God said, "I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature which is with you, for all future generations...When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant...and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh." (9: 12-15)

The story of Noah and the great flood is one of the most important because it represents the beginning of the concept of a covenant relationship between the Creator and his creation.

We are a covenant people. As descendants of Noah we share in the benefits of this relationship which God has established with his children.

We are God's covenant people. Why do you think there are so many songs about rainbows? Rainbows, by nature, are a symbol of hope. They speak of a meaningfulness in creation. Rainbows follow floods. They speak of hope. But most of all, rainbows remind us of our covenant relationship with God. When storms come and waters rise, and the world seems dreadfully frightening, what do we do as God's covenant people?

A Midwestern farmer named Dan West was lading out rations of milk to hungry children during the Spanish Civil War when it hit him. West, who was serving as a Church of the Brethren relief worker, was forced to decide who would receive the limited rations and who wouldn't – literally, who would live and who would die.

So West returned home to form Heifers for Relief, dedicated to ending hunger permanently by providing families with livestock and training so that they "could be spared the indignity of depending on others to feed their children."

*In 1944, the first shipment of 17 heifers left York, Pennsylvania, for Puerto Rico, going to families whose malnourished children had never even tasted milk. Why heifers? These are young cows that haven't yet given birth – making them perfect not only for supplying a continued source of milk, but also for supplying a continued source of support. **That's because each family receiving a heifer agrees to "pass on the gift" and donate the female offspring to another family, so that the gift of food is never-ending. As a result, millions of families in 115 countries are experiencing better health, more income and the joy of helping others.** (www.heifer.org/site/c.edJRKQNiFiG/b.201520/)*

I believe we should learn about our covenant relationship with God from Heifer Project International. Do you know what God's heifer project is? Jesus is God's Heifer Project. We, Christians as covenant people, also have to pass on the gift. What is the gift? Eternal life, Jesus Christ! As a recipient of a heifer donates the female offspring to another family, we too pass the gift of life to others. That's, I believe, Jesus is God's Heifer given for us. What do we do when the waters are rising and the world around seems dreadfully frightening? Our goal is not simply to survive, but more than that. We are to "pass on the gift." Blessing isn't a blessing until it is passed and shared.

We had a memorial service for Clyde Burianek yesterday, and will have another service for Helen Matthews this afternoon. They passed on the gift to us, the grace of God was shown through them. They finished their heifer project on earth faithfully and successfully.

Rainbows speak of hope. Rainbows are also a reminder of our covenant relationship with God. You and I are God's heifers. And the heifer project is still going on in this world which seems dreadfully frightening. In this Lenten season, I want to encourage you to remember Jesus Christ who is the Heifer for us.