

Do You Want to Save this Document?

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(Lent 1 - Year B)

Genesis 9: 8-17

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

As far as computers and word processing software goes, I am old school in that I learned to use the word processing software package called Word Perfect.

In the 1990s, I never learned to use Microsoft Word, but I stuck with my trusty old Word Perfect software.

Even now, I still prefer to use Word Perfect whenever I type up documents or work on sermons.

However, I do have to use Microsoft Word quite often, because that is the software package that most everyone else in the world uses. Yet, when I use Microsoft Word, I can still never figure out the formatting codes.

As I am typing along, suddenly, I find that the margins are out of whack. Or part of the document is mysteriously in italics and the other part is in bold.

Or some paragraphs are in Times New Roman font while the other paragraphs are in a font I have never seen before.

When I get myself into these situations in Microsoft Word,
When I cannot figure out how to adjust the margins, the fonts and the tabs in my document,
Then I have to make an important decision.

I can close out of the document, without saving it, and start over. Yet, the down side to this is that everything that I have typed for the past 20 minutes since I last saved the document - all of that will be lost.

So, with a bit of fear and trepidation, I click on the 'X' mark in the top right hand corner of the open window. And immediately, a message, in the form of a question, appears in a box on my computer screen.

The message says:

“Do you want to save the changes to the document?”

Then, with a bit of fear, I go ahead and click on the button that says
“no.”

And, I realize that all of the work that I have written in the last 20
minutes or so will be lost.

I will have to re-type everything I had written.

However, I can re-open the document back to the last version I had
saved and at least my formatting will be back to normal, after I
have restarted Microsoft Word.

In the Book of Genesis, God sends a historic flood to restart God’s
creation.

God had worked very hard on a document that created humans and all
living creatures.

However, the margins got off center and the formatting got out of
whack.

Human beings did what humans do:

We sinned - and we separated ourselves from God and from each other.

So God decides to shut down his document of creation.

In the flood, God loses almost all of what he had created - and then starts
over again.

However, God saves a part of what was good about creation.

God saves Noah’s family and two of every living creature, by putting
them all safely in the ark.

Later, when the flood is over and everyone comes out of Noah’s ark,
then God makes a covenant, a promise, to us.

God promises us that God will never again destroy the earth and its
creatures.

God promises us that God will never again shut down his document and
re-boot his creation.

And, as a sign of God’s promise, God puts a bow in the clouds, as a
promise that God will always save us.

A message appears on the computer screen saying:

“Do you want to save this document?”

And God remembers the promise that he made after the flood,

God remembers the rainbow that he put into the clouds,
And God clicks on the box that says:
“Yes.
Save the people in the ark.”

When I was growing up at Holy Spirit Episcopal Church in Houston, we worshiped in the original church that would later become the parish hall.

Then, when I was about 7 or 8 years old, we expanded to build a new church building, a building that we would eventually call “the big church.”

While the big church was under construction, our Sunday school class took a tour of the big church.

As little children, we all held onto a rope so that we would not get lost or wander into dangerous areas.

As a child, I can still remember looking up at the massive wooden beams that reached for the sky and that would become the rafters of the church.

While we stood on the concrete slab floor, our priest, Mr. Palmer, explained to us that we were in the part of the church where the pews would sit.

He told us that this part of the church is called the “nave.”

This word “nave” comes from a similar root as the word “navy” as in “having boats and ships.”

Our priest asked us to look up at the shape of the partially constructed church, and to see how it looked just like we were in the belly of a great, big ship.

He explained that the people of God are just like travelers on a big boat. We are huddled together on a journey through the stormy waters of life. And in the nave, in the ark,

God promises us that we will be saved from the storms of life.

This is one reason why traditional churches look the way they do, with a pointed or arched roof.

At St. Alban’s, we are blessed with traditional architecture that speaks to us in profound ways.

And I want each of us to look up for a minute:

If you notice, it looks just like we are traveling together inside a big ship.

We are in the nave, we are in the ark together.

And when we leave this church, when we step out of the ark, God's rainbow in the sky is a sign to the people of the ark that God has promised never to destroy this earth or its creatures.

Sometimes it seems like we are surrounded by floods and storms:

A friend is diagnosed with cancer.

A grown son loses his job.

A parent dies unexpectedly.

A teenager wrestles with substance abuse.

Yet God has provided an ark for us, so that we will travel together through the rough seas of life.

God has provided a church for us, so that we will gladden the hearts of those who travel with us.

God has provided a rainbow in the sky for us, so that we will have a sign that God always loves and saves us.

And, in these last days, God has provided us with another sign.

God has given us the Cross of Jesus, to illustrate that God will go to any lengths to show us how much God loves us.

For God's love is so deep and so high and so broad, that God will always save us.

Whenever we sin,

Whenever our fonts and margins and formatting get messed up,

An error message pops up asking:

“Do you want to save this document?”

And God remembers the flood and the ark and the rainbow and the cross, and God clicks:

“Yes. Save my people.”

AMEN.