

Dear Heaton Moor United Church,

Lenten Seasons' greetings to you all.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all both now and evermore.

Hope you are doing well. We are thankful to God's graciousness during these uncertain times. Glad to hear about many people at our church receiving their jobs.

As we enter into yet another season of Lent, and for a second time in the Pandemic, we are called to take this time in seeking ways in translating the meaning and message of the Cross for our times today. Starting next Wednesday, we begin our Circuit Lent Bible study on Zoom and I encourage you all to kindly join in those studies. The study booklets have been sent out by post.

Thanks to Graham Adams for his video reflections this week on our Church YouTube Channel. Thank you all for subscribing our channel and for viewing them. Our weekly circuit services on Zoom continues on every Sunday at 3 pm and thank you to those of you who are joining them.

Next week kindly remember in your prayers the funeral services of Margaret Jorgensson which is on Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb, and also the funeral service of Joan Evans which is on Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> Feb. We appreciate if you can light a candle for them on those days and say a prayer for their families.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection and the worship material for this Sunday for your kind perusal and meditation.

Friends of Stockport Interfaith are organising an event on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb at 7.30pm where a representative from Stockport Council will share about One Stockport and how faith communities can partner with

each other. Details are attached and if anyone is interested you are welcome to join.

This Sunday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2021 is observed as Church Action and Poverty Sunday, and may I request you to kindly pray and support their mission engagements in tackling poverty in the UK.

May God's peace be with you all. Stay safe and stay at home.

Regards,

Raj

19<sup>th</sup> February 2021

## MESSAGE FROM THE CO-EDITOR

Hi All,

As JoAnne is on holiday this week, I have the pleasure of doing the newsletter this week. I am planning on being on holiday next week, so normal service will resume.

If you have anything you would like included in the weekly notices please let me know. As always if you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Sharon*

[office@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk](mailto:office@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk)

[www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk](http://www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk)



Heaton Moor United Church



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## LOOKING FORWARD TO LENT

**Circuit Lenten Study Course “Life Changing Stories: Scripture From The Margins”  
Every Wednesday in Lent starting on the 24<sup>th</sup> February at 7pm**

The Bible shows us again and again that God is on the side of the poor and the oppressed. People on the margins. But too often, when we read scripture in our churches, we focus on other aspects of the story, or we are so familiar with the text that we don't notice the challenging things it has to say to us. *Scripture from the Margins* is a series of Bible studies that encourage people to focus on the voices and perspectives in scripture that we don't usually hear in our churches.

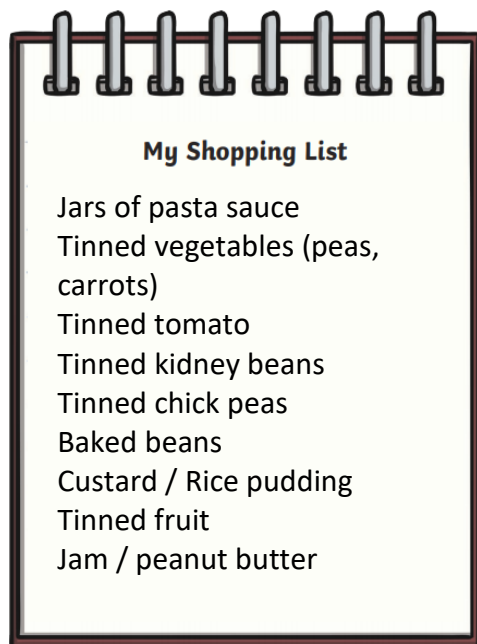
<https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible/lifechangingstories/>

**The Lenten Course will use the same zoom links as the Sunday Worship.**

### **Forty Days of Faith**

During Lent, we want to share what our faith means to us with one another through social media. You can find more information on how to get involved by [clicking here](#). Look out for #FortyDaysOfFaith on our social media feeds.

**All WE CAN** are also running an online Lent Course ‘Change Begins in Lent’ running at 8pm every Wednesday in Lent. To register please go to <https://www.allwecan.org.uk/event/lentgroup/>



## School Pantry

Thank you for the donations that have been dropped off, more are welcome. Please do consider dropping off donations as we are now running short on supplies.

To the left is a list of items that we are currently short of. If you can help in any way that would be great.

If you would like further information please contact JoAnne on [community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk](mailto:community@heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk) or 07340 269 354

**School Pantry donations can be dropped off at Church during the Private Reflection time on a Sunday**

**Please consider the current guidelines and social distancing**

## SPACE AT THE TABLE

Our Space At The Table project is now ½ way through the second phase. I had the pleasure of dropping off the meals this week and it has been great to see people who I haven't seen for a while and some new faces that have joined the project. It's lovely being able to catch up with them on the doorstep.

The Alzheimer's Society has a petition on their website which they are asking people to sign. They are calling on the Government to:

- Set out a clear timetable and process for re-introducing meaningful visits to care homes
- Publish the percentage of care home residents and staff who have received the first and second doses and how many have refused the vaccine
- Urgently review the use of anti-psychotic medication for people with dementia.

If you would like to sign here is the link [Alzheimers Society campaigns - \(e-activist.com\)](https://www.alzheimersociety.org.uk/campaigns/e-activist)

## REGIONAL / NATIONAL CHURCH NEWS

An update on the Open Letter that was shared earlier in the year.

The Open Letter to the British Methodist Church, written in what feels like a Kairos moment, was shared in June 2020 and went on to receive over 700 signatures. Since then, all of the signatories have been invited to join in conversations via Zoom on several occasions to continue to dream and to develop the thinking of the Open Letter, exploring what needs to happen for its vision to be realised. It is now the start of Lent 2021, and the methodology using Open Space conversations continues. In this way, clear goals and objectives are emerging.

The following declaration attempts to summarise the thinking so far and reflects a range of ideas and actions. Some of these are already reflected in Connexional initiatives and this is a cause for celebration. Others will require further engagement and commitment from Methodists to ensure they come onto and remain on the agenda for the British Methodist Church. This can be achieved, and is already happening through personal, local church, circuit and district actions and through the formal structures of Methodist Conference.

***At the heart of this invitation is the belief that the search for justice in the church and in the world is the foundation of who we are as Methodists, not just one piece of the jigsaw. We strive for a church which embodies dignity and solidarity. We commit to work for racial justice, gender justice, justice for those who identify as LGBTQI+, environmental justice, economic justice, justice for all who have been marginalised.***

More information can be found at :

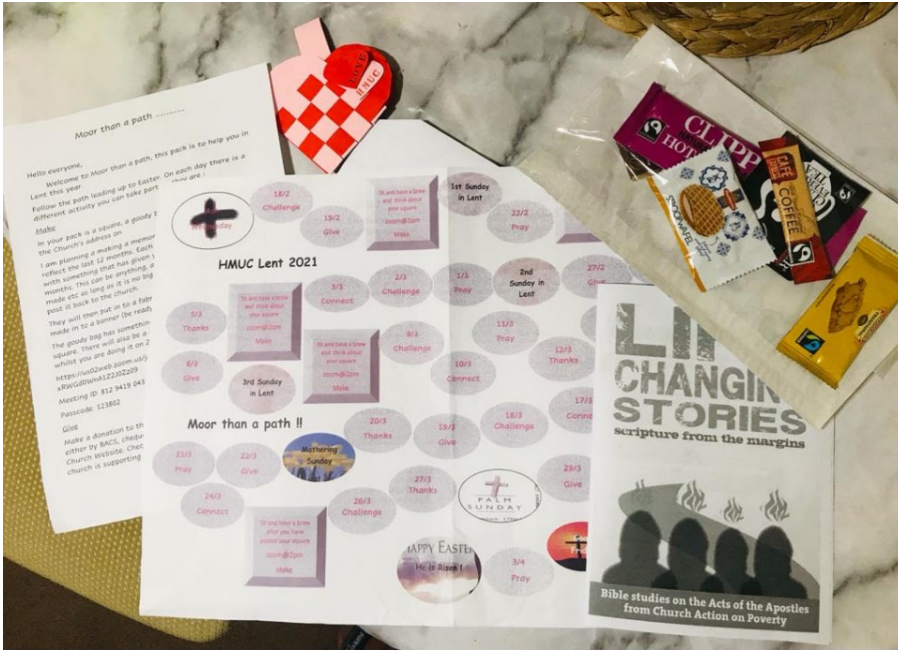
<https://methodistopenletter.wordpress.com/181-2/>

### Thursday Prayer



## MOOR LOVE

Last weekend, you all received a lovely packages from JoAnne and myself



The response to them has been wonderful. We have received lots of messages from people saying thank you. I have already received some squares for the Memory Banner.

It made me think of the passage in Acts 20:35 where it says "It is more blessed to give than receive"

I have indeed felt blessed this week by these responses.

Thank you

Sharon

## One Stockport and Friends of Stockport Interfaith

'Friends of Stockport Interfaith' invites you to  
Join us on Feb 23rd for an hour of discussion at  
7.30pm on Zoom

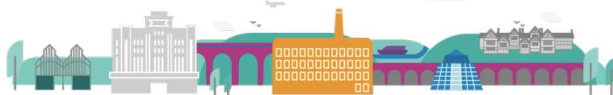
Find out more about :

- ❖ ONE STOCKPORT and the VCFSE Forum
- ❖ FAITH GROUPS' involvement in Community Champions
  - ❖ Covid Vaccinations for Faith Partners
- ❖ WHAT more can we do together?

Facilitator: Rachel Roberts-Newton,  
Relationship Manager, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Rsvp: Raj Patta & Sandy Maclean  
[raj.patta@Methodist.org.uk](mailto:raj.patta@Methodist.org.uk), [sandyneverin@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sandyneverin@yahoo.co.uk)

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7845353424>





## Lent prayers

Lord, be with me during this time of Lent. Let us be honest with ourselves, let us see everything that is wrong with our soul and our heart's and admit our shortcomings and sins. Lord, show us what we should change in our lives and please fill our hearts with patience, gratitude, and peace. Please teach us to accept others and show our love to them. Lord, please guide us to the path which leads us closer to you. The only thing we pray is to work with you and live in the light of your grace. Heavenly Father, please give us the strength to keep our promises and to get closer to you through our Lent prayers and good works. In the name of Jesus. Amen.



Heavenly father here's to the everyday heroes, the volunteers who do what they can, to help the suffering of others, and be of service to their fellow brothers and sister. May they know the true satisfaction that comes from helping others less fortunate than themselves? May they feel the love and grace in their hearts for all the good things they do. We all feel that they are second to none. We give thanks for your people. Amen

If anyone would like to share a Prayer  
with the church family, please call Linda  
on 07564839380 or  
E-mail [lindawfleming625@gmail.com](mailto:lindawfleming625@gmail.com).

No names required because  
God Knows.





Margaret Jorgensson's Funeral will take place on Tuesday,  
23<sup>rd</sup> February

Joan Evan's Funeral will take place on  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February at 10.45

Can you please light a candle and say a prayer,  
during this time to remember them.

*God of mercy,  
From whom we come,  
by whose grace we live,  
in whose love we are held at last;  
surround us with your presence  
that in our grief and loss  
we may find assurance and hope  
in the One who died for us and rose again,  
even your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



## **Towards a Spirituality of Wilderness**

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### **Reflecting on Mark 1:9-15**

Imagine you have had a Christening service of your child at your local church, and right after the service at the church, you were immediately taken by an unknown person to a forest to spend the next forty days there, without celebrating the party of your child's christening with your family and friends. What would be your immediate response? Angry, upset, annoyed, disturbed, and shattered. There can be many more negative reactions to such an incident.

The text for this Sunday from Mark 1:9-15 is a recording of Mark where Jesus right after of his baptism at river Jordan and having heard the heavenly voice affirming that he was the beloved Son of God, was taken immediately by the Spirit into the wilderness, without allowing any time for Jesus to celebrate his baptism and his confirmation of the Son of God. Mark did not record the reactions of Jesus to such a swift movement from that site of Jordan to the sites of wilderness. Mark explains in these 6 verses about Jesus' baptism, the heavens opening up to affirm in Jesus as the Son of God, his forty-day temptations in the wilderness where he waited on the wild animals with angels serving him, and also on his return proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God. There is a sense of urgency for Mark that is visible throughout his gospel, and particularly his usage of the word 'immediately' speaks about it. Forty-two times Mark uses the word 'immediately' in his gospel and at least twice it is mentioned here in these verses, in verse 10 and 12. Why did the Spirit immediately drove him into wilderness?

The Spirit should have given sufficient time at the site of Jordan for Jesus after his baptism, so that he could have engaged in conversations with people that came to John the Baptist on that day. The Spirit should have given some quality time for people to discuss and clarify with Jesus about his being affirmed as the beloved Son of God from the heavenly voice that day. Rather, the Spirit with a sense of urgency drove Jesus into the site of wilderness, forgoing all those conversations and engagements at the river Jordan. Why was wilderness the first stop for Jesus right after his public appearance at river Jordan?

#### **1. Wilderness as a site of subversion:**

In the context of the Roman empire, wilderness was seen as a place where savage people, the barbarians and the wild animals live. Emperor Augustus who claimed to be the Son of God, who also preached that he was 'the beginning of the gospel' was to bring peace by conquest and subduing them. Therefore, wilderness was perceived in the first century Palestine as a place of subversion and as a site of counter-empire. Mark begins the gospel of Jesus Christ with the scenes of the anti-empire led by John the Baptist in the wilderness, with Jesus taking his first public appearance and his forty-day stop at wilderness explaining that the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about anti-empire, contesting the colonial powers. That is the reason I think that the Spirit was rushing Jesus Christ to move into wilderness right after of his baptism to convey the message that Jesus, the beloved Son of God has come into this world the kingdom of God over against the kingdom of Rome, where peace, justice, love and life will flourish and sustain. The Spirit's sense of urgency in driving Jesus to the wilderness is to communicate that Jesus has come to establish an alternative kingdom, the kingdom of God, immediately, without any delay. Jesus movement gained momentum from those sites of wilderness.

## **2. Wilderness as a site of Testing:**

When the Spirit drove Jesus immediately into wilderness, she did not drive him into some jubilation or fanfare, rather was driving him into temptations. Mark does not record the kinds of temptations that Jesus faced unlike other gospel writers. For him all that mattered was to inform his readers that Jesus stayed for forty days in the wilderness and was tempted by Satan or evil (12-13v). From the other gospel writers, we gather that Jesus did not give-in to the temptations, but boldly faced them with courage and strength. Wilderness served for Jesus as a site of testing for a period of forty-days. Right after his baptism and affirmation as Son of God, Jesus deserves a better place to retreat, but was taken into wilderness to be tested. Such a testing served as a kind of preparation for Jesus to face any test and trial in his public ministry.

## **3. Wilderness as a site of Friendship:**

Who were the companions to Jesus in the wilderness when he was tempted for forty days? In verse 13b, Mark records that “he was with the wild beasts.” Many have associated Satan and the wild beasts together as they read this temptation narratives. However, as I read this text, I find that in all those tests and temptations that Jesus was enduring, it was the wild beasts/animals that served as his friends. May be the audience of Mark, would have thought of Jesus as a person like Daniel, who in the Old Testament was in the lion’s den, fearless and courageous. I am reminded of the film “Mowgli: Legend of the Jungle,” where Mowgli lives and befriends all the wild animals, and they all live in harmony. Jesus being with the wild beasts explains that Jesus came to make friendships with anyone and everyone, including wild beasts, for his coming into this world is to restore and renew the entire creation, which includes the flora, fauna, the animals, all the creatures and the humans. To the early Christians who were living under Roman empire, one of the ways they were persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ was to be torn and eaten by wild animals, and when they heard from Mark’s gospel that Jesus was with the wild beasts, it was a message to say that Jesus befriends these wild beasts and with Jesus peaceful kingdom was a possibility. Wilderness served as a site of friendship, when there is none in the world to be with, God brings wild animals to befriend.

## **4. Wilderness as a site of Diaconate:**

Mark also mentions in verse 13c, that “the angels waited on him.” The word “waited” in Greek happens to be “*Deikonoun*” from where we have the word ‘Deacon’ came into existence. In other words, wilderness served for Jesus as a site where the angels served as his ‘deacons.’ When there is none to serve him, the angels, the unknown angels served on him and offered some support and strength. As I read this verse again and again, I find that all those who are in the mission of ‘diaconate’ are angels, for they serve people known and unknown, for all it matters is love in action through service. Wilderness served as a site of service, offering support, care and strength to Jesus in his lonely stay in the wilderness. Mark was in a way communicating the gospel to his audience that, even in sites of wilderness, God doesn’t leave people, God comes through angels, offering hope and support. No matter whatever the site is, ‘God is always with us’ is the message that Mark was explaining to his readers, and in this case, it was the angels who were waiting, serving on him.

What is the relevance of this text today in 2021? In the context of the current lockdown due to the pandemic, many people have explained lockdown as ‘exile’ as ‘isolation’ as ‘home

alone’ and some have called it ‘wilderness.’ When they have called this lockdown as ‘wilderness’ they have been anticipating a sense of ‘promised land’ after the ‘wilderness.’ But today’s text where Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness reminds us that even the site of wilderness is in God’s geography and in God’s location, for God’s presence is present everywhere and in every site. Lockdown creates opportunities to recognise God’s presence in our midst, and it is God who will strengthen us to bounce back from this lockdown to go and live out the kingdom of God that we have in Jesus today. There is a sense of urgency when the Spirit is driving us towards the unknown and the uncertain. The urgency is to recognise our contexts and locations as sites where ‘God is with us,’ and look out for creative opportunities in turning our contexts as sites and signs offering hope to all of the creation.

The call from this text is to make our neighbourhoods, our churches, our localities, our contexts, our families, our fellowships as sites of subversion, as sites of offering strength, as sites of building friendships and as sites of service for all. As a community we are called to subvert the logic of the empire by being with the struggling communities. Today is Church Action and Poverty Sunday, and it is an opportunity for us to express our solidarity with their efforts in tackling poverty in the UK. We are also called to nurture and celebrate the friendships that exist out of our boxes, beyond the walls, for after all friendships don’t look to tick all the boxes and then form, rather they are formed naturally. We are also called to serve people in need, people who are under tremendous pressure of temptations in life, offering care, support and love. Each of us are called into this ministry of diaconate in our localities, where we are there to nurse and care for the vulnerable people.

In the context of the vaccines now being rolled out, we are developing this idea of ‘Twinning your Vaccine,’ where those of us who have received the vaccine can twin our vaccine with people who cannot afford a vaccine in the poorer countries by paying for the two jabs, we receive through the Covax programme of the Unicef. By joining in this ‘Twinning your vaccine’ programme, we can show our care, our service, our friendship and our support to people living in the Global south, and we can strive in ensuring towards making the vaccine available and accessible to all people in all countries.

May God grant God’s strength so that we can be led by the Spirit in making our localities places for care, friendship, love and service to all and make our world a better place to live with. Amen.

Raj Bharat Patta,  
19<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

### **Opening Prayer**

We come before you Almighty God, ever mindful that you have called us as your own. Lead us in your truth and teach us your paths of steadfast love and righteousness. Amen.

### **Hymn: "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah" Stf 465**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j48TLIRb4Q>

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but thou art mighty;  
hold me with thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore;  
feed me now and evermore.

Open thou the crystal fountain  
whence the healing stream shall flow;  
let the fiery, cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through:  
strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield;  
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death, and hell's destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side:  
songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to thee;  
I will ever give to thee.

*William Williams (1717-1791)*

### **Let us pray together**

O Lord we lift up our hearts and minds and bless your holy name. For you have created all things and your glory is seen in the heavens and on the earth. Thank you for your bountiful provision and your love that goes before us. May this time of Lent enable us to walk humbly and be mindful of your covenant with us. Forgive us Lord for the words said and deeds done that have been selfish, inconsiderate, or hurtful to others. We thank you for your mercies that are new to us each day and that wash us clean. In Jesus Name. Amen

### **Today's Reading from the Old Testament: Genesis 9:8-17**

### **Today's Gospel Reading: Mark 1:9-15**

### **Time to Reflect.**

*Here we are at the beginning of a new Church season in Lent 1. There are two readings for today. The Gospel passage should be familiar to folk as portions of it have already featured twice in this year's lectionary and the Genesis passage which I find particularly applicable to our present situation worldwide.*

*Noah and his family have been restricted to an Ark for 378 days, not just 40 days. Which is so similar to how long this Pandemic has been making our lives difficult. When Noah disembarks and makes sacrifices to God, then God promises to establish a covenant which has the rainbow as a sign.*

*What will you sacrifice to God to open a way for God to bless you? Our hands are full of many different things that we need to let go of before we can take up new things.*

*Just as God wiped the earth clean of all wickedness by way of the flood waters so too does the Baptism of repentance wash us clean.*

*The wilderness, like Lent is also a time for reflection, fasting and spending time in prayer as we prepare for what God is going to do in us and through us.*

*What are the “struggles” that you have faced in this last year? What path will you take in the Lenten season ahead?*

Take a time to sit quietly.

### **A time of prayer**

Lord God, we pray for those who find themselves in restricted spaces and unexpected places.

We pray for places affected by climate change, areas where water is scarce and crops fail, places where flooding is affecting people's homes.

We pray for those who are homeless and have lost everything through earthquake or fire.

We pray for those who wait for medical results, for those who are ill in hospital or at home. For those who have lost their jobs and those who await news about benefits.

We pray for our healthcare workers, nurses and doctors, essential service workers, teachers and police.

For our children whose education has been so badly affected, and parents who are juggling time constraints.

For those who are grieving the loss of loved ones. For Religious leaders and funeral parlours who minister to the bereaved.

For those who are working on the Vaccine rollout, scientists, government leaders,

economists, and medical aid associations.

Breathe new life into your people and all circumstances as we approach Easter. May we always know your presence with us. Amen

**The Lord's Prayer**  
*Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to “Waymaker” Michael W. Smith.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SE\\_M9noEhNE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SE_M9noEhNE)

**or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind.**

### **A prayer of blessing**

May Almighty God, who has called us by His grace bless and keep us by confirming and strengthening us through Jesus Christ, our Lord, and fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit to His instruments of peace in the world. Amen.

Original Materials by Fiona Calverey

All Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191.

Local Churches please insert CCCLi No here

We are grateful to all the Ministers and Local Preachers from around the Connexion who have contributed to Worship at Home. This resource is administrated by Ministries: Vocations and Worship in the Connexional Team. We aim to continue to provide these resources until the end of August 2021.

### **Genesis 9:8-17**

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, 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. 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.' 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: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 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. 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.' 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.' (NRSV)

## **Mark 1:9-15**

### **The Baptism of Jesus**

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

### **The Temptation of Jesus**

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

### **The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.' (NRSV)