

R A I N B O W S

Reflections by David P Hood



Rainbows are very popular. It seems that people love to spot them and capture them with their cameras. They mean so many different things to different people.

They remind people of a song, they prompt thoughts of pots of gold, and their beauty is difficult to ignore.

Many within the Jewish and Christian traditions identify the rainbow with a promise from God, given in the story of Noah and the Ark. It is a sign of God's promise and therefore it is a sign of hope. In Genesis 9 it says, "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the promise between me and the earth."

I asked on social media for images of rainbows, and received many. Sincere thanks to all who sent me pictures. As we are part of Clyde Presbytery it is fitting to include two from a friend who lives above the Clyde :



Perhaps the strongest images I received were from a Minister in Stirling. I do not know him but a mutual friend spotted my Facebook request and connected us. From his manse, he took these :



In researching for this article I have discovered there are several independent rainbow flags in use today.

Possibly the most popular modern use of the rainbow flag started in the late 1970's when it became a sign of Pride for the LGBT community.



As understanding and education developed, LGBT became LGBTQi+ as it sought to be as inclusive as possible. The Pride flag also evolved.

In 2018, a graphic designer, Daniel Quasar, added a five coloured chevron to the traditional six stripe flag. The five coloured chevron is composed of the black and brown stripes, and the white, pastel pink and blue stripes representing the transgender flag. Queer people of colour, and especially transgender people of colour are much more likely to receive verbal and physical abuse, or be killed. This new, "Progress Flag" has been much better received in the community.



The Covid 19 Pandemic paralysed much of the world, with millions confined to their homes. At the same time the waves of illness and death which were sweeping through affected countries were devastating on so many levels. In their powerlessness, and isolation, there were many who realised that the NHS in the UK was under intense pressure, and that the NHS is made up of people who were risking themselves and those they lived with, to care for the sick and dying.

And so, a new use for the symbol of the rainbow was popularised, and all over the country it became a symbol of expressing support and appreciation for the NHS workers.

It strikes me that all three uses for the rainbow are about HOPE.



HOPE for a better world and a better relationship between God and humanity.



HOPE for a better world where people are accepted, valued and embraced irrespective of their gender or sexuality.



HOPE for a better world beyond the intense suffering brought by Covid 19.

I do not pretend to have all the answers, but I take as my example and guide, the way that the gospels present Jesus as profoundly loving and wonderfully affirming of those the community marginalised, judged and despised. Jesus instilled HOPE, and I believe that the Church is called to do the same. I was very pleased to be called to be Minister of a new union of two churches which had previously indicated their Inclusive character. The trials of the

lockdowns and restrictions are still with us, although there is finally a bit more HOPE that things will soon begin to improve.

I believe that the Church is called to bring the hope of the rainbow, as it reminds people of God's love and healing, welcomes and accepts ALL people, and journeys with the community on the road of recovery and new beginnings. The rainbow comes when the dark clouds meet the sunshine. As we hopefully emerge from the darkness into the sunshine, let our hallmark be LOVE.



The Progress Flag appropriately affixed to a cross on the summit of a mountain in the Dolomites, Italy. [Image used with permission of leadinglines.net . Please do not copy or use without the photographer's consent.]

Stolen Rainbows

Rainbows, rainbows everywhere
But how many people are actually aware
That there has been mass rainbow theft And
those who've lost it – are they bereft?

It happened before many years ago
When LGBT activists began to show
A rainbow logo, and many a rainbow flag

Waved by all sorts, including those in drag

It declared humanity and a sense of Pride
And was the logo that depicted a tide
Of love and acceptance and a society growing
Acceptance and love for others showing

The rainbow was the church's and that's no joke
A sign of God's promise, a sign of hope
But over time it evolved to be seen
As a message of acceptance and all that could mean

It didn't lose hope, it added more meaning
Hope for those marginalised it was newly streaming
Spreading world wide from nation to nation
The rainbow's message broader for this generation

Overnight the rainbow morphed and renewed once again
In response to a virus and the chaos it rained
A whole new level of meaning it suddenly gained
As our sights of love were newly trained

Millions could see that whilst they were at home hiding
Safely protected as all were the storm riding
Bored and confused by being restrained
Priorities and mindsets needing retrained

As realisation dawned and there dropped proverbial penny
Of the risks undertaken by the few for the many
A desire to be active when so clearly unable
'How to support?' clearly placed on the table

Soon rainbows appeared in places high and low
With "Support NHS" placed on each window
Gratitude and appreciation people keen to show
To those going risky places they wouldn't go.
So the Rainbow again means something new
A message of love from so many to those few
Who get up each day to do what they have to do
To help fight this horror, and protect me and you

So as you view the rainbows in each window and door
Hear the message of hope and let your mind explore
The rainbow's history as a sign of hope
When against destructive power humanity has had to cope

Suffering is part of it, we cannot pretend
But there will come a day when this season will end
For that time and liberation we wait together
Knowing we endure, but not forever.

D P Luca [used with permission]