

After the flood

By [Beth Merrill Neel](#)

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Soon enough, this election cycle will be over. We will have winners and we will have losers. Some in the country will be relieved; others will be angry or disappointed or elated or packing up their things for Canada. The ads and robo-calls will stop. And that will be good.

But I wonder, with all the effort that has gone into the election, if we've thought about what we will do when it's over? How will we make peace with ourselves as a nation? Or does anyone care about peace anymore?

For a while, all Noah and his family could think about was the flood—warning people about it, building the ark, gathering the animals, gathering the food. For a while, all they could do was endure the rain and waves and the stench.

Then one day, it stopped raining and the clouds parted. Then, at long last, the dove came back with the olive branch, and the rainbow appeared.

Were they ready for dry land? When they stepped onto that mountain, did their gaits shift from side to side as if still riding the waves? Had they made any plans for after the flood, or had they been so focused on surviving they forgot there would be new life ahead?

This election cycle has felt like the flood for me. I'm just trying to get through it. I'm not pretending there's no stench anymore. It's dreary, this rain of ugliness and hate. But it will be over. Soon.

Then what?

New life awaits us and I hope deeply that there are some who are thinking beyond November 8, because we'll wake up on Wednesday and while we were all glued to Her and Him, other things—maybe more important things—happened.

Babies were born and old people died. Refugees still sought hope and safety. Haiti was demolished, again. Racism is ever-present. Children in this wealthy nation—this

nation which just spent billions of dollars in the election cycle—children still went home from school on Friday with no certainty of a meal until Monday.

So if, on November 9, we're licking our wounds or fist-bumping in victory, can we maybe not do that? Can we maybe say, the rain has stopped and the sun has come out and it's too hot and humid for some, and some can't get rid of their sea legs, and for others it's perfect, but for all of us, it's time to start healing?

I think about that dove coming back with the olive branch. I think, too, about a small sentence at the end of Revelation, about the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations (22:2).

What branches, what leaves will heal us after this self-inflicted strife? Listening, maybe. Compromise, maybe. Changing some things, maybe. Letting go, probably.

We can't go back to our antediluvian days, rosy as we imagine them to have been. That ark has sailed. The dove will land with the branch of hope. There will be a new day.

How shall we spend it?

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