

BLESSING OF ANIMALS

For October 4th St Francis Day/World Animal Day, or any Summer Day

“The moral progress of a nation and its greatness should be judged by the way it treats its animals.” (Gandhi)

Note: This service can be held inside or outside, but all animals should be on a lead or in a carrier. People may bring a stuffed animal or picture of an animal or endangered species. Advertise and check with local shelters that may want to participate. Provide water dishes and “doggy bags” with treats for animals; doggy clean-up bags might also be a good idea. Invite people to stand or walk with restless animals. Shorten or add readings as necessary.

PRELUDE “A Place in the Choir”

by Bill Staines

WELCOME Grace Wallace, COSSO Coordinator

INTRODUCTION Rev. Dr. Rebeka Maples, COSSO Spiritual Formation Director

OPENING WORDS

From Job 12:

But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
...and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
In the Creator’s hand is the life of every living thing...

From Genesis 1:

God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created creatures of the sea and air and every living creature that moves. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them.
And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind, cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. And God saw that it was good.
Then God said, “Let us make humankind”. And God blessed them.
God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.

OPENING RESPONSES

Leader: Are any among you in need of a blessing?

All: Call the elders of the church and have them pray over us, and anoint us with oil in the name of the Lord.

The prayers of faith will bless you, and the Lord will raise you up.

May the Lord bless us with understanding.

Are any among you in need of forgiveness?

We will confess our sins and pray for one another.

May the Lord bless us and guide us, that we may be a blessing to others.

Come, let us gather together and praise our Creator for life and love;
and let us bless the pets in our care and those we remember.
Peace be with you and all your animal friends!

And also with you.

[passing of the peace, extends to the animals as well]

PRAYER OF ADORATION, THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Leader: Creator God, you have made a beautiful world filled with wonder and surprises!

All: O how we adore you.

Creator God, you have gifted us with the blessing of animals, those in the wild, those on farms,
those in our own homes.

O how we sing praises to you.

Creator God, you brought life into being in a world we could not imagine,
all creatures and animals near us and around the world.

O how you amaze us.

We thank you for the abundance of life, for birds and bees and the vast tapestry of life which is
interwoven with us.

O how we give you thanks.

We thank you for the gift of animal companions;

for the joy they bring us,

for their unconditional love and forgiveness which teaches us about you,

for the benefits they are to our health and to our Spirit.

We give you thanks.

And yet, we know that we have not always been faithful caretakers of animals and the
environment;

forgive us when we have neglected what you have created.

forgive us when we have not loved what you love.

God is love. Through Christ our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN

All Creatures of Our God and King

UMH 62

SCRIPTURE RESPONSES

from Psalm 104:

O Lord, how wonderful are your works! In wisdom you have made all things;

The earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide,

Creeping things innumerable are they, living things both small and great.

These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

When you open your hand,

They are filled with good things.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created;

And you renew the face of the earth.
May the glory of the Lord endure forever...

From Matthew 6: 25-26

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

REFLECTION/ Readings about animals

From Meister Eckhart, a 13th century Christian mystic:

'Apprehend God in all things,
for God is in all things.

Every single creature is full of God, and is a book about God.

Every creature is a word of God.

If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature- even a caterpillar-

I would never have to prepare a sermon

so full of God is every creature.'

Reflection: Rev. Rebeka Maples

(When doing this service, you can add other readings or reflections about animals)

HYMN

"All Things Bright and Beautiful"

UMH 147

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Leader: Loving God, we bring to you all the prayers on our hearts,
for peace in our world and in our lives.

Today we offer prayers for all animals, those close to us and those in the wild;
for people involved in animal welfare and conservation work.

**All: We pray for farmers who care for animals,
that all animals may be treated with dignity and respect.**

We pray for the strays on our streets.

**We pray for veterinarians and animal hospitals and all who protect animals;
enable your wisdom and compassion to be evident wherever there are sick or dying animals.**

Comfort grieving owners; allow warm memories to break through their grief.

May we live in peace with your creation, the earth and all living creatures. Amen.

Blessing of the Animals

In-person, animals may be brought forward row by row or line up in order to be blessed; or ministers and assistants may circulate to the animals. Ask the name of the animal, place hand on the animal's head (if appropriate), and bless the animal. Alternatively, all animals may be blessed at once.

For our Zoom service, please bring your animal (or picture or stuffed animal) to the screen and don't worry about reading, just repeat after me:

