

BROADWAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



A SERVICE OF BLESSING FOR ANIMALS



October 9, 2010, 2 pm, the North Yard

Words of Centering

“Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but still nothing is as shining as it should be for you. Under the sink, for example, is an uproar of mice — it is the season of their many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves and through the walls the squirrels have gnawed their ragged entrances — but it is the season when they need shelter, so what shall I do? Still I believe you will come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox, the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know that really I am speaking to you whenever I say, as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.”

(Mary Oliver, from “Making the House Ready for the Lord”)

The Welcome

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

We come together today to ask God to bless our animals. We can ask God to bless our animals because all creatures were created by God and belong to God.

Our pets are our companions, our comforters, our friends. They show us that compassion and kindness are not limited to human beings.

Animals help us plant and harvest our crops, build cities, and carry heavy loads. They remind us that we are never completely independent of other creatures.

In tamed and untamed animals, we see our limitless Creator at work. All manner of color, size, shape, sound, and texture are combined in the wild world.

Animals also call us to accountability. We have neglected our role as caretakers of their habitat and ours. We ask God’s forgiveness for the ways we have neglected and abused our natural world.

We ask for God’s blessing on us and on these, our companion creatures, and on all the creatures of the world. Amen.



Naming the Animals Present

[Please share you and your animal's name, what type of animal it is, and how long you have cared for it.]

Remembering Animals Past

[You are invited to share the names of loved companion animals from the past, and what you remember as being most special about your relationship. You may also light a candle in memory of these cherished friends.]

Readings from Scripture

Genesis 1:20-25

And 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 the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. 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. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Job 12:7-10

But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.

Group Blessing

Spirit of Life, surrounded by the presence and memories of animals we most love and have loved, we remember with gratitude these animal friends, protectors, and companions who have blessed our lives.

We give thanks this day for our childhood animals who showed us love, and helped us to learn responsibility and relationship; and for the animals who brighten our days and comfort our nights.

Surrounded by the animals we love, we know that many animals contribute to our lives.

We give thanks for all those who, unknowingly and unasked, help us: for worker animals, for those who guard us and find lost ones, for those that guide the blind; for the beasts of farm and field who provide us food and clothing, who tote our burdens and entertain us with their antics.

Spirit of Life, help us to remember that we live and work and love among the animals of the earth, both tame and wild, whether under our own care or that of others.

Help us to be their friends, to love them and care for them and protect them from harm, to thank them when we use their lives for ours.

Especially this afternoon, Spirit of Life, bless these animals who are and have been the companions of our lives. Hear our outpouring of love and gratitude for them and help us to translate that into love and gratitude for all your creatures.

We bless these animals we love. We pledge to care for them tenderly and faithfully, and to remember that we are not alone on the earth, that we are a part of the interdependent web of all existence.

Individual Blessings

[You are invited to come to either pastor with the animal you love for individual blessing for that animal and your relationship.]

Benediction

[Afterwards, please find the side table to receive a certificate commemorating this blessing.]

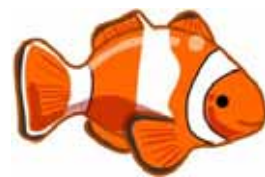
We welcome you to this service of Broadway United Methodist Church. If you have any questions about our congregation, or would like additional information, please speak to one of our pastors or leave a note with your name and telephone number. We will be sure to contact you.



CELEBRANTS

Pastor: Rev. Lois McCullen Parr
Field Studies Intern: Tracy Nolan

www.broadwaychurchchicago.org



Poems about Animals [Submitted by Broadway United Methodist Church members]

“Luke” by Mary Oliver

I had a dog who loved flowers. Briskly she went through the fields, yet paused for the honeysuckle or the rose, her dark head and her wet nose touching the face of every one with its petals of silk with its fragrance rising into the air where the bees, their bodies	heavy with pollen hovered - and easily she adored every blossom not in the serious careful way that we choose this blossom or that blossom the way we praise or don't praise - the way we love or don't love - but the way we long to be - that happy in the heaven of earth - that wild, that loving.
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“Dharma” by Billy Collins

The way the dog trots out the front door
every morning
without a hat or an umbrella,
without any money
or the keys to her doghouse
never fails to fill the saucer of my heart
with milky admiration.
Who provides a finer example
of a life without encumbrance—
Thoreau in his curtainless hut
with a single plate, a single spoon?
Gandhi with his staff and his holy diapers?
Off she goes into the material world
with nothing but her brown coat
and her modest blue collar,
following only her wet nose,
the twin portals of her steady breathing,
followed only by the plume of her tail.
If only she did not shove the cat aside
every morning, and eat all his food
what a model of self-containment she
would be,
what a paragon of earthly detachment.
If only she were not so eager
for a rub behind the ears,
so acrobatic in her welcomes,
if only I were not her god.

“I Ask Percy How I Should Live My Life” by Mary Oliver

Love, love, love, says Percy.
And hurry as fast as you can
along the shining beach, or the rubble, or the dust.
Then, go to sleep.
Give up your body heat, your beating heart.
Then, trust.



“Lessons” by Joanne Hirase-Stacey

If I greeted everyone happily Instead of eyeing with distrust If I didn't pass judgment But accepted all If I listened intently With understanding in my eyes If I brought comfort All the time, no matter what If I loved unconditionally Without reservation If I lived life more simply	Instead of worrying so much If I played tirelessly And didn't work so hard If I made people smile Just by my presence in the room If I experienced true joy At the little things in life Then I'd be the perfect friend Just like my dog.
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“The Gift” by Unknown

I'll lend you for a little while my grandest dog, he said.
For you to love while he's alive and mourn for when he's dead.
It may be one or twenty years, or months or days, you see.
But will you, till I take him back, take care of him for me?
He will bring his charms to gladden you, and should his stay be brief
You'll have such treasured memories as solace for your grief.
I cannot promise he will stay, since all from earth return,
But there are lessons taught on earth I want this dog to learn.
I've looked the wide world over in my search for teachers true
And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes, with trust, I selected you.
Now will you give him all your love? Not think the labor vain,
Nor hate me when I must return to take him back again?
I know you'll give him tenderness and love will bloom each day,
And for the happiness you'll know, forever grateful stay.
But should I come and call for him much sooner than you planned,
You'll brave the bitter grief that comes and someday you'll understand.