



ABLESSING OF THE ANIMALS



We worship with the creatures we love

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

(Gandhi)

CALL TO WORSHIP

'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 his hand is the life of every living thing...'

(Job 12: 7, 8b, 10a)

A Moment of Silence

THE INTRODUCTION: A READING;

Reader:

'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. 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.'

(from *Genesis 1*)

OPENING PRAYER

Come, let us gather together.

Let us join the gathering: we bring fins and feathers.

Come, all is ready for all of creation.

Let us join the gathering: we bring scales and fur.

Come let us praise our Creator.

We are loved: we bring skin.

Come, with fins, feathers, scales, fur and skin. As we gather, we are mindful that, as part of God's creation, we wish the best for one another. Within this gathering we express this in prayer, and through blessing. Let us pass God's blessing amongst one another:

Peace be with you!

And also with you.

PRAYERS OF ADORATION, THANKSGIVING AND CONFESSION

Creator God,
You have made a beautiful world filled with wonder and surprises!

We adore you.

Creator God who has gifted us with the blessing of animals, those in the wild, those on farms, those in our own homes

We adore you.

Creator God, you brought into being that which we could not imagine for ourselves, life we cannot see without the aid of microscopes, animals we can only see in pictures from remote regions of this planet earth,

We adore you.

We thank you for abundant life; for the birds we hear in the morning, for the drone of the bees when we are outside, for the vast tapestry of life which is interwoven,

We give you thanks.

We thank you for the gift of our own animal companions;
For the joy they bring us,
For the unconditional love and forgiveness which teaches us about you;
For the confidant, the listener, the stress-releaser,
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 our animals; Forgive us when we have dirtied their environment, erased places of shelter, polluted the waters, killed off their food supplies or neglected to feed or tend animals in our own communities

Forgive us when we have neglected our own animal companions; when we have said we are too busy to play with them, when we have made excuses, so that we do not walk them, cuddle them, spend time with them.

Forgive us when we have not loved them as they have loved us.

Forgive us when we have not considered the wider picture; when we have neglected the animals in the wild, when we have focused only on our 'favourites'. Forgive us in neglecting the cruelty inflicted in the name of 'sport', or in the name of food production, as each year more animals become extinct, and even more are endangered.

Forgive us when we neglect to see all animals as part of your creation, forgive us when we neglect to acknowledge that your love beats in all hearts, and that you give breath to all creation.

God is love. Through Christ your sins are forgiven. Take hold of this forgiveness, and live your life, knowing that you are forgiven, and deeply loved. Know that the Holy Spirit will enable you to live fully, richly, and deeply.

Amen

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 104: 24-25, 27-28, 30-31

O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.

These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
when you give to them, they gather it up;
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 ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works

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.'

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God.**

Something to Ponder

'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'

(Meister Eckhart, a 13th century Christian mystic).

REFLECTION

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray:

Loving God,
We bring to you the prayers of the people.

Today we offer up prayers for those involved in animal welfare and conservation work: for the RSPCA, the Animal Welfare League, for Earth Watch, World Wildlife Fund, Animals Asia, our local animal shelters and adoption groups.

We pray for those who are working at policy and project levels, and for those tending to the needs of animals.

We pray for the farming communities that have animals in their care, those animals are treated with dignity and respect.

We pray for the strays on our streets; help us not to turn away, but to bring them to a place of safety, where they can be fed, given medical treatment, and the chance to find a loving home.

Help us to be generous: with money, time, or offer of hospitality within our homes to abandoned pets, or for respite care for pets whose owners are unwell or in hospital.

We pray for vets, vet nurses and vet practices: enable your wisdom and compassion to be evident wherever there are sick or dying animals under their watch.

Enable the animals to sense your presence.

Comfort grieving owners; allow the many warm memories to break the frost of grief.

We remember our animal companions who are no longer with us physically.

We give thanks for the gifts they gave us and the variety of ways they enriched and blessed our lives.

We are confident that our Creator continues to care for them.

Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

The minister/ worship leader circulates through the congregation, asks the name of the animal, places his/her hand on the animal's head (if appropriate) and then blesses the animal.

If anyone has access to a photograph of their animal (such as a cat) rather than the animal itself, then bless the owner, and have them pass on this blessing when they return home.

' [insert name], you were created by God, and you are loved by God. May you and your human family experience joy and companionship together, and continue to be a blessing to each other.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.'

DISMISSAL/BLESSING

**God, our Creator, help us to love all creatures as kin,
all animals as partners on Earth,
all birds as messengers of praise,
all minute beings as expressions of your mysterious design, and all frogs as voices of hope. Amen**

(Norman Habel)

Go out into the world, love one another.

Cherish your animal family, protest against abuse and neglect of our animals;
exercise stewardship of ALL creation, so that ALL can experience God's Shalom.

Go out into the world, my horizontal and vertical sisters and brothers in Christ.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

