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ANIMAL BLESSING SERVICE

WELCOME: ALICIA LESLIE

HYMN: "All Creatures of Our God and King" verses 1,2, & 3

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Genesis 1:25, Genesis 9:9-11, Genesis 9:15-16, Ecclesiastes 3:19, Job 12:7-8. READ BY MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

READINGS: Walt Whitman, Dostoyesky, O. Fred Donaldson. READ BY MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION.

LESSON: WE ARE ONE - BARBARA J. FOX

PRAYER & MEDITATION: ALICIA LESLIE

ANIMAL BLESSING: ALICIA LESLIE

OFFERTORY: All of the love offering will be donated to local and international animal rights and protection organizations.

CLOSING HYMN: All Creatures of Our God and King" verses 1,4, & 5

(This service can be effectively done on October 4, which is WORLD DAY FOR ANIMALS and the feast day for St. Francis of Assisi, or on EARTH DAY or ANIMAL RIGHTS DAY.)

ANIMAL BLESSING SERVICE

compiled by Alicia Leslie & Barbara Fox

WELCOME: HYMN: "All Creatures of our God & King" Verses 1,2, & 3

READINGS: Genesis 1:25 "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 say that it was good.

"Genesis 9:9-11 "As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your

descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

"Genesis 9:15-16 "I will remember my covenant that is between n~ and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

"Ecclesiastes 3:19 "For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity.

"Job 12:7-8 "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."

"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.

"I think I could turn and live with animals, they're so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long.
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things,
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago,
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth." WALT WHITMAN

"Love animals: God has given them the rudiments of thought and joy untroubled. Do not trouble their joy, don't harass them, don't deprive them of their happiness, don't work against God's intent. Man, do not pride yourself on superiority to animals; they are without sin, and you, with your greatness, defile the earth by your appearance on it, and leave the traces of your foulness after you---alas, it is true of almost every one of us!"
DOSTOYEVSKY

Grey Wolf
We are sending you to that Great God.
Tell Him,
That we, who invented forgiveness
do not forgive;
That we, who speak of trust

can not trust;
That we who invoke faith would not believe.

I write as though you could read.
But I know you understand.
When you have left the forests and tundras
and no longer leave your sinewy trails within the snows, tell Him that
you were made on a different day.

Your howls of bewilderment will echo with the mountain winds.
And your songs will join those of the whales.
Tell Him for me,
"Forgive them Father for they know not what they do."

O. FRED DONALDSON

"All praise be yours through Brother Wolf,
All praise be yours through Sister Whale,
By Nature's song my Lord be praised
By Brother Eagle, Sister Loon,
Through Brother Tiger, Sister Seal,
Through Sister Flower, Brother Tree,
Let creatures all give thanks to thee,
All praise to those who live in peace.

Ask the Beasts and they shall teach you
The beauty of the Earth.
Ask of the Trees and they shall teach you
The beauty of the Earth.
Ask of the Beasts and they shall teach you
The beauty of the Earth.
Ask of the Flowers and they shall teach you
The beauty of the Earth."

("Canticle of Brother Sun" words adapted by Paul Winter from St. Francis' "Canticle of Brother Sun" and the book of Job.)

"We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, and the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices of the meadow, in body heat of the pony, and man---all belong to the same family.

So when the Great Chief in Washington sends words that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us...

If we decide to accept, I will make one condition. The white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers. I am a savage and do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffalos on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them

from a passing train. I am a savage and I do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

Where is man without the beasts? If the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts soon happens to man. All things are connected.

"One thing we know: Our God is the same. This earth is precious to Him...This we know: All things are connected; like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life. He is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

MESSAGE: We Are One (text below)

PRAYER & MEDITATION: "Hear our humble prayer, O God, for our friends the animals, especially for animals who are suffering; for any that are hunted or lost, or deserted or frightened or hungry; for all that must be put to death. We entreat for them all thy mercy and pity and for those who deal with them we ask a heart of compassion and gentle hands and kindly words. Make us, ourselves, to be true friends to animals and so to share the blessings of the merciful." ALBERT SCHWEITZER

"In safety and in bliss
May all creatures be of a blissful heart
Whatever breathing beings there may be
Frail or firm...long or big...short or small
Seen or unseen, dwelling far or near
Existing or yet seeking to exist
May all creatures be of a blissful heart."
SUTTA NIPATA, 143-52"

O God, scatterer of ignorance and darkness,
grant me your strength.
May all beings regard me with the eye of a friend,
and I all beings!
With the eye of a friend may each single being
regard all others!"
'SUKLA YAJUR, VEDA XXXVI

ANIMAL BLESSING:

OFFERTORY: all of the offering will go to the local and international animal rights and protection organizations.

CLOSING HYMN: "All Creatures of Our God and King" verses 1, 4, & 5.

WE ARE ONE !

We come together today, to thank God for all of the beautiful creatures that enrich and enhance our lives. We come together today to bless all animals everywhere. We come together today, to give thanks and bless our special animals friends. We joyously welcome these honored guests.

This is the day, that we fully, consciously recognize that we do indeed, share this beautiful planet with multitudes of creatures, all of which are created by God. We discover in the scripture readings that we are connected. "FOR THE FATE OF HUMANS AND THE FATE OF ANIMALS IS THE SAME; AS ONE DIES, SO DIES THE OTHER." from Ecclesiastes. It doesn't say that ONLY if we humans die, the animals die. It works both ways. It is in our best self-interest to take care or give care to all of God's creatures. From Chief Seattle: "WHAT IS MAN WITHOUT BEASTS? IF ALL THE BEASTS ARE GONE, MAN WOULD DIE FROM GREAT LONELINESS OF SPIRIT, FOR WHATEVER HAPPENS TO BEASTS ALSO HAPPENS TO MAN. ALL THINGS ARE CONNECTED. WHATEVER BEFALLS THE EARTH BEFALLS THE SONS OF THE EARTH." We do give thanks for these magnificent creatures.

Putting together this lesson has been VERY INTERESTING. Not only has been the research been fascinating, but the spirit of my dog, Amy, has been ever so present. She was a very bossy spiritual director when she was with me in the furry flesh, and she still remains pretty bossy in spirit. Many of us have been blessed with pets as children and as adults. We know intimately how much they add to our lives. They teach us so much about faith and unconditional love, but much more they give us the opportunity to love, to keep our love channels open, to exercise our faculty of love. We know that love needs to be exercised and these wonderful beings provide us an opportunity to love, especially, at times when loving humans may not be too easy. They are easy to love.

But our relationship with the animals is much deeper and much richer than the companionship we enjoy. We have learned much from religion and psychology, especially Charles Fillmore and Carl Jung. In Unity we believe that God did CREATE the world. "There is a divine goodness at the root of all existence...Even the animals exhibit its regulating and directive power. This goodness sleeps in the recesses of every mind and comes forth when least expected," writes Charles Fillmore in KEEP A TRUE LENT (p.43). We also know that our emotional and mental or intellectual reactions to our experiences - people, places, and animals - represent parts of our consciousness. Many of our attitudes about animals reflect attitudes we hold about ourselves and others.

One thing that drew me into Unity, was the loving and gentle belief that we don't rid ourselves of negative feelings by violently killing them off. We believe in divinely loving ourselves into wholeness, into holiness. When we violently, thoughtless curse and/or kill off the animals, we are cursing a part of ourselves, we are killing off a part of ourselves.

We are denying our true identity as Children of God, we are denying the connectedness of all of God's Creation. As Chief Seattle says, what we do to the animals we do to ourselves.

In TWELVE POWERS OF MAN, Fillmore writes, "Man's body represents the sum total of the animal world, because in its evolution it has had experience in nearly every type of elemental form. These memories are part of the soul...According to Genesis, the original creation was ideal, and through man the ideal was given character and form To the spiritually wise it is revealed that, when man is fully redeemed, he redeems and purifies and uplifts the animals in himself. The animal world will go through a complete transformation when the race is redeemed. As Isaiah says, 'the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.'" We do ourselves a favor by loving and blessing the animals. As we do that we are acknowledging the animal parts of ourselves, we are loving the animals parts of ourselves, and they are being transformed, or perhaps returned to the original ideal state. We don't have to be brutally crucified, we can be transformed through love, when we express love, a sense of communion or connectedness with each other and all living creatures.

Now this ISN'T PURELY A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. It readily manifests in our everyday lives. Sometimes, I have had difficulty believing in the law of mind action. My thoughts haven't always been pretty. In fact, at times, they have been pretty awful. But they haven't always produced after their kind. Grace has been active. But inquiring minds want to know how and why, grace has been so fully functional in our lives. I thank God that this is true and has been my experience, but I still wanted some understanding of how this all works.

Well, I can't say that this is positively it, I haven't done scientific research, but it intuitively feels very right to me. I have always had a kind of reverence for life. But still it was all unclear. Then I read THE SEAT OF THE SOUL by Gary Zukav. He defines reverence as ',...engaging in a form and a depth of contact with Life that is well beyond the shell of form and into essence. Reverence is contact with the essence of each thing and person and plant and bird and animal. It is contact with the interior beingness Reverence is an attitude of honoring Life. You do not have to be authentically empowered to be gentle with Life or to love Life.'" Reverence is accepting the Truth that all LIFE IS SACRED.

We come together, accepting the Truth of our being, that all Life is sacred. We have reverence. It is a way of being. We acknowledge and express and experience our reverence today. We express our love for animals, we lovingly accept our own animal natures. We allow Holy Spirit to work in and through us, to integrate us, as we acknowledge our animal sisters and brothers.

THANK YOU GOD FOR ALL OF THESE BEAUTIFUL CREATURES. WE ACCEPT AND LOVE THE ANIMALS WITHIN US AND WITHOUT US. WE ARE GRATEFUL THAT WE HAVE BEEN BLESSED, SO WE BLESS THEM. THANK YOU GOD

The Rainbow Bridge

There is a bridge connecting heaven and earth. It is called the rainbow bridge because of its many colors. Just this side of the rainbow bridge there is a land of meadows, hills and valleys with lush green grass.

When a beloved pet dies, the pet goes to this place. There is always food and water and warm spring weather. The old and frail animals are young again. Those who are maimed are made whole again. They play all day with each other. There is only one thing missing--They are not with the special person who loved them on earth.

So, each day they run and play until the day comes when one suddenly stops playing and looks up, the nose twitches! The ears are up! The eyes are staring, and this one suddenly runs from the group.

You have been seen, and when you and your special friend meet, You take him or her into your arms and embrace. Your face is kissed again and again and again, and you look once more into the eyes of your trusting pet.

Then you cross the Rainbow Bridge together, never again to be separated.

Author Unknown

Prayer at the Death of a Pet

Lord God, to those who have never had a pet, this prayer will sound strange, but to You, Lord of All Life and Creator of All Creatures, it will be understandable.

My heart is heavy as I face the loss in death of my beloved (name) who was so much a part of my life.

This pet made my life more enjoyable and gave me cause to laugh and to find joy in his/her company.

I remember the fidelity and loyalty of this pet and will miss his/her being with me.

From him/her I learned many lessons, such as the quality of naturalness and the unembarrassed request for affection.

In caring for his/her daily needs I was taken up and out of my own self-needs and thus learned to serve others.

May the death of this creature of Yours remind me that death comes to all of us, animal and human, and that it is the natural passage for all life.

May (name) sleep on in an eternal slumber in Your godly care as all creation awaits the fullness of liberation.

Amen
