A SERVICE FOR THE BLESSING OF ANIMALS

*A Blessing of Animals, in many congregations, witnesses to God's and the Church's love, care, and concern for creation. As we recognize our mutual interdependence with God's creatures, the Church's witness of stewardship of creation is strengthened. It is also a service with special appeal to children.*

*The Blessing is best celebrated during daylight in the outdoors—in the churchyard or in a park. It may be celebrated at any time of the year, especially in early spring, or on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4. Make allowances for the arrival of larger animals such as horses and other livestock. The space may contain a table on which the Bible or musical instruments may be placed. Music is best led by instruments that work well outdoors—trumpets, accordions, drums, and guitars. Bulletins are awkward and should be used only to provide the texts of hymns to be sung.*

GATHERING AND GREETING

*When most animals and their friends have arrived, the leader invites all to form a large circle around the table. The leader begins:*

The animals of God's creation inhabit the skies, the earth, and the sea.

They share in the fortunes of human existence

and have a part in human life.

God, who confers gifts on all living things,

has often used the service of animals

or made them reminders of the gifts of salvation.

Animals were saved from the flood

and afterwards made a part of the covenant with Noah. (GENESIS 9:9–10)

The paschal lamb recalls the passover sacrifice

and the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. (EXODUS 12:3–14)

A giant fish saved Jonah; (JONAH 2:1–10)

ravens brought bread to Elijah; (1 KINGS 17:6)

animals were included in the repentance of Nineveh; (JONAH 3:7)

and animals share in Christ's redemption of all God's creation.

We, therefore, invoke God's blessing on these animals.

As we do so, let us praise the Creator

and thank God for setting us as stewards

over all the creatures of the earth.

HYMN *Suggested hymns from* UMH:

62 All Creatures of Our God and King 122 God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale

147 All Things Bright and Beautiful 152 I Sing the Almighty Power of God

149 Cantemos al Señor 148 Many and Great, O God

(Let's Sing unto the Lord) 144 This Is My Father's World

227 The Friendly Beasts

SCRIPTURE *Suggested lessons and psalms:*

Genesis 1 The creation

Genesis 6:17 –22 Animals on the ark

Isaiah 11:6 –9 The wolf and the lamb

Psalm 8 (UMH 743) The work of your fingers

Psalm 148 (UMH 861) Praise the Lord for creation.

PRAYER

*The following, or St. Francis' Prayer for All Created Things (507), or another prayer may be prayed.*

God created us and placed us on the earth

to be stewards of all living things,

therefore let us proclaim the glory of our Creator, saying:

**O God, how wonderful are the works of your hands.**

Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; you create the animals

and give us the ability to train them to help us in our work. **R**

Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe;

you give us food from animals to replenish our energies. **R**

Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; for the sake of our comfort

you give us domestic animals as companions. **R**

Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe; you care for us

even as you care for the birds of the air. **R**

Blessed are you, O Lord of the Universe;

you offered your Son to us as the passover lamb

and in him willed that we should be called your children. **R**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

*The leader says the following prayer with hands outstretched or may touch and bless each animal. The animals may form a procession to be blessed.*

Bless, O Lord, this (these) creature(s),

and fill our hearts with thanksgiving for its (their) being.

HYMN

See suggestions.

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

May God, who created the animals of this earth,

continue to protect and sustain us all,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

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