

PET BLESSING 2020

September 13, 2020

WELCOME

Good morning everyone and welcome to the worship of God with McClure United Church. We are so grateful you have joined us for this time.

Today is our annual Pet Blessing Service. Normally we would be gathered together in McClure's sanctuary to the sounds of barking, meowing and lots of joy as we celebrate not only the furry ones who keep us company in our homes but also the beasts and birds and water creatures of the wild. We are so blessed by all of God's creatures and the many gifts they bring to the world and our lives. Today is also an opportunity for us to remember our role within creation... as stewards – caretakers of all that God has made. An amazing responsibility and gift.

May you experience this time as a blessing – in the beautiful music, scripture story and reflections offered by some of McClure's own pet lovers. Thank you so much to everyone who has participated in today's service... scripture readers, pet lovers and, of course, our very talented musicians.

And just before we ground ourselves in prayer, there are a couple of announcements I'd like to share with you.

First, a reminder that zoom programs for Rainbow Village begins Sunday the 20th... children will gather at 10am and youth at 11. I will be posting the connection info in the Rainbow Village Facebook group but you can also contact me directly and I'll happily pass the info onto you. I have also completed the Faith at Home kits for families with children... they include stories, family games and activities to help you stay connected to your faith. I'll be contacting folks in the next week or so for delivery.

And I have exciting news for all the pie-lovers in our congregation... McClure United Church is hosting a pie sale fundraiser on September 30th. For those who would like to donate a delicious pie or two—please contact Ebba Eggleston. Her contact information can be found in the Pie Sale page of our website at www.mcclureunitedchurch.org. Keep an eye out for future announcements (like how to get your hands on one) as we get closer to the date.

And I believe that's all I have for announcements today.

OPENING PRAYER

Candle:

We are friends with God's friends:

All the ones who talk by barking or meowing,

All the ones who nudge us with their noses,

All the ones who sing and fly,

All the ones who have long tails and whiskers.

Some of our animal friends are big some are small.

Today we **thank God** for the love we share with our animal friends.

We light this candle and we remember that we are blessed to know God's love in many ways.

Light Candle:

God of creation.

Like a cat in a sunbeam let us soak up your love and healing.

Like a dog greeting its human after they have been apart all day, excite our living and help us embrace your promise of new life.

Like a bird in flight let us feel your support beneath our wings and your sky of freedom before us.

Like a fish in a bowl may we feel the safety and the beauty of your care of us.

Be with us now as we worship.

Amen.

REFLECTION

It is our tradition at McClure to kick off our church year each year by celebrating and blessing the animals of creation. Animal blessing services have become a tradition in many churches as way of honoring Saint Francis of Assisi... patron saint of animals.

One of the reasons I like the blessing of the animals is because it is one small way to acknowledge the important role our pets play in many of our lives.

If you don't have now, or never have had a pet, this may be hard to imagine, but for those of us who include animals among our household,

they truly are often like members of the family. It's not an exaggeration to say that some people have closer and deeper relationships with their pets than they have with other humans.

Our pets are utterly dependent on us, –yes, that's true even of cats, no matter what they might think, and whatever attitude they might have at the moment... they need us. And they share love and devotion with us. I think that for many of us, our spiritual lives are also experienced and deepened through our relationships with animals.

I know that my own pets have been a great source of joy, comfort and love during the past few months. They are great company and remind me to take breaks throughout the day to go for a walk or even just stop for a quick snuggle.

I'm sure the pets are disappointed not to be able to attend church in person this year but I hope they will still experience God's blessing on them and on their relationships with us.

I too miss the in person pet blessing... it's one of my favourite services. Yes it's chaotic and disruptive and perhaps seems a little unseemly to some... but to acknowledge the role our pets play in our lives is also to acknowledge our full humanity, in all of its messiness and unseemliness.

And if there's anything that St. Francis was about, it was just that. His ministry, as well as being about the love of animals, was mostly among the poor and the downtrodden. He and his followers sought to help those who were sick and dying and he brought the gospel to places it was rarely heard or experienced. His life was preaching the gospel. As is often attributed to him, he said, preach the gospel, if you have to, use words.

So today, we honor the messiness of the gospel, the good news of God's love for all... by honoring our pets. I invited a few of our members to share their pets with us this morning. Thank you to Jim and Angie, Jocelyn, Eden and Terry... for blessing us with their pet stories today.

BLESSING OF PETS

And now I invite you if you have a pet with you this morning to place your hand on them as we offer a blessing.

You were created by God and are loved by God. May you and your human family experience joy and companionship together, and continue to be a blessing to each other. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God who dwells beyond us

God who dwells among us

God who calls us to dwell together,

Be with us now as we gather our thoughts in prayer...

Send your spirit searching within our hearts, and know us through and through, Hear our prayers.

Hear our prayers of gratitude for the wonders of the world around us.

For the early morning chorus of geese

For the plump grain in the fields,

For the cool crisp air and the wind in our hair.

For all these things and for the breath of life we share with all the creatures of the earth, we offer thanks and praise to you creating God.

Today we particularly celebrate the gift and the privilege we have of being in relationship with our pets. They are often sources of unconditional love for us and reminders of our connection to all living things. Thank you for all they bring to our living - help us to be worthy of their trust and care.

Hear now the worries that haunt us for all of your creation in danger and the part we play in that;

For air that is made dangerous to breathe

For water that becomes unfit to drink, for soil that is blown away, or mined into lifelessness;

For all these things and for the task of stewardship you call us to - we offer our prayer so concern.

Hear our mingled thanks and concern, God, for the people who share our life, for those who care for us and for the ones who need our care. For the joy they bring us, for the love they call forth from us, for the goodness we know in relationships – for the forgiveness we are given and the forgiveness we offer - we give thanks and praise.

For those relationships that are broken and in need of healing we pray.//

We pray for the wholeness and health of our loved ones, for the healing of those who are sick and for the comfort of the grieving.

We pray for the safety of our children and those who have care of them.

We pray for teachers and healthcare providers and custodians for parents and guardians and siblings who care.

We pray also, in this time, for all those who are tired - tired of this long journey through Covid. We pray for energy and peace in the turmoil. We pray for grace to acknowledge the struggle of our own hearts and struggle of others. We ask that we might respond to the struggle with gentleness and understanding.

God who dwells beyond us

God who dwells among us

God who calls us to dwell together hear our prayers for we bring them in the strength of the spirit and in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray saying:

Our Father who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING

May God, the Creator of all that is, God the Redeemer of all Creation, and God the life-giving Spirit, bless you all, now and forever. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord! **Thanks be to God!**