



### *Community Pet Memorial Service*

**Welcome and Purpose**—God, the creator of all living things, enriches our lives in many ways through the gift of our pets. In our grief ministry here at Zion, we acknowledge grief of all kinds, and we acknowledge that the grief that comes with the loss of a pet is real grief. Whether you recently said goodbye, or it has been years since you lost a beloved pet, this afternoon we gather in intentional community to name that loss. You'll have a chance during the service to bring forward a photo of the pet or pets you are remembering and place them on our memorial table. You'll be invited to share about your loss if you'd like to. Together we'll give thanks to God for the joy these wondrous creatures brought to our lives as we celebrate all they meant to us.

We remember that in the beginning God created light from darkness and God created all creatures great and small. So, we light now a candle, to remind us of the light our pets brought us and the light of God's comforting presence with us here now.

### **Prelude**

**Gathering**— *The following is adapted from St. Francis' Prayer for All Created Things.*

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; for the sake of our comfort you give us domestic animals [and our beloved pets] 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**

**\*\*Hymn**

*All Things Bright and Beautiful, 30*

**Prayer**—God, we come to you with thanksgiving in our hearts for the wonder and beauty of your creation. You called the whole world into being, including each and every one of the pets we gather to celebrate this day. With gratitude we lift up to you the pets who have been for us a source of joy, comfort, and companionship. Be with us now as we remember each one lost. Offer your comfort in our grief. Grant us your encouragement and steadfast love as we continue to be stewards and caretakers of your creation, including all your creatures great and small. Amen.

**We Hear God's Word**—*Psalms 104:5-25 (NRSVUE)*

<sup>5</sup> You set the earth on its foundations,  
so that it shall never be shaken.

<sup>6</sup> You cover it with the deep as with a garment;  
the waters stood above the mountains.

<sup>7</sup> At your rebuke they flee;  
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.

<sup>8</sup> They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys,  
to the place that you appointed for them.

<sup>9</sup> You set a boundary that they may not pass,  
so that they might not again cover the earth.

<sup>10</sup> You make springs gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow between the hills,

<sup>11</sup> giving drink to every wild animal;  
the wild [donkeys] quench their thirst.

<sup>12</sup> By the streams<sup>[e]</sup> the birds of the air have their habitation;  
they sing among the branches.

<sup>13</sup> From your lofty abode you water the mountains;  
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.

<sup>14</sup> You cause the grass to grow for the cattle  
and plants for people to cultivate,

to bring forth food from the earth  
15 and wine to gladden the human heart,  
oil to make the face shine  
and bread to strengthen the human heart.  
16 The trees of the field<sup>[f]</sup> are watered abundantly,  
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.  
17 In them the birds build their nests;  
the stork has its home in the fir trees.  
18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;  
the rocks are a refuge for the coney.  
19 You have made the moon to mark the seasons;  
the sun knows its time for setting.  
20 You make darkness, and it is night,  
when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.  
21 The young lions roar for their prey,  
seeking their food from God.  
22 When the sun rises, they withdraw  
and lie down in their dens.  
23 People go out to their work  
and to their labor until the evening.  
24 O Lord, how manifold are your works!  
In wisdom you have made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.  
25 There is the sea, great and wide;  
creeping things innumerable are there,  
living things both small and great.

## Hymn

*God of the Sparrow, 29*

## Meditation

The scriptures remind us again and again of how important all of creation is to our God who is the creator of all things. It's not often enough that we pause to remember that.

There was once a saint who constantly had God's creation on his mind, especially the wonderful creatures of this world of all kinds. His name was St. Francis. That's a name we hear often around Indy because of St. Francis Hospital and the Franciscan Health network. He was born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone around 1181 in Assisi, Italy, to a wealthy silk merchant. He is remembered for his vow to

live simply and in poverty. He founded a new monastic movement that brought people closer to God and they devoted themselves to prayer and service. St. Francis especially loved animals, and it is St. Francis who introduced animals to the nativity scene and was the first to have a live nativity. Story after story of St. Francis' special relationship with creation took hold of people's imaginations so much so that Francis is the patron St. of animals and ecology. His feast day is celebrated on October 4, which is why pet blessings and services like these are often held in October.

I want to share with you one of the stories of St. Francis that shows how attentive he was to God's creatures:

*"All ye birds of the air, bless the Lord"*

*Saint Francis and his companions were making a trip through the Spoleto Valley near the town of Bevagna. Suddenly, Saint Francis spotted a great number of birds of all varieties ' doves, crows and others. Swept up in the moment, Saint Francis left his friends in the road and ran after the birds, who patiently waited for him. He greeted them in his usual way, expecting them to scurry off into the air as he spoke. But they didn't move.*

*Filled with awe, he asked them if they would stay awhile and listen to the Word of God. He said to them: "My brother and sister birds, you should praise your Creator and always love him: He gave you feathers for clothes, wings to fly and all other things that you need. It is God who made you noble among all creatures, making your home in the air. Without sowing or reaping, you receive God's guidance and protection."*

*At this the birds began to spread their wings, stretch their necks and gaze at the saint, rejoicing and praising God in a wonderful way according to their nature. Saint Francis then walked right through the middle of them, turned around and came back, touching their heads and bodies with his tunic.*

*Then he gave them his blessing, making the sign of the cross over them. At that they flew off and Saint Francis, rejoicing and giving thanks to God, went on his way.*

*Later, Saint Francis wondered aloud to his companions why he had never preached to birds before. And from that day on, he made it his habit to solicitously invoke all birds, all animals and reptiles to praise and love their Creator. And many times during his life there were remarkable events of Saint Francis speaking to the animals. There was even a time when he quieted a flock of noisy birds that were*

*interrupting a religious ceremony! Much to the wonder of all present, the birds remained quiet until Francis' sermon was complete.*

*In 1228 Francis was declared a saint by Pope Gregory IX, who laid the foundation stone for the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. According to legend, the doves at the Basilica arrived as soon as the foundation stone was laid and have roosted there ever since.<sup>1</sup>*

Just as St. Francis blessed God's creatures, we gather here today, too, to bless them and to remember the ones who made our lives better. We'll move now into our time of remembrance as we sing...

## Hymn

*Hymn of Promise, 515*

## We Remember

### We Name the Pets We've Lost

**Prayer**—God of all creation, thank you for your presence with us here this afternoon. Thank you for each and every pet named and remembered this day. What a blessing it has been to have these wonderful creatures as part of our families, our lives, and our world. Even as they are no longer here among us, we entrust them into your care, for in you, nothing is lost or forgotten. As we carry these beloved pets with us in our hearts, continue to offer our comfort and your joy as we remember them. Be with all those who know loss and grief that in you they might find rest and peace. Amen.

## Hymn

*All Creatures of Our God and King, 23*

**We Celebrate the Pets Still with Us**—God we ask your blessings for the animals still with us, the ones who continue to bring comfort and joy into our lives. Watch over them and protect them. Pour our your care upon them and enable us to be good caregivers of those you have entrusted to us. Amen.

**Benediction**—Go forth to care for all God's creation—the animals in your homes, the creatures in this world, the earth itself, our home, and one another. May the wondrous God of all creation be with you now and always. Amen.

## Postlude

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.monasteryicons.com/product/Saint-Francis-and-the-Animals/did-you-know?srsItid=AfmBOooRv8JQbFQG3TbM4IXOS\\_Oh74P1eSUDI-fIFOssH494KX1XwAEP](https://www.monasteryicons.com/product/Saint-Francis-and-the-Animals/did-you-know?srsItid=AfmBOooRv8JQbFQG3TbM4IXOS_Oh74P1eSUDI-fIFOssH494KX1XwAEP)