

Blessing of the Animals



Colonial Presbyterian Church has held Blessing of the Animals services in our Pavilion since 2015. From 2015 through 2019, the services were in late spring, but in 2022 the event was held on September 25, as the culmination of our Season of Creation, which we celebrated on the Sundays in September.

The following materials can be found in this document:

- the text of the service
- a flyer we distributed
- a sample newsletter article about the service
- photos of the 2022 service

Keep the service SHORT!

Animals must be on leashes or in cages for their protection. Predators (such as dogs) can cause great stress for prey animals (such as rabbits) that can result in death.

Depending on the size of the crowd, you may find it helpful to have more than one "station" for individual blessing. Long lines are to be avoided! There is nothing about this service that requires clergy to offer the individual blessings, so consider creating multiple stations hosted by either a clergy person or a lay person. Animals should not be placed alongside other species with whom they have a natural antipathy.

Have bowls of water available for animals.

Have treats for cats and dogs, but be aware that pets might be on special diets and cannot have the treats.

Advertise

Posters and flyers in multiple areas of the church, as well as in local businesses and veterinarian offices.

Church website and Facebook page – consider creating a video advertisement.

Facebook posts repeated every few days.

Emails to church members and others, such as area pastors.

Announcement on TV segment listing weekly events.

Neighborhood/area churches.

Newspapers.

Peaks Postings.

Invite area shelters to bring animals available for adoption. Collect donations for them. If possible, livestream the service.



Blessing of the Animals
We Worship with the Creatures We Love

Sunday, September 25, 2022
4:00 p.m.

Colonial Presbyterian Church Pavilion

Welcome

Leader: Blessed be God, Creator of heaven and earth.

All: All creation sings your praises.

Hymn: *All Creatures of Our God and King*

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing:
Oh, praise Him! Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,

Refrain:
Oh, praise Him! Oh, praise Him!
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Let all things their creator bless,
And worship Him in humbleness,
Oh, praise Him! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit three in one:

Refrain

Litany of Confession

Leader: Holy God, you have established your covenant with us and with all living creatures.

No creature is left desolate or bereft of your grace.

All look to you for sustenance and care;

without you, all the creatures of the earth would perish.

All: You have put all creatures under our protection, and we are to care for them as you care for us; but we have often betrayed your trust.

For this, gracious God, we are truly sorry; we ask your pardon and forgiveness.

Leader: Give us new hearts, O God, for animals neglected and ill-treated, for those whose homes have been destroyed in forests, oceans, and fields, for those harmed by poisons in their environment, for those killed for convenience or sport, for those suffering in laboratories, factory farms, or slaughterhouses.

People: God of the new covenant written into our hearts, help us to love all creatures as our kin, all animals as our partners on earth, all birds as messengers of praise, all frogs as voices of hope, and all small beings as expressions of your mysterious design. Amen

Scripture: Psalm 104:10-14, 16-20, 21-22, 24

¹⁰ You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills,

¹¹ giving drink to every wild animal; the wild asses quench their thirst.

¹² By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation; they sing among the branches.

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

¹⁴ You cause the grass to grow for the cattle and plants for people to cultivate,
to bring forth food from the earth.

¹⁶ The trees of the field 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 conies.

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.

²² When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens.

²⁴ O LORD, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Moment of Remembrance

Let us pause to remember the pets we have lost and to give thanks for the ways in which they enriched our lives.

Blessing Prayer (unison)

Gracious Lord of love, all living creatures belong to you alone. May our relationships with them mirror your love and bountiful mercy. Guide our choices so that we might safeguard their habitats. Empower us to seek their welfare, defending and tending your earth with grace, compassion, and dignity.

And now, we thank you specifically for these pets who bring us joy. Let your blessing be upon them. Give them health and long, happy lives. As you take care of us, give us strength to take care of these pets who trust us to look after them. Amen.

The Blessing of Each Pet (Individually)

"N. (*name of animal, i.e. "Smokey", not cat/dog*) may you be blessed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May you and N. (*the name of the "owner"*) enjoy life together and find joy with the God who created you. Amen."



Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, September 25

4:00 p.m.

**Colonial Presbyterian Church
Pavilion**

3550 Poplar Dr, Roanoke, VA 24018

**Please bring pets on leashes or in carriers for their
protection.**

**If your pet would not enjoy this experience, then bring a
photo or toy to represent him or her.**

There will be a time of remembrance of pets who have died.

Sample newsletter article:



Blessing of the Animals **We Worship with the Creatures We Love**

The act of blessing is more than an expression of goodwill and caring. The blessing of each animal, by name, means that health, healing, and life are being mediated from God for the benefit of the animal in its relationship with its human partner.

Many churches hold a Blessing of the Animals service in the fall near the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, who had a great love for animals and the environment. Our service will be held on Sunday, _____, 20__, at 4:00 p.m. in the CPC Pavilion. The service will be very brief, and each animal will receive an individual blessing.

Please bring your pets in carriers or on leashes. This assures that nothing is going to startle them and cause them to run away in a strange neighborhood. If your pet would not enjoy this experience, then bring a photo or an object to represent him or her. There will also be a moment of remembrance of pets who have died.

Please invite your friends, neighbors, coworkers, and anyone who loves animals to attend this special celebration.

Photos from 2022 service

