

Blessing of the Animals

By Helen Vogt Greene

First Congregational Church of Lake Worth (FCCLW), 1415 North "K" Street, held the Blessing of the Animals on September 30. The usual date is October 2, but because of a church conflict and the importance of the event to the church, it was moved to the earlier week.

Studebaker Hall was filled with smiling humans, dogs, cats, rabbits, and a guinea pig. Fox, a Muskie mix, gave and an occasional 'Arf' Amen of approval. The tradition of blessing the animals began over 800 years ago. God called a common man, now known as Saint Francis of Assisi. St. Francis believed that all creatures are 'blessed in the eyes of God.'

Rev. Jason Fairbanks, Pastor of FCCLW shared the amazing life of St. Francis. God's calling of St. Francis has become a world vision.

Each hymn, scripture, and activity provided the framework, for the important blessing of the visiting animals and loving pets. Hymns such as "All Creatures of Our God and King," "Heart of Creation," and "Called By Earth and Sky" took on a note of jubilation and renewed commitment.

The children's lesson included the reading and a power point of the book, "Brother Son, Sister Moon." The poem was written by St. Francis while at the sickbed of his friend and God's coworker, Clare of Assisi, founder of the new Order of Poor Clare's.

Bruce Linser, Director of Music, led the Chancel Choir in the uplifting "Creator Rhythm." During the Offering, Lynn Serratore, Lois Atchley, Karen Christensen and Heidi DaCunha presented the musical rendition of "The Lord's Prayer."

Pastor Jason took time to go to and acknowledge each owner and pet by name. The blessing included the words "(name) you were created by God, and you are loved by God. May you and your human family experience joy and companionship together, and continue to be a blessing to each other." Included in his closing comments was a blessing for all the animals who were happier, for whatever reason, to remain at home.

Following the service a sandwich luncheon with all the trimmings was provided to the human guests. Special, sinfully delicious treats were provided to each pet.

St. Francis continues to serve as an example today. His life and mission gives each of us a reason to stop the continued neglect, to acknowledge that God's love beats in all hearts, and that He gives breath to all of His Creations.

Fox, a Muskie mix, was all 'smiles' as Rev. Jason Fairbanks gave him his 'blessing'. Fox is the DaCunha family pet, who doesn't realize he is a dog. To the blessing of all the Animals he said.. Arf, which means Thank You and Amen!



The Blessing of the Animals at the First Congregational Church was a blessing and birthday celebration for a very special dog, Dakota. Owned by Tom Zook, with sister Pam Zook, they enjoyed the Florida sunshine with mother, longtime member, Dorothy Zook (seated).



Well-loved pets arrived in special carriers. Summer Hodges's and her friend, Kaya Grauer, carried Fenix, a 10 lb. black cat, to be blessed. Fenix enjoyed the 'blessing' in the safety of her carrier. Smart kitty!



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