



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Animals Bless Our Lives

Last night I rewatched select scenes from the 1972 movie *Brother Sun, Sister Moon*, directed by Franco Zeffirelli. It starred Graham Faulkner in the role of Francis of Assisi – long before the Catholic saint’s canonization – and featured Alec Guinness as an imposing Pope Innocent III. The scene I rewatched multiple times was the barefoot and dirty Francis’ appearing in the sumptuous papal court, a simple friar with his fellows seeking a blessing from the regal pontiff. What a study in contrasts!

As you might expect, while aiming to encapsulate the essence of the saint-to-be, the movie uses a light hand with historical facts. The movie is an anachronistic portrayal of Francis as seeking that elusive American goal of “happiness” and singing, hippy-like, in fields of flowers. The American 1960s counterculture quality of the depiction of a medieval story feels cheezy, yet it is enjoyable... especially when you squint just right.

While non-Catholics are often not that interested in Catholic saints, St. Francis is one who often captures the non-Catholic imagination too. He chose a life of simplicity and poverty with the aim of serving the poor. He “preached” to the birds and other animals, in spite of the fact that they had no need of his spiritual lessons. The “catness” of a cat, for instance, is always secure and fully expressed.

As a result of Francis’ love for animals, he came to be seen as the patron saint of animals, and many stories and legends emerged about his connection to animals. In 1979, Pope John Paul II declared Francis the patron saint also of ecology, and in 2015 Pope Francis cited his namesake St. Francis in his encyclical on the environment.

Unitarian Universalists also often feel something special in the life and legends of this medieval saint, and so the Sunday closest to his feast day is often observed by our congregations as a day for a blessing of the animals – particularly pets, animal companions, and fur babies. Together with Annie Foerster, I will be leading an animal blessing service on Sunday, October 1. Those who are able can bring their pets to the service and the children will be with us through the entire service. Annie has written a story for this service that she used when she was a congregational minister. The choir will sing. And each one will then bless their own animal companion.



In order to have this kind of service safely, of course, we have to have a few basic rules, specifically these two:

- All dogs must be on a leash, the other end of which is held by an adult; and
- All other pets must be in a cage, aquarium, or other secure carrying container.

We encourage each one to bring a treat that their pet enjoys with which to bless them. And if you are unable to bring your pet or your pet has crossed the rainbow bridge, we invite you to bring a picture or other memento of your pet to place on a table to share them with others. Let's celebrate our animals together!

Peace and Blessings,
Rev. Paul

New Member Spotlight



Carla Throckmorton's story is one of lifelong friendship. She moved here with long-term

friends Margot and Jim Kephart. The winters in Willow River, Minnesota were getting too difficult for each of them, so they sold their houses and bought an RV together. At some point they decided to settle in this area where one of them had a connection. They have been here for three years and recently bought a big farmhouse together in Waynesboro.

Back in Minnesota, Carla was a math teacher and also taught industrial education. She has three adult sons and also considers the Kephart children as hers too. Her sons are still in Minnesota along with one grandchild and her former spouse with whom she has an amicable relationship.

Carla has many interests, including gardening, painting, drawing and making Keltic knots. She is interested in taking up quilting. Eager to become a member, Carla recently signed the book after a personal orientation to UU by Rev. Paul. She is already serving on the Membership Team and looks forward to taking on other roles in our Fellowship.

Community News

[Staunton Pride 2023](#) will be held on Saturday, October 7 from noon until 5:00 pm at the Gypsy Hill Park bandstand. There will be vendors, a beer garden, live music and drag performances. Given the disturbing recent political trends in opposition to the LGBTQ+ community, this is a good opportunity to show our support. The Membership and Social Justice teams hope to have a table at this event to get the word out about our welcoming community of faith.

