



# The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist  
Fellowship of Waynesboro

## Blessing the Animals Who Bless Us

My partner Walter and I had been together for fifteen years before it even occurred to us to get a dog. Walter had a much-loved dog named Rex when he was a boy, then later there were his children's pets. For me, there were always temporary dogs around us as my brothers and I were growing up, dogs that had been dumped along the rural highway less than a mile from our home. I was only ever attached to one of them, and Dad unsentimentally took him to the pound. When my daughters were little, we usually had a dog for them. But when Walter and I joined our lives together, we weren't coming off of recent years of having our own dear pets. We lived abroad. And we traveled a lot. Having a dog was just never on our radar.

That is, not until we moved from suburban New Jersey to a farm in rural southern Illinois with forty hilly acres of rough pasture and woods. We wanted to plant a small orchard of heirloom apples, pears, and quinces. But we were in deer country. We finally thought that, if we had a dog, its scent, its barking, and its giving chase might tip the balance in our favor. So we got a rescue puppy as a pragmatic solution. But dogs evolved to "domesticate" humans. We fell in love with the dog who never was effective at keeping the deer away. The deer quickly killed off our entire orchard. But we had the consolation of Peter the Great, "Pete," a half German Shepherd, half chow chow opinionated bundle of love.

And the rest was history. Pete made friends with Brownie, an older dog whose elderly owners had died, and so we adopted Brownie for Pete. When we moved to town, we bought a house we didn't much like and lived there for a decade because it was the best suited house for Pete and Brownie. When Brownie died, Pete himself selected his next four-legged companion from a rescue shelter: Marcus Aurelius – "Marcus" for short – half Malinois, half golden retriever, a very skittish yet loving dog. Pete and Marcus moved to Waynesboro with us in 2015. Walter's health was on the decline by the time both dogs died, so we did not seek other pets. But we had almost fifteen years blessed by the presence of Pete, Brownie, and Marcus before we were without them, consoled by memories.

I will be thinking of these three companions on **October 6**, as we hold our second annual *Blessing of the Animals* service at our Fellowship. The non-human animals in our lives don't need us to bless them – only to care for them. But as we offer them our hearts, ceremonial and ritual things that sometimes lend meaning to us intersect with the ways they are present in our lives. And so we bless them. For our own benefit, to be sure, but sincerely and with love. Last year we found that, with a few very simple guidelines, having our pets who do not know each other together in one room works and is a meaningful service. So please bring your pets

who are sufficiently socialized for a fun service together. Put October 6 on your calendar now!

Dogs need to be on a leash attached to their humans. Cats in carriers. Birds in a cage. And so on. And their humans should bring some of their favorite treats to help them in the unfamiliar environment. And if your pets past and present are not able to attend for any reason, please bring pictures. We look forward to another beautiful service of blessing!

Peace and Blessings,  
Rev. Paul

**Walking Home from Ace Hardware in Autumn**

**By Diane Ganiere**

Wind on wet sidewalks  
scatters the shine, locust leave  
honey gold, rain down.

Sudden gust:

Now heavy fronds let go  
and another storm of leaves flies free,  
not much bigger than fingernails,  
some still pinnate on their fine twigs,  
still alive, all flame.

Rain down, rain down, rain down soft gold  
on my head, on my shoulders,  
on darkened cement!

Some scatter on the sidewalk,  
some gather in soft piles.

Brocade! Such brocade!

How can I step?

*Very lightly.*

*Diane Ganiere is a beloved former member currently living in Milwaukee. She sent this poem last year to her good friend Carroll Lisle.*



*The City of Waynesboro hosted Prism, its first pride festival, on September 14, and we were there! The Social Justice and Membership teams joined forces to set up a table to tell attendees about UUFW and how we support the LGBTQ community. A steady stream of people stopped by to ask questions and pick up our brochures. Many expressed surprise that there is a welcoming religious community in Waynesboro.*



*Ein Prosit!! For the Fellowship.*

