

Christ Church

Good News and Notes

*** Please note that all new items for this edition are in red**

All Creatures Great and Small

In the first week of October we recognize the life of St. Francis of Assisi. In doing this we often direct our eyes and our ears to see, listen, and indeed apprehend God in the gift of our animal companions. Saint Francis was among those who believe that the special relationships we have with animals is a part of how we experience God. I hope to reboot a Blessing of the Animals service next year, but in the meantime, I offer a reflection on what St. Francis taught us.

It is meet and right to take time to give God thanks for all the ways that companion animals and even wild animals enrich our lives and give us windows on God's wider creation! And for many people, the bond we share with the animals in our lives is very strong and enduring.

We forget just the very special place animals occupy in the Biblical account of God's creative activity, and that animals are included in God's hope for the future of peace and harmony.

Methodist founder John Wesley insisted that animals will attain heaven. He maintained that in what he called the "general deliverance" from the world's pervasive wrongs and cruelties, animals would be given "vigor, strength and swiftness...to a far higher degree than they ever enjoyed."

And of course, we have Francis. Francis called animals "brothers" and "sisters" and even preached to them! And Albert Schweitzer said, "To the truly ethical man, all life is sacred, including life regarded by some as "less than ours."

Scripture issues a meaningful call to move beyond ourselves and into God's hope for the beauty and purpose of the natural world.

In the book of Genesis, we see that with delight, God proclaims the goodness of creation. Genesis also tells us that we are created in the image of God. When we say we are created "in the image of God" we

mean that all that is best and whole and loving and creative in God is the very seed out of which we grow.

It means that we have the ability, should we choose to claim and nurture it, to love and care for the whole creation the same way that God does. Our care of the world around us is meant to reflect the fullness of the ways God loves us.

We are meant to understand that being given "dominion" over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth means we will care for creation in the same way that God has dominion and care over humankind.

What we have long forgotten to mirror is that God's practice of dominion is characterized by mercy, gentleness, compassion, and caretaking. We are meant to care for creation the way that God cares for us.

Just as God desires our wholeness and joy we were meant to offer the land and the creatures of the land, the sea, and the air this same chance to flourish and be nurtured by a loving hand.

Sacred story tells us that animals are created and important to God in their own right. Respecting animals is a sign of humility and respect on our part and an admission that humans are not the center of everything.

Moreover, the animals many of us have are our companions. They are part of our lives, they share our homes, and the more science and study advances we learn that many even share our joys and sorrows.

Because they are our companions, our friends, we are reminded that friends are not there to be used or easily forgotten or discarded when they grow old or somehow inconvenient.

The companionship of animals is yet another of God's gracious gifts and a sign of God's care for us. And many depend on their livelihoods from animals.

So even beyond the companionship we share with our beloved creatures we also give thanks for the many ways that animals both give and sustain life for many. We should never forget the multitude of ways that animals bless our lives in ways great and small.

I'll end with a prayer of thanksgiving for the creatures that share our lives.

Loving God, remind us always that we are created in your image, the image of a loving and compassionate God. In this image we are called to care for your creation. Open our hearts and minds to the lessons we may learn from our companions---to live fully in the present; to love without judgment; to face each day anticipating joy. Help us, we pray, to do your will on earth, so that you may look upon our care of your creation and declare it good.

In our Journey to Generosity, we are expanding our offering to include a special collection for both the Solid Rock Food Closet and for the Alleghany Animal Shelter. We are asking that on November 19th, at our In-gathering Celebration of our pledges, you also bring an item for Solid Rock or the Shelter. In this way we hope to see an outward and visible sign of the generous hearts of Christ Church as we share our Abundant Life within and without our walls. We will publish a list of desired items very soon!

Grace and Peace, Stephanie+

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Journey to Generosity: What is the Abundant Living Action Team?

As we introduced at the Celebration Luncheon at the beginning of September, Christ Church is building on the strengths of past Financial Stewardship efforts and expanding it to a fuller range of activities.

Under the leadership of Jann Boggs, in partnership with Stephanie+, this year's Financial Giving effort is also being supported by the newly minted Abundant Living Action Team. **The Team includes Nancy Wilson, Sheila Pfaender, Lillis and Joe Ward, Joe Ritchie, Chance Wyatt, Shelley Jones, Shelley Morris, and Denise Seckel.** Please feel invited to speak with anyone on the Team if you have any questions.

In addition to familiar elements like witness talks on Sundays and a letter to all members, we will have a Festive Luncheon gathering and a Celebratory In-gathering of financial pledges during our Sunday worship.

Abundant Life is something about which Jesus speaks frequently. Jesus wishes for all of us to know Abundant Life. Abundant Life is defined by a shared sense of joy in something beyond our own interests; it is found in a generosity of spirit that calls us to be kind and loving to one another even amid our differences. Abundant Life is about fellowship and supporting an overarching goal to grow into a family of faith that is marked by its vitality and sense of belonging.

Managing finances responsibly in our parish is paramount. On the other hand, scarcity thinking is something that limits our ability to flourish.

Abundant Living means letting go of a scarcity mentality that says we never have enough—enough money, enough love, enough of what is good in our church. Scarcity thinking around Parish finances and budgeting is a death knell for future growth and joy. Jesus warns us repeatedly about this kind of thinking and tells us it will rust our souls as well as our living, waking life.

While financial challenges are simply a part of church life, failing to be thankful for our Abundance is a spiritual wound.

Because of the generous nature of Christ Church's members, we have no debt, we are financially sound, and compared to many parishes that really struggle, we have so much for which to give thanks!

Your Abundant Living Action Team is hard at work planning a celebratory Festive Luncheon to be held at Nikola's beginning at 11AM on Saturday, November 4th so SAVE THE DATE! You should receive your invitation next week. We will have a special speaker, sharing at tables, and good fellowship.

There is no charge for participation—come and enjoy! We will have a basket available should you wish to contribute, but all are welcome in grace and love.

Jesus loved table fellowship and gathering for shared meals in which we break the bread and rejoice in the goodness of life—Abundant Life! You will receive your invitation soon and we hope you will mark your calendars and take your part in our common joy and Journey toward Generosity.

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Neighborhood Bible Study

A Neighborhood Bible Study on the Letters (Epistles) of John began on Thursday the 28th of September and continues every other week at 6:00pm at the Seckel Barn, 404 Vestal Road, and is led by Rev. Martha Honaker. We will gather every other week at 6 pm, and end at 7:45 pm. The next session will be Thursday, October 26. We look forward to you joining us.

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Adult Forum: Embracing Forgiveness

We have started the new Adult Forum Series called Embracing Forgiveness. We are using a video series in which storyteller and teacher, Barbara Cawthorne Crafton, leads us in a revealing and helpful exploration of what forgiveness is not, first of all, and then, what it is and how to find it in our lives, on both the personal and communal level.

Barbara will lead us in a series that is warm, honest, realistic and practical. *Embracing Forgiveness* promises to offer a tonic for troubled souls—yours and mine.

Join us this Sunday as we get to the heart of the matter and journey with one another deeper into the life of God's all-encompassing grace and love.

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Back by Popular Demand

We extend our gratitude to Deb Donaldson and Eleanor Plummer for graciously volunteering to host their Baked Potato Bar luncheon on **Sunday, October 15th**. This is the third year that Deb and Eleanor are providing the main event and all the fixins' for what has turned into our favorite themed luncheon. The remaining members of the Food & Fellowship Committee will contribute some yummy desserts. Please plan to join us following the Sunday morning service for a great opportunity to share in fellowship while enjoying some delicious food.

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Mark Your Calendar

The Annual Alleghany Lives *Sunshine Walk* is scheduled for **Saturday, October 14th at 10:00am**. Dr. Charles Rudy will be the speaker. Walkers will gather in the Sparta United Methodist Church Prayer Garden to raise awareness for suicide prevention, offer support to those who have lost loved ones, and encourage all to ask for help. Organizers for the walk ask that you wear yellow and/or purple. Our own Rev. Stephanie will deliver the invocation.

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Women's Fellowship

Friends in Faith meets on Wednesdays at 11:00. We gather as sisters in Christ to praise, pray, study, and share our lives. **From September 20 through November 15 we will be attending the Wednesday Bible Study.** Please join us!

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For Urgent Prayer Request - Contact Gary Medley. Please be sure to get permission to share any details for the Prayers. Also, if you like to be listed as an Urgent Prayer Partner, please let Gary know.

Great thanks & peace, Gary Medley
gapdweller@gmail.com
336.372.7464 or 336.572.2905

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For any building or property issues, please contact Phil Donaldson, Chris Huysman or Willie Plummer with your concern.

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Mark Your Calendars

Saturday, October 14

10:00am – The Annual Alleghany Lives Sunshine Walk (Sparta Methodist Church)

Sunday, October 15

9:15am – Adult Forum
10:30am – Holy Eucharist
11:45am – Baked Potato Luncheon

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Prayer requests from the staff and prisoners River North Correctional Center, Independence, VA

Lord please bless the whole world and my family. -LD

Lord, please help me.

Pray for all the men and women serving overseas fighting for our country;
Pray for Puerto Rico and pray for the – family. -CD

Thank the Lord for God's goodness. Pray that all people recognize it and give God praise. Pray that my family and children come to know God. Help me thank God for God's work in my wrongful conviction. -EC

Pray for me and my three sons and my family. Pray for the RN church and guests. Pray for the prayer team and the world. Keep God first. Whatever God does is best. Love always. -SC

I pray for the Holy Spirit will perfect worship in God's people even the more. I also pray for every family affected by the earthquakes and hurricanes and for the church. -JF

Pray that all see the awesome power of Jesus.

Pray that God bless those who are in need of a miracle. -RJ

Pray for my family. -MD

Thank You Jesus for my life. Pray for me and my family, daughter, and friends. Thank You. -RT

Prayers for those who lost their lives in Las Vegas. Continue to pray for those serving our country. -SS

Pray for all the people who need God's grace in their lives today and every day.

Pray and give thanks to God.

Pray for my family.

Pray for the restoration of my soul.

I would like to thank God for my blessings. Pray for the families who have been going through tragic issues over the past few weeks. And my God bless all in God's name. Amen. Thank You God in advance for my freedom. -AR

Lord give peace to every inmate in every cell and bless all our families. I ask that the officers get peace and also for their families. I ask God's favor in having my sentence reduced. -JS

Pray for anyone who still does not have a relationship with God. Pray for all the victims of the recent natural disasters across the nation and for the victims and the families affected by senseless violence going on in our society. -JB

Pray for those who are suffering not just in the U.S. but in so many others nations. Pray especially for the lost. -HD

Help my uncle and pray for his health. -H

Pray for my two sons, my family, for my sisters and brothers in Christ, for the ones who are not saved and for a special friend who has cancer. Pray for me. -DR

Pray for my best friend and his family and loved ones who are in the hospital. Pray for his uncle's healing.

Lord I thank You for giving me the breath of life. Now I want to pray for the renewal of the mind for all our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. Amen. -CJ

Pray for the church to be open hearted and to overcome.

Pray for -- who went to the hospital earlier this week. The doctors say he may not live much longer.

God I want to be ready when Jesus comes.

Continue to pray for my family and over my parole situation. Thank you. – AR

Pray for the families and loved ones and for everyone in bondage.

God, I ask that You continue to look after my wife and kids, Continue to be with my family. I pray for an early release and that everyone that needs a blessing receives one. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pray for all of us, every man, woman and child in this world. Pray for my relationship with my daughter be mended. Pray for our chaplain, the volunteers, our congregation. I pray I am strengthen in my faith and walk with God. -KD

Pray for us all every woman, man, and family and my kids. -CR

Pray for my former cellmate who has a life sentence. Pray for our families who are doing time with us.

Praise you Lord. Bless You and thank You for watching over us and for providing the food and the life we live. I pray for family, for friends. Please provide – and abundance of all. Watch over us. Pray for those in disaster areas. Bless their souls.

Lord I send You a prayer for allowing me to be in church and for the blessings. I pray for the brother that got hurt, for those in hurricanes and earthquakes. Pray for all of them in Jesus' name. –RJ

Bless my family and other families as well. Thank God. -DA

O Lord, thank You for Your love and grace. I am very much thankful for all that You have done in my life and for my fellow brothers and sisters. I love You and You are worthy to be praised always.

Pray for my special friend that we will come back together soon. Pray for his family. God is in control of all our requests and God answers them. -CF

Pray for my wife and that we will be back together soon. Pray that I get to stay here. -JF

Will you pray for my family and loved ones. Pray for all here at RN. Pray to keep us all safe. -K

Pray for me, my family. Keep us all in God's world.

I pray for my family.

Pray for my spiritual growth and for my leadership in the family. -DJ

Continued prayer for my family and me. Keep us strong in the faith. Thank you for your prayers. -EC

Continue praying for me, my thoughts and the way I think. Pray that things in my life start to get better in a way that I may start working to get out of here. Pray for my family and friends. -MD

I would like the church to pray for my family, my friends and that god will protect them from a dangerous world. Pray that God will continue to allow us to trust each other. -FS

Thank You God for everything. You make me calm and keep me in Your grace. I had not notice, but now I see clearly. Keep me in Your crosshairs because I want only Your guidance & love. God, take care of my family. Keep the world in your hands.

Pray for my mom that she will have the blinders removed that she will see the truth of God's Word and stop listening to the Sci-Fi/History channel about the Bible. -DP

God thank You for gathering us in Your wings and protecting us from all evil and giving us the strength to be stronger in our faith and to do Your will. -AR

I pray God's will be done here at this church and in all the world.

Pray for all those affected by hurricanes and shootings. Pray for my family and for my faith to grow. God bless. -GT

Keep my father in prayer for he has problems with an aneurism in his heart. Pray for the families of everyone involved in the natural disasters in the world.

Pray for me that I will be able to get the return of my property that was taken in a cell search. Touch and agree with me that this mountain will be moved in the name of Jesus.

Por favor oren por nuestros prisioneros. Gracias.

Dios te doy gracias por este milagro que as hecho con mi matrimonio y con mis hermanos que to toda lo ases para bien to mos cuidas y nos guarda asitis tambien nis hios gaudalos y nos permitas esta juntos otra bos gracias en el nombre de crito Jesus. -S

Oracion por mi familia para que Dios se glorifique en ellos y derrame su Espiritu sobre todas ellos; para que las cadenas de maldicion se rompa enel nombre de Jesus (Cielos abiertos un tiempo de refrigerio) Amen.