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## **Blessing of the Animals**

## **FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE**

Congregational 1633-1636  
United Church of Christ  
Garden and Mason Streets  
Cambridge, Massachusetts



PRAYER OF CONFESSION

L: Let us pray for pardon, healing, and peace.

**All: Maker of all that lives,  
you asked us to care tenderly  
for your world and every creature in it.  
But we have been careless.  
We have not been reverent.  
We have hurt your world.  
Pardon us especially  
for causing needless suffering  
to our animal companions.  
Forgive us as we bless them  
in your name today.  
Set before us the vision of a time  
when lion and lamb  
will lie down together,  
and a small child will lead us  
to justice and joy.  
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

DECLARATION OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

\*GREETING OF PEACE

*Please note: Because we want to ensure the safety and happiness of our animal companions and of every human being in the sanctuary this morning, you are requested to offer a sign of peace only to people and pets near you in the pews. Kindly do not leave your pew to greet people and pets in other parts of the sanctuary. Please also take care when greeting pets that you do not touch them without their human companion's permission. All animals should remain in carriers or on leashes throughout this time.*

\*HYMN 98

*God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale*

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

## RESPONSE OF FAITH: BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

For the safety and comfort of animals and humans alike, **please do not remove pets from their carriers or leashes as you approach the “stations” where the blessing will be offered.** If your pet is in a container, when you reach the blessing station, please set the container on the small table you will find there. If the carrier is too large for the table, set it on the floor.

Once they have been blessed, all pets are welcome to remain in the sanctuary for the rest of the service. However, if you are concerned that your animal will not be happy remaining for the post-blessing parts of the service, you should feel free to leave the sanctuary immediately after receiving the blessing.

If you are not participating in the blessing, please join in thanks and praise for our animal companions, and for all God’s creatures, by singing the hymns below.

## HYMNS FOR A TIME OF BLESSING

*You may remain seated for these hymns.*

Hymn 529	<i>Let All Things Now Living</i>
Hymn 143	<i>Jesus, Our Brother, Strong and Good</i>
Hymn 53	<i>Let Us with A Gladsome Mind</i>

## PRAYERS FOR CHURCH AND WORLD

L: God be with you.

**C: And with your spirit.**

L: Let us pray...(silence, intercessions, Lord’s Prayer)

## THE LORD’S PRAYER

*(Please pray this prayer and address God in words most meaningful to your heart.)*

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY

*Sparrow, Sparrow*

Patricia Van Ness

\*DOXOLOGY AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Praise God, the source of life and birth,  
Praise God, the Word, who came to earth,  
Praise God, the Spirit, Holy Flame,  
All glory, honor, to God's name. Amen.**

\*HYMN C-9

*Psalm 148*

\*BENEDICTION

\*CHORAL RESPONSE

*Send me, Jesus (Thuma Mina)*

Hymn 344

*The congregation is invited to join in the singing of this response.*

*Send me, Jesus, send me Jesus  
Send me, Jesus, send me Lord*

*Lead me, Jesus...*

*Fill me, Jesus...*

*Thuma mina, thuma mina,  
Thuma mina, somandla*

Blessing of the animals. 'Perky felines,'  
'handsome canines.' Pets, congregants.

All hungry. I fed a canine  
in the pew behind mine.

Our pets are 'serious-minded and fun-loving.'  
Please bless us all. Woofs and meows!

-Richard McCann

*Richard McCann was a member of First Church who passed away in 2012. The Blessing of the Animals was one of his favorite services.*

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*The photo on the bulletin cover was taken by First Church member Mary Robinson, on a recent visit to Assisi. St. Francis is known for his teachings that call on humans to care for animals and nature as part of God's creation.*

## **WELCOME TO FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE...**

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, we are thankful that you are with us today, and we hope that you will stay for a bit after worship for refreshments and conversation. First Church is an open and affirming, just peace congregation of the United Church of Christ. If you'd like to know more about us, please introduce yourself to one of the ministers after church and explore our website at **[www.firstchurchcambridge.org](http://www.firstchurchcambridge.org)**.

**Large print bulletins and assistive listening devices are available.**

**Please ask a greeter for assistance.**

Children of all ages are welcome in our worship. Picture books, children's Bibles and activity packets can be found in the Children's Book Corner located by the door to the parish building (to the right of the chancel). Children may visit the Book Corner at any point during worship. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is located through that door and down the hallway (up four stairs to the door on the right). Fussy babies and their caregivers are invited to the Hastings Room, just across the hall from that same door, where the service is broadcast through speakers.

**LEADING WORSHIP TODAY ARE** Dan Smith, Senior Minister, Sarah Higginbotham, Director of Creative Worship & Arts, Jennifer Wenz, Ministerial Intern, and Jan Jeffers Lo, Doctor of Veterinarian Medicine and First Church's Vice-Moderator. Our liturgist is First Church member Poppy Coffin. Peter Sykes, Director of Music, is playing the organ and directing the choir.

**The YOUR PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED section of the liturgy is omitted in the online version to respect the privacy of those mentioned.** For more information on who we are praying for this week, please contact the office at [parishadmin@firstchurchcambridge.org](mailto:parishadmin@firstchurchcambridge.org) or 617-547-2724.

## **NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS HIGHLIGHTS**

*In an effort to reduce paper consumption and be better stewards of the environment, we will no longer be printing weekly bulletin announcements along with the liturgy. Instead, we will print bi-weekly booklets with news, announcements, and calendars, which will be available at the sanctuary entrances. For more information about these and other announcements, please pick up a News and Announcements booklet or visit the Latest News section of the website at [www.firstchurchcambridge.org](http://www.firstchurchcambridge.org).*

**EARTH STEWARDSHIP MEETING Sunday, September 29, 9 a.m., in the Tower Room.**

**LIFE TOGETHER — PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE Sunday, September 29, 10:00 a.m., in the Hastings Room** Join Dan Smith and other leaders for the final 10 O'Clock Hour conversation about the ever changing yet everlasting nature of Christian faith community.

**BLESSING OUR ANIMAL COMPANIONS Sunday, September 29, 11:00 a.m., in the Sanctuary** Today, our Morning Worship will once again celebrate and give thanks for God's creatures great and small, especially our animal companions. Pets, photos of pets, and favorite stuffed animals are all welcome in the Sanctuary on this very special day.

**LIFE TOGETHER LAST SUNDAY LUNCH Sunday, September 29, 12:30 p.m., in the Margaret Jewett Hall** Sundays at First Church tend to be full of many different activities and general busyness. To provide some balance, this will be the first of what we hope are many Life Together Last Sunday Lunches. No other activities will be scheduled until 1:30 p.m. on these Sundays (the final of each month), and we'll have a chance to connect as a whole community in food, fellowship and fun.

**WITNESS AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE--DISCUSSION AND DEBRIEFING Sunday, September 29, 1:30 p.m. in McKenzie Library** Everyone is welcome, to share ideas, experiences and suggestions about next steps and new directions. See Ann McCann, Jean Bellow, and Alice Kidder for more information.

**SPIRITUALITY & MENTAL HEALTH GROUP Sundays at 2 p.m., Tower Room** We meet as persons with questions about our inner lives, pursuing wellness, and to consider how our faith and our soundness inform each other. Participation in the group is open to any and all who identify with our purpose. For a warm welcome and to learn more, see Carter West or e-mail him at [cartergw24@gmail.com](mailto:cartergw24@gmail.com).

**SOLUTIONS AT WORK CLOTHING DRIVE Sundays, September 22, 29, and October 13.** You are invited to donate gently used children's clothing, shoes, children's books, and interview appropriate adult clothing. A box will be in the Narthex. Clothes go to Solutions at Work, which is partially supported by our Mission and Social Justice committee. For information, call , Alice Kidder at (617) 924-7236.

**THE CREATIVE AGING/RETIREMENT BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP** will meet today, Sept. 29, after the Life Together Lunch in the Hastings Room at 1:30 pm.

**HOWARD THURMAN READING GROUP Tuesdays, October 1, 8, and 15, 8:00 - 9:30 a.m., Dan Smith's Office** Dan Smith leads a new small group this fall focused on the writings of philosopher, theologian, and civil rights leader, Howard Thurman.

**GBIO FALL DELEGATES ASSEMBLY Tuesday, October 1, 7:00 p.m., at Roxbury Presbyterian Church** Come for an update on Greater Boston Interfaith Organizations current work and a look ahead to a new Congregational Organizing Campaign that we'll be launching later this fall.

## First Church Covenant Testimony

Adopted 1990

We believe that our covenant with God and each other calls us:

To love God with all that we are, and our close and distant neighbors as ourselves;  
To seek peace with justice and equity for all people;  
To engage in non-violent resistance to evil;  
To respect and preserve God's earth;  
To foster community across every barrier and division;  
To attend to God's unfolding and reconciling word;  
To support each other in our frailties and strengths, that we may embody that love which overcomes fear and death.

This we testify, confessing always our reliance on God's grace in Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

FIRST CHURCH  
IN CAMBRIDGE  
CONGREGATIONAL  
375 YEARS  
ON·THE·WAY

## The Staff of First Church in Cambridge

Senior Minister	Rev. Dan Smith, 617-547-2724, ext. 23 dsmith@firstchurchcambridge.org
Minister of Mental Health & Healing	Rev. Terry McKinney, on leave
Affiliate Minister of Stewardship and Finance	Rev. Karen McArthur, 617-547-2724, ext. 22 treasurer@firstchurchcambridge.org
Ministerial Interns	Jennifer Wenz, jwenz@firstchurchcambridge.org Sheehan Scarborough, sscarborough@firstchurchcambridge.org
<i>Havruta</i> Scholar-in-Residence	Rev. Brent Coffin
Director of Music	Peter Sykes, 617-645-0833 psykes@aol.com
Director of Creative Worship & Arts	Sarah Higginbotham, 617-547-2724, ext. 42 shigginb@firstchurchcambridge.org
Staff Composer	Patricia Van Ness
Shelter Director	Jim Stewart, 617-661-1873 jstewart@firstchurchcambridge.org
Parish Administrator	Kirsten Manville, 617-547-2724, ext. 21 parishadmin@firstchurchcambridge.org
Pastoral Associate	Julie Rogers, 617-547-2724, ext. 41 jrogers@firstchurchcambridge.org
Facilities Manager	Dan dos Santos ddossantos@firstchurchcambridge.org
Sextons	Ronaldo dos Santos, Tina Quimby, George Williams, Kimel Williams, 617-642-3980



**FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE, CONGREGATIONAL**

*United Church of Christ*

11 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

617-547-2724