**ADVICE ABOUT ANIMAL BLESSINGS**

**Theme** - Emphasise Jesus as Creator (John 1 etc.) and Redeemer (Col 1 v 19 & 20) of the *whole* creation. Stewardship (Genesis). Useful evangelism.

**When** - Book about 3 months in advance. Weather is usually more suitable from May (Pentecost) to October (St Francis Tide). School summer holidays are probably best avoided, as people may be away.

**Order of Service** - Preferably a Sunday or Saturday afternoon - 2 or 3 pm. Approximately 45 minutes. Allow to stand, sit, or kneel at will to help people with children and animals to look after.

**Sermon** - Not too long. [See here](http://www.aswa.org.uk/uploads/92319_AWS_Information_Booklet.pdf%20) for some suggested themes, which ASWA are happy for you to duplicate.

**Hymns** - Four or five give people opportunity to 'shuffle', depending on whether there is a sermon or a piece of music from the choir or music group.

**Choir or music group** - Optional - A lively piece of 'animals' music.

**Readings** - One or two, there again, depending on whether there is a sermon or a piece of music from the choir or music group. One could be a poem or playlet if preferred. Perhaps dot Order of Service with appropriate sentences to provide scripture.

**Blessing**:-

1. Can be a Blessing from the front, asking people to lay their hands on their animals wherever they are sat, whilst the Blessing is said - or, if there are not too many animals, they can be invited out to front. Play by ear. In Blessing include animals unable to be present.
2. As animals leave Church 'child stewards' could give them a titbit - (dog biscuits, cat biscuits, chew, carrot, etc.)
3. Horses, farm animals etc. can be Blessed outside at the end of the Service.

**Practicalities:-**

1. Publicity. A good outreach opportunity.
2. If farm animals are to attend, ensure that special provision is made for them and I would recommend that horses, larger farm animals etc. would be safer and more comfortable outside the church, because of the danger of slippery floors inside. The Service can be enjoyed from outside, especially if doors are left open.
3. All animals, birds etc. should be kept safe and under control. None should be allowed to roam and cats, birds, mice etc. should be held in carrying boxes.
4. Bowls and buckets of drinking water should be available, both outside and inside the Church.
5. Hopefully, there will be no cleaning up required inside the Church, where animals are likely to be domesticated, but it is useful to have a bowl of water handy and nappy bags available to pick up any accidental mess. If horses/farm animals are to be Blessed outside, cleaning buckets, shovels etc. should be available.

**NB**. It is a good idea to involve the children in the Service, as this encourages their families to come. An Animal Blessing Service for young children will necessarily be different from a Service of Intercession without the presence of animals, at which serious Animal Welfare concerns, such as animal experimentation, intensive farming, bloodsports, fur and skin trading and entertainment etc. will be considered. Emphasise, however, that *all* animals taken to these Church Services, whatever the type of Service, are representative of *all* God's animals and a reminder to us of those who are in need of prayer.

**Suggested hymns**:-

'Jesus Is Lord! Creation's Voice Proclaims It'

'All Things Bright And Beautiful'

'All Creatures Of Our God And King'

'Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks To The Risen Lord'

'O Lord, My God, When I In Awesome Wonder'

'Morning Has Broken'

'Who Put The Colours In The Rainbow?'

'God Is Working His Purpose Out'

'Love Divine, All Loves Excelling' (Tune: Blaenwern)

'We Have A Gospel To Proclaim'

**Suggested playlets or presentations with children, perhaps for first reading**:-

Playlet - 'St Francis And The Birds'

Playlet - 'A Sad Day' - Genesis 3

Presentation - 'God's Peaceable Kingdom' - Isaiah 11 v 1-9

Presentation - 'Thoughts On A Collection Of Bible Passages' - Genesis 1, Ch 2 v 19-20, Ch 9 v 12-16, Isaiah 11 v 9, John 1 v 1-3

**Suggested readings, perhaps for second reading**:-

Matthew 25 v 34-40

Colossians 1 v 15-23

Romans 8 v 18-25

'Thoughts On A Further Collection Of Bible Passages' - Luke 12 v 6, Matthew 23 v 37, John 10 v 14-15, Colossians 1 v 19-20, Revelation 5 v 13-14