**BBC RADIO LEEDS – INTERVIEW – SUNDAY 13 OCTOBER 2013 – 8.45-9AM – JOHNNY I ANSON**

By popular request, another St Francis Tide Pet Service will be held at Rawdon Parish Church St Peter this afternoon, at 2pm. Hello Ros.

**Hello Johnny.**

1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself.

**Yes - since 1985, I’ve been the Assistant Co-ordinator of Animal Christian Concern, an organisation born out of dismay at humanity’s cruel exploitation of animals, and a need for a Christian animal welfare voice.**

2. Can you give directions.

**Yes – The address is . . . . . Just follow the Leeds/Bradford Airport signs to Rawdon village.**

3. What will happen at the Pet Service?

**Well – following previous years’ success, the event celebrates Francis of Assisi – Patron Saint of Animals – and will be a service of thanksgiving and animal Blessing.**

**All are welcome, with or without pets.**

**Smaller animals, such as gerbils and rabbits should be in carrying boxes, and dogs should be on leads.**

**And, each pet will also represent the many animals, NOT loved and cared for by humans.**

4. Why take animals into Church?/Where did the idea come from?/What do people get out of it?/What’s the main purpose of it?

**Well – there is a serious side to this event, in that today’s human lifestyle places at risk the well-being of God’s animal creation.**

**Animals suffer, astronomically, in factory farms, vivisection labs, fur farms etc., and we turn a blind eye. We don’t listen to their screams; or watch the undercover videos of their suffering; or speak out about it. They suffer the same as we humans do. God gave us dominion, not to abuse them, but rather, in His image, to care for them.**

**There’s been great concern that the Churches seem to be silent on the subject of animal welfare. So this Service is to express the view that cruelty of any kind is incompatible with Christ’s teachings of love, that love is indivisible, and that cruelty towards any sentient creature is a breach of love.**

**Love is paramount to all else. Not just love of people, but ALL of God's creation. And if we fail to recognise this, then we are failing Christ, because we are underestimating the extent of His love.**

**ALL of God’s creatures need our love – His love is indivisible – He calls us to love them and to open our eyes and hearts, not only to our own human suffering, but to the suffering of ALL life He has made.**

**We are to be active participants in bringing about His Peaceable Kingdom.**

**Remembered in prayer will be those animals suffering commercial and social exploitation.**

**Also remembered will be those animals who help humankind in many ways: As companions, guide dogs, hearing dogs, animals for disabled people; in crime detection and at times of war.**

5. Can you give us ACC contact details.

**Yes – either email . . . . . or telephone me on . . . . .**

6. Can you tell us the name of your book, where it’s available, and tell us a bit about it?

**Yes – ‘Animal Welfare: Through The Cross’, available on Amazon, is a compilation of articles, showing the work Animal Christian Concern has done to reach animal welfarists and the Churches, while preaching the Gospel. ALL proceeds are donated to animal sanctuaries and humane research.**

7. What sort of people come to the Service?/How did the previous Services go?

**Oh – the Church is usually pretty full, with people of all ages, ranging from young families with pets, to older people, whose pet may be their only companion; people with guide dogs or therapy pets; people with animals from shelters, who are in need of the Blessing of a loving home; and people who don’t normally go to Church or don’t have pets, but who are interested in animal welfare.**

8. How do you cope with the noise?

**Oh – the animals join in, especially with the singing – barking, miaowing, snuffling, squeaking – it just makes the event more lively - it’s wonderful!**

9. Can you tell us a bit about St Francis?

**Well – Francis was probably the greatest evangelist the world has ever known and whose ministry perhaps most nearly resembled that of Christ Himself. His life reflected God’s love for the WHOLE of creation. He walked away from a life of wealth and comfort, to live in poverty and serve the unwanted – be they human or animal.**

10. Do animals go to heaven?

**I would say "Yes"! Jesus' death on the Cross and the whole Gospel message is with ALL creation in mind, including the animals.**

Well - thank you Ros.

**Thank you Johnny and can I just say to everyone listening, please do come along, with or without pets, even if you don’t normally go to Church – don’t miss this opportunity to show that you care about animals and the way they are treated.**