



The Blessing of the Animals

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
October 4, 2026, 10:00am
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
StPaulsSparks.org

Whoever you are and wherever you find yourself on the journey of faith, you're welcome to participate fully in all that we do here. We invite you to say the words in bold throughout the service. Restrooms are outside the sanctuary and down the hall. Turn right at your first opportunity. You're invited to join us for coffee and fellowship after the service in the parish hall. If it's your first time worshipping with us, please fill out the Connect Card in the foyer. Be sure to leave your mobile number if you'd like a text from Mother Hannah.

St. Francis of Assisi

St. Francis of Assisi was born in Italy in 1181 into a wealthy family, but as a young man he experienced a profound spiritual transformation. He gave up wealth and social status to follow Jesus in a life of simplicity, peace, generosity, and service. Francis became the founder of the Franciscan movement and one of the most beloved saints in Christian history. He is especially remembered for recognizing God's presence throughout creation. He saw the sun, moon, earth, water, birds, animals, and human beings as members of one great family held together by the love of God. Stories about Francis describe him preaching to birds, caring tenderly for creatures, and even making peace with a wolf that had frightened a village. Whether every story happened exactly as it is told matters less than the truth the stories reveal: Francis believed that all creation is sacred and worthy of our care. That is why churches around the world bless animals near the Feast of St. Francis on October 4. We bring our dogs, cats, birds, horses, and other beloved companions to give thanks for the joy and companionship they bring into our lives. Animals often love us with remarkable faithfulness. They greet us without judgment, stay beside us when we are lonely, and teach us about trust, play, patience, and presence. In their unconditional love, we sometimes catch a glimpse of God's own love for us — constant, joyful, and freely given.

Prelude

*Come into his presence with thanksgiving in your heart and give him praise, and give him praise.
Come into his presence with thanksgiving in your heart; your voices raise, your voices raise.*

"Come into His Presence"

*Give glory and honor
and power unto Him,
Jesus, the name above all names.
(Repeat)*

Announcements & Welcome

The Processional

*Separated—Until the veil was torn
The moment that hope was born
And guilt was pardoned once and for all*

*Captivated—But no longer bound by chains
Left at an empty grave*

"All of Creation"

*The sinner and the sacred resolved
Chorus: And all of creation sing with me now
Lift up your voice and lay your burden down
And all of creation sing with me now
Fill up the heavens let His glory resound
When time has faded*

*And we see Him face to face
Every doubt erased
Forever we will worship the King. Chorus.*

The reason we breathe

*Is to sing of His glory
And for all He has done
Praise the Father
Praise the Son
And the Spirit in One. Chorus x2*

The Acclamation & Collect for Purity

Blessed be the one holy and living God. **Glory to God for ever and ever!**

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect of the Day

Let us pray. (*A moment of silence for prayer.*) Most high, almighty and good Lord, grant your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world; that, after the example of blessed Francis, we may for love of you delight in all your creatures, with perfectness of joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lessons

A Reading From *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories that Make Us*
by Cole Arthur Riley. *Cole Arthur Riley is the creator of Black Liturgies, a space where Black words of dignity, lament, rage, and rest, are curated and integrated with a liberating spirituality.*

HAVE you ever stood in the presence of a tree and listened to the wind pass through its leaves? The roots and body stand defiant and unmoved. But listen. The branches stretch out their tongues and whisper shhhhhh. Trees make symphonies without their trunks ever moving, almost as if the stillness of their centers amplifies their sound. The tree may appear still, but if you look closer, you'll see that each leaf flails with breath. The tree may seem alone, but plow deep and you'll unearth its secret gnarled roots—the grotesque and the beautiful—creeping in the soil, reaching toward the ancestors. Thomas Merton said, "No writing on the solitary, meditative dimensions of life can say anything that has not already been said better by the wind in the pine trees." I hold this close.

Lector: Here ends the reading.

The Canticle of Brother Sun

We will speak the Canticle responsively.

All praise be yours through Brother Sun,
All praise be yours through Sister Moon,
By Mother Earth my Lord be praised,
By Brother Mountain, Sister Sea,
Through Brother Wind and Brother Air,
Through Sister Water, Brother Fire,

Jim Scott & Paul Winter from Missa Gaia

The Stars above give thanks to Thee.

All praise to those who live in peace.

All praise be yours through Brother Wolf,
All praise be yours through Sister Whale,
By Nature's song my Lord be praised,
By Brother Eagle, Sister Loon,

Through Brother Tiger, Sister Seal,
Through Sister Flower, Brother Tree.

Let Creatures all give thanks to Thee.

All praise to those who live in peace.

Ask of the Beasts and they shall teach you
the beauty of the Earth.

**Ask of the Trees and they shall teach you
the beauty of the Earth.**

Ask of the Winds and they shall teach you
the beauty of the Earth.

**Ask of the Flowers and they shall teach you
the beauty of the Earth.**

The Second Reading

The Biography of Saint Francis

We invite you to listen, and maybe close your eyes. Notice which parts of this biography stand out to you, or resonate with you.

The Gospel Acclamation

“They Will Know We are Christians”

*We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.
We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.
And we pray that all unity may one day be
restored.*

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew (11:25-30)

Glory to you, Lord Christ.

At that time Jesus said, ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Gospel Acclamation Continued

*All praise to the Father from whom all things come
And all praise to Christ Jesus, his only Son
All praise to the Spirit who makes us one.*

*And they'll know we are Christians by our love,
by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

The Sermon & The Blessing of the Animals

The Rev. Hannah Wilder

All are invited to bring their pets, photos, or stuffed animals to the front for a blessing. While animals receive their blessing, we invite you to listen to the music or to sing along:

Hymn #416 "For the Beauty of the Earth"

1 For the beau - ty of the earth, for the beau - ty of the skies,
2 For the beau - ty of each hour of the day and of the night,
3 For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and mind's de - light,
4 For the joy of hu - man love, bro - ther, sis - ter, par - ent, child,
5 For the Church which ev - er - more lift - eth ho - ly hands a - bove,
6 For each per - fect gift of thine to the world so free - ly given,

for the love which from our birth ov - er and a - round us lies,
hill and vale, and tree and flower, sun and moon, and stars of light,
for the mys - tic har - mo - ny link - ing sense to sound and sight,
friends on earth, and friends a - bove, for all gen - tle thoughts and mild,
off - 'ring up on ev - ery shore thy pure sac - ri - fice of love,
faith and hope and love di - vine, peace on earth and joy in heaven.

Refrain
Christ our God, to thee we raise this our hymn of grate - ful praise.

The Prayers of the People

Let us join with all creatures in praising the Creator. As we give thanks, let our hearts be opened to the beauty, wonder, and bonds we share with all creation.

In the Anglican cycle of prayer, we pray for the Church of Brazil. O Lord, **Hear our prayer.**

In our diocesan cycle of prayer, we pray for St. Jude's Ranch for Children, Chapel of the Holy Family. O Lord, **Hear our prayer.**

Creator of mountain goats and wild coyotes, of ox and ostrich, we give thanks for the creatures who share this world with us, strong, strange, playful, and free. Open our eyes to glimpse your

wisdom and delight in them. God of Love,
Hear our prayer.

Good Shepherd, you lead us beside still waters and restore our souls. Draw near to all who are weary or burdened, that they may find rest and healing in your care. God of Love,
Hear our prayer.

Spirit who speaks through trees and whispers in the wind, deepen our kinship with the earth. Root us in wonder, that we may hear creation's song and walk gently upon the earth. God of Love,
Hear our prayer.

We remember all who suffer from the wounds of environmental harm, those displaced by fire, flood, drought, or storm, and creatures whose habitats are destroyed. Strengthen us, that in your Spirit we may act with justice and compassion for all who suffer and for the earth itself. God of Love,
Hear our prayer.

Priest: Gentle Christ, you invite the weary to rest and the humble to learn from you. Receive the prayers of your people and the silent longings of every creature. Shape our hearts, that with Francis and all your saints we may dwell in compassion and reverence for all you have made, until we share in the peace of your reign, O God of all creation, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Feel free to greet one another with whatever sign of peace (handshake, fist bump, nod, etc.) is comfortable for you.

Communion Instructions & Offertory Sentence

The Offertory #400 "All Creatures of Our God and King"

Your gifts sustain our mission and ministry. Thank you for being generous. You may place your gifts in the offering plate as it comes around. Or you can point your phone camera at the code to the right and follow the instructions to give online. We especially appreciate automated giving, and help with covering fees.



When the offering is brought to the front, we stand and sing together:

The Presentation Song

*Give thanks with a grateful heart.
Give thanks to the Holy One,
Give thanks because He's given
Jesus Christ, His Son. (x2)*

Doxology

*And now, let the weak say I am strong.
Let the poor say I am rich.
Because of what the Lord has done for us. (x2)
Give Thanks.*

Prayer Over the Offering: All things come of thee, O Lord, **and of thine own have we given thee.**

This bread comes from grain that once was scattered on a hillside. It is harvested, ground down, and created into something new and nourishing. This bread reminds us that we are all seeds and plants of this beloved world, where God's hand has been present since the beginning of time, in the creation of the world, in the calling of God's people in the wilderness, in the voices of prophets, and in sending Jesus to come among us.

What Jesus did before he died was to spend a lot of time eating with his friends and with strangers.

This bread is broken as a reminder to us of the brokenness of the world, of Jesus who came to live among us in a breakable human body, and a reminder of the suffering and brokenness that each of us knows.

We pray that the presence of your Holy Spirit will sanctify our meal, and that we remember that whenever we gather for a meal—be it ever so simple—we proclaim that each of us is beloved.

We share bread as a reminder that we are not alone.

We share wine as a reminder of the new covenant of forgiveness.

And when we do this, we proclaim hope. We create something greater than our individual selves. We break bread and share it with the hope that like the first followers of Jesus, we are becoming a body, a community that does great things. For this let us be thankful. And let us eat. And the people say:
AMEN!

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we pray: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

The Breaking of the Bread

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. **Therefore let us keep the feast.**

Please be seated. Follow the directions of the ushers. If you need gluten-free wafers, please say "gluten free" to the priest. If you prefer not to receive communion, you may still come forward for a blessing; please cross your arms over your chest. Let an usher know if you would like communion brought to you in your seat.

Communion Music

Hymn #405 "All Things Bright and Beautiful"

*Chorus: All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.
Each little flow'r that opens,
each little bird that sings,*

*God made their glowing colors,
God made their tiny wings. Chorus.
The purple-headed mountain,
the river running by,
the sunset, and the morning
that brightens up the sky; Chorus.*

*The cold wind in the winter,
the pleasant summer sun,
the ripe fruits in the garden,
God made them, ev'ry one. Chorus.*

*God gave us eyes to see them,
and lips that we might tell
how great is God Almighty,
who has made all things well. Chorus.*

“On Eagles Wings”

*You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord,
who abide in his shadow for life,
say to the Lord: “My refuge,
my rock in whom I trust!”
Chorus: And he will raise you up on eagles’ wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of his hand.*

*The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
and famine will bring you no fear:
under his wings your refuge,
his faithfulness your shield. Chorus.
For to his angels he's given a command
to guard you in all of your ways;
upon their hands they will bear you up,
lest you dash your foot against a stone. Chorus.*

The Blessing

Please stand as you are able.

The priest gives a final blessing to which we respond, **Amen.**

The Recessional

“Put a Little Love in Your Heart”

*1 - Think of your fellow man,
Lend him a helping hand
Put a little love in your heart
You see it's getting late,
Oh please don't hesitate
Put a little love in your heart*

*2 - Another day goes by and,
Still the children cry
Put a little love in your heart
If you want the world to know
We won't let hatred grow
Put a little love in your heart. Chorus.*

*Chorus: And the world will be a better place
And the world will be a better place
For you, and me;
You just wait and see,*

*3 - Take a good look around,
And if you're looking down
Put a little love in your heart
I hope when you decide,
Kindness will be your guide
Put a little love in your heart. Chorus.
Repeat Verse 1.*

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord! **Thanks be to God!**

The Postlude

“Big House”

Permission to reprint, perform and stream the music in this service has been obtained from RiteSong, CCLI #2874630.
Biblical interpretation from the New Revised Standard Version.

Announcements

Welcome to St. Paul's We're so glad you joined us! You're invited to the coffee hour after the service in the parish hall, which is down the hallway from the narthex (entryway) and to the left. If you're new here, please fill out a yellow Connect Card. We would love to get to know you. You can place the card in the offering plate as it goes by, or hand it to an usher. Welcome!

Our New Nursery Caregiver We are delighted to welcome Jocelyne Dalton, our new nursery caregiver! Jocelyne is an experienced caregiver who is passionate about creating a safe, joyful, and welcoming environment for our youngest members, ages 0–4. We hope you'll take a moment to introduce yourself, get to know Jocelyne, and help us give her a warm St. Paul's welcome as one of the newest members of our community. We're so glad she's here!

Eco-Palians Meeting Join us on Sunday, October 11, after worship in the Choir Room as we explore ways to care for God's creation through education, advocacy, practical action, and community. Together we'll share ideas, plan future projects and events, and support St. Paul's efforts to grow in environmental stewardship and sustainability. All are welcome. Meets the second Sunday of every month. For more information, contact Robin Towne at 775-432-8574.

Lynne Snell Celebration of Life Saturday, October 17, 11:00am. We will remember and celebrate our sister, Lynne. All welcome.

Eucharistic Visitor Training Saturday, October 24, 9:00am - 12:00pm. Learn how to bring the bread and wine made holy to people who cannot make it to church. This important ministry ends up being a blessing to volunteers, maybe even more than to those we visit. RSVP to Amee: office@stpaulssparks.org.

Dia de Los Muertos: Remembering Our Loved Ones Special altar (ofrenda) will be up October 18 - November 1. Bring your photos on October 18 and pick up on November 1. We will observe Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, a beautiful tradition from Mexico. As part of our observance, we will create an *ofrenda* (oh-FREN-dah), a special altar of remembrance. We invite you to bring a photograph, small memento, favorite drink, or other item that reminds you of someone you love but see no longer and place it on our *ofrenda*. Come help us fill our *ofrenda* with the faces, stories, and memories of those who still live in our hearts.

All Saints' Day & United Thank Offering (UTO) Ingathering Sunday, November 1 During worship on Sunday, November 1, we will offer special prayers for those who have died. If you would like someone included in our prayers, please submit their name to Amee Hartman, Parish Administrator, at office@stpaulssparks by Monday, October 26. You may also write names in the remembrance book located by the office door in the narthex. We will also gather in all the blue boxes for United Thank Offering on that day.

New Instagram Account! St. Paul's is now on Instagram! Check us out and follow us: @st.paulssparks

Kairos Prison Ministry Do you have a calling to minister to people in prison? St. Paul's has an active ministry to and with people who are incarcerated. Contact Mike Margerum for information about how to get involved: 775-229-2695.