

Opening music: 'All things bright and beautiful' Piano praise SANGAH NOONA

Find it here: https://youtu.be/Ap4BSa_rEKk

Welcome + Introduction

Today's service is an animal welfare special written by Steve. He doesn't like speaking in public, so asked the congregation to deliver it instead. These are Steve's words.

Our opening music was the music to the hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'. This popular Anglican hymn is probably one of the world's best-known and beloved hymns. It's also Steve's favourite. The words are by Cecil Alexander, melody by William Monk.

What inspired today's service was a picture Steve saw on the internet of a cat's gravestone. The cat was called DEWEY and lived between 1898 to 1910. The message on the gravestone said: he was only a cat, but he was human enough to be a great comfort in hours of loneliness and pain.

I am sure many of us have experience of a pet that we loved as much as any person and deeply mourned their passing.

One of our core beliefs as Unitarians is responsibility or stewardship of the earth and all its inhabitants. Our ethical responsibility extends beyond our human family to include all animals who share this earth with us. As a congregation we are united by a commitment to compassion and justice for all sentient beings, both human and animal.

Our service will be in three parts, all animal welfare related.

There will also be a period of silence for personal prayer and meditation as well as some music.

Chalice is lit.

Reading from Genesis 1:24-25, the New International Version.

'And God said, Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind. And it was so.

God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good'.

1st Hymn: Green book 280: 'Morning has broken'

Morning has broken
Like the first morning,
Blackbird has spoken
Like the first bird,
Praise for the singing!
Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing
Fresh from the Word!

Sweet the rain's new fall
Sunlit from heaven,
Like the first dewfall
On the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness
Of the wet garden,
Sprung in completeness
Where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight!
Mine is the morning
Born of the one light
Eden saw play!
Praise with elation,
Praise every morning,
God's re-creation
Of the new day!

Tune: 'Bunessan' Old Gaelic Melody arr. Martin Fallas Shaw 1875 – 1958
Words: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881 – 1965 From the Children's Bells published by Oxford University Press by permission of David Higham Associates, Ltd

We come now to a time of prayer, and we will hear two.

The first is written by Theologian Albert SCHWEITZER.

Hear our humble prayer, O God,
For our friends the animals.
Especially for those who are suffering,
For any that are lost, or deserted, or frightened, or hungry.
For all that will be put to death.

We entreat for them all Thy mercy and pity.
And for those who deal with them,
We ask a heart of compassion,
And gentle hands, and kindly words.
Make us, ourselves, to be true friends to animals,
And so, to share the blessings of the merciful..... Amen.

Our second prayer is a prayer to Saint Francis for our pets.

Good Saint Francis, you loved all of God's creatures.
To you they were your brothers and sisters.
Help us to follow your example of treating every living thing with kindness.
Saint Francis, patron saint of animals, watch over my pet.
And keep my companion safe and healthy..... Amen

Part A

The Brits have often been called the world's greatest animal lovers.

We were the first country to have an animal welfare charity, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals established in 1824 which later became the RSPCA.

It would be another 60 years, in 1883, before we founded the NSPCC to protect and assist vulnerable children.

This sentimentality towards animals is perhaps due to the absence of dangerous animals from our island. I don't mean the dog attacks you hear about in the news, but native animals like bears which became extinct in Britain around 1,500 years ago and wolves which died out in the 18th century but still exist in the wild in other countries. Our fear of animals has in effect been switched off meaning we don't see them as dangerous or something to be tamed or conquered.

In North America hunting is extremely popular mainly due to the multitude of deadly animals they share their habitat with. These include three species of bears (brown, black and polar), wolves, coyotes, mountain lions, cougars, pumas, and alligators.

Australia has more deadly snakes than any other country worldwide as well as the two most fearsome predators, the saltwater crocodile, and the great white shark.

And did you know that the most dangerous land animal in Africa is actually the hippopotamus with over 500 human deaths per year?

Imagine if all those species lived in Britain. I don't think we would have quite the same attitude to animals.

Poor countries often treat animals badly. People are too busy trying to survive, let alone care for animals. Animal welfare legislation is simply not a priority for them.

Steve spent part of his childhood in Egypt where he saw appalling treatment of animals, particularly dogs, and donkeys which are working animals.

As a result, Steve supports and follows a charity called Safe Haven for Donkeys which was set up in the year 2000 to help the thousands of working donkeys in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

We'll now hear about the first of our 10 animal advocates. She founded the PDSA, the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals.

Maria DICKIN lived from 1870 to 1951 and founded the PDSA in 1917 during World War One.

The PDSA is the UK's leading veterinary charity carrying out more than one million free veterinary consultations a year providing care for sick and injured animals for those on a low-income.

DICKIN opened the first PDSA clinic in the Whitechapel neighbourhood of London to improve the dreadful state of animal health in the area. She opened her dispensary with a sign on the door saying:

"Bring your sick animals. Do not let them suffer. All animals treated. All treatment free."

On the first day, they only treated four animals, including a limping donkey.

However, that limping donkey soon spread the word and by 1922 the PDSA had seven clinics and mobile dispensaries across London treating 70,000 animals a year as well as raising awareness of animal welfare issues. In 1923 they opened one in Salford, and the rest as they say is history.

Today this ground breaking charity has 48 pet hospitals and clinics and is supported by royal patronage under Princess Alexandra.

The PDSA has been a cornerstone of animal health and welfare in the UK and its influence has been felt across generations benefiting pets from low-income families who otherwise would not have access to veterinary care and education.

Have you heard of the DICKIN medal? This is the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross or VC named after Maria DICKIN. This award was created in 1943 by the PDSA and given to animals in recognition of their extreme bravery, initially in wartime assisting the British Armed Forces or civil emergency services. This included searching for civilians trapped in rubble, detecting mines, or assisting in the rescue of stranding personnel.

So far, 34 dogs, 32 messenger pigeons, four horses, and one cat have been awarded the DICKIN medal.

In 2002 a second animal bravery award was created by the PDSA, called the GOLD medal, recognised as the animal equivalent of the George Cross; it's the civilian equivalent of the DICKEN medal.

Our second animal advocate is Saint Gertrude of NIVELLES, the patron saint of cats, or as Steve likes to call her, the cat lady of the Catholic Church (not the crazy cat lady).

Saint Gertrude lived in the seventh century from 626 to 659 CE. Born into a noble family, she resided in the court of King Dagobert in what is now Belgium. Her family tried to arrange a marriage to the son of an Austrian Duke, but she steadfastly refused choosing instead a religious life and became a nun.

She was known for her hospitality to all, human and animal.

How she became the patron saint of cats is unknown, but people of the Middle Ages believed she had a special affinity for felines. It is suggested her abbey had a rodent problem and she welcomed cats as a result. Cats kill rodents and it is rodents that spread disease and infest homes and granaries. Think of the bubonic plague or Black Death for example which wiped out most of Medieval Europe.

She became an important saint to call upon in the Middle Ages during the height of the plague and has ever since become by default the saint that all cat lovers venerate.

It is likely her invocation against rats and mice which led cat lovers to claim her as their own. In Medieval art, she is often depicted with a cat at her side, and this perhaps suggests the harmonious nature between humans and animals reminiscent of the garden of Eden.

Saint Gertrude has never officially been made a patron saint of cats by the Catholic Church.

She shares the same feast day March 17th with her more famous peer Saint Patrick.

We have a short poem-prayer to Saint Gertrude that Steve found online and liked, and it goes like this:

Dearest Saint Gertrude,
Ask you I pray,
Watch over my cat, this and every day.
Protect them from those who might wish them harm,
Keep them at home, all safe from the storm.
Give me the sense to care for them well,
And provide me the strength for never to yell.
And Gertrude, a last thing I beseech from thee,
Protect my sofa from sharp claws, and my carpet from pee Amen.

Number three in our list of animal heroes is Harriet HEMENWAY, a Boston socialite and avid birdwatcher who began a campaign to boycott feathered hats.

In the late 19th century during America's gilded age of opulence and wealth, feathered hats became a status symbol.

In any period of opulence, the wealthy will flaunt their riches with status symbols, including clothes which are often made at the expense of animals.

In ancient times purple was the most valued and expensive colour for clothing and became known as royal or imperial purple. It is where the expression 'born to the purple' comes from, born into a reigning family or privileged class. It was made from extracting a gland from sea snails. Even one robe involved killing thousands of snails and substantial human labour.

In the 1980s it was fur, and the real type, not faux. Think of the soap opera Dynasty with Joan Collins as Alexis Colby swanning around like Cruella De Ville draped head to toe in sable, chinchilla and mink.

Well in the gilded age, which was between about 1865 to 1902, it was feathered hats. This trade led to the over-hunting and slaughter of between five and 15 million birds each year in the US alone for millinery work. The hats became so popular that over 50 species of birds across the globe nearly became extinct. Some species did, including the Carolina parakeet. Feathers had become more valuable than gold.

In this historical period women had no vote, nor political clout, but HEMENWAY persevered and pressurised the state legislature of Massachusetts to outlaw the wild bird feather trade in 1897. This was quite an achievement for a 19th century woman.

Her conservation advocacy contributed towards the passing of The Lacey Act of 1900, a conservation law in the USA that prohibited trade in wildlife, fish, and plants that had been illegally taken, possessed, transported, or sold.

What Steve noticed in researching this service was that the animal rights movement seems to have emerged in the Victorian era. This is linked to a change in attitudes as Victorians perceived pets in a more favourable light; they recognized animals could better society and had a new moral value. This was a period of wealth and disposable income; pedigree dogs became culturally more acceptable and popular, conveying class and status.

Before the Victorian era keeping a pet was seen as frivolous and frowned upon. Animals were expected to earn their keep or be eaten.

Queen Victoria liked smooth haired collies, setting an example of royal pet ownership which exists to this day.

It was also in the Victorian era that the book *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell was written. This was the first book told from an animal's point of view.

Poems

Before we go into a time of silence and meditation, we have two poems Steve wrote using the magic of AI.

The first is one Steve wrote about Belted Galloway cows at Ann's request and is dedicated to her.

The second one is called I prefer dogs to people.

After the poems we will move into a time of silence followed by a short piece of music.

Perhaps during the silence, you might like to remember a beloved pet, the happy memories you shared, and how lucky they were to have you as their owner.

Poem ONE

Dedicated to Ann who loves them. In honour of her birthday which is this month.

Belted Galloway cows are sometimes called panda cows due to their distinctive black and white coats.

In the fields where the good grass grows,
Belted Galloway cows strike a dainty pose.
With their coats black and white,
They graze in delight,
And the farmer just smiles as he knows.

Their thick fur keeps warm through the chill,
As they munch on the green grass at will.
With each gentle moo,
They bring joy to Ann, that's so true,
In the meadows, they graze, and they thrill.

From the hills to the valleys they roam,
Belted Galloways feel right at home.
With a charm that's unique,
In their quiet technique,
They remind us of nature's sweet dome.

Poem TWO

I prefer dogs to people
Their souls are pure and true
Loyal companions always by my side
Bringing joy in all they do

Their wagging tails and gentle eyes
Speak volumes without a word
They listen with unwavering love
A bond that will never be blurred

People may judge and betray
But dogs never leave your side
They offer comfort in times of need
A friend you can always confide

In their presence, I find peace
Their unconditional love never wanes
I'd chose a dog over any person
For their love forever remains

So, I'll take my furry friends
Over people any day
For in their company, I find solace
In their love, I will forever stay.

Silence and meditation

Followed by Music

'Opera' performed by animals MAESTRO – a CG short film (1.49 minutes).

Find it here: <https://youtu.be/ft-h6BDiV50>

Part B

The power of a pet is not to be underestimated. There are significant benefits both physical and mental. Pets attune themselves to our emotions. They can interpret our tone, and sense when we are sad or ill.

Having a pet can reduce stress, anxiety, depression, ease loneliness, and encourage exercise. They can bring joy and love into your life. Both playing with them and giving them a cuddle can increase your happy hormones such as serotonin and dopamine.

We now move onto numbers four to seven in our list of 10.

Each October 4th is World Animal Day, a global call for action for animal welfare. This event was founded in 1925 by German animal rights activist Heinrich ZIMMERMAN in honour of Saint Francis and is now celebrated in 70 countries. Zimmerman lived between 1887 to 1942 and was a journalist, writer, editor, and publisher of the German magazine MAN AND DOG. He was one of the key figures in the animal welfare and rights movement stating that regarding animals 'the world is their home too.' It should be noted that humans are only 2.5 percent of the population, 97.5 percent are other animal species trying to survive with us, the deadliest of the species.

FRANCES COBBE is number five. She lived between 1822 to 1904 and was an Anglo-Irish anti-vivisection activist as well as a women's suffrage campaigner.

She came from a prominent family and was a descendant of Archbishop Charles Cobbe who was Primate of Ireland.

Cobbe believed sympathy was central and we must above all treat animals in ways that show sympathy for them. She founded the Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection in 1875 and the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection in 1898. Both still exist today although the first is now called the National Anti-Vivisection Society and the second Cruelty Free International.

She is remembered after her death as the master builder of the anti-vivisection movement leaving a foundation for future campaigners.

Most of us have probably heard of the most famous dogs' home in Britain, Battersea. Number six is Mary TEALBY who founded this charity.

She lived from 1801 to 1865 and founded Battersea Dogs Home in Holloway in 1860, prior to it moving to Battersea. She founded a home where abandoned dogs could be cared for, and it is still going strong today. At its creation, The Times newspaper ran a story ridiculing the idea of opening a home for dogs when there were homeless people in London. However, The Times underestimated the British love of dogs, and one of TEALBY'S most impressive supporters was Charles Dickens himself.

The Victorian period saw an increase in pet ownership and Dickens was a huge fan of dogs, especially fond of a mastiff he named Turk.

In 1883 the home also started to take in cats, and in 2015 our former Queen Elizabeth II opened a plaque to name the intake kennels after its founder.

Steve knows a lot of the congregation are vegetarian or vegan, which he isn't.

He does feel a hypocrite writing a service about animal welfare but isn't it strange how so many people can see animals such as cats and dogs as beloved members of our family, and others such as chickens, pigs, and cows as sources of food. The term for this is called the meat paradox. Meat eaters strategically disconnect meat from its animal origins.

Britain's first vegetarian church was founded by number seven in our list, and he was called Willam COWHERD, who lived from 1763 to 1816. Despite his surname he was a vegetarian activist and oversaw a tiny chapel in Salford which became the birthplace of the meat free diet. Reverend Cowherd demanded that all his congregation eat a vegetarian diet, and they all took a vow to abstain from meat as a form of temperance. He believed God inhabited each animal,

and it was sin to eat meat. He said that if God wanted man to eat meat, it would have come to us in an edible form that could be picked and eaten, like a ripened fruit. The COWHERDITES as they were called became the philosophical forerunners of the Vegetarian Society which was founded in 1847.

Christian vegetarianism is popular in some denominations, particularly Seventh Day Adventists. Christian vegetarians often quote Genesis Chapter 1 Verse 29:

“And God said, behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat”

Vegetarianism is also common in other religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. It should also be noted that pescatarians were widespread in the early Christian church.

2nd Hymn: Green Book 241 “All creatures of our God and King” (The hymn of St Francis)

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,
 Sing your praises, sing your praises,
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong
Ye clouds that sail in heaven along,
 Sing your praises, Alleluia!
 Thou rising morn, in praise rejopice,
 Ye lights of evening, find a voice,
Sing your praises, sing your praises,
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
Make music for thy God to hear,
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
Thou fire so masterful and bright,
That giveth us both warmth and light,
 Sing your praises, sing your praises,
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Dear Mother earth, who day by day,
Unfoldest blessings on our way,
 Sing your praises, Alleluia!
The flowers and fruit that in thee grow,
Let them God's glory also show:
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
 Alleluia, Alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship God in humbleness;
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
Praise, praise your Maker and your King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
 Alleluia, Alleluia!
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Words: St Francis of Assisi, 1182 – 1226 from tr William Henry Draper, 1855 – 1933
Used by permission of J. Curwen & Sons, Ltd
Tune: 'Lasst uns Erfeuren (Easter Alleluia) Kolner Gesangbuch, 1623 From the English Hymnal
Used by permission of Oxford University Press

This is from YOUTUBE, and the hymn will be relatively unknown to us as a congregation.

Steve chose it because of the title, and he likes the hymn.

The words will appear on screen. The clip only has the music though, piano instrumental hymn with lyrics.

Either just listen or if you know it and want to sing along, it's up to you. Remain seated for this one.

Part C

Steve says he often sees homeless people in Plymouth with dogs. They have them for companionship, warmth, and protection. He likes to buy them dog food and biscuits to give to their canine companions. Maybe they have dogs with them as people likely feel sorrier for the dogs than the homeless and are more likely to buy them something to eat or drink.

Because of the constant media barrage on TV and social media documenting the violence and despair of the world 24-7, we have become desensitized to the suffering of our fellow man. The more tragedy we see, the less we care. Our minds cannot cope. We are overwhelmed and we switch off our compassion switch.

Watch a documentary about a serial killer, and you will not bat an eyelid. Watch a reality TV show about starving dogs being rescued by the RSPCA, or a horse dying in a movie and you'll be sobbing like a baby.

We are programmed to be animal lovers from a young age. We have a reverence for animals in Britain and have attributed human characteristics to them. This pet humanisation is due to the entertainment industry, and can be seen in books, cinema, and TV shows.

Think of Dumbo the elephant, The Jungle Book, 101 Dalmatians, Narnia, The Lion King to name but a few. Look at the popularity of Paddington Bear. He even took part in a sketch with the late Queen Elizabeth for her Jubilee celebrations in 2022.

We dress our pets in clothes and hold birthday parties for them.

The pet clothing market generates billions, and the term used is having a FUR-DROBE. There are even designer pet clothes and brands such as Lords and Labradors, Poochie Fashion, and Chelsea Dogs. Designer labels including Gucci, Balenciaga, Fendi and Giorgio Armani sell pet clothes, tags and leashes. Dolce and Gabbana currently sell a dog perfume called FE-FE. The bottle has a 24-carat gold plated paw print on it.

Luxury dog food is another lucrative market capitalising on pet humanisation and generates billions in revenue. We do have the dog perfume advert for you to watch now. This is a real advert by the way and not a spoof.

FE-FE advert from YOUTUBE.

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/0CA5YzZQUM0>

We move onto our final three animal advocates.

Anna Jessey WADE lived from 1859 to 1952 and was an English suffragette and campaigner for animal welfare. She founded the Cats Protection League in 1927 which from 1998 has been called Cats Protection. Cats Protection is the UK's largest feline welfare society and in its 100 years has rehomed and championed the rights of cats and kittens. Its aims are to find good homes for cats in need, support and encourage the neutering of cats, and improve people's understanding of cats and their care.

WADE also founded the Humanitarian League, the Pit Ponies Protection Society, the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, and the Humane Education Society.

Our penultimate advocate is Colonel Richard MARTIN, an Irish politician and campaigner against cruelty to animals. He lived from 1754 to 1834 and was given the nickname Humanity Dick by King George IV.

He has often been called the greatest Irishman you have NEVER heard of, as all animal rights laws in the world stem back to this man.

MARTIN pioneered the world's first piece of animal welfare legislation, inspired by the visible maltreatment of animals in London's Smithfield Market, called the Cruel Treatment to Cattle Act of 1822. This became known as Martin's Act.

He was also involved in campaigns against bear baiting and dog fighting and was the driving force behind the creation of the SPCA, The Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals which later became the RSPCA when the then Princess Victoria became its patron in 1835.

MARTIN was a pioneer for animal rights at a time it was unheard of.

In the music halls of the time a new ditty was created as a result which goes like this:

"If I had a donkey wot wouldn't go,
Do you think I'd wallop him? No, no, no.
But gentle means I'd try, do you see,
Because I hate all cruelty.
If all had been like me, in fact,
There'd had been no occasion for Martin's Act".

Our final advocate is Saint FRANCIS of Assisi, the Italian mystic, poet and founder of the Franciscan Monastic Order

Born in 12th century Assisi he underwent a spiritual transformation that changed his life from one of wealth and privilege into one of voluntary poverty and simplicity.

He renounced all worldly wealth and instead sought a closeness to God and all His creations.

He advocated a brotherhood with animals stating we should return to the spiritual state we shared with animals in the Garden of Eden.

For FRANCIS the divine was found in all creatures, and he called everything his brother or sister. He even preached to animals, and it is customary for Catholic Churches to hold ceremonies blessing animals on his Feast Day October 4th. October 4th as stated earlier in the service later became World Animal Day.

3rd Hymn: Purple book. Number 189. 'We celebrate the web of Life'

We celebrate the web of life',
its magnitude we sing;
for we can see divinity
in every living thing,

A fragment of the perfect whole
in cactus and in quail,
as much in tiny barnacle
as in the great blue whale.

Of ancient dreams we are the sum;
our bones link stone to star,
and bind our future worlds to come
with worlds that were and are.

Respect the water, land and air
which gave all creatures birth;
protect the lives of all that share
the glory of the earth.

Words © Alicia S. Carpenter, b. 1930 Used by permission.

Music, Tune 'Christus der est mein Leben' Melchior Vulpus, c. 1560 - 1616

Closing words

Our closing words are taken from the 'Fragments of Holiness' book Steve was given when he officially joined the church on 24 October 2021.

By Frances Hodgson BURNETT who lived between 1849 and 1924, a writer, author of 'The Secret Garden':

"How it is that animals understand things I do not know, but it is certain that they do understand. Perhaps there is a language which is not made of words, and everything in the world understands it. Perhaps there is a soul hidden in everything and it can always speak, without even making a sound, to another soul."

Chalice is extinguished

Closing music 'Chasing Butterflies' (song for my dog) by Jordon Frank

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/RtrboFMqbl4>