

Families at 4 & Blessing of the Animals

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2026



ACCEPTING DONATIONS OF PET GOODS





Families at Four

Sunday, October 4, 2026, 4:00pm

OPENING HYMN “All Things Bright and Beautiful”

Royal Oak (H 405)

Please stand as you are able.

Refrain:

**All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.**

**Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colors,
He made their tiny wings. Refrain.**

**He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well. Refrain.**

WELCOME

The Rev. Stephen P. Hagerty

Celebrant: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;

All: **And God said ‘Let there be water with living creatures,
and let birds fly above the earth across the sky.**

Celebrant: God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing,

All: **And God saw that it was good.**

PRAYER

All: **Lord, You have created all things:
Light and darkness, wind and sea
Sun, moon and stars,
Plants and living creatures.**

**Thank you for making animals.
Help us to protect them, just like Noah did.
Help us to love and care for them just like St. Francis
And St. Anthony of Padua, St. Gertrude, St. Francis
Xavier, St. Kevin, St. Cuthbert, St. Seraphim, St. Mary,
St. Jerome, St. Anthony the Abbot, St. Roch, St. Martin,
St. Benedict and St. John Maximovitch.**

THE LESSONS

The children are invited up to the altar for the lessons

HYMN

“All of Us Belong”

Richard B. Colligan

**All of us belong,
Each and every one.
All of us belong
In this sacred circle!**

**We have WINGS, and PAWS,
And TAILS, and TOES
And INSTINCTS, and SOULS**

READING: “Madeline Finn and the Blessing of the Animals” Lisa Papp

"Wake up, Star. It's a special day!"

"You're up early," Mom says. "We don't want to miss the Blessing," I say.

"It only comes once a year." I show Mom the paper again.

"The celebration comes once a year," Mom says. "But blessings are all around us."

"Like Star," I say, and I give him a hug.

"That's right," Mom says. "I have an idea. Why don't you make some more leaves? After the Blessing, you can decorate the windows at the animal shelter."

Star helps me gather my leaf-making things. We make big leaves, small leaves, smooth leaves, and pointy leaves. "You're going to get a special blessing today," I tell Star. "You too, Bonnie."

When we arrive, there's already a long line, and lots of animals. I see dogs and cats. There's even a goat. "Do you think they'll run out of blessings?" I ask. "I don't think so," Mom says. I watch the lady in the brown robe. One by one, the animals come up and she says something to each one. "She knows a lot of blessings," I say. Mom laughs. "She sure does."

Behind us, someone has a goldfish in a bowl. In front, there are two ferrets on a leash, and a small dog in a basket. "How does she know what to say?" I ask. "I'm not sure," Mom says. "Why don't you ask her?"

Finally, it's our turn. "I'm Reverend Mary Alice," the lady says, "You can call me Miss Mary. What's your name?" "Madeline Finn," I say in my quiet voice. "This is Bonnie, and this is Star."

Miss Mary puts her hand on Bonnie's head and looks into her eyes. "Your gift is bringing comfort," she says. Then she touches Star. "You have so much joy to share." I look at Bonnie and Star. I can tell they feel good inside. "How do you know what to say?" I ask.

Miss Mary smiles. "Everyone has a blessing inside," she says. "We just have to look for it." "Everyone?" I ask.

"That's right, Madeline Finn. Everyone has a gift to share. And once you find it, you have to set it free."

"Miss Mary..." I start to say. "Do you have another animal for me to bless?" She asks. "Yes, please," I whisper. Then I get on my toes. "They're not here. They're at the shelter." "I see," Miss Mary says. She looks at her long line. I can tell she's thinking. "Madeline Finn," she finally says, "maybe *you* can bring the blessings to the shelter animals." I look at Miss Mary. "I don't know how to do that." She smiles. "Give me your hands." Miss Mary wraps her hands around mine.

"Madeline Finn," she says, "I bless you to know how special you are... I want you to remember all the blessings inside you." She looks into my eyes. "Blessings you need to share with the world."

She gives my hands a little squeeze. "How do you feel now?" I nod, but no words would come out. Miss Mary smiles again. "Here's a gift from my heart to yours."

She pretends to put something in my hand, then closes my fingers around it. "What is it?" I ask. "Courage."

"Did Star enjoy his blessing?" Mom asks when we're back in the car. "Yes." "And Bonnie?" "Yes, I say, kind of quiet. "Everyone got a nice blessing."

I open my hands, but there's really nothing there. When we get to the shelter, I tell Mrs. Dimple all about Bonnie and Star's blessings. "How lovely," she says. "Thank you, Madeline Finn."

"I'm proud of you," Mom says. "Why don't you do something nice with your leaves while I help Mrs. Dimple with donations."

Everyone's busy with the dogs, so we go into the cat room. All the kitties stare at me. I don't know what to say. Then Star gives me a nudge, and I remember what Miss Mary told me. *Everyone has a blessing inside.* I go to the first cage.

"Hi Winter," I say, and I notice his funny ear. "It looks nice on you." I tell him.

He puts his paw out and I touch it. "You're going to make someone really happy," I say. I reach into my bag and pull out a leaf. *I am special*, I write, and I tie it to his cage. Next, I see a mama cat and five kittens. "Hello Woolly," I say. Her kittens climb all over her, but she doesn't mind. I pick out another leaf. *I will take care of you*, I write. I giggle when the kittens play with it. *We will make you laugh*, I write on a leaf for them. The next cat is hiding. "Hello, Twilight," I say real soft, but he doesn't turn around. His card says he's thirteen years old and still looking for his forever home. *I will be your best friend*, I write on his leaf, and I fasten it on. Pretty soon, every cat has a leaf and a blessing!

Now, we visit the dogs. "Hi Shiloh," I say to the first one. I look into his eyes the way Miss Mary did with me. *You have a big heart*, I think, and he gets a big red leaf. "Hello Lily," I say to the next dog. She's really calm, and friendly. I talk to her a while and she just listens. *I like to hear stories*, I write on her leaf. "Maybe you could be a therapy dog one day," I say.

Sammy is in the last cage. He has a big, happy smile, and sweet brown eyes. *I have a lot of love to give*, I write on his leaf. Soon, the whole shelter is filled with colorful leaves! "Miss Mary is right," I say. "Everyone has a blessing inside."

I'm decorating the windows when Mom gives me a hug. "I saw your leaves," she says. And then she hands me one. *You're my little blessing*, it says.

THE SERMON Rev. Stephen P. Hagerty and Rev. Maureen Carey, Deacon

SERMON HYMN

"Jesus Loves Me"

Anna B. Warner

Yes, Jesus loves me

Yes, Jesus loves me

Yes, Jesus loves me

The Bible tells me so

Please take a few moments in silence to hear what the Spirit is saying to you.

SEASHELLS AND SORRIES

The seashells are a visual reminder for all of us. Together, we think about any cares, worries, or things we have done wrong. We imagine placing them in the seashell and giving them up to God. Jesus always forgives us. Jesus always gives us a "do over" so we can try again to love one another as Jesus loves us. We pour water over the seashells as a reminder that everything we give to God is washed away and we can start new.

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

THE PEACE

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: **And also with you.**

The Lord's PRAYER

Deacon: You are invited to pray The Lord's Prayer both out loud and/or as a body prayer through yoga, on the mats provided. (See page 7)

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

**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,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

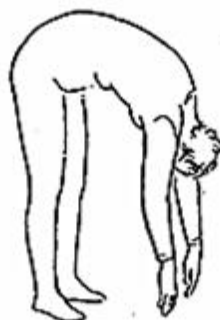
The Lord's Prayer: Body Prayer

Engage your whole body in prayer. We can pray not just with our hearts and minds, but also with movement. You are invited to pray The Lord's Prayer aloud, follow along with prayer yoga (you may use the mats provided), and/or rest in the quiet of God's presence.

AN INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN YOGA
NANCY ROTH



Our Father • who art in heaven



• hallowed be
thy Name.



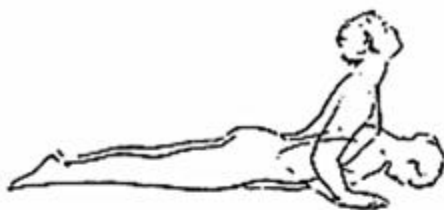
Thy Kingdom come;



thy will be done



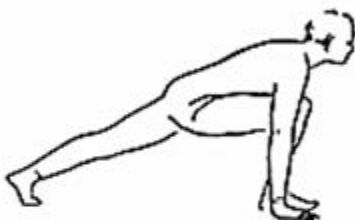
• ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.



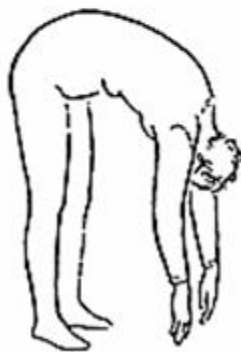
Give us this day
our daily bread.



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 - for ever and ever.
Amen.

PRAYER

All: **Thank You for the animals—
for cats, dogs, the songs of birds in the morning,
and the quiet steps of deer in the woods.
Bless our pets at home,
and wild creatures far away.
Keep them safe from harm,
warm in the cold,
and full when they are hungry.
Help us to be gentle and kind,
to care for them as You care for us,
and to remember that every creature
is part of Your beautiful world.
Amen.**

BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS

Rev. Stephen and Rev. Maureen will come to you to offer a blessing.

CLOSING HYMN

“Thanks a Lot”

Raffi

Thanks a lot (**Thanks a lot**)
Thanks for the sun in the sky (**Thanks for the sun in the sky**)
Thanks a lot (**Thanks a lot**)
Thanks for the clouds so high (**Thanks for the clouds so high**)

Thanks a lot (**Thanks a lot**)
Thanks for the wonder in me (**Thanks for the wonder in me**)
Thanks a lot (**Thanks a lot**)
Thanks for the way I feel (**Thanks for the way I feel**)

Thanks for the animals,
Thanks for the land,
Thanks for the people everywhere!
**(Thanks for the animals,
Thanks for the land,
Thanks for the people everywhere!)**

Thanks a lot **(Thanks a lot)**
Thanks for all I've got **(Thanks for all I've got)**

DISMISSAL

Deacon: Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

People: **Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE

Join us for Fellowship and Dinner in the Narthex

Families at 4 Schedule 2026-2027

Join us on the first Sunday of each month

October 4th	Blessing of the Animals
November 1st	All Saints Day (<i>Church and Narthex</i>)
December 6th	Christmas Tree Lighting (<i>Preschool & Church</i>)
January 3rd	Epiphany and Winter (<i>Church & Narthex</i>)
February 7th	All about love (<i>Church and Narthex</i>)
March 7th	Lent and Easter (<i>Church and Narthex</i>)
April 4th	Creation and Spring (<i>Church and Garden</i>)
May 2nd	Last Faith at 4 (<i>Outside in the ruins</i>)