

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SAN RAFAEL

October 11, 2026 10 am

Blessing of the Animals



Welcome to worship!

We are delighted that you chose to worship with us this morning. We hope you find a warm spirit of hospitality and a worship experience that strengthens your faith and discipleship. You are invited to stand, as you are able, when you see an * in the bulletin.

Centering Thought

‘The moral progress of a nation and its greatness should be judged by the way it treats its animals.’ *Gandhi*

Centering Bell *On hearing the bell, settle into a time of centering silence and listening to the Prelude with an open heart.*

Prelude

Welcome/Opening Words (A special welcome if you are joining us online)

Liturgist: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey..."

Congregation: "You are welcome here."

*Opening Litany -

One: 'But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
...and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

All: In God's hand is the life of every living thing...

One: 'God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind.

All: And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them.

One: And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind, cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so.

All: And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind". And God blessed them.

One: God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.'

*Opening Song All Things Bright and Beautiful

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
Our God has made them all.

1 Each little flower that opens,
each little bird that sings,

God made their glowing colors,
and made their tiny wings. [Refrain]

2 The purple-headed mountain,
the river running by,
the sunset and the morning
that brightens up the sky. [Refrain]

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

Opening Prayer

Creator God,

You have made a beautiful world filled with wonder and surprises!

You have gifted us with the blessing of animals, those in the wild, those on farms, those in our own homes. You brought into being that which we could not imagine for ourselves, life we cannot see without the aid of microscopes, animals we can only see in pictures from remote regions of this planet earth,

We thank you for abundant life;
for the birds we hear in the morning,
for the drone of the bees when we are outside.

We thank you for the gift of our own animal companions;

For the joy they bring us,

For the unconditional love and forgiveness which teaches us about you; For the confidant, the listener, the stress-releaser,
for all the ways they support our health-and our Spirit.

We give you thanks.

Amen

Assurance of Grace

People of God, when you go out into the world, love one another.

Cherish your animal family, protest against abuse and neglect of our animals;
exercise stewardship of all creation, so that all can experience God's Shalom.

In doing so, you will experience God's grace.

Amen

Give Me Love

George Harrison

B $\flat$ B $\flat^{\Delta}$ C-7 F

Give me love,

B $\flat$ B $\flat^{\Delta}$ C-7 F

— give me love, — give me peace on Earth. — Give me light

E $\flat$ - F A $\flat$ E $\flat$

— give me life, — show me all — I'm worth. — give me

B $\flat$ B $\flat^{\Delta}$ C-7 F

hope, help me cope — with this hea - vy load. — Try-ing to —

E $\flat$ - F A $\flat$ E $\flat$ B $\flat$

— touch and reach — you with heart and soul. —

First Reading: "Jesus and the Donkey"

A story about Jesus, probably Coptic (Egyptian) in origin, which scholars have collected alongside other fragments of lost or non-biblical gospel material.

"It happened that Jesus left the city and walked with his disciples over the mountains. And they came to a mountain, and the road which led up it was steep. There they found a man with a pack-mule. But the animal had fallen, because the man had loaded it too heavily, and now he beat it, so that it was bleeding.

And Jesus came to him and said, 'Man, why do you beat your animal? Do you not see that it is too weak for its burden, and do you not know that it suffers pain?'

But the man answered and said, 'What is that to you? I may beat it as much as I please, since it is my property, and I bought it for a good sum of money. Ask those who are with you, for they know me, and they know about this.' And some of the disciples said, 'Yes, Lord, it is as he says. We have seen how he bought it.' But the Lord said, 'Do you then not see how it bleeds, and do you not hear how it groans and cries out?' But they answered and said, 'No, Lord, that it groans and cries out, we do not hear.'

But Jesus was sad and exclaimed, 'Woe to you, that you do not hear how it complains to the Creator in heaven and cries out for mercy. But threefold woes to him about whom it cries out and complains in its pain.'
And he came up and touched the animal. And it stood up and its wounds were healed. But Jesus said to the man, 'Now carry on and from now on do not beat it anymore, so that you too may find mercy.'

Second Reading: Meister Eckhart, a 13th century Christian mystic

Apprehend God in all things,
for God is in all things.
Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God.
Every creature is a word of God.
If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature- even a caterpillar-
I would never have to prepare a sermon
so full of God
is every creature

***Hymn of Preparation What a Wonderful World (Bob Thiele & George David Weiss)**

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself what a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces of people going by
I see friends shaking hands, saying how do you do
They're really saying I love you

I hear babies cry, I watch them grow
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself what a wonderful world
Yes, I think to myself what a wonderful world

Sermon Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg

Quiet Reflection

Special Music We Celebrate the Web of Life (Alicia S. Carpenter, Melchior Vulpus) FCC Choir

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

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

Sharing Our Joys & Concerns *After each joy or concern, Pastor leads the congregation to respond "Lord, hear our prayer."*

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Creator (*Father, Mother, God*) who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kindom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kindom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever. Amen.

Offering

Invitation to Generosity

All creatures are held in God's tender care, and we are invited to share in that care. As we bring our gifts today, may they bless the animals and people in our community, and everyone who depends on a generous world. Let us give with grateful hearts."

Offering Song What is Good

What Is Good (What Does The Lord Require Of You?)

$\text{♩} = 88$

What does the Lord re-quire__ of you? What does the Lord re-quire__ of you? To act just
- ly. To act just - ly. To love kind
- ness. To love mer - cy. And to
walk hum - bly with your God. And to
walk hum - bly with your God.

WORDS: *Micah 6:8*

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ACT JUSTLY

Irr.

Offering Prayer (*Norman Habel*)

God, our Creator, help us to love
all creatures as kin,
all animals as partners on Earth,
all birds as messengers of praise,
all minute beings as expressions of your mysterious design, and all frogs as voices of hope.

Amen

Blessing of the Animals

Prayer: God, you have made us and all living things. We thank you for giving us these animals who bring us love, joy, happiness, kindness, comfort, wisdom, and understanding.

As you take care of us, we ask that with your help we might take care of those who trust us to look after them. By doing this, we share in your own love for all creation.

We remember our animal companions who are no longer with us physically. We give thanks for the gifts they gave us and the variety of ways they enriched and blessed our lives.

We are confident that our Creator continues to care for them.

Amen

The Blessing

Please share your name and your animal's name as the pastor comes around and offers a blessing.

[*Pet's name*], you were created by God, and you are loved by God. May you and your human family experience joy and companionship together and continue to be a blessing to each other.

Amen

Announcements/Life of the Church

***Sending Song** All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir [last page](#)

***Benediction**

***Response**

And God will raise us up on eagles' wings,
bear us on the breath of dawn
make us to shine like the sun,
and hold us in the palm of God's hand.

Postlude



Announcements

Diaper Donations

We've been asked by Marin Interfaith Council to collect donations of disposable diapers needed by our community. There is a need for sizes 3, 4 and 5. Donation box will be in the narthex under the name badge table.

REMEMBER THE FOOD BANK BARREL

Please continue to bring in non-perishable food items. The last Sunday of the month is a good time to just bring your donation to the barrel. Most needed items are: Coffee, tea bags, cooking oil, boxed milk, peanut butter, canned goods, rice, cereal, mac and cheese mix and canned meat. Sugar and flour are also greatly appreciated.

Donations to the church

Thank you to everyone who supports the church financially. Your generosity allows us to maintain the building, pay our staff, and sustain the ministries that make this community possible. About 20% of every dollar donated goes right back out to support organizations in the wider community.

If you give through the offering plate on Sundays, consider using the envelopes available at the welcome table. This lets us track your contributions and send you a year-end giving statement for tax purposes.



Pastoral Visit

Do you want a visit with Pastor Elisabeth? Call the church office 415-479-2747 or email: elismid@yahoo.com

Prayer Chain

E-mail Julie Dowling: isabella1472@comcast.net if you have a prayer request you would like included in the prayer chain.

Remember your offering: Ways to give

*Paypal- You can make a one-time donation or set up regular monthly payments using a credit card or debit card. Just click the "Donate Now" button on our website or in each weekly email.

*set up automatic donations through your banking institution

*send your check to: FCC San Rafael: 8 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael, CA 94903

We are in need of liturgists, greeters and communion servers. If you are interested contact Amy in the office: office@fccsanrafael.org or call 415-479-2747

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SAN RAFAEL

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Website: www.fccsanrafael.org
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Pastor: Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg
Music Director: Gerry Grosz
Office Manager: Amy Powers

Office hours: Monday and Thursday
10:30 -2 pm

Sunday Servers

October 11

Liturgist: Caryl Hodges
Altar: Lucinda Ray
Greeter: Jackie Dema
Coffee: Caran Cuneo

October 18

Liturgist: David Knopf
Altar: Clara Miller
Greeter: Clara Miller
Coffee: Christopher Weddle

