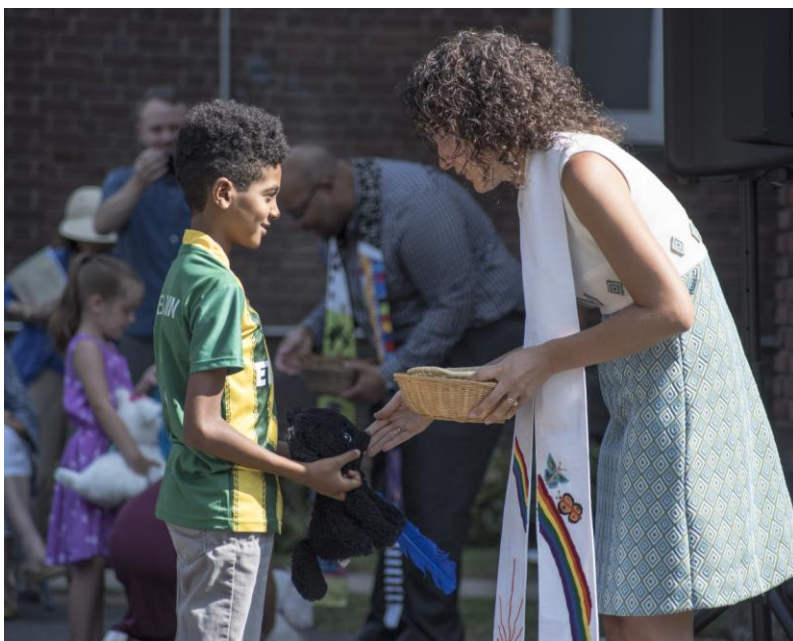


Immanuel Congregational Church Blessing of the Animals



Once again Immanuel Congregational Church celebrated the blessing of animals, this year on the 4th Sunday of August at an outdoor service. It seemed that the celebration was both an invoking of God's blessings and an acknowledgement of the blessings that animals are in the lives of so many.

The service began with a call to worship, hymns, prayers and scripture reading, all related to animals before Tracy

Gormley spoke to the children about not just blessing the animals that are their pets, but also the wild animals whose lives are an important part of nature. She then invited them to bless those animals by dipping a feather into water and sprinkling it as a sign of blessing.

Next Rev. Kari Nicewander told the story of the wolf of Gubbio and St. Francis, who hearing of the great wolf that was terrorizing the village of Gubbio in Italy, came to the village and first convinced the wolf to repent and then the villagers to forgive in order to broker peace in the village.

This was followed by the blessing of the animal pets, mostly dogs, a few cats and more that a few stuffed animals. Each one came forward, and either Rev. Kari or Rev. Isaac Lawson blessed the pets and people.

Before the closing hymn, Lynn Johnson made a plea for environmental stewardship and action to reverse the harm that mankind has done to the earth and all its living beings.

This annual event has become an opportunity to strengthen the love that many feel for the animals in their lives as well as to strengthen our awareness of our connection to the natural world and the environment we all share.

Photos of the event are available at: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/7ygew7k21YSsiHHq6>