

## How about an Animal Service?

Animals play a large part in our lives. You don't have to drive far from anywhere to see cows and sheep that we rely on for food, milk and wool. Many families have pets of lots of different sizes and birds visit our gardens. Animals are all around us.

And they are in the Bible too: In Genesis we read that they were on the earth before we were! And God felt they were important enough to save with Noah in the Ark. They appear in familiar stories like Jonah, in the belly of his big fish; Daniel with the lions; The parable of the Lost Sheep; and at the very end of time they are mentioned as important symbols of God's kingdom: "The lion and the lamb will rest side by side."

For some people their pet's may be their closest friend, for others their livestock may be their means of survival. Animals are a very important part of creation.

So how about an animal service?

Think carefully about where to have it!

A field in the parish may be less courageous than the church building!

But many churches do hold them in their churches.

Some segregation may be necessary (cats and dogs do not find it easy to worship side by side yet!)

Have a bucket and mop ready just in case.

Keep the service to a reasonable length of time (40 min max!)

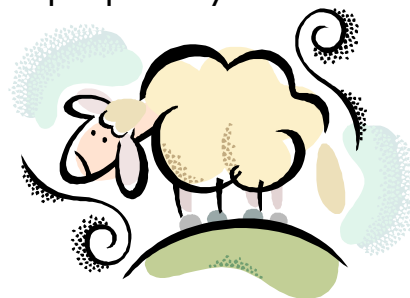
Make sure you tell people about it – some people may come to this who do not usually come to a church service.

Readings:

Genesis – Creation, Noah

Jonah

Lost Sheep: (Luke 15)



Hymns: There are lots of good hymns and songs to give thanks for creation

Order of service: There is an order of service in this mailing

Prayers of Praise:

In the book "A Church for All Ages" there is a suggestion that animal noises are rehearsed just before this section and then introduced with the words – "Cows praise God by saying: ... Moo!" Then all join in with the response: "Let all praise the name of the Lord!" Lots of animals can be used. It works amazingly well!!

Dedication:

Perhaps this is an opportunity for people to dedicate themselves afresh to God, to give thanks for his creation, to promise to care for the environment and together with all creation to praise God.