

I hope that the greatest gift of transformation born of our work for Earth and Environment has been in Creation itself! Because God so loves this world.

Church of the Nativity in Grand Junction has a humane backyard, as designated by the Humane Society of the United States. Food, water, shelter and an absence of chemicals, like pesticides, provide haven for birds and wildlife. Several generations of barn owls have occupied our two nesting boxes, which were installed by the Audubon Society. A volunteer comes out every year to check on the tenants and to provide us with a photo of the latest family. We gave free office space to a local non-profit that partnered with “Dr. Jeff” of the Animal Planet TV network to spay and neuter feral felines. In their first big show they “romantically repaired” 134 cats. One year later they came back and did 230 more. One sweet, innocent little kitty can have as many as five litters per year of – conservatively – 20 kittens who can over-run habitats, spread disease, or be inhumanely dispatched by those who find them annoying.

Tomorrow a team of vets and vet techs will provide low-cost vaccinations for dogs and cats at our annual Animal Care Fair, now in its fifth year. The event doesn’t begin until 11:00am but people start lining up with their animals at about 8:00. More than 30 animal advocacy groups will be onsite to promote their work, and seven mini seminars will be held in our sanctuary on such topics as backyard beekeeping and the remarkable healing power of horses.

And the really amazing thing about this is that nobody planned it. Nobody designed it. It just happened. It happened when we started doing one small thing out of the treasure of our Anglican heritage – the Blessing of the Animals. We offer a blessing service monthly, and have, since 2012. Most of the people who come never set foot in a church otherwise except for weddings and funerals. But in the Human-animal bond, they experience God’s love. There are a those, however, who are regulars for our monthly “Paws for a Blessing” service. It is their church home.

After that humble start, it was just a matter of saying “yes” to what followed. Can we have a memorial service twice a year for people to mourn their lost pets? Yes. Can we inter animal ashes out back and mark the graves with a pretty stone? Yes. Can we offer monthly lectures featuring local experts on Earth and Environment? Yes. This frame of mind is profoundly biblical. St. Paul says that in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, every one of God’s promises is a “yes.” When we just say “yes,” we open doors for God. (2 Corinthians 1:19)

There are two other measures of transformation to detail. One is the erasing of our church walls. People who aren’t members, aren’t Episcopalians and may or may not even be Christians flow in and out of our building. They do the work of caring for Creation. With us. They love what God loves so we are brothers and sisters regardless of our individual religious pedigrees.

The other transformation has been within us – the people of Nativity. Without even knowing it, we held a narrow concept of what God loves. It isn’t just Humans, but plants, animals, water, soil, sea and sky. God loves all that God has made. Yes, even mosquitos. Because of this Caring for Creation ministry, our ability to love has expanded. God’s love is so vast that not even one sparrow will fall to the ground apart from our Father and to live, as a parish, in that love is transformative! (Matthew 10:29)