

Creation: A Relationship Of Respect

Rev. Patrick Stephens

*First Week of Lent
Friday March 11*

Scripture

Genesis 1:24-26

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. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

Reflection

St. Francis of Assisi is one of the most famous human friends of nature. Raised with extreme wealth, as a young man, Francis was moved to voluntarily embrace a life of poverty, charity and preaching. Famous for his devotion to Christ and his skills in ministry, Francis became an important leader in the monastic movement of the late middle ages.

Francis' environmental message, preached to a 13th-century audience, holds relevance today. He believed that the world is created by God and is good. He also preached that the earth is in need of redemption because of human sin. He demonstrated his passion for nature in his poetry.

He was also known as a friend of animals. He was said to preach to birds, befriend dogs, and treasure a woolen cloak which was made by members of a convent with wool from his favourite sheep.

I can relate to Francis' love of animals. I have a pet dog and I feel blessed that she shares a home and a life with me and my family. When I provide and care for her, I am reminded of the love God has for creation and the redeeming care to which we are called. The relationship between people and domestic animals is really important because it helps us understand the call to care for all of God's creatures and creation itself.

Prayer

*The animals of God's creation inhabit the skies,
the earth and the sea.*

*They share in the fortunes of human existence
and have a part in human life.*

*God, who confers gifts on all living things,
has often used the service of animals
or made them reminders of salvation ...*

We, therefore, invoke God's blessing on these animals.

*As we do so, let us praise the Creator
and thank God for setting us as stewards
over all the creatures of the earth.*

*"Occasional Services: A Service for the Blessing of Animals," The United Methodist Church Book of
Worship*

How goats support community health workers

In the Neno District of Malawi there are no paved roads servicing the district hospitals, making it a great challenge for its 160,000 people to access healthcare. The district is one of the poorest and most rural, underdeveloped areas of the country.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are on the front-line of healthcare in the district. They live in the communities in which they work and reduce the need of vulnerable patients to travel. CHWs are trusted in their communities and ensure patients are receiving necessary care, treatment and even provide psychosocial support.

CHWs spend significant time each week attending to the health needs of their assigned households, conducting home visits, monitoring treatment, screening patients and even accompanying them to distant health centres.

As vital community members it's imperative CHWs have a sufficient livelihood to stay motivated and able to complete their work. Partners In Health (PIH) Malawi, locally known as Abwenzi Pa Za Umoyo (APZU), runs the CHW program in the district. CHWs fall into two categories: senior CHWs, who receive a monthly stipend of \$34 and junior CHWs who receive \$23. Considering the amount of work they have been assigned and their duties as household heads, these stipends are inadequate.

Realizing the needs of CHWs in Neno District, PWRDF partnered with APZU to improve livelihoods by providing CHWs with breeding goats. These goats will provide CHWs with another income source, additional food security and open up more time for them to fully participate in health delivery for the community.

CHWs will receive training and support from APZU in collaboration with the Malawi Ministry of Agriculture to ensure the goats thrive and families receive the full benefits of owning them.

In the first year of the project, 270 CHWs will receive goats and over the course of the three-year project, as the goats breed, they will be distributed to all 1,227 CHWs across the district.

This project will not only benefit the CHWs and their families, but the whole community. When CHWs worry less about their livelihoods they can spend more time ensuring the entire community has access to safe and proper healthcare.

Read the whole story on our website at

<https://pwrdf.org/pwrdf-supports-goat-program-for-community-health-workers-in-malawi/>