

The Guide

A Newsletter of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

October 2021



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[October Calendar and Rota](#)



One of the topics priests are often asked about but are rarely able to address on Sunday mornings is the fate of one's dead pets: "Do animals have souls?" or "Do all dogs go to heaven?" or "Will I see Fluffy again after I die?" Outside of when someone's pet dies, such questions most frequently come up at the beginning of October, when some churches offer pet blessings because October 4 is the Feast of St. Francis (who among other things is known as the Patron Saint of Animals). There is no perfectly correct answer to such questions, but since it is the season, I wanted to use this month's newsletter to offer some

brief thoughts on the subject.

The general assumption Christians make is that humans have souls but whether non-humans do is up for debate (although the definition of humanity has also changed: Christians didn't always accept that the black-skinned inhabitants of Africa and their descendants are human). Sometimes high intelligence is taken as a sign that a creature has a soul, sometimes animation (in the sense of being able to move under one's own voluntary power), sometimes merely being alive. If those are true, then, respectively, some exceptional animals (like apes or dolphins), all animals, or all living things (including plants) have souls. Alternatively, animals might not have individual souls at all but are instead ensouled insofar as God made the entirety of creation with a soul.

How we interpret Genesis 1:28 is also relevant here. Some read humankind's "dominion" over creation to mean that the world was made solely for our benefit, and it would be as absurd to think that animals have souls like ours as to imagine that the chair in our office has a soul. Others think that "dominion" indicates stewardship, caring for the world and maintaining it for God's future use and not only our own present purposes, in which case animals are dependent on our care and might be thought of as more like children than furniture.

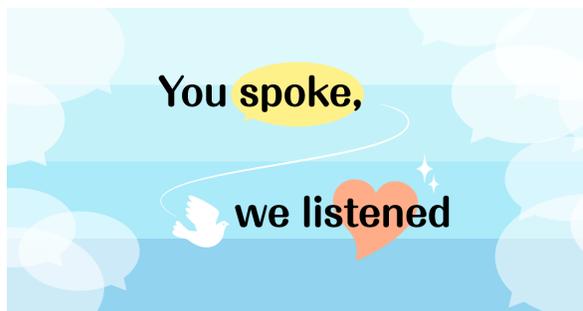
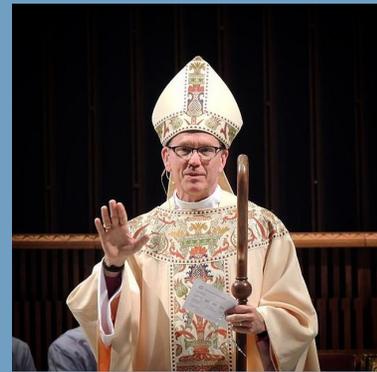
Our answers about animals further depend on what we expect of the heavenly afterlife. Some chapters of Scripture point toward a separate state of bliss to which individual souls are invited (Revelation 7, Matthew 25, or the popular image of happy souls floating in the clouds), while others look forward to the new creation of everything

(Isaiah 65, Romans 8, Revelation 21). The soul might need to be perfect before entering heaven (when judged as a sheep or a goat) or might be perfected by the process of entering heaven (as in the concept of Purgatory). Luke 20:35 also leaves us uncertain as to how much continuity there actually is between our earthly lives and our heavenly existence, whether much of our individual awareness persists after death. All of which is to say that, if animals do have souls, it's possible that only the good ones get into heaven, and if animals don't have souls, they still might be in heaven because the whole creation is redeemed, not just individual humans (for example, Isaiah 43:20 has the wild animals honoring God as part of the re-creation in which the exiles return).

Whatever conclusions you draw, St. Stephen's is offering a Blessing of the Animals in conjunction with Messiah Lutheran on October 10. Whether we will see Fluffy after we die or not, the love shared between humans and their pets is another manifestation of God's love for creation, and as such is something the church should bless and celebrate. So you are invited to bring your dogs, cats, hamsters, snakes, horses, etc. to St. Stephen's Prayer Garden (accessed through the breezeway doors) at 4:00 pm on Sunday, October 10, for a brief prayer service and blessing.

Bishop's Visit

On October 3, Bishop Scott Barker will preach and celebrate at our 10:00 am service; he and Canon Liz Easton will also join us for fellowship afterward. You are encouraged to join us for this opportunity to hear from and speak to the leadership of our Diocese of Nebraska.



Listening Sessions

In the latter part of September, Fr. John and the Vestry held a trio of Listening Sessions to hear from members of St. Stephen's. Among the

things you like about the parish are our Episcopal identity and worship, our beautiful and historic building, and the fellowship of this community. The low attendance, particularly the absence of children and teenagers, and lack of live music were especially noted as things you hoped to change, along with missing activities that were offered in the past. Some envisioned that in five years the church will have returned to the pre-pandemic status quo, while others imagined that we would be sharing clergy and other resources with another church. Over the next couple of months, the Vestry and Finance Committee will consider how those responses might shape our vision and Budget for the next year; please keep both

Annual Council



The Annual Council of the Diocese of Nebraska will be in Lincoln October 21-23, with Kaeleigh Post serving as St. Stephen's Delegate thereto; we will be elected new members to Diocesan governing boards, approving a Budget for 2022, and generally enjoying the company of other Nebraska Episcopalians after holding Council over Zoom in 2020. Please keep the Council in your prayers that weekend.

Youth News

Corn Hole Tournament Fundraiser!!

Grab a friend and sign up today
for a fun event!

Here are the details:

Date: October 17th

Time: Starts at 1 p.m.

Place: Northwest High School

Cost: \$25 per team

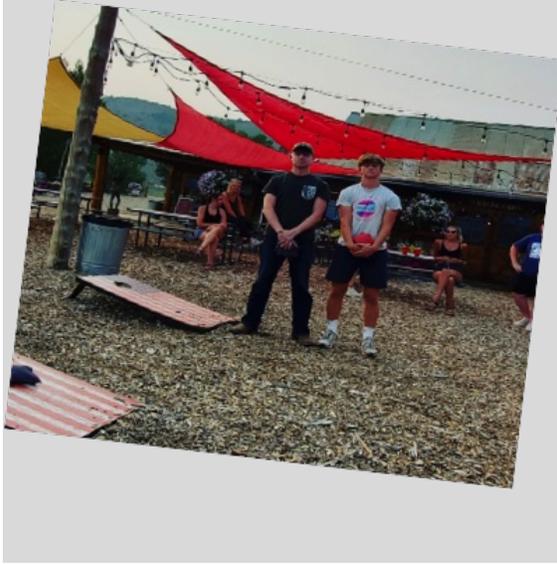
First and second places will be paid out. Only 32 spots, so register today! You can register by emailing [Courtney](#), stop into your church office or drop your registration into the mail. All registrations need to be paid before the games begin. Hope to see you all there to cheer on your Corn

Hole champs or to become the champs!

Next Summer Messiah and St. Stephen's youth will be teaming up with Wolbach's Lutheran Church youth group to spread the light of Christ. The three churches will be planning our next mission trip.

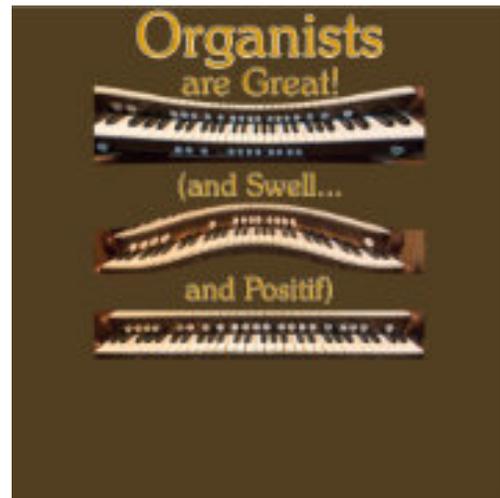
October 10th 2021 the three of us will be getting together to get to know each other and start planning. Details will be emailed out by September 27th.

Blessings,
Courtney



Music Update

Heretofore, our search for candidates to play organ or piano for Sunday services has been unsuccessful, with neither the informal network of musicians in Grand Island nor the schools in the region yielding any leads. If you know an organist or pianist who might be looking for a Sunday morning gig, please ask them to contact St. Stephen's or give us their contact information.



Resources for Nebraska Episcopalians

[Here](#) is a list of links that might be of interest to members of St. Stephen's. Included are places to sign up for emails of national Episcopal news and Diocesan events, as well as churchwide and Diocesan ministries serving those in need.

Make a Call, Send a Card, Say a Prayer

On Our Prayer Lists

Those in need of healing or for other concerns: Robin, Marilyn, Cindy, Rebekah, Jerry, Cody, Reece, Jade, Keith, Elaine, Brendan, Sue, Carrie, Arland, Cindy, Jok, Randy, Dennis, Russell, Frances, Ryan, Pat, Dorothy, Sue, Don, Sue and Sam

Those serving in the military: Tim

Homebound: Virginia, Marla, Mickey and Vera

October Birthdays

Xavier Briseno - Oct. 1
Terry Babcock - Oct. 2
Jan Moore - Oct. 4
Fred Rauch - Oct. 6
Stacia Dreier - Oct. 8
Spencer Goodman - Oct. 8
Austin Hackel - Oct. 9
Ethan Briseno - Oct. 14
Toree Wieland - Oct. 14
Ann Thorndike - Oct. 17
Raegen Hillman - Oct. 23
Bob Condry - Oct. 24
Rich Webb - Oct. 25
Nate Wieland - Oct. 27
John Albers - Oct. 28

Prayer Chain requests can be e-mailed to Donna at dowesm@yahoo.com

The prayer lists are printed in the bulletin weekly and monthly in The Guide.

Sue Clement - Oct. 28

October Anniversaries

Don & Stacia Dreier - Oct. 8
Don & Becky Young - Oct. 8
Mick & Sandy Fowler - Oct. 21

If you would like to add a name (or remove a name) from the prayer list or submit birthdays and anniversaries, please call the church office at 308-382-4961 or e-mail Lynne.

How Can YOU Connect with St. Stephen's?

Worship Services

Holy Eucharist on Sundays at 10 a.m.
Holy Eucharist on Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

Christian Education

Tuesday morning study, 9:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall
Tuesday evening Four Quartets study, 6:00 p.m. over Zoom

Church Office Hours

Monday - Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Priest-in-Charge

Fr. John can be reached at johndavidadams85@gmail.com or 571-232-1294.
Please email, call, or text him if you are sick, having surgery, or are otherwise in need of prayer or conversation.

St. Stephen's Leadership and Staff

Priest-in-Charge

Fr. John Adams
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