



The Abundant Life Garden Project: A Program for the Children of the Episcopal Church

Blessing of the Animals

A Special St. Francis Day Edition

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Artwork Courtesy of The Rev. Jay Sidebotham for Episcopal Relief & Development

Introduction

This special edition of **The Abundant Life Garden Project** is available to you for free download to introduce children, their parents, and others in your faith community to the work of Episcopal Relief & Development.

How to Use These Materials

These materials may be used for Blessing of the Animals services, children's chapel, Sunday school, school chapel services or other worship services and Christian formation programs. Materials may be printed and used with little advance preparation. We supply you with a litany, a homily accompanied by photographs, discussion questions, and child-appropriate prayers. You may also show these materials on a laptop, large screen or active board.

Additional Resources

Additional children, youth and adult curricula resources are available at our website at www.er-d.org/formation. The full Abundant Life Garden Project may be used for Vacation Bible School, Sunday morning programs, weekday night programs, camps and special events. ActOut, our youth program, may be used for retreats, camps and even Sunday morning or weeknight programs.

Share Your Blessings

We invite you to share in our ministry of healing a hurting world by giving the gift of animals to others in need around the world. These Gifts for Life – cows, pigs, goats, bees and chickens – empower the people we serve, enabling them to produce food for their families and sell surplus produce to others. An order form for these gifts is found at the end of this guide.

Gather in the Lord's Name

(Leader's prayers are **boldface**; children and others' lines are in *italics*.)

Leader: **The Lord be with you!**

Children and helpers: *And also with you!*

Leader: **We thank you, Lord, for the gift of your creation. We thank you for plants, for water, for soil and seeds, for rocks and air, and for all animals. We thank you for all these gifts and ask you to help us be good and wise caretakers of this beautiful earth. In Christ's name, Amen.**

Leader: **Now, I will read several prayers about animals. Since all kinds of animals are important gifts in the cycle of life, please respond to each of these prayers with, "We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals."**

(The leader might ask children to practice saying, "We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals," before continuing.)

Litany of Thanks for Animals in the Life Cycle of Earth

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals in our lives. We thank you for animals that comfort us, delight us and give us companionship. We thank you for dogs and cats, birds and hamsters, guinea pigs and fish.

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals.

We also thank you, Lord, for animals that give us wool and feathers to keep us warm. We thank you for animals that give us milk, cheese and eggs to help us grow and to keep us healthy. We thank you for horses, donkeys and oxen that work hard on farms around the world.

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals.

We thank you, Lord, for animals that eat plants and fertilize the soil, making it richer and more fertile for new growth and new life. We thank you, Lord, for the gift of insects, and especially bees, to pollinate fruit and vegetable plants for us to eat and flowers to give us joy.

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals.

We thank you, Lord, for being our Good Shepherd, for seeking us when we are lost, for showing us water to quench our thirst, and for leading us to green pastures. Help us to share our blessings with others and to help others have clean water and green pastures to feed and nourish their families, too.

In Christ's name, Amen.

Proclaim and Respond to the Word of God

Leader: Listen to the words of Jesus...

“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” —Matthew 25:40



Today is a day of serving those we might consider “the least” of the kingdom of God. We gather on this day to honor St. Francis of Assisi, a saint who listened to God, who took care of creation, and who ministered to animals.

St. Francis grew up in a wealthy household, and as a young man, he decided to give up all his riches – even his nice clothes – to serve God and others. He treated all animals with respect and, it is said, once preached to a flock of birds.



Animals are indeed important in our lives. We live with them. We play with them. They give us comfort and joy. But animals also help to nourish us. On this day, we honor both our pets and those animals who give us food, work on our farms, and are part of the cycle of life on our earth.

We also look today to the example of Francis of Assisi in serving and giving to others. As the son of a wealthy merchant in Assisi, in Italy, Francis could have lived a life of great pleasure. Instead, he lived a life of great service and great sharing.



Eight hundred years later, we are asked to share, just as Francis of Assisi was asked to share and serve. We are all asked to be the hands and feet of Christ whenever we see “the least” of our human family in hunger or in thirst.

In many countries of the world, animals are an important part of people's lives. Animals pull plows, provide eggs and milk, pollinate plants and fertilize soil. Animals are truly a gift and a vital part of creation.



As we honor our own animals this day, we also honor the role of animals in feeding the hungry, all over the world. We pray to seek out people in need, wherever they might be. We pray to serve them with our gifts, our blessings and ourselves.

Questions for Discussion

- How have animals blessed us in our own lives?
- How might we share the joy and comfort we receive with others?
- Where do we see “the least” of our human family?
- How might we follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi in thought, word and deed?



Prayers for the People, Prayers for the Passing of the Peace

Leader: **Now, we will pray to seek and serve others through the gifts and abundance we enjoy. Please respond to each of these prayers with the words, “We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.”**

(The leader might ask children to practice saying, “We pray to share your peace, dear Lord,” before continuing.)

The Lord be with you!

Children and helpers: *And also with you!*

Help us to remember the example of Francis of Assisi, and help us to remember that we are the hands and feet of Christ.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

Help us to bring healing to this hurting world. Help us to act as Jesus to those in need.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

Help us to appreciate our many blessings. Help us to share what we have with others.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

Help us especially to share your hope, your care of each and every person in this world, and your Kingdom of Heaven, so that all will have abundant life in you.

We pray to share your peace, dear Lord.

We also pray for those in need in our own community. You may name them or pray for them silently, if you wish.

(Please pause so that children and leaders may freely make their own intercessions.)

We thank you, Lord, for the gift of animals in our world. We thank you for the role of animals in serving as our companions, in fertilizing our soil, in pollinating our plants and in providing food and drink for us. We pray for those who raise animals to support themselves and their families, and we pray to help give others gifts for life.

In Christ’s name, *Amen*.

Passing the Peace, Passing Our Gifts

The peace of the Lord be always with you!

And also with you!

(Children should greet each other and their leaders with a handshake or other appropriate gesture.)

One or more songs might be sung. These might include:

- For small children, “The Lord, the Lord, the Lord is my shepherd (#102 in *My Heart Sings Out*, ed. Fiona Vidal-White)
- For older children, “A new commandment” (#92 in *My Heart Sings Out*, ed. Fiona Vidal-White)

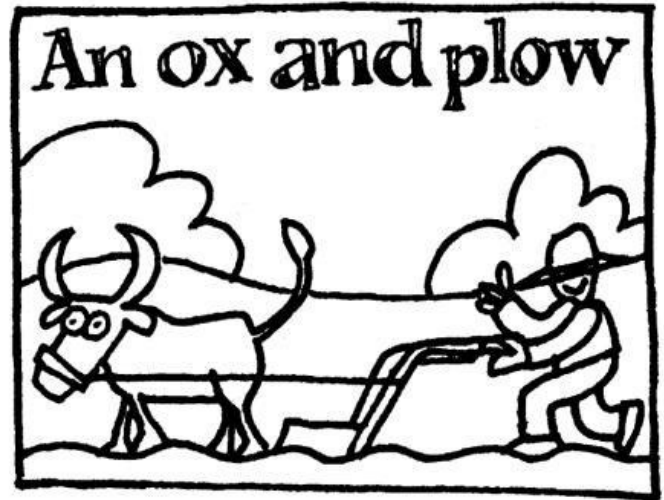
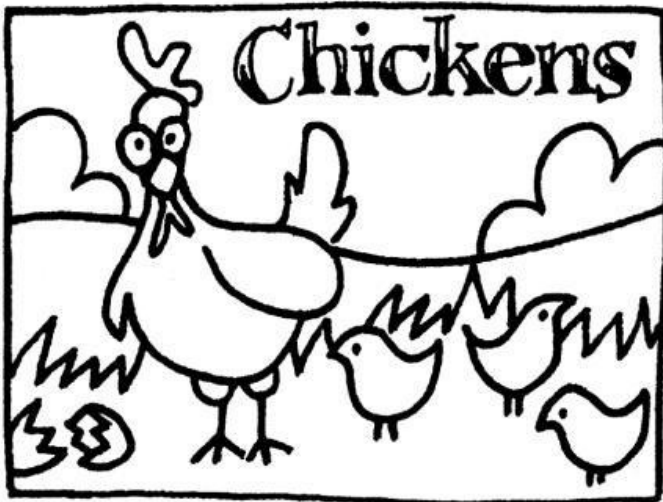
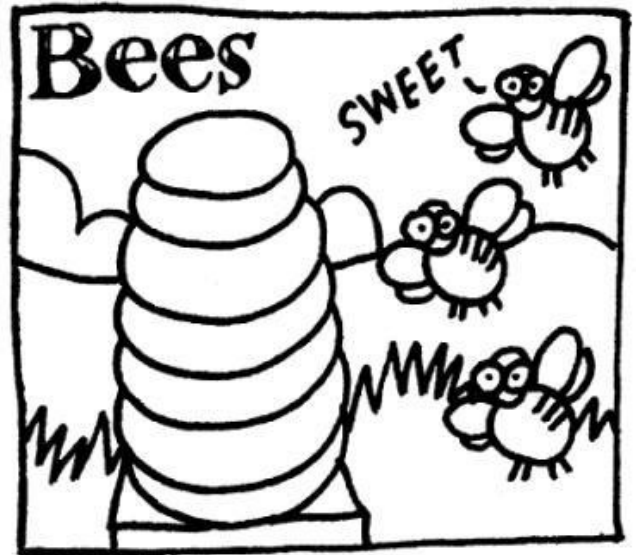
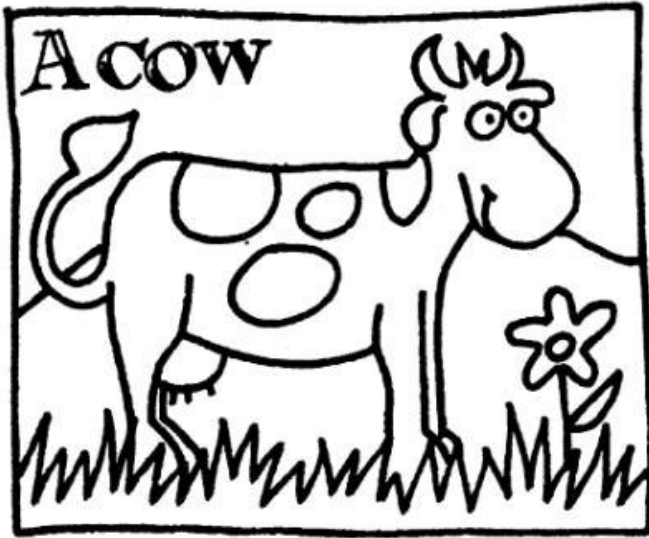
Offertory

(If time allows, children might now spend time thinking about, making or planning a response to the Scripture, prayers and story presented. Below are several possible responses.)

- Use the Page 11 of this module as a coloring sheet for young children to color and take home to their parents.
- Draw a picture of how God gives us life through the gift of animals.
- Draw pictures to go with the Litany of Thanks for the Gift of Animals; display them in your church, school or camp
- Visit a farm and learn about the work of real farmers who tend dairy cattle, goats, or sheep. Ask questions about the amount of work involved in raising animals that give us milk or wool. Find out how real farmers and farm workers live and the challenges they face.
- Celebrate and honor the animals in your life by giving the gift of farm animals to others through the Gifts for Life catalog
- Plan and hold a fundraiser to give the gift of animals to those in need. A gift of only \$35 will buy a duck or goose for a family in need. A gift of \$80 will buy a goat, and a gift of \$100 will purchase a pig for a family to raise.

(Children might share their pictures, ideas or other gifts by placing them on the altar as they return to the celebration of Holy Eucharist with their families.)

This page may be used as a coloring sheet for young children. Please feel free to make copies for children to color and take home to their families.



Gifts for Life:

The Abundant Life Garden Project Order Form

Purchasing gifts from *Gifts for Life* enables you to support Christ's children in need around the world in starting or sustaining a family garden or farm.

Order gifts in 3 easy steps...

1. Enter Your Name and Address

Donor Name _____

Church or Organization and City (if applicable) _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

2. Choose a Method of Payment

Please send one payment for your entire order. Enclose your payment with this order form and send to - Episcopal Relief & Development, PO Box 7058, Merrifield, VA 22116-7058.

Please make all checks and money orders payable to Episcopal Relief & Development.

Check Enclosed Money Order

Credit/Debit Card:

VISA MasterCard Amex Discover

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Phone Number (required for credit card orders) _____
















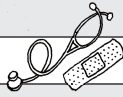
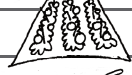




If you would like additional copies of the *Gifts for Life* Catalog to share with friends and family, please call 1.800.334.7626, ext. 5129.

Thank you for your order!

Your donations go directly to their stated use unless an item is overfunded, in which case funds will be allocated to an area of similar need.

Episcopal Relief & Development is committed to using all donations effectively and appropriately to serve and empower vulnerable people around the world. The product descriptions in this catalog represent gift items related to Episcopal Relief & Development's programs that alleviate hunger, promote health and fight disease, provide economic opportunities and rebuild communities after disasters. Actual gifts may vary depending on local need as determined by the communities and Episcopal Relief & Development program directors. All donations are used to help children and families in need worldwide.

3. Select Your Gifts

Item #	Gift Description	Price	Qty	Total
SAMPLE ORDER				
FS0901	Flock of Chickens (sample only)	\$25	2	\$50
ANIMALS AND AGRICULTURE				
FS1601	Bees and Honey - Equipment and Training 	\$55		
FS2102	Cow (per share) 	\$65		
FS2101	Cow 	\$630		
FS2301	Ducks and Geese 	\$35		
FS0901	Flock of Chickens (per share) 	\$25		
FS0902	Flock of Chickens (per flock) 	\$135		
FS0102	Goat 	\$80		
FS2103	HIGH-IMPACT: Duo of Dairy 	\$710		
FS2201	HIGH-IMPACT: Ox and Plow 	\$750		
FS8201	HIGH-IMPACT: Animal Farm (cow, goat, ox and plow)	\$1,460		
FS1001	Pig (per share) 	\$20		
FS1002	Pig 	\$100		
FS1201	Drought-Resistant Seeds and Tools (per share) 	\$45		
FS1202	Drought-Resistant Seeds and Tools (per family)	\$180		
BASICS FOR LIFE				
PH9131	HIGH-IMPACT: Share of One Well 	\$750		
PH9132	HIGH-IMPACT: Build a Well for a Village	\$5,000		
PH0301	Clean Water (per person) 	\$35		
PH1101	Providing Food to the Littlest Scholars 	\$15		
PH0601	Roving Health Clinics (per person)	\$15		
PH1001	Vitamins and Medicine 	\$65		
GREEN GIFTS				
FS2403	Community Garden - Individual Share	\$35		
FS2402	Community Garden - Family Share 	\$175		
FS9151	HIGH-IMPACT: Community Garden	\$9,000		
PH0701	Smokeless Stove 	\$175		
FS2401	Fruit Trees (per share) 	\$35		
FS2501	Solar Energy System (family) 	\$200		
FS2502	Solar Energy System (school or clinic)	\$1,000		
CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES				
FS9131	HIGH-IMPACT: Micro-Credit Loans for Small Businesses 	\$550		
FS1801	Micro-Credit Loans for Women	\$200		
I would also like to add a donation to help Episcopal Relief & Development's work around the world.		\$		
TOTAL AMOUNT		\$		

