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ALERT

Tucson-area church will bless furry family members

Cassandra Scott For the Arizona Daily Star

Oct 7, 2022



Rev. Stuart Salvatierra blessing dogs at the Blessing of the Animals service on Oct. 3, 2021, at St. Mark's United Methodist Church.

Ana Beltran, Arizona Daily Star

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St. Mark's United Methodist Church is inviting the community to bring their furry animals and feathered friends to the northwest side church on Sunday, Oct. 9, for St. Mark's annual blessing of the animals.

"The pastors will go around to all the pets and do a blessing for each individual pet," said St. Mark's UMC Animal Ministry Leader Jan Walker.

The blessing is scheduled to start at 3 p.m. and will be held outside in the labyrinth, 1431 W. Magee Road.

Walker says all types of animals — big and small, young and old — are welcome to come to the event, which is sponsored by the Animal Ministry of St. Mark's Church.

"People can bring any kind of pet," Walker said. "We've had snakes, different kinds of reptiles, guinea pigs, and dogs and cats, of course."

Because the church anticipates seeing any and all types of animals, St. Mark's requires every animal to be on a leash or in a carrier or crate for the safety of those attending.

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This will mark St. Mark's Church's 11th year of welcoming pets for the blessing ceremony.

"At St. Marks, we believe that animals have become significant sources of affection for people," Walker said, adding that pet owners see the blessing as a way to honor their pets.

St. Mark's is expecting around 30 to 40 pet owners to show up with their animals. Participants do not have to be church members.

"We encourage all people to come and get to know St. Mark's and get their animals blessed," Walker said.

For more information, visit St. Mark's Facebook page at **facebook.com/StMarksTucson**

Cassandra Scott is a University of Arizona journalism student apprenticing with the Arizona Daily Star.