

Pastor's Point

At least once a day, if it's pretty, I look out my office windows to see a neighbor or two using our green space. Sometimes it's one or two folks sharing a meal or snack mid-day. Sometimes it's a few kids tossing a football or kicking around their soccer ball. I've seen batting practice and games of tag. Last Sunday afternoon it was a couple moms and their toddlers who enjoyed the room to run. Often, I'll see a dog and their human hanging out on the grass or practicing their manners — sit! Stay! Roll over! Shake! And of course, Charlie has done his share of zoomies out there, blessing the bush and then running like the Gingerbread Man. And I can't help but do some day-dreaming about how that green space can be such a gift to our community.

I think about how Episcopal and Lutheran church often do a Blessing of the Animals as a celebration of the St. Francis feast day. And to be sure, lots of other churches have picked up the habit. And I imagine a Saturday festival to benefit McLean County animal shelters and rescues. I see organizations setting up tents to distribute information and build relationships. Rescues showing off their adoptable animals, local groomers and pet stores offering up their skills and wares. Maybe a bakery or two with gourmet pet treats and an obedience training demonstration at 10am and 2pm. I see bone-shaped cookies for the kids and story time featuring picture books about animals of all kinds. And a line of dogs, kittens, fish, and guinea pigs waiting to be blessed. And food trucks in the parking lot. Don't forget the food trucks.

I see one of those big blow-up movie screens sitting out there on a summer evening, waiting for the sun to set so that the movie can start. I can smell the hot dogs sizzling on a grill someone borrowed and the popcorn with melting butter. I can see families of all kinds and shapes and ages sitting on blankets or in camp chairs and kids with glow-sticks running around.

I imagine a makeshift stage at one end and a portable sound system and an open-mike night for musicians and poets (with suitable boundaries for content, of course.) I see food trucks and folks in camp chairs grouped for a trivia tournament made up of teams of diverse folks all looking for a sober way to enjoy a Friday night.

And I imagine the Holy Ground that emerges as we build friendships that come from sharing the welcome and hospitality of God in Christ. I see the sacred connections made and partnerships built over food and fun. I imagine the hygiene kits for homeless folk assembled from the donations given and the fellowship enjoyed over excess garden produce shared. I imagine early morning coffee klatches and yoga classes. Exercise boot camps and school supply drives.

I imagine living as the Body of Christ, staffing a mission post dedicated to hospitality. And I am overwhelmed at all of the possibilities God puts in front of us everyday. Even in the age of COVID, opportunities to share God's love through deep, divine welcome abound. The ability to build true, supportive community as a cornerstone of ministry exists within us all and I pray everyday that we are willing to make ourselves vulnerable enough to do so.

Blessings on Your Dreams,

Pastor Heather