

Animal Welfare



The plight of animals is a legitimate concern for the Anglican Church and goes hand in hand with care for creation, to which the Church is committed. There is now a growing number of people who will fight for the animals until they achieve the changes to give animals a decent life.

This Diocese accepted two motions, both from Fr Graeme Lawrence, formerly Dean of Newcastle. The first, at the 2004 Synod, called upon the Diocese to seek ways to challenge the Australian community about the care and welfare of animals and requested the Social Responsibilities Committee to consider ways in which the Church might be assisted to a better understanding of its role and responsibilities in the care of animals. The second motion, at the 2008 Synod, specifically addressed the battery cage issue and the suffering caused to laying hens. The motion encouraged the Parishes and Diocesan entities to follow the lead of others in the community to purchase only free-range eggs for Parish and Diocesan catering events.

Support from the Rev'd Professor Andrew Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics

Congratulations to the Bishop and the Diocese. It was Archbishop Robert Runcie who said that in the light of the "interdependence of creation", exclusive preoccupation with human welfare is increasingly parochial. So glad that the Newcastle Diocese is pioneering attempts to put animal welfare on the Christian agenda.

*The Revd Professor Andrew Linzey
Director, Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics*

The inspirational and insightful words of many famous people encourage us to do all we can for those who have no voice to change the horror of their lives. Here is a small selection.

By **Meister Eckhart**, the thirteenth century Dominican mystic:

"Apprehend God in all things,
For God is in all things.
Every single creature is full of God
And is a book about God.
Every creature is a word of God.
If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature
Even a caterpillar –
I would never have to prepare a sermon.
So full of God
Is every creature."

St Francis of Assisi 1181-1226 Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission – to be of service to them whenever they require it.

The Rt. Rev'd Austin Baker, Bishop of Salisbury, 1982-93, is a Patron of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals. It is in the battery shed that we find the parallel with Auschwitz.... To shut your mind, heart and imagination to the sufferings of others is to begin slowly, but inexorably, to die. Those Christians who close their minds and hearts to the cause of animal welfare, and the evils it seeks to combat, are ignoring the fundamental spiritual teachings of Christ himself.

The Rev'd Professor Andrew Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. What rational grounds have we for supposing that animal suffering is not as important for the animals as human suffering is for humans?

Cardinal Newman 1801-90 Now what is it that moves our very heart, and sickens us so much as the cruelty shown to poor brutes? I suppose this: that they have done us no harm: next, that they have no power whatsoever of resistance; it is the cowardice and tyranny of which they are the victims which makes their sufferings so especially touching There is something so very dreadful, so Satanic, in tormenting those who have never harmed us, and who cannot defend themselves, who are utterly in our power.

Albert Schweitzer Compassion, in which all ethics must take root, can only attain its full breadth and depth if it embraces all living creatures and does not limit itself to humankind.

George Bernard Shaw The biggest threat to animals is not that we hate them, but that we are indifferent. That's the essence of inhumanity.

Professor Peter Singer All the arguments to prove man's superiority cannot shatter this hard fact: in suffering, animals are our equals.

Jane Goodall, D.B.E. Only when we understand, can we care.
Only when we care, can we help.
Only when we help, shall they be saved.

Links

Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals The mission of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals is to promote within the Anglican Church and wider human community thankful awareness of God's animal creation and practical and prayerful concern for its well being.

Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics The Director, the Rev'd Professor Andrew Linzey describes the centre as a theological and ethical think tank on animals.

RSPCA Aims to prevent cruelty to animals by actively promoting their care and protection.

Animals Australia The peak body for 40 animal-related organisations in Australia.

Voiceless Voiceless will work to promote respect and compassion for animals, to increase awareness of the conditions in which they live and to take action to protect animals from suffering. Voiceless is particularly active in education of the young, in encouraging ethical corporate practices and is a leader in promoting animal law.

Compassion in World Farming The world's foremost organisation working to improve the lives of farm animals. This site gives an overview of their work plus trends and developments in Europe and of international significance. In particular, the news archive will allow you to focus on Australian concerns.

World Society for the Protection of Animals WSPA exists for the sole purpose of raising the standards of animal welfare throughout the world. WSPA works in co-operation with over 600 member organisations in more than 135 countries.

Quaker Concern for Animals in Britain has had an unbroken link with The Religious Society of Friends since 1891. We seek to extend our testimony to peace and justice to include our fellow species, God's creatures too.

We value our work with likeminded people of all faiths and none, worldwide.

Events

Thanksgiving for Creation and the Blessing of the Animals

On 25th September, 2011, our annual service was held in Christ Church Cathedral and was greatly enjoyed and appreciated by all who attended. Thanks are extended to the Dean and Cathedral staff. Fr Mark Watson preached and his sermon is on the previous Social Justice page.

In the UK on Animal Welfare Sunday (2nd October 2011), The Rev'd Professor Andrew Linzey, Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, preached in Westminster Abbey. His sermon is on the previous Social Justice page.

Olga Parkes was in the UK for Animal Welfare Sunday and was invited to give the sermon at St Mary the Virgin Anglican Church, West Derby, Liverpool. This text is included on the previous Social Justice page.

Animals and Religion Programs

The worldwide thrust to lessen animal suffering is gathering momentum. Part of this movement is now the involvement of faith communities. Because people of faith have been at the forefront of social change for centuries, their support, it is hoped, will increasingly influence thinking, both within their own faith and in the wider community. To this end Best Friends Animal Society and the Humane Society of the United States have developed Animals and Religion programs.

The Humane Society of the United States

HSUS seeks a humane and sustainable world for all animals, and is calling on all people of faith, as a reflection of compassion and mercy, to take a stand for animals. HSUS is concerned for all animals and their wide-ranging website contains a wealth of information. The organisation produces a monthly online newsletter – The Humane Steward – and you can sign up to receive it. Visit www.hsus.org/religion

Best Friends Animal Society

The US organisation Best Friends Animal Society has given sanctuary to abandoned and homeless animals for over twenty years. Dedicated to reducing the number of unwanted animals, it now supports numerous grassroots organisations in the States and worldwide. An indication of their success is that in the early 90s 17 million animals (mostly cats and dogs) were destroyed in the US. That figure is now approximately five million. To further their aim – "A better world through kindness to animals" – Best Friends has now reached out to faith communities, and after a retreat for religious leaders of over 20

faith traditions, "A Religious Proclamation for Animal Compassion" was unveiled in Washington, DC on 7th November, 2007. To read the Proclamation, which you can sign on line, and to learn how Best Friends initiatives are reaching into a number of religious communities, visit www.network.bestfriends.org/religion

News Items

Live Exports

Due to mounting concern within Australia and internationally about the suffering and cruelty to sheep and cattle exported live from Australia, particularly to the Middle East and Indonesia, a global coalition has been formed, led by the World Society for the Protection of Animals. Among the many groups supporting the campaign, the aim of which is to slaughter on home soil and export only chilled and frozen meat, are Compassion in World Farming, Animals Australia and RSPCA Australia. To learn more visit humanechain@wspa.org.au and www.animalsaustralia.org.

Help with the cost of spay/neutering of pets

Hunter Animal Watch provides financial help to pensioners and the unemployed for pet desexing. 35 veterinary practices in the Lower Hunter participate in this program. If this service would help you, or someone you know, please call 49 616 133 any Friday between 10am and 3pm.

Anglican society for the welfare of animals

The Diocese is a member of ASWA. This is an article from the February 2011 issue of the ASWA Magazine, Animal Watch.

2010 was not a good year for our wildlife and their diminishing habitat, but did herald some hope for domestic animals due to growing community awareness about cruel conditions in factory farming. Animals Australia has run powerful media campaigns on sow stalls and caged hens; the slogan used is "**You are our hope for a kinder world**". These campaigns are building on years of work and are definitely having an impact. Free range eggs are increasingly preferred. One major supermarket chain has stated that by 2013 they will no longer sell cage eggs in their own range, and has also committed that by 2014 its own range of pork products will be from sow-stall-free production. It is anticipated that the pig industry will phase-out sow stalls by 2017. Not soon enough, but testimony to an informed public rejecting cruelty.

And on the subject of factory produced animals, the RSPCA is conducting an excellent campaign against puppy factories, calling for changes to the law which would effectively make puppy farming and backyard breeding very unattractive as money-makers. Here is one of the sad and shocking images they are using to alert the public.



In November Animals Australia conducted its seventh Middle East investigation into the cruelty endured by millions of Australian sheep sent there into hell. Lobbying to achieve a ban on live exports is relentless.

Before I sign off, I should mention that we enjoyed a wonderful animal blessing service in Christ Church Cathedral here in Newcastle NSW last September, a very special animal at the service being that beloved Christian symbol, a little lamb.

Olga Parkes

Reflection

“Animals are God’s creatures, not human property, nor utilities nor resources nor commodities, but precious beings in God’s sight....Christians whose eyes are fixed on the awfulness of crucifixion are in a special position to understand the awfulness of innocent suffering. The cross of Christ is God’s absolute identification with the weak, the powerless and the vulnerable, but most of all with unprotected, undefended innocent suffering.”

Andrew Linzey, Animal Gospel, Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.

Contact

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