



September 20, 2023

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**Pets Flock to Old North Church & Historic Site for the Annual Blessing of the Animals
Bostonians Honor Faithful Companions for St. Francis Day
Sunday, Oct. 1**

WHAT: Calling all Boston area pet owners! On Sunday, Oct. 1, Old North Church will hold its annual Blessing of the Animals. The North End celebration draws people of diverse faiths and backgrounds and is an opportunity to find joy and honor our faithful companions who are a source of comfort for so many.

This year's event will include a ceremony led by **Rev. Dr. Matthew Cadwell**, Old North's Vicar-in-Charge, and assisted by **Rev. Holly Hartman**, Old North's Deacon. All animals, photographs of pets that do not travel, as well as children's stuffed animals are welcome. Each animal will receive a special blessing. Pets must be on leash or in appropriate carriers. For the safety of all, attendees must refrain from petting others' animals.

WHO: **Rev. Dr. Matthew Cadwell**, Vicar-in-Charge at Old North Church, is available for interviews and can speak to the significance of St. Francis to Old North Church and the North End community, as well as Old North's community engagement activities.

WHEN: Sunday, Oct. 1, from noon to 1:00 p.m.

***Best interview/photo/filming opportunities**

- **11:45 a.m.:** 1:1 interviews with Rev. Dr. Matthew Cadwell
- **Noon.:** ceremony and scripture reading
- **12:15 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.:** pet procession and blessings
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WHY: The Blessing of the Animals is held in honor of St. Francis, who lived in Italy from 1181 to 1226 and is revered for his love of nature. Born into wealth and privilege, he preferred a life of poverty and simplicity. He founded the Franciscan religious order embracing the same values. Canonized as a saint in 1228, St. Francis is honored across Christian denominations and beyond.

The St. Francis Chapel, built in 1918, is adjacent to the Old North Church and shares Old North's status as a national landmark. It was built as an Italian Mission, ministering to the needs of the thousands of Protestant Italian immigrants living in the neighborhood around the Old North Church. In the 1950s, the chapel became the home of the Old North Gift Shop. Many of the chapel's architectural features remain: angels, sentinel stone lions, crosses, and a statue of St. Francis in the garden behind the building.

Formally Christ Church in the City of Boston, "Old North" is home to an active Episcopal congregation. The Old North community is committed to Gospel principles of justice and service, striving to make a positive impact in our neighborhood, city, and the world. We are dedicated to learning from our history in order to be a more faithful, inclusive, and loving community, nourished and sustained by scripture, sacraments, music, fellowship, and outreach beyond our walls.

Old North Illuminated, a secular 501(c)(3), inspires active citizenship and courageous, compassionate leadership by interpreting and preserving the Old North Church & Historic Site. For more information, visit: www.oldnorth.com.

WHERE: Old North Church & Historic Site, 193 Salem St, Boston, MA 02113
Bigelow Courtyard and St. Francis Garden (media to enter from Unity Street)

SOCIAL: Old North Church on social media: Facebook ([@oldnorth1723](https://www.facebook.com/oldnorth1723)); Twitter ([@OldNorth1723](https://twitter.com/OldNorth1723)); Instagram ([@oldnorth1723](https://www.instagram.com/oldnorth1723)); and YouTube ([Old North Church & Historic Site](https://www.youtube.com/OldNorthChurch&HistoricSite)).

HOW: For interview opportunities, call Allison Epstein at 203-915-8364 or email allison@teakmedia.com. | **Onsite media contact: Jason Fishman: 617-901-3032.**

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