

**Bring your pet Sunday, Oct. 4 at 5 p.m. for the third annual "Blessing of the Pets" ceremony. Invite friends and neighbors to bring theirs as well.**



By Nancy Dorman-Hickson

A beautiful Persian mix named Pink quickly earned a place in the hearts of Earl and Jenny Waller. Only a month after the death of Kirby, the Wallers' beloved blind cat, the couple received the fluffy, white Pink from Johanna, Pastor Darryl Kiehl's daughter. When the new feline joined the household of Jenny, Earl, and their other cat, three-

legged Isabel, Pink obviously had some big paws to fill.

She proved a fairly typical kitty—sleeping at length, eating daintily, and earning her keep primarily in the cat-honored traditions of being easy to look at and easier to touch. "She weighs 6 pounds but looks like she weighs 15—all fur," says Jenny. She's a polite cat, too. "If I'm sleeping, she will jump on the coffee table or night stand and wait patiently until I wake up," says Jenny.

But, all in all, Pink seemed like every other cat—until the day Jenny, a novice guitar player, strummed the chords of a favorite hymn. As the first notes drifted through the house, Pink ran to Jenny's side, lured by the siren song of old-time gospel.

On that day and every time since, "when I start playing 'Amazing Grace,' she comes up to me—even if she's been asleep—and starts rubbing her head on the guitar," Jenny says. The finicky feline responds in this manner only to this particular tune. "When I play most songs, Pink just keeps doing whatever she might be doing at the moment," says Jenny. She only reacts to Jenny's playing, too. Occasionally the cat shows up when master guitarist Earl plays 'Amazing Grace,' but never consistently. When she does appear, she watches politely from a distance but doesn't follow the same rubbing-the-guitar routine. It's as if she's saying to Earl, "That's nice, but a bit overproduced. Could you get Mom to play it the soothing way?"



If Pink is agitated or anxious, she brushes against Jenny's silent guitar and casts a plaintive look at her owner. Most of the time, Jenny gives the cat what she wants. "As soon as I play 'Amazing Grace,' Pink rolls over on her back and looks at me as if to say, 'Thank you,'" Jenny notes.

The cat's hymnal obsession comes in handy, too. "If I'm trying to get her to come and she won't"—a familiar scenario to virtually every cat owner—"I just start playing the song and here she comes," says Jenny.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, indeed.

### **Blessing All Creatures, Great and Small**

Even if our own furry or feathered friends don't exhibit behavior as unique as Pink's, all pet owners consider their animals special. Pets truly become a part of our families, giving us endless love and loyalty. Small wonder, then, that animal companions often come to mind when we count our blessings.



On Sunday, October 4 at 5 p.m., Shepherd of the Hills will host its third annual "Blessing of the Pets" ceremony. The event, open to the public and presided over by Pastor Kiehl and Vicar Sean Myer, will be held in the church's front parking lot. In the event of rain, the service will be moved inside—assuming, owners can persuade and fit their animals through the door.

"Mostly dogs, cats and hamsters have been brought for past services, nothing exotic yet," says Pastor Kiehl. "The only request we have is that animals be under the control of their owners." If you're not sure how your pet might react to the woofs, meows, and sudden moves of animal strangers, use a carrier or leash. If your pet is deceased, consider bringing a photograph and a candle to light in memory.

One source describes a pet blessing ceremony as "a spiritual celebration to honor our loyal companions who love us unconditionally." Many sites hold their events on October 4 in conjunction with the Feast Day of Saint Francis of Assisi, also known as the Patron Saint of Animals.

As for Pink, even before the pet blessing event, Jenny thinks her cat enjoys a connection to heavenly hosts. "I think an angel sent her to us," Jenny confides with a laugh.



"Great is your faithfulness."

LAMENTATIONS 3:23

Children's Church will be starting again on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup> and we need your help asking volunteers to sign up to lead Children's Church one Sunday each month from September through May. We currently have volunteers to lead Children's Church we still need volunteers for two more Sundays. If you don't want to commit to being a leader every month, we could also use some volunteers to help fill in as needed.



Children's Church is held during the 10:30 service and up. Children leave during for children ages 4 and up. Children leave during the message to hear a bible story and then complete a craft or project. Lessons are based on "Seasons of the Spirit" by Augsburg Fortress. It is a commitment of only 25 minutes a month and we know you will love this special time with our children!

Please consider volunteering for Children's Church. If you have questions, would like to see a sample lesson plan or want to sign up, please contact Sue Collins at 981-0910 or [susan.c.collins@att.net](mailto:susan.c.collins@att.net)