

Dogs in the Bible

With the arrival of spring, churches around New Zealand will soon convene their annual blessing services for animals. These services are often scheduled around the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of the Environment and Animals. This day, 4 October, is also now widely considered to be World Animal Day.

For this column, I decided to investigate the Bible and how dogs are depicted in it. There are many references to dogs, in metaphor and otherwise, in the Bible:

Proverbs 26:11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.

Proverbs 26:17 He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

Deuteronomy 23:18 Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Exodus 11:7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that

the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

2 Samuel 9:8 And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?

2 Samuel 16:9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

1 Samuel 17:43 And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

Ecclesiastes 9:4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

The only breed of dog specifically mentioned in the Bible by name is the Greyhound. It appears in **Proverbs 30:29-31** (King James Version): There be three things which do well, yea, Which are comely in going; A lion, which is strongest among beasts and Turneth not away from any; A greyhound; A he-goat also. 



Greyhounds Barney and Sox were blessed at the animal blessing service at St Paul's Anglican Church, Christchurch on 8 September 2024.