



## What Does Community Mean? II

As God's people, we are to reject the world's view where dominance and submission reign. We are called to seek God's transforming will. We are not animals who live by a strict 'pecking order' and survival of the fittest. We are children of God. However, the animal world does have something to teach us.

We often assume that animals do not have feelings and do not form attachments as people can, but they do! Scientists are beginning to understand just how strong the bonds are in many animal communities, and that many attributes we use to think defined only humans, are also found among God's other creatures as well.

In elephant family groups, all the mothers will gather around to help a baby in trouble. Elephants remember and work together for the good of the group. They honor their matriarch not for her strength alone, but for her wisdom. It is her wisdom gained during long years of experience, that leads the herd to food and water in times of extreme scarcity. It is her ability to pass that information on that helps preserve the herd over the long term. Elephants also treat the remains of their dead with reverence and respect – even years after the death. How many of these were considered 'human traits'?

Some animals, including cardinals, mate for life (also once thought to be a human trait. . .). I have seen a cardinal stay with a dead mate for hours gently touching or just sitting with the body. I have seen a mother purple finch give her life to protect her young by wedging her wings into the edges of a gutter to try and protect her nest from the water – this in the same week when the news was full of the story of a mother who intentionally drown her children by driving her car into a body of water and leaving it with the children inside. There are animal parents, including penguins, who will go hungry themselves for days or weeks at a time to tend their young and assure their survival. God has given the tiny ant the bond of community that makes them work as a unit for the good of all. He has given starlings and fish the ability for hundreds – even thousands – to gracefully move as one for the protection of all.

God keeps his eyes on all these creatures and cares for them (Matthew 10:29-31). Does he not care even more for us and have even greater expectations of us – the creatures he created in his own image? He has given people so much more – so many more possibilities! Lord, help us open our eyes and our hearts to those possibilities. Help us build the community God calls us to build and include everyone in its supportive and loving embrace!

### ***This week in your prayer time:***

- **Those Dealing with Hurricane Dorian** – at least 45 died in the Bahamas and 2,500 are missing, a large part of which was devastated. Some people in the U.S. were also hard hit by the storm, especially in the outer banks of the Carolinas. The current U.S. administration has decreed that people from the Bahamas will not be given temporary protected status so they can come to the U.S. for help. . .In the past, people facing such devastation would have been offered this option.
- **Children at the Border** – and all refugees who continue to be mistreated.
- **Those affected by gun violence & those affected by acts of terror**



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