



All Saints Day

Focus Scripture
Revelation 21:1–6a

Additional Scriptures
Isaiah 25:6–9 *or*
Wisdom 3:1–9
Psalm 24
John 11:32–44

Holy God, your wisdom has formed all that has been, that is, and that shall be. Thanks for revealing your glorious ways in Christ and in the lives of all your saints. Strengthen us to live faith-filled lives, with confidence in your eternal love. Amen.

All Saints Day (Year B)

All who claim and trust in the promises of God are blessed. As in ages past, God’s saints today are called to embrace God’s new creation, here and now. In baptism, we become God’s new creation – God’s saints – and are commissioned to live now in the presence of God’s promises, working toward their fulfillment.

Focus Scripture: Revelation 21:1–6a

The beginning of the book of Revelation tells us that it is the record of the visions of John concerning “what must soon take place” (1:1). The term for this kind of revelation is *apocalypse*, meaning “unveiling.” Revelation was likely written around 95 CE. This date, plus the style of language, leads most scholars to say it was not written by the apostle John or the author of the gospel of John. This John was a Christian prophet, speaking a vision of God’s word to seven early churches.

A central tenet of Judeo-Christian beliefs is that the universe has been created by God for a purpose; therefore, history has meaning and purpose. According to this belief, history is not an endless cycle where events are destined to repeat themselves, but rather a path with a destination. As the Bible begins with creation in Genesis, so it ends with re-creation in Revelation. There, John speaks of the goal of God’s creation – a purpose never fully realized in the history of time and space, but not entirely beyond history, either.

The text speaks of a new Jerusalem “coming down” from heaven, the place of perfection. Jerusalem, the central and most important point in the world for Jews – and at this early stage the church was predominately Jewish in self-understanding – is portrayed as a character in a wedding ceremony. In this new time of living, God will remove death and tears. The time of human pain will have passed.

At the same time, the sea is “no more.” For ancient Jews, the sea was a threatening place and in Revelation it was a place from which the beast had come (13:1). With it gone, there would no longer be any chaotic forces that resist God’s sovereign love. There would be “a new heaven and a new earth” – perfect, holy, and in union with God.

This new heaven and new earth are not meant to completely replace the old, for that would mean that human history is ultimately unimportant to God. The vision is one of renewal. Like the flower in the bulb or the oak in the acorn, the new has been present in the old all along.

Another vision of God’s ultimate reign is given in **Isaiah 25:6–9**. The prophet describes the time when God will call “all peoples” to a new life on God’s holy mountain – a location that suggests the meeting of heaven and earth – where death will be swallowed up forever. On a similar note, the writer of **Wisdom 3:1–9** describes how God watches over the souls of righteous ones forever, in spite of what mortals may perceive. **Psalm 24:4** echoes the refrain of God’s glorious reign as home for those “who do not lift up their souls to what is false.”

John 11:32–44 is the account of Jesus journeying to be with Mary and Martha as they grieve the death of their brother Lazarus. Jesus weeps with them, yet still offers the promise of new life in God’s glory.



It is often said that the past informs the present, but it may be just as true to say the future informs the present. When we faithfully place ourselves in God’s presence, new possibilities for life and service become visible. All Saints Day is a time to remember the saints who have gone before us and to give thanks for the blessings God has given us to share with others. Visions of renewal, of new covenant, and of all creation singing praises to God – how do these glimpses of God’s hope for the new heaven and the new earth inspire us to bring renewal right here, right now?



Prepare

NOTE: All of these suggestions are mere starting points; adapt, delete and add according to your local needs.

- ❑ Recruit *volunteers* needed for worship: three for the prayer of confession (optional).
- ❑ Create a *slide show* or *photo gallery* as described in gather.
- ❑ Select a *Seasons of the Spirit* poster that suggests the *Body of Christ* or the *communion of God's saints*.
- ❑ Bring *candles* for the Communion prayer.

Gather

Create a slide show or arrange to have a photo gallery as people enter that includes the members of your community who died during the previous year. You may choose to include a verse of scripture that was read during each person's memorial service. During the prayers of the people or the Communion prayer, these names may be mentioned and the scripture verses read. Play instrumental music during the presentation and/or sound a bell between each name.

Call to worship

(based on Psalm 24)

**Who can climb the mountain of our God,
and dwell in a holy place?**

Come, people of God –

God is here in our midst, inviting us into a new place.

**Who can climb the mountain of our God,
and dwell in a holy place?**

The God who offered a land
flowing with milk and honey,
offers a new heaven and a new earth,
a holy city, a place of God's presence.

**Who can climb the mountain of our God,
and dwell in a holy place?**

God calls us to cleanse our hearts,
to offer ourselves to God with all our being.

**Let us climb the mountain of our God,
and dwell in a holy place!**

Come, let us worship God.

Opening prayer

Invite people to consider someone who has helped give shape to their faith. It may be a family member, friend, church school leader, minister, or historical figure. Announce that they will be invited to say this person's name aloud at the conclusion of this prayer.

We come into this sacred space,
mindful of the generations of faith who have come
before us:
adults and children, certain and questioning,

men and women, hopeful and despairing.

We give thanks for the welcome
all receive from you, Divine Beloved,
and for the ways we continue
to be enfolded into community.

With grateful hearts, we mention now
the names of those who have shaped our faith,
encouraging us as saints in your realm...
(people mention names aloud).

Prayer of confession

Divide the congregation into three sections, each echoing the last two words of the worship leader. Or, arrange to have three readers read the responses from different places in the worship space.

LEADER: In our worry and despair, for you, O God,
we wait...

ONE: We wait...

TWO: We wait...

THREE: We wait...

LEADER: When tears threaten to overwhelm us, we
wait...

ONE: We wait...

TWO: We wait...

THREE: We wait...

LEADER: When we long for a fresh start and newness
of heart, we wait...

ONE: We wait...

TWO: We wait...

THREE: We wait...

LEADER: When we consider the state of our world,
we wait...

ONE: We wait...

TWO: We wait...

THREE: We wait...

LEADER: When we have done all that we can, for you,
O God, we wait...



Revised Common Lectionary (Yr B)

Isaiah 25:6–9 or
Wisdom of Solomon 3:1–9
Psalm 24
Revelation 21:1–6a
John 11:32–44

Liturgical colour:
white

Music Suggestions

Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom
Ruth Duck, Donna Kasbohm; Seasons Songbook, vol. 7

Come Build the Church
Ken Medema; Seasons Songbook, vol. 7

Somlandela/ We Will Follow
Zulu; Seasons Songbook, vol. 7

God's Family
P. Shelly; Seasons Songbook, vol. 7

All Things New
Rory Cooney

For All the Saints
Ralph Vaughn Williams

I Sing a Song of the Saints of God
Lesbia Scott





ONE: We wait...
TWO: We wait...
THREE: We wait...

Words of assurance

(inspired by Isaiah 25:6–9)

This is the day we have waited for;

God's presence is among us
and our salvation is at hand.
God has wiped away the tears from our faces
and disgrace and shame are no more.
Let us rejoice.
Thanks be to God.

Engage

Scripture readings

 **Revelation 21:1–6a**

Read Revelation 21:1–6a slowly, accompanied by soft instrumental music.

Opening the word with children

Art reflection

Show the children the *Seasons of the Spirit* poster you selected that suggests the Body of Christ or the communion of God's saints. In a manner appropriate to the age level of the children and in keeping with your tradition, explain that the communion of saints is made up of people from throughout history – from Bible times until today – who try to follow Jesus and do the things that Jesus teaches us to do. Invite the children to consider the poster and ask where they would like sit or stand in this image and why.

God's dream

(based on Revelation 21:1–6a)

On a sheet of newsprint, draw an oval with eyes, a nose, and some hair. Bring a marker. Put an adhesive bandage on your hand. Invite everyone to say the repeating words and, when appropriate, do the motions after you.

God has a dream – a wonderful dream!

Listen while I tell you about this wonderful, wonderful dream.

In God's dream, there will be no more sadness. *(Draw a happy smile on the face.)*

Alleluia! Alleluia!

In God's dream, there will be no more sickness. *(Take off bandage and throw it away.)*

Alleluia! Alleluia!

In God's dream, there will be no more need to cry because everyone will live in peace. *(Wipe eyes with hands.)*

Alleluia! Alleluia!

In God's dream, everyone will have a home. *(Stretch hands over heads and touch fingertips to form roofs over their heads.)*

Alleluia! Alleluia!

In God's dream, there will be no more hungry people. *(Rub tummies.)*

Alleluia! Alleluia!

In God's dream, God will never, ever leave us. *(Hug themselves.)*

Alleluia! Alleluia!

What a wonderful dream!

Let's dream with God about this totally wonderful new world. *(Jump up and shout.)*

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Proclaiming the word

"This new heaven and new earth are not to completely replace the old (for that would mean that history is ultimately discarded and unimportant to God). The vision is of renewal. Like the flower in the bulb, the oak in the acorn, the new has been present in the old all along" *(from the biblical background).*

What new life is emerging from the old, like a flower from a bulb, in your life? Where is new life emerging within your congregation? How do the visions in **Isaiah 25:6–9** and **Revelation 21:1–6a** compare and contrast with the life emerging within and around you?

Consider the *Seasons of the Spirit* poster you selected that suggests the Body of Christ or the communion of God's saints. How is the communion of saints represented in this poster for you? If you could include your picture in this poster, where would it be and why?



Respond

Eucharistic prayer for All Saints Day

God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

It is always right and good to praise God,
who created us and never stops loving us.

God has such great love for us
that we can call ourselves the children of God,
and indeed, that is what we are:
we are God's children.

Thanks be to God.

God sent Jesus
to share our life and journey with us,
to show us how to live as God wants.
Through reading the Bible, prayer,
acts of justice and kindness,
and this holy meal,
we seek to be more like Jesus each day.

We are followers of Jesus.

Thanks be to God.

With words and actions
Jesus taught us that the ways of God
are sometimes different from the ways of the world.
We are called to love God

with our hearts, souls, and minds,
and our neighbours as ourselves.

When we do these things,
we are holy, we are saints.

Thanks be to God.

We give thanks for the many people
who have gone before us,
and are with us even now:
a great cloud of witnesses who have tried
to live God's love every day,
and with their lives, have shown us
how to be followers of Jesus.

(Here you may wish to name particular individuals, including those members of your church who have died in the past year. You may toll a bell or light a candle as each departed saint is named.)

We are part of the communion of saints.

Thanks be to God.

Jesus invited saints and sinners
to dine with him and be his friends.

And Jesus invites us to this sacred meal,
in which we can taste and see,
experience and remember the goodness of our God.

(Continue the prayer according to your tradition.)

Bless

Go from this place to continue the work
of making our world new with the Spirit of Christ.

Where there is hurt, and tears are falling,
we will be God's comfort.

Where there is anger, and violence reigns supreme,
we will be God's peace.

Where there is neglect, and loneliness abides,
we will be God's love.

Go as saints of this generation who are
the love of God,
the incarnation of Christ,
and the friendship of the Spirit. **Amen.**

Special Days Commentary

November 1 – All Saints Day

In many churches, All Saints Day celebrates all people of faith, recalling how, in New Testament usage, the word *saints* refers to Christians collectively, as well as to people of special significance who have been set apart by the church or canonized. It is the recognition of the common bond of Christians, both living and dead, and the common bond of the church here on earth and the church triumphant in heaven. If November 1 falls on a weekday, All Saints Day is generally observed on the following Sunday.

November 2 – All Souls Day

For those traditions who use All Saints Day to commemorate canonized saints, or those whose lives have been particularly Christlike, All Souls Day on November 2 provides an opportunity to remember other Christians who have died. A simple, reflective service can provide an opportunity to invite those who have been bereaved during the year to gather to remember their loved ones in prayer.

