

Special Sundays

Liturgy,
art, &
poetry
for special days
of worship

Liturgy for All Saints Day

Written by Rev. Anna Strickland

We invite you to implement this service as-is, or adapt it for your context. Either way, please attribute credit as follows: Liturgy by Rev. Anna Strickland | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Introduction

About All Saints Day

All Saints Day is observed by the Western Church on November 1 and is generally celebrated in worship on the first Sunday in November. In the Protestant tradition, All Saints Day and All Souls Day (November 2) are times to remember those who have passed on, particularly those who have shaped our faith. Many Western Protestant churches who celebrate All Saints Day have a tradition of reading the names of members who have died in the past year as a part of their worship service.

Archaeologists have discovered funeral practices dating back to the earliest human remains that have been unearthed. It is human nature to honor, grieve, commemorate, and bury our dead, so festivals and holidays to remember our dead are widespread across cultures.

It's important to note that expressions for this holy day are varied throughout the globe and are sometimes rooted in indigenous rituals and ancestor-honoring traditions. While these expressions may be unique in different contexts, the impulse to honor and remember the dead is nearly universal across cultures and belief systems.

About the Service

This service uses the imagery and metaphor of the veil that separates the living from the dead, as well as our earthly understanding from the glory of heaven. It celebrates and honors our forebears in faith and encourages us to continue the work of our ancestors. It also acknowledges the incompleteness of our understanding and entrusts our loved ones to God as they take their place in the communion of the saints. While this service borrows from language and imagery common to Western Protestant Christianity, we encourage you to incorporate your own cultural or ancestral traditions around All Saints Day.

Introduction (continued)

Music Suggestions

Here is a list of suggested hymns and songs you may want to incorporate into this service.

- “We’ll Understand It Better By and By” by Charles Albert Tindley (1906)
- “For All the Saints” by William W. How (1864)
- “We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight” by Henry Alford (1844)
- “Not with Naked Eye, Not with Human Sense” by Dan Damon (1989)
- “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” by Lesbia Scott (1929)
- “Strong Son of God, Immortal Love” by Alfred Tennyson (1850)
- “In the Bulb There Is a Flower (Hymn of Promise)” by Natalie Sleeth (1985)
- “When the Saints” by Sara Groves (2013)
- “A Million Saints” by Meredith Andrews, Mia Fieldes, Phil Wickham, Hank Bentley (2018)
- “By Faith” by Keith & Kristyn Getty (2009)
- “Worthy Of It All” Performed by CeCe Winans, written by Kyle Lee and Dwan Hill (2021)

Scripture Suggestions

This liturgy is not crafted around any particular scripture. Instead, it is designed to be general enough that you can use any desired preaching or focal scriptures. The liturgy includes these suggested scripture readings:

- 1 Corinthians 13:8-13
- Romans 8:18-27
- Psalm 139

About This Liturgy Outline

- *Italicized lines are notes for worship leaders.*
- Unbolded lines are to be spoken by worship leaders and, when appropriate, printed in bulletins or projected on screens.
- **Bolded lines are to be spoken by the congregation and printed in bulletins or projected on screens.**

Materials & Setup

Materials

The following materials are needed for the service:

- Christ candle or large pillar candle
- Tealights or votive candles
- Long bamboo skewers, long matches, lighting tapers, or small candle lighters for lighting small candles from the Christ candle
- Communion elements
- *Optional:* Vases to hold skewers or matches
- *Optional:* Bowls of sand for extinguishing skewers or matches
- *Optional:* Materials to veil the candles (see options below)
- *Optional:* Notecards or seed paper and pens

Preparation Before the Service

Set the Table with both Communion elements and the Christ candle (*or any large pillar candle*) in the center and arrange smaller candles around them. Alternatively, consider having multiple tables for the candles and reserve the Communion Table for Communion elements only. In this case, be sure to have a large pillar candle on each table for lighting. Light these candles whenever you light the Christ candle, whether before the service or during the prelude/processional.

Place bamboo skewers or long matches in vases around the table(s) for people to easily find and use to light the candles. You may also wish to place bowls of sand on the table(s) for easier and safer extinguishing of the skewers or matches. Alternatively, you might have some small lighting tapers or candle lighters to use in place of skewers or long matches.

Create a veil in front of the table(s) with the candles. (*See the section below for more detailed instructions.*) Be sure that any fabric is far enough away from the candles so as not to be in danger of catching fire. As a precaution, you may wish to have a fire extinguisher or bucket of water on hand just in case.

Materials & Setup (continued)

Veiling the Candles (Optional)

If you are able, we encourage you to create a visual display in which a veil is placed in front of your candles to emphasize the veil that divides us in life and in death. There are many ways to create a veiled effect in front of the lit candles using materials you already have on hand or can obtain easily. If you have virtual worshippers, consider how your display may appear on a livestream from different angles. The veiling is not a critical part of this service, so please do not worry if you are unable to create a veil with the time and resources you have.

Option A) Sheer fabric

Drape thin or sheer fabric, such as curtain sheers, in front of the Communion Table. Fabric can be draped over a frame, hung from the ceiling in front of the Table, or placed on curtain rods across the opening of an alcove. Common items to consider using to drape fabric in front of the candles are candle screens, wardrobe racks (*such as those used to hang coats or choir robes*), easels, banner stands, processional candle holders, candelabras, or flower stands. Frame the Table using one or more of these objects and drape the sheer fabric over them, making sure to set the candles far enough away from the fabric so as not to be a fire hazard.

Option B) Paper or Frosted Glass

Place candles behind or inside thin paper or frosted glass to create a veiled effect. You might place plain white paper in standing acrylic frames, old frosted windows, glass bricks, or stained glass pieces in front of the candles on the Table. Or, you might set candles inside frosted glass candle holders or small white paper bags. (*Be sure to fill the bottoms of bags with sand for stability.*)

Order of Worship

Prelude/Processional

If the Christ candle has not yet been lit, light it at this time. Process in elements according to your tradition.

Welcome

In your welcome to the gathered community, share more about All Saints Day and your particular celebration of it during this service. Below is a paragraph you can adapt to include in your welcome and/or print in the bulletin:

Today we are celebrating All Saints Day. Though we don't typically celebrate the canonized saints of the church and all their various saints' days in our denomination, we recognize that we have saints in our own lives who have formed our faith in some way and who have passed on from this life. So on All Saints Day, we celebrate, honor, and remember these forebearers of the faith. Today in worship we will read aloud the names of the saints in our community who have passed in the last year. You will also have the opportunity to light a candle in memory of the saints in your life, whether they passed just recently or long ago. If you are worshipping from home, we invite you to find a candle to light so you can join us in this time of remembering our saints. We pray that their memory will continue to be a beacon of faith, hope, and love for us all.

Call to Worship

Read "Where I Saw God Last" by Rev. Sarah A. Speed. Below is a possible adaptation of the poem for three readers:

Reader 1: The dimple in your right cheek,

Reader 2: the child playing peek-a-boo from his stroller,

Reader 3: the abuelita who spends her afternoons in the park by 86th;

Reader 1: the teenagers on the subway who cannot control their laughter;

Reader 2: Neil, my neighbor, who always asks about you,

Reader 3: the mother who whispers a dozen times a day,

All readers: "thank you, Jesus, thank you, Jesus, thank you, Jesus";

Reader 1: the saxophone player at 42nd street,

Reader 2: the poets,

Reader 3: the artists,

Reader 1: the garden volunteers;