

SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

All Saints Sunday

Preparation Needed:

- Gather names of those who have died since last All Saints' Day to be read
- Make ribbon banner (see instructions that follow)
- Get a hand bell with a low, somber, but clear tone or make sure your church bell is working
- Get someone who reads well to read the Donne selection

The pace of this service is slow and its mood tender.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND LITURGICAL INSTRUCTIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.
In life and in death
We belong to God.
Baptized into Christ's death
We live unto Him.
Come, let us Worship God!

PRELUDE WITH LIGHT OF CHRIST AND PROCESSION of ribbon banner, and the ringing of bell

*Make sure the acolytes are far ahead of the banner so that no ribbons can be blown into the flames. Though symbolically significant, even the martyrs knew fires are to be avoided! Instructions for making a ribbon banner follow. After the banner has processed in about ¼ to 1/3 of the way, start the reading. Gently swing or shake the banner slightly so that its bells ring and the ribbons move without too much tangle. Set the banner(s) into banner stands up front or on wall hooks. Ring a mellifluous handbell or your church bell as the banner processes and time its ringing at pertinent places in the reading, indicated by * below.*

READING from John Donne **Read slowly and deliberately. This language takes awhile for us to process it aurally.**

"The church is catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. * When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. * And when [the church] buries a person, that action concerns me. All [of humanity] is of one author, and is one volume; when one [person] dies, * one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; * and every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age,* some by sickness,* some by war, * some by justice; * but [the Lord's] hand is in every translation, * and [God's] hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every

book shall lie open to one another. * As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all. . . . *

No [one] is an island entire of itself; every[one] is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. * Any[one's] death diminishes me, because I am involved in [hu]mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; * it tolls for thee." * [from John Donne's Meditation XVII of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*]

OPENING PRAYER Eternal God, you have knit your people of all times and places into one communion in the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant us your Holy Spirit of encouragement and strength so we may persevere in our leg of the relay race of faith until such time as we join the great cloud of witnesses who cheer us on the Way. Keep us one with all who proclaim your gospel until such time as we finish our race, collapsing into your arms where you wait for us at the finish of your new creation begun in Christ, the pacesetter and perfecter of the way, the truth, and life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones

PH 451

CALL TO CONFESSION

CONFESSION OF SIN (in unison):

**Eternal God,
in every age you have raised up men and women
to live and die in faith.
We confess that we are indifferent to your will.
You call us to proclaim your name,
but we are silent.
You call us to do what is just,
but we remain idle.
You call us to live faithfully,
but we are afraid.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Give us courage to follow in your way,
that joined with those from ages past,
who have served you with faith, hope, and love,
we may inherit the kingdom you promised in Jesus Christ.¹**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

from Romans 14:7-9, 6:2-4

Deliver this from the baptismal font.

Hear the good news: We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the living and the dead. *{placing hand in water}*

¹ *Book of Common Worship*, p. 386.

When we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death. We were buried so that as *{raise hand and let water pour through it}* Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God, we too might walk in newness of life. Friends, believe the good news:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Let us give thanks unto the Lord; God's steadfast love endures forever.

GLORIA PATRI or MUSICAL ASCRIPTION OF PRAISE

PASSING THE PEACE

OFFERING AND OFFERTORY

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O Word of God Incarnate

PH 327

RESPONSIVE READING from Psalm 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Bless the Lord.

God's dominion is forever.

As for us our days are grass;

Like a flower of the field, we flourish and then we die.

But the steadfast love of God is from everlasting to everlasting,

And God's righteousness is to children's children.

The grass withers and the flower fades;

But the word of the Lord stands forever.

Bless the Lord, O my soul. Bless the Lord.

God's dominion is forever.

SCRIPTURE READING Matt. 5:1-12

SERMON

This sermon starter links a description of what the Beatitudes describes as the righteous—a rather ragtag life—to the ribbon banner.

Today we processed in an All Saints banner. Banners were used in the Middle Ages to signify under whose dominion we marched. They were big and bright and bold so you could look toward them and fight on. Then they were planted at the end of battle as a sign of triumphal conquest

But this banner is not a proper banner. Why? Because the nature of Christian triumph is not like military conquest. Our victory is one of reliance upon God's power, God's dominion. Early Christian art for our triumphant, risen Lord depicts a lamb carrying a triumphal banner, but notice that it's a lamb, a slaughtered innocent on a cross, who is the triumphant one. Christian triumph comes in continuing to carry forth the good news that God, not brute force of Empire, rules. Of course, this means we are vulnerable to also being killed or ripped to shreds with criticism. So our rather tattered ribbon banner is an appropriate one for the church, for this communion of saints, to which we belong.

Truth be told, the Christian life is rather ragged. If you look at the Beatitudes you see a picture of the blessed Christian life, one that is poor, meek, full of grief, hunger, persecution. {Expand with examples.}



Well, this banner may be tattered, but it's still beautiful, open to the winds of the Spirit blowing free that move its gospel peals that ring forth down through the ages, coming now even to us, like the ringing of a bell that goes forth. Look again at the banner, representing the communion of saints. Some of the ribbons are wide, some small, some indistinguishable, some bold, some short, some long, of all different colors and patterns. {You can name some of the different saints down through the ages, tell brief anecdotes about them, including John Calvin in a nod to Reformation Day. Ask them to tell about the saints who've helped them grow in faith—yes, right in the middle of the sermon.} Then conclude this with something like, "There are many different lives represented in the communion of saints. Lives as beautiful and shredded and ordinary as ribbon on this banner.

But if we didn't talk about the beauty that is also represented by the communion of saints, we'd be remiss. The Christian life is blessed, beautiful and good. We may be persecuted, but we're victorious nonetheless. We may be poor, but we're rich in blessing. We may be shattered by grief, but we go on. {Tell stories of the beauty of the Christian life that follow the beatitudes.}

In your imagination, do you ever throw a dinner party of various historical characters? You know, like Queen Elizabeth, St. Francis, Shakespeare, John Calvin, Michelangelo, Dorothy Day, Mother Jones, the Apostle Paul—and whoever--all come to the same dinner party. Well, every time we come to worship, to this table, we join the communion of saints who forever feast in God's glory. You wouldn't think of going to a dinner party without introducing folks to the guests you've brought with you, so let us name for each other the saints in whose communion we are today. After we call the names of the members of this congregation who have died in the past year and who now rest in God's eternal peace, you are invited to name the saints who have encouraged you along the way of faith in Christ, especially those who have recently passed on to reside in God's glory.

NAMING OF THE SAINTS

Read each of the names of those in the church who have died this past year. This is done slowly, deliberately with the ringing of a bell after each name. After the official church list, others are invited with a gesture of open arms to name those in their personal lives who have died in the past year, or those whom they want to remember as significant for passing along the faith. You may want to ask a few people beforehand to name someone so that others may feel free to do so as well.

HOLY COMMUNION

INVITATION

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God!
Folks will come from east and west,
and from north and south.
All the citizens of God's Rule in Christ
Will feast forever in glory.
This is the Lord's table,
His dinner party spread across time.
And all who are baptized in him
Are invited to this foretaste of the Age to come.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right to give our thanks and praise
to you, the God of Abraham and Sarah,
Miriam and Moses,
Joshua, Deborah, Ruth,
David, priests, and prophets,
Mary, Joseph, Peter and Paul,
apostles, and martyrs, and ordinary unknown saints .

**You are the God of our mothers and fathers
and our children to all generations.**

You, Everlasting One, made us all.

You fashion us into one people,

and continue to love us

even when we deny our godly heritage.

**Still, you call us home to you
through saints dedicated to your will.**

Therefore we praise you joining our voices with all the people of faith of every
time and place who forever sing to the glory of your name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are
full of your glory!**

**Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of
the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Blessed are you, most gracious God,

for the gift of your child,

our brother, Jesus Christ,

who lived in accord with your will

to the point of laying down his life

for the good news he preached

and passed on to us.

On the night of his arrest,

he taught us how to serve one another in love

with a ritual of table fellowship

enjoyed by Christians of all times and places.

**And so in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves with thanksgiving
as a living sacrifice.**

In union with Christ's offering for us,

we live out the mystery of the faith we proclaim:

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

Spirit of the living God,
make us one as we partake of these your gifts to us
so we might be in communion with you and one another.

**As we break bread together,
may our eyes be opened to see your glory.**

**As we lift the cup of salvation,
may we be strengthened to follow your Way.**

Until Christ comes in final victory
and we feast together with all the saints
at God's great family reunion,
keep your church one in service to the world here and now,
even as we pray for the world you so love:
Speak your peace in the world
where wars rage and violence triumphs *{Pause for particular prayers named
aloud or in silence.}*

We lift before you our prayer for the health of all nations,
that all people may flourish,
for the upcoming elections in our country,
for all people in positions of power over others' lives. *{Pause for particular
prayers named aloud or in silence.}*

May your will be done. May your Kingdom come.

We pray for those who grieve . . . *{Pause},*

for those who are sick . . . *{Pause},*

for those struggling to live the fullness of your resurrection . . . *{Pause}*

Send forth comfort as only you can give.

Forgive our sin, O Lord, as we forgive others,
and remember our making.

Work with who we are, where we are,
to form these clay pots

into vessels of living praise,

that our lives may participate

in the same unending song of the universe

raised by all the saints,

**Through Christ with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor and praise are yours almighty God, now and
forevermore. Amen.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

from Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number,
from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the
throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their
hands, crying out with a loud voice:

**“Salvation belongs to our “God who sits upon the throne, and to the
Lamb!”**

And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying,

“Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen!”

HYMN

For All the Saints

PH 526

CHARGE:

from Hebrews 12:1-2

Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us with our eyes fixed on Christ.

BENEDICTION May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May God's face shine with delight
In looking upon you with favor
And may you rest forever in God's peace.

SENDING TO SERVE

POSTLUDE

To Make Your Own Ribbon Banner:



You will need:

- Cording the length of your rod + additional inches for attachment and hanging to desired length, keeping in mind that it will stretch under the weight of the ribbons and bells.
- Tassels for the end of the cording or rod, if desired
- A 1- 1 ½” dowel rod, old broomstick, or a 1” x 2” board cut the length you want the banner to be (usually 2/3” of the length of the ribbons’ overall length)
- For the open ribbon banner seen above: different solid ribbons in different colors. For the banner on the left: many different colored and patterned ribbons of different widths and lengths. Consider heavier and patterned ribbons that you can write on with a permanent marker that won’t show through so much. Diaphanous ribbons add shimmer and depth to the multi-layered banner. There’s no special gift required for choosing ribbon. Just putting them together in a shopping cart can tell you what does and doesn’t work.
- Bells to attach to ribbons (not all ribbons need bells). Jingle bells and small brass bells work best.
- A staple gun if you’re using a 1”x2” board
- A ribbon to cover all the staples on the header board if you’re using the 1x2
- Hot glue gun and sticks
- Permanent markers to write the names of saints on the ribbons

If you use reds, oranges, golds, white, and some violet and blue, you can use this banner as a Pentecost banner, too.

This is a project children can make, though you won't want to turn them loose with a staple gun. If people are bringing in their own ribbon, you may want to have someone with an eye for color and pattern arrange the ribbons somewhat. However, be careful not to be too careful. The irony is that if you try to make this with a careful systematic arrangement, it won't look as good.

To Assemble



Attach the cording to the ends of the dowel rod, broomstick or 1"x2" header board by stapling it on. Measure the length you want based on where it will hang. To get the length you see here, we loosely laid out the cord the length of the board and attached it to the ends where it fell. Because of the stretch of the cord and weight of the banner, we got the look we were after.



Cut the ribbons to various lengths on a point or slant to help with fraying. You may cut the ribbons as you unfurl and attach them.

Attach the ribbons to the dowel rod, old broomstick, or the back of a 1"x2" header board with a staple gun. Cover the entire rod or header board with ribbons, stacking them upon each other in random ways. Let the ribbons drape over the front of the header board. Or just use the ribbons you want for the open ribbon banner.



Attach bells on the ends some ribbons at varying lengths. To avoid tangling, don't tie too many bells to the ends of ribbons—about 1/8 of the ribbons.

Once you have all the ribbons on that you want, horizontally cover the header board's staples and cording attachment with one or two thick ribbons. Attach this with a glue gun. A patterned ribbon works best because the pattern hides the glue and can help to tie in all the various ribbon colors. For this banner, the ribbons were attached to the back side of a 1" x 2" and draped over the front so that no such ribbon was necessary on the front. To cover all the staples on the back, though, which can be seen during a procession, such a header bar cover is necessary. It may or may not need to be extended to cover the front as well.



Banner without header bar cover

For the procession, you will attach the cording to a pole with a hook that can be placed in a banner stand or up on a hook in the sanctuary.

These ribbon banners are susceptible to tangling, some of which is inevitable and interesting. Have someone straighten the ribbons before the procession. You want the ribbons to move somewhat as you walk so that the bells ring. Practice this beforehand.

At the end of the procession, hang the banner(s) in a prominent place in the sanctuary where drafts won't jingle the bells incessantly throughout the service.

After the service, drape the banner over a table and provide permanent markers that won't bleed through so that people can write the names of saints on the underside of the ribbons. Then hang the banner in the fellowship hall with something like the attached explanation posted beside it.

FOR ALL THE SAINTS, WE GIVE YOU THANKS AND PRAISE, O GOD

The All Saints banner here is a strange banner. It's not a proper banner. A real banner was supposed to be a solid piece of material you marched under in war, something bold, bright, something you could see from far away so you could fight toward it in the midst of bloody battles. But look at this banner. It's in shreds! It's not one piece of bright fabric, but open ribbons blowing however the wind blows, certainly nothing you could fight your way toward in the heat of battle; you couldn't see it!

Of course, that's the point, isn't it? An All Saints banner is not the banner we Christians live under; it's simply a banner that commemorates the saints whose battle is done. They fought the good fight, and now their rest is won. We're not to be living under this banner; that'd be ancestor worship. The only banner we lift high is the cross of Christ. But like the tattered star spangled banner that still stands despite the raging battle, this ragtag banner commemorating the saints reminds us that in the Spirit of the living God, the saints continue to fly high with their ragtag lives serving as testimonies to the eternal truth of God's Word that rings out like bells. They have fought the good fight and, in Jesus Christ, have emerged victorious, though possibly in shreds.

Each saint is like a single ribbon—not much in and of itself. Like these ribbons, some of the saints' lives are plain, some glorious, some dull, some bright, some diaphanous, some short, some long, many blossoming forth like flowers in praise to the Son above. Separately, saints may not be much to look at, but together they comprise a beautiful testimonial tapestry made up of disparate, discounted lives like the partial rolls of ribbons found scattered at yard sales, kids' craft bins, and discount stores which were used to make this banner.

The somewhat ridiculous bells tied on the end of the ribbons like bells attached to the ends of fools' caps or jesters' shoes, represent fools for Christ who proclaimed the gospel that continues to echo forth unto the outermost reaches of the universe like sound waves that never die. The gospel lives of saints are like bells that bid us to come worship as well as death knells that remind us that everyone's death diminishes us because we are all members of one another in the mystical body of Christ Jesus our Lord.

In thanks to God for providing witnesses of grace, we invite you to name your saints by writing their names on the backs of these ribbons. Name the people of God whose lives have become entangled with yours and whose gospel testimonials, in whatever form they have taken, have helped you along the journey of faith. These may be ancient or contemporary saints, as you will.

O God you are Lord of the eternal living. We praise your holy name for all your servants who have finished their course in faith. We pray that, encouraged by their example and strengthened by their fellowship, we may be partakers with them of the inheritance of the saints; through the merits of Jesus Christ alone. Amen.