

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?



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.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

As the children arrive for this All Saints Day session, greet them as saints. Children in this age group may still be learning what the word “saint” represents in our faith tradition. One way to help them understand what it means to be called “saint” is to introduce saints as people who have an amazing capacity to use their imaginations to see God’s vision for the future in a new way.

The focus passage for this session comes from the book of Revelation, and children will be invited to hear in the story God’s dream for the world. The children will be invited to use

a spyglass of imagination to see in a new way. In this activity we are introducing them to one of the most awesome truths of our living: that God asks us to share in God’s dream for the world. Perhaps, as the children’s imaginations are captivated by the dream, they will be caught up in the wonder of seeing the future through God’s eyes.

After the story the children are encouraged to share their own dreams for their family, friends, and for the world. As you prepare for this session, pray that the children will feel part of God’s dream of love and peace.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on the focus scripture, Revelation 21:1–6a, and biblical background material (p. 1).
- ❑ Gather materials for the worship area: *white cloth*, *white pillar candle*, and *Bible* with a bookmark placed in the book of Revelation.
- ❑ Choose songs for gathering and closing worship from the *Seasons* music resources. Print music and recordings are available as MP3 downloads.
- ❑ Bring *candlesnuffer*, *matches*, and *CD player*, if possible.

Gather

- ❑ Bring *Priscilla*, the *puppet*, or another *hand puppet*.
- ❑ Make a *spyglass* by taping *coloured cellophane* over one end of a *large cardboard tube*.

Engage

- ❑ Bring the *resource sheet “God’s Dream”* (p. 5).
- ❑ Draw a simple large face (without a mouth) on *poster board*; cut one mouth and four teardrop shapes from *construction paper*. Use *reusable adhesive* to stick tears on the cheeks and place the mouth in a sad position; add a *bandage* to the face shape.
- ❑ Bring a special *party snack*.

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Saints in our lives:** *plain paper*, *felt markers* or *crayons*
- ❑ **Transformed tears:** *different colours of construction paper* cut into many tear shapes in different sizes, *poster board*, *glue sticks*
- ❑ **Thank you cards:** *felt markers* or *crayons*; prepare cards following instructions on *resource sheet “Thank You Hug”* (p. 6)



All Saints Day (Year B)

Scripture

Revelation 21:1–6a

FOCUS To imagine God’s wonderful dream for the world.

Gather

Welcome children individually by name. Sit together and encourage them to tell about what they have done during the week. Thank them for their storytelling and for listening to their friends’ stories.

Opening ritual

Gather in the worship space. Invite a child to spread the white cloth on the table, and place the Bible and the candle on it. Mention that this is a very special day called All Saints Day. It is a day to remember all the people who love God and help us to follow Jesus. Everyone who knows and loves God is called a saint. Saints are all ages and live all around the world.

Sing or listen to a gathering song from the *Seasons of the Spirit* music resources.

Pray Dear God,
thank you for (*name everyone gathered*).
Thank you for this special day. Amen.

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Priscilla, the puppet, introduces the theme

(*Have the prepared spyglass close by.*)

Priscilla: Good morning, Saint (*Leader’s name*). I heard that this is All Saints Day.

Leader: Good morning to you, Saint Priscilla.

Priscilla: I have something to show you. (*Hold spyglass up to Priscilla’s face.*) Now everyone looks so

different! And everything looks so different. It’s like I am seeing a new you and a new room. Would you like to look through it? (*Encourage children to look through it.*) What a different world this would be if everyone saw the same colour all the time!

Leader: Yes, that’s true, Priscilla. Let’s imagine another different world. Let’s do some dreaming.

Priscilla: I like to dream. Sometimes people dream when they are awake. I like to imagine all sorts of things in my dreams.

Leader: Let’s imagine that we live in a world where everyone loves each other. Can you imagine that? What do you think it would be like? (*Listen to children’s responses.*)

Leader: Today we are going to hear about a dream that God has for us. We are going to hear how God imagines a different world for us.

Priscilla: Will God look through a spyglass?

Leader: Oh, no. You don’t have to look through anything when you dream. Let’s find out what kind of world God would like for us. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla or place her nearby.*)

If not using Priscilla, the puppet, invite children to look through the prepared spyglass. Notice how different everything is. It’s like seeing something new. Refer to Priscilla’s conversation and talk about God’s dream being like imagining something different.

Engage

Invite children to sit in a circle. Ask a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and open it to today’s story, marked with the bookmark. Place the open Bible in the middle of the circle and say, “It’s story time – time to tell, to listen, and to remember together.” Use the resource sheet “God’s Dream” to lead the children in the story based on **Revelation 21:1–6a**. When the story is

finished encourage children to continue celebrating by dancing around the room, jumping and saying “Hooray for God’s wonderful dream!”

After the story

Close Bible and return it to the worship table. Say, “Our stories help us to be part of God’s story.”

Sharing a snack Encourage conversation about ways to make our world a better place to live. What can we do with each other to make this a happier place? During this discussion, share a

special party snack together to celebrate all the saints that have helped us learn more about God's love.

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- Saints in our lives** We are all saints, part of God's family. Invite children to think of someone in their families who loves them. Have each child name and draw a picture of a family member. Then ask children to dictate sentences about the people they have drawn and how they show their love, and write their words under their drawings. Encourage them to take their pictures home, or staple all the pictures into one booklet and encourage children to add more saints in the coming weeks.
- Transformed tears** In God's dream, there will be no more sadness. Place many large paper tear-drops on the floor. Invite children to talk about



some of the things that might make people cry. As each idea is mentioned, everyone takes a tear shape until all tears are in the children's hands. Invite children to transform those tears into things that can make people happy (such as flower, heart, or tree shapes), working together to glue their creations onto poster board.

- Thank you cards** In God's dream for the world, everyone will feel God's love. Invite children to think of those who show God's love and to make thank you cards for them. Distribute the supplies and prepared cards from the resource sheet "Thank You Hug" and help children create their cards.

Bless

Gather around the worship table and light the candle again. Invite children to join hands in a circle.

Sing or listen to a blessing song from the *Seasons of the Spirit* music resources.

Pray Dear, God,
thank you for all of the saints you send
who share the good news of your love
with us. Amen.

Extinguish the candle.

Send each child out with the words, "(Child's name), God loves you and wants you to share your love with others."

Reflect

What did you glimpse of God's dream of a wonderful world in your time with the children?

How might you continue to encourage the children to be a part of making some of God's dream come true?



Story Tip

Before you begin, have all your props readily available. Rehearse the story several times so that you will not have to depend on the written word.

God's Dream

(based on Revelation 21:1– 6a)

(Place the large poster board face on a board or wall in front of the children. Invite children 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.
(Turn the mouth into a happy one.)
Alleluia! Alleluia!

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

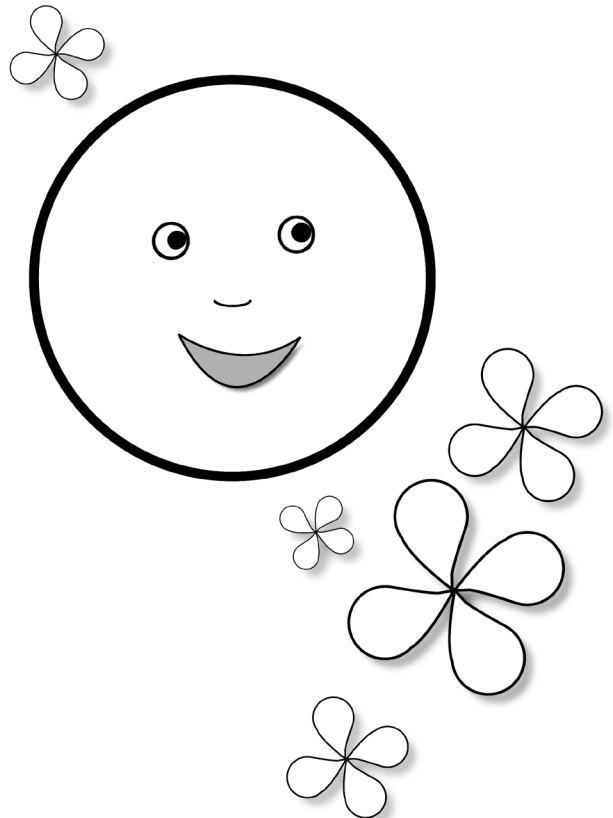
In God's dream, there will be no more need to cry because everyone will live in peace.
(Take off the tears and turn them into a flower growing by the feet.)
Alleluia! Alleluia!

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, everyone will feel God's love.
(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!





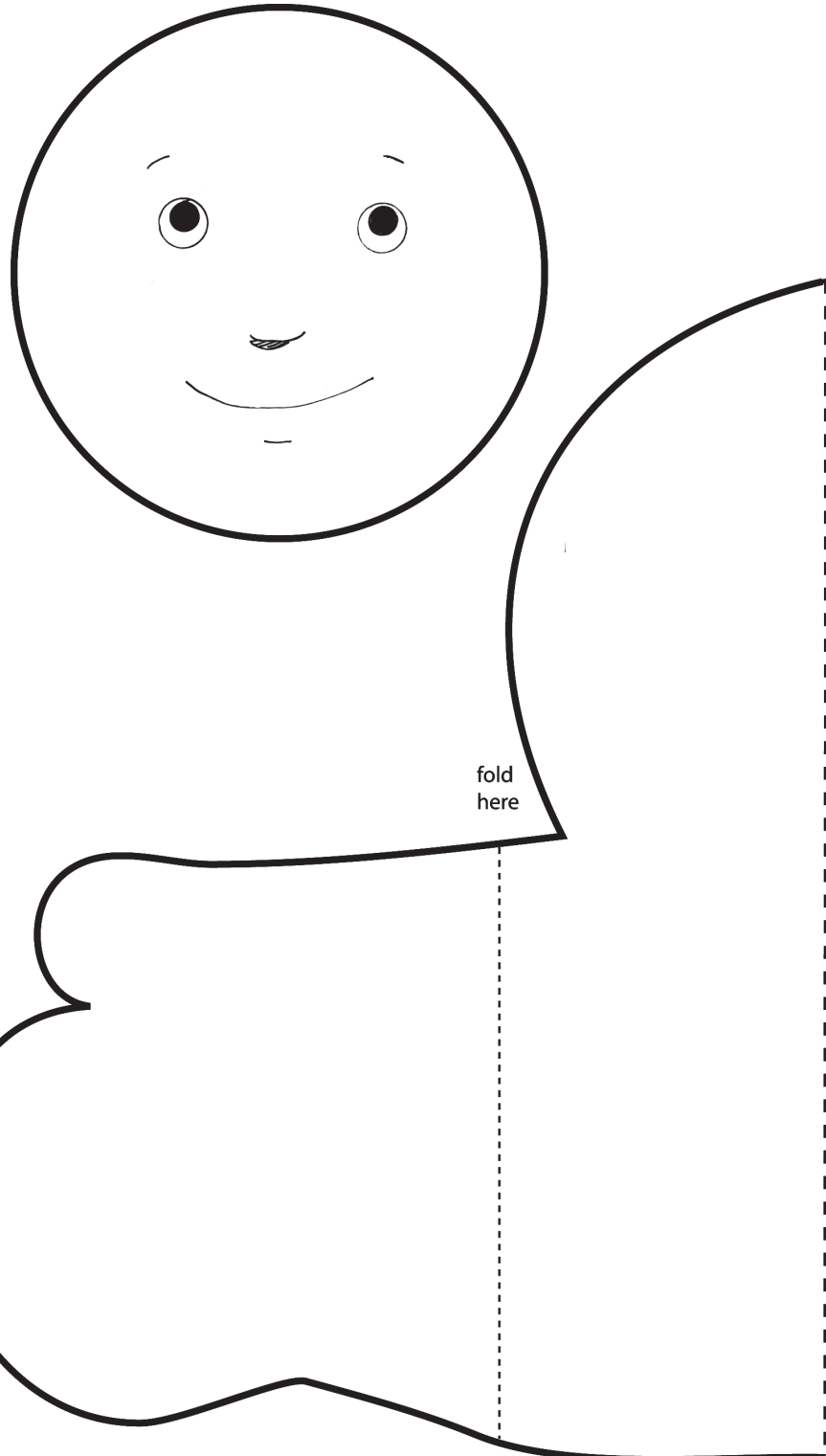
Thank You Hug

Before session:

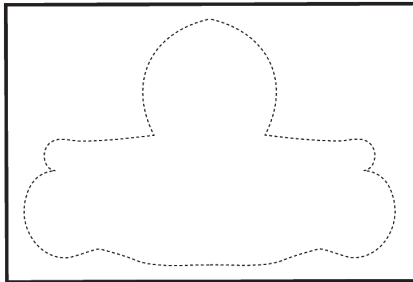
- Make a template using the pattern below. Make a complete person by turning the pattern over and tracing the other side. Cut out template.
- Trace person onto construction paper using template (illus #1).
- Cut out head and body and separate face.
- Print a thank you message on the body portion of the person.

With the children:

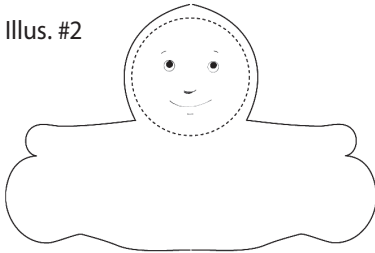
- Read the message.
- Decorate the body and separate face.
- Glue face onto the head (illus #2).
- Fold arms in to form a hug (illus #3).



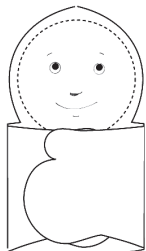
Illus. #1



Illus. #2



Illus. #3



fold here