

# 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.**

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## The Focus for Ages 9–11

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Children in this age group have a lively imagination. They especially enjoy books and movies with a theme of fantasy. Their imaginations may be able to help them connect with the wonders of John’s vision in the reading from the book of Revelation. They might enjoy considering all the new things that are possible for God. Depending upon the times of sadness they have experienced in their lives, the children may be especially taken by the promise of no more tears. Whatever their connection with this passage, encourage the children to engage their imaginations as they encounter this text.

This session looks to the future that God has for all creation. Because it is All Saints Day, the session will also help children understand that all saints, past, present, and future are included in this vision of God’s new creation. This session can also provide an opportunity for you to tell the children something of the history of your congregation as well. Pray that the children in your group will find that they, along with all the saints of the church, can look forward to God’s new creation.

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## Prepare

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### Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on the focus scripture, Revelation 21:1–6a, and biblical background material (p. 1).
- ❑ Prepare a worship area with *white cloth*, *white pillar candle*, and *Bible*.
- ❑ 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.

### Engage

- ❑ Bring *copies of the resource sheets “Amazing Words”* (p. 5) and *“Revelation 21:1–6a”* (p. 6).

### Respond

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

- ❑ **Balloon game:** *balloons*, *permanent markers* (variety of colours); check for latex allergies.
- ❑ **Art images:** *construction paper*, *oil pastels*, *coloured chalk* (soaked in water before using)
- ❑ **Medallions:** *key labels* (heavy paper circles with a lightweight metal rim and hole to insert the chain) and *key chains*, or *circles of card stock/heavy paper*, *hole punch*, and *ribbon*; *gold*, *silver*, or *other metallic gel pens*



# All Saints Day (Year B)

## Scripture

Revelation 21:1–6a

**FOCUS** To join with all the saints, in imagining God’s vision of a new creation.

## Gather

**Greeting** Welcome the children and greet each one by saying, “Good morning, Saint (*child’s name*).” Point out the white cloth on the worship table and explain that today is All Saints Day in the church year calendar. On All Saints Day, we celebrate all the saints, those people who have followed Jesus and lived in God’s way.

**Call to gather** Invite the children to join you at the worship table and ask a child to light the candle.

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

**Pray** the following prayer, or one of your own:

Loving God, help us to be aware of your presence as we gather here and to learn how to be your people. Amen. Extinguish the candle as a signal that the Gather ritual is over.

### Connecting with the focus

Invite children to think about times when they have been given something new. Ask those who wish to share what they received and how it felt to receive this new gift. What did they enjoy the most about having something new?

## Engage

### Preparing for the Bible story

Have the children open their Bibles to the last book in it. Some may know the name of this book, but ask all group members to find the first page of the book. Invite a child to read aloud the name of the book. Sometimes people call this book “Revelations,” adding an “s” to the name, but you can point out that this is a single revelation, or vision, received by a person who lived long ago. Invite a child to read **Revelation 1:9–11** so the group has a setting for this unusual book. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Amazing Words” and invite volunteers to read aloud the background information. Take a moment after each section to discuss any questions or comments from the group.

### The Bible story

Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Revelation 21:1–6a” and invite children to look first at the title and subtitle. Explain that a paraphrase is taking something that is written and rewriting it, or saying it, in your own words. A paraphrase usually makes something easier to understand. A paraphrase is also different from a translation, where the translator begins with the text

in one language and then writes it in a different language. Some versions of the Bible are translations and some are paraphrases. Invite volunteers to take turns reading the sentences of the paraphrase on the resource sheet “Revelation 21:1–6a.” Ask:

- What words or images stand out for you from this passage?
- What will make the new heaven and earth so different from the old heaven and earth?

### The Bible in our lives

In John’s vision the voice said, “I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.” Invite children to look at the illustrations of these two Greek letters, *alpha* and *omega*, on the resource sheet. These letters are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In English we would say “from A to Z.” This is a way of saying that everything is included. Recalling that the Christians for whom John was writing were living in dangerous times.

- How do you think these words might have helped these people to stand firm?

John’s vision speaks of everything being new again. All Saints Day is a time when we remember all the saints in our own lives and throughout history who have helped others to experience hope and to know that God can make things new again.

- **Who are the saints in your life who help you to have hope and who remind you that we can look forward to God’s new creation?**

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### Respond

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Choose one or more of the following options.

- **Balloon game** On All Saints Day we can remember and celebrate the people who share God’s love and hope for the world. Distribute the balloons and markers and invite children to write the names of saints, those who have helped them to imagine God’s vision of a new creation. They might also write words and phrases from Revelation 21:1–6a that give them hope. Inflate the balloons, tie the ends closed, and toss them back and forth to each other, calling out the names and words written on the balloons.
- **Art images** The vision in Revelation speaks of a new earth and a new heaven. Invite children to imagine God’s new heaven and new earth and draw images on construction paper using



the pastels or chalk. Invite them to choose a title for their works from the paraphrase on the resource sheet “Revelation 21:1–6a.”

- **Medallions** John’s vision reminds us the God’s love is with us forever, in the beginning and at the end of time. Invite the children to make medallions with these symbols of beginning and ending, alpha and omega. Distribute key labels or circles of card stock/heavy paper and invite children to copy the alpha and omega symbols from the resource sheet “Revelation 21:1–6a,” one on each side of their circles. Encourage them to embellish the letters using the gel pens, and keep these medallions as reminders of God’s love and presence in the lives of all saints.

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### Bless

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**Gather** around the worship table and invite a child to relight the candle. Recall today’s conversation about what it means to imagine God’s new heaven and new earth.

**Pray** together this prayer or one of your own:

God of all people and times,  
we give thanks for the faithful throughout the  
ages.

We also give thanks for your words of hope.  
Amen.

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

**Send** each child out with the words, “(Child’s name), remember that God loves you forever.”

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### Reflect

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In what ways were the children’s imaginations engaged as they reflected on this text from Revelation?

What new insights did you and the group members gain about God’s new heaven and new earth?



# AMAZING WORDS

## The book of Revelation

### **Who is John?**

Many men were named John in the early church. In this time before people used last names like Jones or Martinez, it was hard to tell which one was which. This John is probably not the disciple John that we read about in the gospels or the writer of the gospel of John. His identity, all these years, is unknown.

### **Why was John on the island of Patmos?**

Again, we have no records to give us a clear answer. Tradition suggests that John was sent there in exile, perhaps because of what he preached.

### **When was this revelation written down?**

It was certainly written after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The following years were difficult for followers of Jesus Christ. The Romans wanted everyone to worship the emperor as the saviour of the world. People who did not were severely punished or put to death. The author uses dramatic words and startling images to encourage the people to remain faithful and to tell others about the gospel of Jesus Christ. So it was probably written down about 95 CE, at the end of the reign of Domitian, who was emperor of Rome from 81 to 96.

### **Just what is a revelation?**

A revelation is like a vision or dream. This vision is about the battle between good and evil in the world. It tells how the power of Jesus Christ will overcome evil with good. It tells how faithful people will be rewarded and how God will create a new world without suffering and struggle.

This revelation to John is not a book of science or a prediction of specific events. The author of it believed, wholeheartedly, in God's saving power through Jesus Christ. This power would someday overcome all the evil in the world. The words in this revelation are like poetry. They encourage us to use our imagination and feelings to understand the message.

As we read Revelation, we might think about all the people, from the early church to today, who have found courage by reading these words. The vision of God's future reminds us that God loves us and cares for us forever and ever. We have nothing to fear. Thanks be to God!



# REVELATION

## 21:1-6A *A paraphrase*

*John had many visions while on the island of Patmos. This is one of them:*

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Then I saw a new heaven above and a new earth below. The first heaven and the first earth were gone. Even the sea was gone.

Coming from the heaven, coming down from God, was the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. It was beautiful and glowing like a bride walking down the aisle to the groom.

And I heard a loud voice. It came from a great white throne.

“See, God is at home with women and men,  
children and young people.

God will live among them.

They will be God’s people.

God will be with them,

and will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will not happen.

No one will weep or cry or be in pain – ever again.

All these first things in the first heaven

and first earth are gone.”



The voice from the one who was seated on the throne said to me, “See, I am making all things new. Write this down, for every word is true and can be trusted.”

Then the voice said, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To anyone who is thirsty, I will give the water of life, a gift from me.”