

## Biblical Background • All Saints Day – Year C



### Focus Scripture

**Luke 6:20–31**

### Additional Scriptures

**Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18**

**Psalm 149**

**Ephesians 1:11–23**

Almighty God, thank you for working in the lives of all your saints. Give us faith to engage the world according to your ways, living in hope and confidence of your gift of salvation. Amen.

# All Saints Day (Year C)

**H**ow do we live out God’s call to sainthood? This week’s readings affirm that all who claim and trust in the promises of God are blessed. God’s saints today – including all who are baptized into Christ – are called to look ahead, to know the hope to which God calls. And God’s saints are called to live now in the presence of God’s promises, working toward their fulfillment.

## Focus Scripture: Luke 6:20–31

Imagine the scene: Jesus goes up a mountain to pray and stays all night. The next morning he calls the disciples together and chooses twelve of them to be apostles (Luke 6:12–16). As they come down the mountain, there is an enormous crowd of people waiting for them, seeking healing. In this group there are other disciples, Jews (those noted as coming from Judea and Jerusalem) and Gentiles (those noted as coming from Tyre and Sidon). Jesus turns to the disciples and says, “Blessed are you...”

In this way the gospel of Luke begins Jesus’ teaching commonly called the Beatitudes. These sayings are also recorded in Matthew 5:1–12. In Luke, this teaching marks the beginning of a period of instruction for the disciples before Jesus sends them out on their own (9:6). As Jesus teaches about the life of discipleship, he turns conventional human understanding upside down.

Luke reports Jesus’ teaching as including four sets of blessings and woes. Poor/rich, hungry/full, weeping/laughing, and rejected/accepted form parallel pairings of blessing and woe. Jesus’ use of the word “you” in each statement suggests that the crowd included individuals living in each of these situations.

As named in Deuteronomy 11:26–28, Jesus’ hearers would have considered blessing to be a sign of God’s favour and woe a sign of God’s disapproval or judgment.

Jesus’ message to those who would follow as disciples is one of astounding promise. Jesus speaks prophetically of the

great reversal of human understanding that we encounter in the reign of God. As Jesus continues to teach, his message continues to reveal the surprising ways of God. For many in that crowd, Jesus’ words may have seemed full of justice and mercy. Others may have heard them as harsh judgment. Some may have wondered, perceiving that following Jesus was not going to be as easy as it may have first seemed.

Jesus’ words call us and all the saints to gaze forward to the time when God’s promises will be fulfilled. Those who weep now will laugh. Those who are hungry now will be filled. Those who are poor now will receive the riches of God’s inheritance. With this future firmly in our gaze, the obstacles to faith become smaller, the path easier to navigate.

After giving thanks for the faith of the Ephesians, in **Ephesians 1:11–23** the writer affirms that, through the “seal” of the Holy Spirit, these saints in Ephesus are living in God’s power and protection. The writer shares Paul’s prayer that they will welcome Jesus the Christ as head of the church.

Written to encourage those being persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BCE, **Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18** relates Daniel’s first vision and its interpretation. An angel explains to Daniel that four successive empires (or their rulers) will be destroyed by God and replaced by “the saints of the Most High”– those now suffering under Antiochus.

In **Psalm 149**, the psalmist calls God’s faithful saints to praise God’s saving acts and promises.



There are blessings and woes in life, and God’s saints are not exempt. Yet, when we faithfully place ourselves in God’s presence, new possibilities for life and service become visible. We have a role to play, along with the saints of old, in the story of God’s saving work. What might we do, as individuals and as the church, to live into God’s promises?



## Reflecting on the Word

### Connecting with life

Think back on your week and identify one thing that happened that you would consider a “blessing.” What one thing would you consider a “woe”?

- **What adjectives would you use to describe something that is a blessing? something that is a woe?**

### Scripture

On a copy of **Luke 6:20–31** circle words that suggest the key point of each verse, and compile a list of the words.

- **Based on these lists, what seems to be the thrust or intent of this passage?**
- **What dichotomies strike you in these verses? What stand out as reversals from the prevailing attitudes of contemporary culture?**

One way to define *blessings* are those things that open us up; *woes* are those things that close us down. Consult other Bible versions for additional translations of key words as you discuss:

- **In what ways are “the poor” blessed? those who hunger? those who weep? those who suffer for their faith? Does this make sense to you? Why or why not?**
- **What do you make of the list of woes Jesus gives? What does that list say to you?**
- **When will the blessings that Jesus teaches about be present?**

Like many of Jesus’ teachings, Luke 6: 20–31 addresses what it means to live both in and toward the reign of God.

- **The passage mentions the “kingdom of God.” What do you deduce about this reign of God from these verses?**

**Materials** copies of today’s focus passage, Luke 6:20–31  
various versions of the New Testament

**Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18** We encounter Daniel’s vision of four beasts.

- **What promise is made to “holy ones”?**
- **Based on this passage, what would you say about God and the nature of God’s reign?**

**Ephesians 1:11–23** As saints in Christ, we have a place in God’s reign. Jot down words or phrases that speak of the gifts we receive from Christ.

- **What role does Baptism play in the life of a saint?**
- **What strengthens us to bring God’s healing and blessing to others to invite them to participate in the vision of God’s reign?**
- **How might one reconcile the words of Ephesians 1:11–23 with the idea of the communion of saints being an inclusive community?**

### Connecting scripture and life

- **If you were writing guidelines for how to live as God’s saints, what would you include from the readings for this session?**

Saints are invited to live the presence of God’s promises and work toward their fulfillment.

- **In what ways do you – as an individual and as a church – live into God’s promised reign by sharing the blessings you have received?**

## Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

All Saints Day invites us to gaze forward to the time when God’s promises to all who believe will be fulfilled. A saint is one who has been chosen, or set apart, for the work of God, and this includes all those baptized into Christ. This may be a new understanding for those who gather this week. Jesus’ teaching on blessings and woes in Luke 6:20–31 may turn upside down the understand-

ing of blessing and woe in your culture, and opinions may differ. Specifically, in considering God’s blessings, some may find it difficult to feel they are blessed if they are facing difficult economic or relationship situations. As you prepare for worship, learning, and serving this week, pray that all may grow in understanding of what it means to live as a saint in God’s reign.



# All Saints Day (Year C)

## Prepare

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

- ❑ Recruit volunteers needed for worship: two for the prayer of confession
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Luke 6:20–31. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present the story “God Will Bless You” on p. 7. For the reading from two perspectives, arrange for two readers.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space.
- ❑ Prepare the visual presentation described in Gather.
- ❑ Bring a quantity of tealights for moving into the focus scripture (optional).
- ❑ Bring song “Everyday Loving” (pp. 16–17 *Seasons Songbook, vol. 5*, #24 on *Seasons Music CD, vol. 5*, and available for purchase as an MP3 download).
- ❑ Decide which stations you will set, and set stations as described on pp. 8–9.

## Music Suggestions

### Companions on the Journey

Carey Landry; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 8*

### Following Where Jesus Leads

Kate Abba, Julia Abrahams; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 8*

### I Am a Child of God

Bruce and Cheryl Harding; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 8*

### Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race

Ruth Duck; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 5*

### Everyday Loving

Linnea Good; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 5*

### Forever I Will Sing

Michael Mangan; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 5*

### For All the Saints

Ralph Vaughn Williams

### Give Thanks for Life

Shirley Erena Murray

### I Sing a Song of the Saints of God

Lesbia Scott

## Gather

Prepare a simple visual presentation using a program such as PowerPoint® or Keynote and images of various “saints.” Depending on your church’s understanding of saint, these might be people from your church’s heritage, or they might be those who have died during the past year, or they may be current members of your congregation. Begin with a slide that states “Saints are those who teach us how to journey in God’s ways.”

### Call to worship

(based on Psalm 149)

**LEADER:** Praise God! Sing a new song, all you who love God.

**PEOPLE:** **Let us be glad in our Creator! Let all God’s children rejoice!**

**LEADER:** Let us praise God’s name with dancing; let us make music with instruments of all kinds.

**PEOPLE:** **God loves the people and honours those who are humble.**

**LEADER:** The faithful ones can be happy and sing for joy.

**PEOPLE:** **They can celebrate as they help end the evils of injustice, abuse, and tyranny.**

**LEADER:** God will turn the world upside down and bring honour to the saints who are faithful and true.

**PEOPLE:** **God delights in the people.**

**ALL:** **Come, let us worship God!**

### Opening prayer

Loving God, we your saints gather to worship and praise you this day. We celebrate the saints who have served you and been an example for us throughout the past. We give you thanks for the joy of being a part of the communion of saints with those who have gone before and those scattered around the globe. Open us to your Spirit to continue being the saints you have called us to be. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.



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## Worship Outline • All Saints Day – Year C

### Prayer of confession

(based on Luke 6:20–26)

**ONE:** Jesus said, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours in the kingdom of God.

**TWO:** But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.”

**ALL: God, forgive us and bless us.**

**ONE:** Jesus said, “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

**TWO:** Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.”

**ALL: God, forgive us and bless us.**

**ONE:** Jesus said, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

**TWO:** Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.”

**ALL: God, forgive us and bless us.**

**ONE:** Jesus said, “Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for sure your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

**TWO:** “Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.”

**ALL: God, forgive us and bless us.**

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## Engage

### Moving into the focus scripture

Recall that this is All Saints Day/Sunday, explaining that saints are people who show God’s love and participate in loving acts that bring blessings to others. Invite the people to name people they know, or know about, who show God’s way in their words and actions. Who have been role models for them? You might light a candle for each name mentioned.

### Luke 6:20–31

Choose from the following for hearing the focus story.

**Bible story** Have a storyteller present the story “God Will Bless You” on page 7.

**Reading from two perspectives** have someone read Luke 6:20–31, inviting the people to listen to the scripture reading from the perspective of those who are considered blessed in our culture, such as those who are well-fed, happy, well-liked, and so on. Have a second person read the passage again, inviting the people to listen from the perspective of those who are poor, or hungry, or sad, or persecuted. Offer a few moments of silent reflection and then invite the people to say how it felt to listen from both sides. In what ways did they hear the message differently with each reading?

### After the focus scripture

Invite children, young people, and all who wish to move to the stations. Others will remain seated for proclaiming the word.

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## Respond

After proclaiming the word, you might invite those who have not already done so to move to and around the stations, taking ten minutes or so with a chosen practice.

**Sing** or listen to the song “Everyday Loving” (pp. 16–17 *Seasons Songbook, vol. 5, #24* on *Seasons Music CD, vol. 5*, and available for purchase as an MP3 download) as people gather together again.

### Litany of saints

*You may wish to replace some of these names with others that have local or contemporary significance, and/or to add other stanzas. The prayer can be led by one voice, with the people responding with the words in bold print, or different voices could read the*

*different names. If celebrating the Eucharist this day, you might wish to use this prayer as preface, moving from it into the portion of the Eucharistic prayer which reads “Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven...” or similar wording, according to your tradition.*

This day we celebrate God’s saints,  
those people who have tried to live in God’s ways,  
gently and firmly turning the world around –  
and even upside down –  
to make it a better place for all of God’s children.  
Thank you for your saints, O God:  
**help us to be like them.**



There are saints who have famous names:

St. Mary Magdalene

St. Peter

St. Mary the Mother of Jesus

St. James

St. Johanna

St. Mark

and many others.

Thank you for your saints, O God:

**help us to be like them.**

There are saints whose names we do not know:

unnamed caregivers

forgotten single parents

landless plantation workers

amnesty letter writers

God's volunteers

church workers.

Thank you for your saints, O God:

**help us to be like them.**

There are those throughout history

who gave their all for what they believed:

Julian of Norwich

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Martin Luther King

Teresa of Calcutta

Florence Nightingale

Sister Mary MacKillop.

Thank you for your saints, O God:

**help us to be like them.**

And there are those who are living among us,

who work for justice and peace,

for freedom and human rights,

who bring laughter and a human touch,

healing and wholeness,

acceptance and understanding,

into a world in need.

Thank you for your saints, O God:

**help us to be like them.**

### **Offertory invitation**

In Christ we have obtained an inheritance – everlasting life.

As an act of praise and thanksgiving, let us share our gifts with and through the Body of Christ.

### **Prayer of dedication**

We offer our whole selves to you,

O God, creator of everything.

It is a joy and a blessing

to share our gifts with one another.

As we offer these things

for the work of your church,

help us to be mindful of all

that we can do together

as the Body of Christ. Amen.

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## **Bless**

Go in peace to be the saints of God. Do to others as you would have them do to you. And may the God of Jesus Christ give you a spirit of wisdom that you might come to

know the hope to which you have been called, as the saints of God. Amen.

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## **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 those 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.



# Living Generously

## Scripture reading

To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person...

If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously...

Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for *them!*

Excerpts from *Luke 6:27-31*. Scripture taken from *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson; copyright ©1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002; used by permission of Navpress Publishing Group.

## Pass it on



I read a story, years ago, about a man whose car ran out of gas. A passing motorist stopped, dug a battered red can of gas out of his trunk, and gave it to the author, without charge. The only condition was that he had to pass it on, in turn, to someone else who needed it.

So the writer of the story did. With the same condition. Good fortune must be shared, not hoarded. The can must be passed on. Of course, years later, the same motorist ran out of gas again. And, of course, another one came to his aid. And to his amazement, he was given back the same old gas can, considerably more battered by now, but undeniably the same can.

More recently, I saw a similar kind of story in a church magazine. When the author went to his car in the parking lot, he found that his gas tank cap was missing. His first thought was that someone had swiped it. So he bought himself a

locking gas cap. “That’ll fix them!” he thought.

But later, he began thinking about two kinds of worlds – the kind where you had to keep everything under lock and key, and the kind where everyone was willing to share. Wouldn’t it be much better, he thought, if he saw someone without a gas cap, to share whatever he had, even his only gas cap – knowing that someone else would do the same for him?

That’s the kind of world Jesus was talking about, when he gave his disciples the great commandment. “Love others, as I have loved you,” he said.

“Pass it on,” he was saying. “Don’t try to hoard the good things. They’re not yours to keep.”

Some day, like the gas can, some good that I have done for somebody may come back to me. But if it doesn’t – well, all that really matters is that they “pass it on,” too.

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# God Will Bless You

Based on Luke 6:20–31

**O**ne night, Jesus went up a mountain to pray. The next morning he chose 12 special friends, called apostles, to spend time alone with him. Now they were coming down to a level place. Many other disciples came to join them. Large crowds of people from all over were there. They wanted to hear Jesus teach. Some wanted Jesus to heal them. They crowded around, trying to touch Jesus.

Jesus looked at the great crowd of people. Jesus saw boys and girls, parents and grandparents. There were people who were poor and people who looked sad. Jesus also saw people who were rich and people who looked happy. All kinds of people had come to see Jesus.

“You people who are poor,” said Jesus. “All of God’s creation is for you. God will bless you.”

**Invite the people to echo:** *God will bless you.*

“You people who are hungry. You will have all you want to eat. God will bless you.”

**Invite the people to echo:** *God will bless you.*

Then Jesus looked tenderly at the people who looked sad. “You people who are so sad. You will be so happy you will laugh. God will bless you.”

**Invite the people to echo:** *God will bless you.*

Jesus continued, “When you have no friends, God will bless you.”

**Invite the people to echo:** *God will bless you.*

“When people say mean things about you, God will bless you.”

**Invite the people to echo:** *God will bless you.*

“Long ago people treated God’s prophets like that. If this happens to you, be happy for God will reward you.”

Jesus turned to look at all the people in the crowd. To everyone, Jesus said, “Do your best to love everyone, but above all, do to others what you would like them to do to you.”

## Living, Learning, Growing as Disciples

The following stations might be set up around your worship space or in other places around the church. Choose one or more practices depending on your space and numbers. Display the directions.

### A circle of saints

**Materials** copies of the resource sheet “A Saint of God” (several for each person), felt-tipped markers or crayons, fabric, yarn, sticky tape, and a copy of the directions displayed where all can see

#### The practice of building community

##### Directions

God’s saints are people who show God’s love and participate in loving acts that bring blessing to others. Create a group mural that puts us among the saints of God.

1. Together make a list of people you know or know about who show God’s love in the things they do and say.
2. Have each person choose a name from the list.
3. Take several copies of the resource sheet “A Saint of God.”
4. Decorate your shapes with markers or crayons, fabric, and pieces of yarn.
5. Each person labels one of their shapes with a name from the list and the other shapes with their own name and names of friends.
6. Create a “circle of saints” by taping the hand shapes together.
7. Display on church bulletin board.

### Blessing collage

**Materials** large sheet of poster board or mural paper, art supplies, magazines, scissors, glue sticks, and a copy of the directions displayed where all can see

#### The practice of living our faith

##### Directions

1. When we offer God’s love to others, we are being a blessing.
2. Talk together about ways in which we share God’s love with others.
3. Use the art supplies and magazines to create a group collage of words and images of sharing God’s love.
4. Add a title such as “Being a Blessing.”
5. Display your collage in the church hall.





## Greeting Cards

**Materials** postcard-size pieces of card stock or sturdy paper, tissue paper in various hues, ribbon the same colour as the tissue paper, felt markers, glue sticks, scissors, copy of church directory (optional), and a copy of the directions displayed where all can see

## The practice of affirming

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### Instructions

All Saints Day is a good opportunity to recognize the saints in our congregation by giving them greeting cards.

1. Together look through the church directory, if possible, and each choose a person.  
Or discuss together some possible recipients of the card.
2. Using the card stock or heavy paper print this message on one side of the card:  
God blesses you. You are a saint!"
3. Decorate the other side of the card by gluing on a piece of tissue paper, just a little smaller than the card, and then gluing two pieces of ribbon the same colour of the tissue paper to form a cross on top of the tissue paper.
4. Make arrangements for distributing the cards.

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## Welcome projects

**Materials** card stock/heavy paper, art and craft supplies, name tag holders, and a copy of the directions displayed where all can see

## The practice of hospitality

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### Directions

Jesus speaks of loving others and doing good.

1. Consider projects in which you could participate that convey the welcome and love expressed in Jesus' teaching.
2. Use the supplies provide to create "welcome" tags for visitors or create welcome cards to place in the pews.
3. Talk about other projects in which you might participate.

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## Discussion

**Materials** copies of "Living Generously" (p. 6), and a copy of the directions displayed where all can see

## The practice of living generously

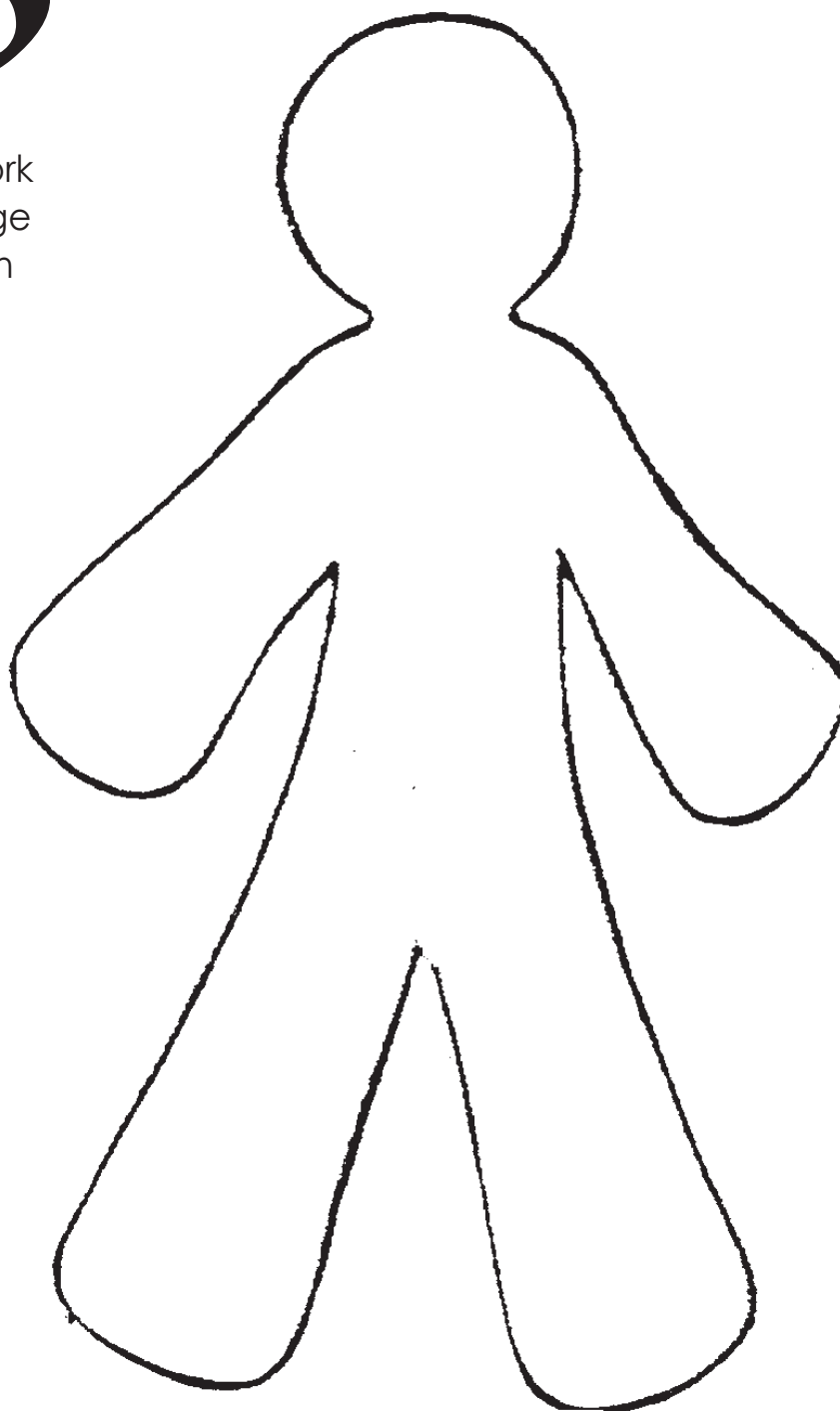
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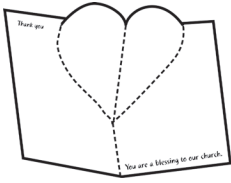
### Directions

1. Take a copy of "Living Generously" and read the paraphrase of Luke 6:27–31.
2. Together talk about this question:
  - **What does this paraphrase say about how we can live in relationship with one another?**
3. Read the story "Pass it on" on the sheet "Living Generously" and tell your own stories of passing on God's way of love.
4. Together discuss:
  - **How has Jesus' teaching, and this story, helped you to understand more about what it means to live in God's way?**
  - **In what ways can you be a "saint," sharing God's generous love with others?**

# A Saint of God

Saints are people who work hard to live God's message of love and to share it with others. Watch for saints of God this week.





# Thank You Card

## Instructions

There are many people in our church community who show God's love in the way they help others. Make a card to give to one of these "saints."

- Cut out the card along the outside solid lines.
- Decorate the heart shape.
- Fold along the dotted line to form a card, with the heart inside.
- Decorate the front and inside of the card.

