

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 5–12

Children usually have lively imaginations. Older children in this age group 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 and the session provides opportunities for the children to respond to the message in Revelation through using both their senses and their imagination. Children are often more ready and able than adults to “step into” a dream and may be able to encourage others to see themselves as part of this celebratory vision. 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. This message gives hope to the children as it has given hope to Christians through the centuries.

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. Take some time with the children to think about the word “saint” and reflect on those who have provided inspiration and encouragement in their lives. You can also encourage them to recognize the ways in which they are also saints, helping to do God’s work of love in the world. Pray that the children will know that they have a part to play in participating in 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).
- ❑ Prepare a worship area with *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 *glitter glue and name tags* on which you have printed “Saint,” leaving room for children to add their names.

Engage

- ❑ Make a *copy of resource sheet “Revealed: A Wonderful World”* (p. 6) and tape onto a *strip of paper* to make scroll.
- ❑ Bring *copies of teardrop shapes on resource sheet “Teardrops to Joy”* (p. 8) and sheets of *coloured paper*.

- ❑ Bring *copies of resource sheets “Revealed: A Wonderful World”* (p. 6) and *“Seeing with New Eyes”* (p. 7) and *pencils*. Make a *copy of directions for the “Word group”* (see p. 4).

Respond

Gather or make the materials for the zones selected.

- ❑ **Art zone:** *mural paper, art supplies, collage materials, glue sticks,*
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** *black or dark blue construction paper, coloured chalk* (soaked in water), *recording of meditative music*
- ❑ **Community zone:** *several balloons* (with no design or lettering) for each child, *permanent markers, ribbon*; check for latex allergies.
- ❑ **Music zone:** *song “May the God of Hope”* (pp. 30–31 in *Seasons Songbook, volume 6*; #24 on *Seasons Music CD, volume 6*); *print chorus lyrics on newsprint*.
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** *folded card stock/heavy paper, markers, crayons, or pencil crayons*



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

Welcome the children and any guests.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship area and invite a child to light the candle. Point out the white cloth and mention that the colour white is used on celebration days. Today we are celebrating All Saints Day, a time to remember all the people in the past and present who love God and are followers of Jesus. Distribute name tags, and invite children to add their names and decorate with glitter. Gather in a circle and welcome each other by saying, “Welcome, Saint (*child’s name*)!”

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

Pray (*invite children to repeat each line after you*)

Creator God,
you make everything new.
Help us dream along with you. Amen.

Extinguish the candle to show that the gathering 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 story

Have a child bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to Revelation. Notice that it is the last book of the New Testament. Explain that when this book was written life was not very good for Christians. The Roman Empire ruled the land. It was dangerous to be a Christian and not to worship the emperor. The followers of Jesus saw little around them that gave them hope.

The Bible story

Tell the story of the resource sheet “Revealed: A Wonderful World” (based on **Revelation 21:1–6a**) by unrolling it like a scroll. Ask:

- **If you had a dream or vision like this one, who would you want to tell about it?**

After the children have named some people, remind them that John wrote down what he heard and saw so his friends would know about it. Those writings were saved for years and years so we too can read about God’s dream of a wonderful new world.

Exploring the story further

To enable the children to explore the story further, according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.

Dream group Invite this group to explore how tears can sometimes become something happy. Review the lines on the resource sheet “Revealed: A Wonderful World” that refer to the taking away of sadness, sickness, and death. Distribute the paper tear shapes (from the resource sheet “Teardrops to Joy”) and sheets of paper. Show children how to make a heart and a flower from the shapes, as shown on the resource sheet. Encourage them to experiment with other ways to use the shapes to create pictures of joy and glue the shapes in place on the sheets of paper.

Word group Invite this group to learn about the word “apocalypse.” Provide copies of the resource sheets “Seeing with New Eyes” and “Revealed: A Wonderful World,” pencils, and a copy of these directions:

- 1 Take a copy of the resource sheets “Seeing with New Eyes” and “Revealed: A Wonderful World.” You will need a pencil too.
- 2 Read about the word “apocalypse” on the page “Seeing with New Eyes.”
- 3 Think about John’s vision by reading the words in italics on the page “Revealed: A Wonderful World.”
- 4 Follow the directions in the section “An Experiment” on the page “Seeing with New Eyes” for thinking about situations in your own life.
- 5 If you have time, talk with a partner about the question in the starburst near the bottom of the page.

The Bible story and us

Invite the children who made pictures with tear shapes to show them to the others. Invite the group who learned about the word “apocalypse” to tell something about it. Ask:

- **How would hearing about God’s vision to John give hope to the saints of the early church?**
- **How does hearing about God’s vision for a new world give people hope today?**
- **What actions can we take to participate in God’s dream for our world?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Art zone: Mural** All Saints Day gives us a chance to recognize how we are saints when we participate in God’s wonderful dream for the world. Stretch a length of mural paper along a table and invite children to work together with the art and craft supplies to create a mural of images and words that express things they can do to participate in God’s dream for a wonderful world.
- **Quiet zone: Chalk meditation** John’s vision invites everyone to imagine God’s dream for a new world. Invite children to participate in a meditation activity as they imagine the wonderful world that John described. Provide construction paper, chalk, copies of the resource sheet “Revealed: A Wonderful World,” and the following directions. Play a recording of meditative music during the activity.

- 1 Take a piece of chalk and a sheet of construction paper.
- 2 As you listen to the meditative music let the chalk move across the paper, without trying to draw anything.
- 3 When you are ready to stop, find a title for your creation from the words written in italics on the page “Revealed: A Wonderful World.”



- **Community zone: 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.
- **Music zone: Singing about hope** The vision in Revelation 21 gives us hope that with God all things are possible. Sing the song “May the God of Hope” (*volume 6*). Read aloud the words for the chorus. Ask:
 - **According to these words, what are we called to do as we live in God’s world?**
 - **What might you do to participate in God’s dream for “a world that’s new”?**Sing the song together again. Note that a song like this would have been important to saints, followers of Jesus throughout the history of the church.

❑ **Outreach zone: Comforting others** We do not have the power to do away with all tears and sadness, but we can bring comfort to people who are sad. Invite children to make cards by decorating the outsides of the folded pieces of

card stock with drawings, and writing simple messages of comfort on the inside. Make arrangements for children to deliver these to a clergyperson or the pastoral care team to deliver to families who have recently been bereaved.

Bless

Gather Invite children to gather at the worship table. Light the candle, or ask a child to light it. Recall today’s conversation about what it means to imagine and participate in God’s dream for a wonderful world. Invite children to share something from the activities in which they participated during Respond.

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

Pray this prayer or one of your own:

Thank you, God, for the people who have saved these stories about you and your people so we can hear them today. Amen.

Blessing Say to each child, “(Child’s name), God blesses you, for you are a saint of God.”

Reflect

What visions and dreams were expressed by the children as they thought about participating in

God’s dream? How can you continue to affirm that they are saints, God’s precious ones?



Revealed: A Wonderful World

based on Revelation 21:1–6a

Holding a scroll with the story on it will reinforce the idea that this was written down like a letter.

Long ago there was a follower of Jesus named John. Well, there were many named John, but this one had a dream that was amazing. This John was one of the saints of the early church.

John's dream was about how God sees the world. In this dream, John heard a voice telling about some wonderful, amazing, stunning things. They were so wonderful that John listened with great care and looked at this vision with wonder.

Then John wrote everything down that he saw and heard, which was what he was told to do at the beginning of this revelation or vision or dream. John wanted everyone to know about God's dream for the world.

This is part of what John saw, heard, and wrote down:

In God's dream of the world, no one will be sad because God's home is with every one of us, almost like God pitches a tent next to where we live.

In God's dream of the world, no one will cry because everyone will live in peace so there will be no fighting and arguing.

In God's dream of the world, no one – woman, man, or child – will be hungry, and everyone will have a home. Can you imagine anything better?

In God's dream of the world, God will never, ever leave us. Sickness and death will disappear. What a glorious day that will be!

What do you think the people thought when they got John's letter telling them about God's dream?



Seeing with New Eyes

Apocalypse

a-poc'-a-lips

Have you ever heard this word? Apocalypse? Sometimes movies about destruction and doom are said to be about the Apocalypse.

Actually, the word "apocalypse" comes from the Greek word meaning "to remove the veil." When we use it about God and the Bible, we think about God trying to reveal something that we wouldn't otherwise see. The book of Revelation is called a book of the Apocalypse. Think about it. The vision from God to John lifts the veil and reveals the world as God sees it. That wonderful world is without sadness or pain. Thinking about the world in this way gave hope to people in John's day, people who are the saints of the early church.

An Experiment

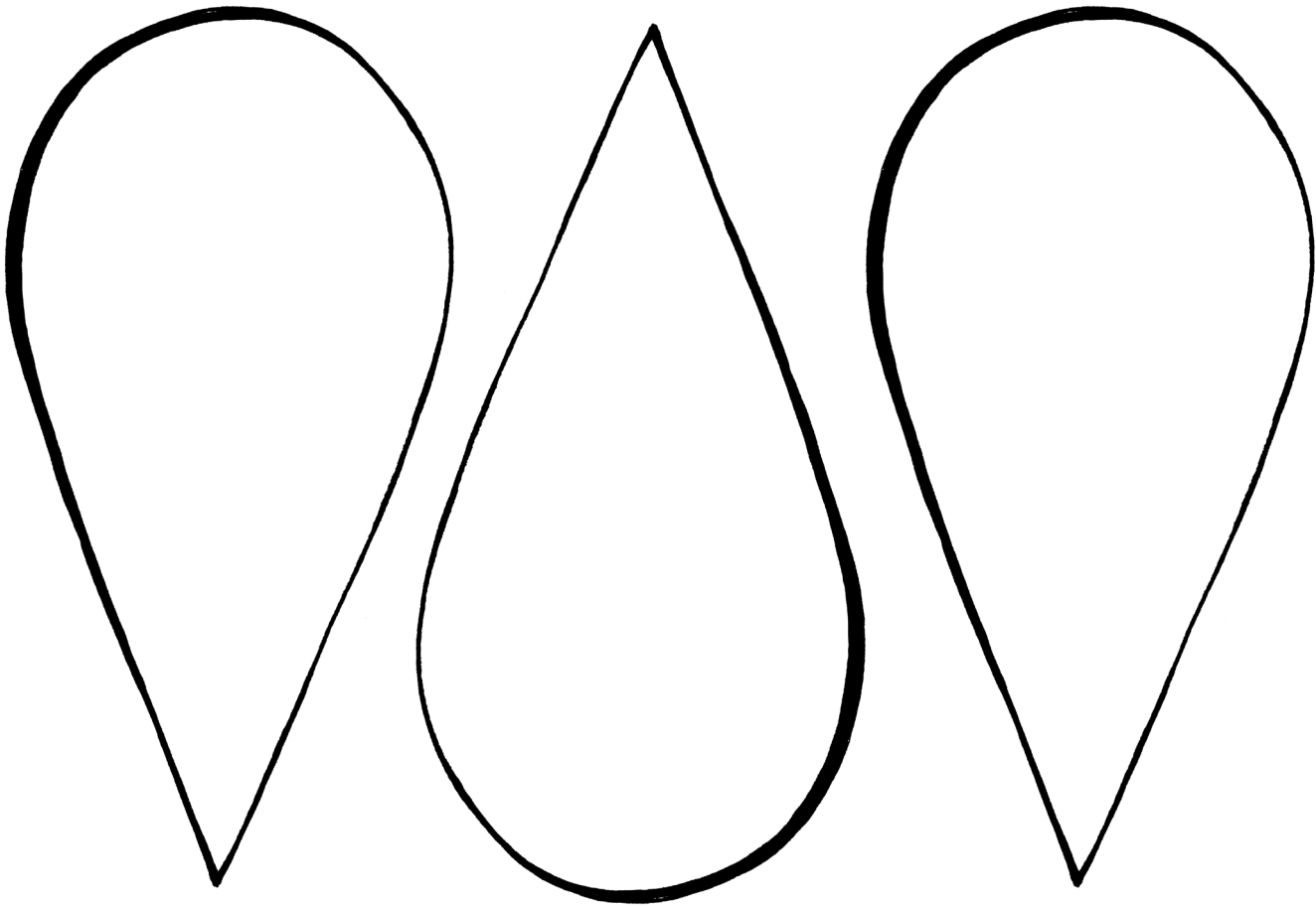
Sometimes when we look at a situation from a different angle or from another point of view, the situation changes for us. That different point of view might be through the loving eyes of God. Think of a situation in your life or community or the world that is troublesome. Write it in this box.

Now, think about that situation as though you were viewing it from God's wonderful world described by John. How could the situation look different to you? Write about it in this box.

How would your life be different if you tried to imagine that you lived in God's wonderful world?



Teardrops to Joy



Copy and cut out many teardrops on many colours of paper. The tear shapes can be assembled to create hearts, flowers, and many other joyful objects.

