



On your marks

All Saints Day is a traditional festival of the church and gives us an opportunity to do three things: to remember inspiring stories of the heroes of our faith from the past; to celebrate the fact that we are each called today to play our part in God's mission as his saints; and to look forward to heaven when all God's saints – past, present and future – will be gathered before the throne of God in heaven.

If your church is named after a particular saint from long ago, All Saints Day can be another opportunity to remember how he or she shone for God in this world along with countless others down the ages. If your church is not St Somebody-or-Other's, then this festival is an ideal moment to pause and thank God for each other. Although there have certainly been famous Saints (with a capital 'S') throughout history, the New Testament is clear that we are all saints – called, loved, saved and filled by God – and that we need each other to be able to catch even a glimpse of how wonderful God is:

May you have power with all God's people to understand Christ's love. May you know how wide and long and high and deep it is. And may you know his love, even though it can't be known completely. Then you will be filled with everything God has for you. Ephesians 3:18 – 19 (NIRV)

Get set

The aim of this all-age service outline is to focus on the present-day saints of your own congregation of God's people. Every single person in the Christian family is important and gifted, including those who aren't the ones 'up front' but who go about their ministry quietly within church or publicly in their day-to-day lives outside Sunday.

Two key Bible passages are: 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 27 (The church is like a body) and Romans 16:5b – 16 (Paul's list of the saints from the church in Rome who each only get this brief one-off mention at the end of his letter, buried at the heart of the New Testament!)

You will need:

- An all-age group to prepare and read Psalm 15 (see below).
- You will need the 24 names (from Romans 16:5b – 16) written out on separate cards and given to 24 members of the church, hopefully scattered around your worship area.
- Post-it notes of varying sizes, shapes and colours, and some coloured pens or pencils.
- An enlarged dove mobile (see below).
- White sticky labels.

Possible hymns and songs:

For all the Saints

We are the Church, You are the Church



Bind us together

Church is not a building

The Church's one foundation

For further ideas for All Saints Day, go to:

[Stories of Everyday Saints](#)

[Story Assemblies of 24 Saints](#)

Go!

1. Introduction

Today is a day to celebrate each other as the saints of God. The well-known saints of the past were ordinary people just like you and me who wanted to follow Jesus and who opened up their lives to the love and inspiration of his Holy Spirit. The Saints - with a capital 'S' - of tomorrow are you and me today, as we seek to do the same. We are saints alive and we need each other!

2. Some sentences of welcome to say together

Leader: We are not just once a week friends.

All: We are the family of God.

Leader: We are not a cosy club.

All: We are the body of Christ.

Leader: We are not simply strangers meeting.

All: We are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Leader: We are not here by accident.

All: Our Father has called us to worship.

Leader: We are not just filling up an hour.

All: Jesus wants us to know him better.

Leader: We are not here just to go through the motions.

All: The Holy Spirit has some special words for us.



All: We meet in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

3. A time to say sorry

Ask a group to read Psalm 15 (CEV, see below) – perhaps an all-age group such as an extended family – taking a line each. This psalm helps us to realise that none of us could ever earn the badge of sainthood. It is a gift that we receive when we admit our need of God and learn to depend on him.

Who may stay in God's temple or live on the holy mountain of the LORD?

Only those who obey God and do as they should.

They speak the truth and don't spread gossip;

They treat others fairly and don't say cruel things.

They hate worthless people, but show respect for all who worship the LORD.

And they keep their promises, no matter what the cost.

They lend their money without charging interest,

And they don't take bribes to hurt the innocent.

Those who do these things will always stand firm.

Follow this with a short time of silence for everyone to say their own 'sorry' to God. Then, pass on to each other God's forgiveness in Jesus' name. This should be done in the manner of 'passing the peace', as is practised in many churches, only now it is an absolution passed on from God via the worship leader to each other. Perhaps the following words could be used, accompanied by a handshake, hug or kiss, as is felt appropriate.

God has forgiven you because of what Jesus has done.

Then say: *The Lord's Prayer*

4. What does 'saint' mean to you? A Story

For most of us the word saint is 'loaded', carrying with it an other-worldly holiness that is way out of our ordinary reach! We somehow feel deep down that 'saint' is a title for someone else and not us; and that what we have to offer God isn't much good.

Here is a traditional story that you might like to use that addresses this point in a fun way. It reminds us that each one of us brings pleasure to God by being who he made us to be. This is our specialness – our saintliness! Lucy Moore from our team quotes this story in her book [All-Age Worship](#), Chapter 3, p. 69:



The monks loved to serve God in lots of different ways. They prayed and gave weary travellers a bed for the night. They looked after sick people and sang praises to God in their services. But the years passed and the monks grew old. Although their hearts were truer to God than ever, their voices grew cracked and hoarse. Their once-beautiful singing sounded like a farmyard of animals honking and squawking and wheezing. The Abbot was very troubled. 'This singing sounds terrible!', he said to the brothers. 'Brother Andrew sounds like a strangled turkey! Brother Francis sounds like a dying pig! Brother Mark sounds like a squashed frog! How can this awful noise be pleasing to God?' The monks agreed to pray about it.

That night a stranger arrived at the monastery door. He was a traveller who had lost his way and needed a bed for the night. The monks welcomed him in and gave him hot soup and fresh bread. 'Where are you going?' they asked him. 'To the National Opera House,' the young man replied proudly. 'I am an opera singer and I have a big part to sing in the gala next week.'

'A singer?' said the Abbot. 'What a godsend! Could you possibly sing instead of us in the service tonight? Your voice would do far greater honour to God than the sounds we make.'

The opera singer was delighted to show off in front of the old men. 'I'll show them how to sing!' he thought.

That night, the chapel was filled with his glorious voice, echoing through the chapel like the voice of an angel. The monks were so thrilled that they forgot to pray. They thanked the young man and went to bed, marvelling at what they had heard.

That night, the Abbot had a dream. In his dream, God spoke to him and said, 'What was the matter with my dear servants? Why did no one sing for me in the chapel tonight?'

'Lord,' said the Abbot. 'At last we could give you real praise tonight. Didn't you hear the wonderful singing?'

'I heard nothing from the chapel tonight,' said God sadly. 'Usually it is your love for me that I hear, not the quality of your voices. But that young man only loved himself, so I could hear nothing at all.'

The Abbot woke up and told the other monks his dream. They were all deeply ashamed that they had forgotten to pray to God the night before. They asked God's forgiveness and then they were filled with such joy that they thought their hearts would burst. God loved them! He had missed them when they didn't sing! They rushed to the chapel and lifted up their voices in praise once more. In heaven God smiled. He didn't hear the wheezing, gasping and croaking. It was their love that he heard once again.

5. Reading from Romans 16:5b - 16 and a whole-church activity

This Bible reading from the last chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans probably doesn't get used much in churches. It doesn't seem that important after all the doctrinal teaching in the rest of this letter and, on top of that, it is full of impossible names!



A way to make this reading work as a whole-church activity is to write out each of the names listed in these verses on separate pieces of card together with a phoentic clue (where necessary) as to how it is pronounced. You will need 25 people (adults and children), 24 of whom should each take a name. Number the cards 1 to 24 in the order the names appear in the reading. For example:

Number 12: Tryphaena (=Triff-ay-na)

Note: names ending in 'a' are usually of women.

When you get to number 15 - Rufus, another person (unnamed), who is his mother, should stand as well. This is why you need 25 people.

The service leader should start off the reading, pausing before each name to call out the number. On hearing his or her number that person should stand and say his or her name. That person should remain standing. At the end of the reading there should be 25 people standing around the church - these are the saints of the church in Rome.

Look everyone. Here are just some of the saints of the church in Rome. I bet not one of them thought of themselves as saints. I bet they never imagined that their names would be remembered and read out in the province of Britannia 2000 years in their future! I bet they thought that they hadn't got much to offer the church of God in Rome but they had - they were friends, examples of faith, hard workers, fellow prisoners, relatives, faithful servants, caring mothers and much more besides!

If Paul were writing to our church today, he would want to greet all the saints here in the same way. Yes, the saints at... (*name of church*)... because everyone is important; everyone is needed to make it church; and everyone is part of God's mission in the world. Paul wrote at the beginning of this letter about these very Romans: First, I thank God in the name of Jesus Christ for all of you. I do this because people everywhere in the world are talking about your faith' (Romans 1:8, CEV).

Let's all call out our names - the names of the saints in this place today. (Shout out names together and not just those standing up.)

Listen to what Jesus says: 'Be happy that your names are written in heaven!' (Luke 10:20b, CEV)
This is what makes us saints alive!

6. Outline for a short talk

The following outline draws on 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 27.

1. Saints alive with the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:13b)

What an unlikely bunch of people you find in a church! What draws them together isn't a shared love of some sport or hobby; not a shared social background, upbringing or particular education; not even sometimes a shared geography or commitment to a certain locality, although hopefully this will usually be a factor. What links everybody is that God's Spirit lives in them. This is what makes them



and us God's saints. It takes the whole people of God to begin to show and share what God is like - both to each other as well as to the world around.

Invite each person to write their name on post-it notes of different colours and shapes and ask them to bring them out and stick them on to a large dove mobile, which represents the Holy Spirit. ([Download a template for this dove mobile here.](#)) Alternatively, each person could come and put their initials in different colours on the dove. This represents each saint being incorporated into the Spirit and the Spirit being in each person.

Conclude by saying: Look, here are the Saints of God... (*name of church*)... filled with the Spirit of God

1. **Saints alive as the body of Christ** (1 Corinthians 12:12 and 14 - 27)

It takes all the saints here at this church to become Jesus now to each other and to the community around us. Each one of us is part of his body.

You will need to clear some space for this next activity as hopefully everyone will be willing to reposition themselves into an outline of the human body. This could also be done within the main body of a church that has chairs or pews but it will be more challenging!

Imagine this space to contain the invisible outline of a human body. Here is where the head would be, here the neck, the torso, arms, legs, etc. Now can I invite you to come and put yourself inside this body outline in the place that matches your gifts and talents. For example:

- If you are someone who is a good listener, put yourself in the place of one of the ears.
- If you are good at catering, put yourself in the stomach!
- If you are a visitor, then be one of the feet.
- If you are someone gifted with empathy, place yourself by the heart.
- If you are someone quick to spot someone new, become an eye.

Don't worry if you end up with several people in one place.

All of us have a place in the body of Christ. Sometimes our place changes over time. Sometimes we can be in two places, depending on the need. Sometime it takes time to discover the part God has for us to play in his body on earth. Sometimes others can see the place we have better than we recognise it ourselves.

Conclude by saying, when everyone is in place: The Saints of God... (*name of church*)... who together make up the body of Christ

1. **Saints alive with God at work in each one of us**(1 Corinthians 12:6)

Every saint is a work in progress. But God has promised to bring that work to completion one day as we work with him and he works in us. This is why we need to be kind to each other and



understanding, as well as stand in awe of each other - individually we are each his workmanship! To remind us of this, let us give each other a new name label today and, using this, pray for each other.

Arrange for a set of white sticky labels to be available for each row, table or area within the church. People should pair up and each write a label for the other that says:

Saint... (*name of the person*)

As each person sticks the label on to the other person, invite them to say a simple prayer of blessing for that person either aloud or silently as suits the tradition of your church.

Conclude by all saying: We are the Saints of God... (*name of church*)... God is at work in us.

7. Prayers

When it comes to prayers, invite all the leaders of the organisations and groups at your church to stand up. Include as many groups as you can think of: from the men's breakfast club to luncheon club drivers; from the missionary prayer group to the brownies. Have them call out each group as you all pray God's blessing on the saints at work in your church and their work beyond the church.

8. Blessing

Encourage everyone to join hands and face outward, as a sign that our shared sainthood is not for ourselves but for the world into which God sends us as his Spirit-filled body for the week ahead. Use the words of the grace (2 Corinthians 13:13).