

Christ Church, 31 Oct. 2021, Eve of All Saints, Eve of COP26. Written service circulated to all

Today is a 5th Sunday so we have decided to have another café style church, which is All Age and led jointly by myself (Rev Naomi) and Sandy (Children's and Family Worker). We are live-streaming though this may not work so well for those of you watching at home – hopefully you can do the activities at home, rather than watch us do them!

We are using some of the lectionary readings set for All Saints, which is tomorrow and they will influence our prayers and hymns. Also, COP26, the Climate Conference starts tomorrow in Glasgow, hosted by the UK government. We have been counting down to COP26 since our Climate Sunday service at the end of August. And the URC Eastern Synod is holding an online prayer vigil, tonight at 7.30pm Fortunately the Psalm set for today talks about the earth and all that is in it belonging to God and we use that as the basis for our call to worship, which we will say together:

Call to Worship (inspired Psalm 24)

**The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it!
From the east to the west, from the north to the south,
God's Spirit moves across the face of the earth.
From the east to the west, from the north to the south,
we gather together, united by God's Spirit,
to celebrate God's glory
and proclaim His praise!
Let's worship God together!**

Hymn Touch the earth lightly - Red folder 98

Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger,
who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
we who would foster
clouds of disaster,
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

Let there be greening,
birth from the burning,
water that blesses and air that is sweet,
health in God's garden,
hope in God's children,
regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living,
God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow, and the sun,
teach us, deflect us,
Christ re-connect us,
using us gently and making us one.

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Opening Prayer – video prayer on the eve of COP26 by Revd David Coleman – URC Eco Chaplain

To watch at home - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cl2X4aQW4g>

**Readings: Psalm 24:1-6
John 11:32-37**

Naomi – introduction what 'Halloween' is really all about:

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I'm probably telling many of you what you already know, but as I see more and more Halloween stuff being sold and decorations being put out all over the place earlier and earlier, it seems that a lot of people, and certainly society in general doesn't know what Halloween is. Halloween is a contraction of All Hallows Eve – the night before All Saints Day or All Hallows' Day (like we have Christmas 'eve'...). It begins the observance of Allhallowtide the time in the liturgical year (church calendar) when we remember the dead, including saints (hallows), martyrs and all the faithful departed – that it is Christians who have died, but really we include anyone, not only church members. So that is how perhaps we get the link to graveyards and ghosts at Halloween, but it shouldn't be a scary time. I've no idea where all the witches and decorated pumpkins and trick or treating come from – probably from America and of course shops take advantage to sell things.

Something I didn't know - In Scotland and Ireland, **guising** – children disguised in costume going from door to door for food or coins – is a traditional Halloween custom. It is thought that because so many Irish emigrated to the USA, that is how trick or treating became so popular there, but there seems to be no record of people trick or treating in America before the 1930s.

All Saints Day is a celebration observed in many countries. In some places it has nothing to do with religion, but in most countries it is a festival of the church – people attend special church services and light candles for people who have died, often actually in the cemetery or graveyard. Some Christians also abstain from eating meat and have special vegetarian food like potato pancakes and 'soul cakes'. This is a small round cake a bit like short bread (**show picture**) The cakes, often simply referred to as souls, are given out to **soulers** - usually children and the poor who go from door to door during the days of Allhallowtide singing and saying prayers. Apparently, this started in the medieval period and went on to the 1930s and may still happen in some places. This may be another origin of trick or treating – going to people's houses and being given something to eat. The practice of giving and eating soul cakes continues in some countries today, such as Portugal and the Philippines. Because Halloween is in late autumn, apples are also a popular food, and toffee apples.

The Christian Church (worldwide, I'm not sure the URC has ever done it!) traditionally observed Hallowe'en through a vigil. Worshippers prepared themselves for feasting on the following All Saints Day with prayers and fasting. After this special vigil service, suitable festivities and entertainments often follow, as well as a visit to the graveyard or cemetery, where flowers and candles are often placed in preparation for All Saints' Day. In Finland so

Christ Church, 31 Oct. 2021, Eve of All Saints, Eve of COP26. Written service circulated to all many people visit the cemeteries on All Hallows' Eve to light candles that, they are known as 'seas of light'. **(show pictures)**

In Guatemala they fly special kites to take the spirits away.

Some countries (Peru) have special dances

(show pictures of other countries)

And, you may know that All Saints Day, called Day of the Dead, is a huge festival in Mexico, with people visiting the graveyard with food and drink, special food – like *pan de muerto* and skulls made of sugar, dressing up, and special orange flowers. Many people also make an altar in the home with photos of family members who have died and gifts of their favourite things.

There is a little quiz on your tables – see if you can match the pictures with the right country (represented by the flag, so you will need to know the flags too!)

Sandy: (John 11:32-37)

How do we all feel right now? Hold up the emoticon to show how you feel. As I talk about Lazarus, can you hold up the emoticon that matches what I am talking about?

In the reading from John 11 you heard earlier, we have one of the shortest of all verses in the bible, verse 35; 'Jesus wept'. We don't often read about Jesus crying, do we? It seems strange to think of God's Son having this emotion, or any emotion actually, but particularly this one. Jesus crying? We have a general view that crying is letting down your guard a bit too much, its weak, and makes you vulnerable. Doesn't it?

Other people might say; "It's ok to cry – let it all out – then you can get over it!" Neither of these are particularly helpful are they? Crying is a natural process that we can't help, it's our body's way of releasing that emotion and it's very necessary so that we don't get all tied up inside. If you have had a friend or relative die, you may have experienced an overwhelming sadness that doesn't go away in a hurry, it might feel as if you have lost a part of yourself. And you may cry every time you think of that person. This too is OK. Eventually, we may be able to think of happy memories of that person, but this takes a while and we need time to process what has happened and the great loss we feel.

When my best friend died of cancer, I was very sad for a long time, I missed her and also felt sad because I knew I would no longer be able to chat to her and she would no longer be a part of my life. I also felt sad for the family she left behind, including her four-year-old daughter. Even now, I feel sad sometimes when I think about her, especially at this time of year as she would have had her birthday on 24th October. But I also have happy memories of the times we spent growing up together. I will never forget her – her name was Amanda but we used to call her Mandy, and she is the reason my name is Sandy, as we changed it from Sandra to Sandy so that we were Sandy and Mandy! That memory still makes me smile now.

Why did Jesus cry? After all, he knew that he would bring Lazarus back to life, he had already had that conversation with his disciples on the way there, you can read this in verses 11 to 15. So why was he crying? Jesus was affected by all the sadness around him. He saw all his friends, Mary and Martha and all the people around crying and it upset him too. This too is natural – when we see someone crying, we feel for them and their emotions become ours. This is called empathy.

And he was angry, which often comes with grief. The anger comes because we want to do something to make things better and we may feel helpless. Jesus got angry probably because he saw and felt all the sadness around him, knowing that it was unnecessary, knowing what would happen next.

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Jesus showed us that it's OK to have all these emotions, and that he was a normal human being just like us – but also God's Son, able to perform miracles.

The next time you see someone who looks sad, it's ok to try to cheer them up, but it may not be what they need right at that moment. They may just need to know you are there for them and it's OK to cry with them if that's how you feel, because it shows you care.

Activity – making paper flowers

We usually have flowers at a funeral and a lot of people take flowers to the cemetery to put on a grave on the anniversary of the person dying, or sometimes on their birthday, or as we heard earlier on 1 November for All Saints Day. Some people like to arrange the church flowers to remember someone who has died.

Also as we are an Eco Church and we are thinking and praying about the Climate Conference which starts tomorrow we are recycling newspapers and other things like old calendars and tissue paper to make our flowers.

There are also two conversation starters on the table, for things you might want to chat about while you make your flowers (don't worry, this is not a discussion you need to report back on!) Afterwards we can decorate the church with our flowers. And if you would like to hang a heart on the tree for someone who has died, you can do that too. (We had the tree for our Remembering Service last Sunday)

Conversation starters:

- How do you feel about Halloween? (do you like it? Not like it? Why?)
- What do you do to remember people who have died?

Hymn For All the Saints R&S 658 (omit v2) traditional hymn sung around this time

For all the saints, who from their labours rest;
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name, Lord Jesus, be for ever blessed:
Alleluia, alleluia!

O may your servants, faithful, true and bold,
fight as the saints who nobly fought of old
and win with them the victor's crown of gold.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Oh blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine
Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine:
Alleluia, alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest shore
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
and sings to Father, Son and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, alleluia!

W. W. How

Prayers of Intercession (next page)

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Dear Lord God,
thank you for the gift of new life that you have given to us
through the waters of our baptism, which we remembered last week.
Help us, as your baptised people not to be tempted to do wrong,
and to have new life through the gift of your Holy Spirit
Lord who forgives: **hear our prayer**

We pray for all those who are feeling sad because of the death of someone they love.
Help them to feel better knowing that Jesus has everlasting life
so that everyone who dies knowing and following You may also have everlasting life.
Keep us from fearing death, but when we are not sure about things,
help us put our faith in Jesus.
Lord who forgives, **hear our prayer**

We pray for hospices and for people who work with the dying.
Keep them strong, and give them peace to do their difficult work with dignity and sensitivity.
We pray for all those people who work with alcoholics and drug addicts.
Use them to make a difference to people's lives,
and to help them start their life anew.
Lord who forgives: **hear our prayer**

We pray for the meeting about climate change called COP26. Be with the world leaders and guide
them to make the right choices to save our planet and limit climate change.
We pray for all those already affected by climate change, especially most recently the floods in
Kerala, Southern India.
Help us all to play our part in taking care of the planet, limiting our use of the world's resources
and re-using as much as we can.
Lord who forgives: **hear our prayer**

As we start moving closer to Advent and Christmas
Let us remember that you came to live among us, as a human just like us.
You experienced joy and sadness; you were sad when your friends died.
Help us to live as people who face death in the certain hope of coming back to life through you.
Remind us and comfort us every day with your promise
that we will be together again in your kingdom, with all who have died in the faith of Christ.
Lord who forgives: **hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, through the death and coming back to life again of your Son,
you rescue us from the fear of death.
Restore us to full life, free of worries and fears, so that we may serve you in the world;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Hymn Longing for light (Christ be our light) red folder 65 (next page)

Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to You.
Make us Your own, Your holy people
Light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.

Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us.
Make us your living voice.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.

Longing for food, many are hungry
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us Your bread, broken for others
Shared until all are fed.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.

Many the gifts, many the people,
Many the heart that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another
Making your kingdom come.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in Your church gathered today.

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Blessing let's say the Grace together:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. **Amen**

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