

Straight from the "Hart"

November 6, 2022

All Saint's Sunday



Welcome to the Hartland United Methodist Church service script. We are glad you are reading.



Tribute to Veterans Before next Sunday is Veteran's Day, so let's pause to hear this poem by Cheryl Dyson.

On Veteran's Day we honor all
who answered to a service call.
Soldiers young, and soldiers old
Fought for freedom, brave and bold.
Some have lived, while others died
and all of them deserve our pride.
We're proud of all the soldiers who
kept thinking of red, white and blue.
They fought for us and all our rights
they fought through many days and nights,
and though we may not know each name
we thank ALL veterans just the same.

Prayer Let's pray. Dear Lord, Today we honor our veterans, worthy men and women who gave their best when they were called upon to serve and protect their

country. We pray that you will bless them, Lord, for their unselfish service in the continual struggle to preserve for all of us, our freedoms, our safety, and our country's heritage. Bless them abundantly for the hardships they faced, for the sacrifices they made, for their many different contributions to America's victories over tyranny and oppression. We respect them, we thank them, we honor them, we are proud of them, and we pray that you will watch over these special people and bless them with peace and happiness.

Now any of you that are veterans, we ask you to stand or raise your hand so we can acknowledge you and thank you for your service... [clap] and now let's all stand with them as we sing... America, the Beautiful...

Music

America the Beautiful

1. O beautiful for spacious skies,
for amber waves of grain;
for purple mountain majesties
above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
and crown thy good with brotherhood
from sea to shining sea.



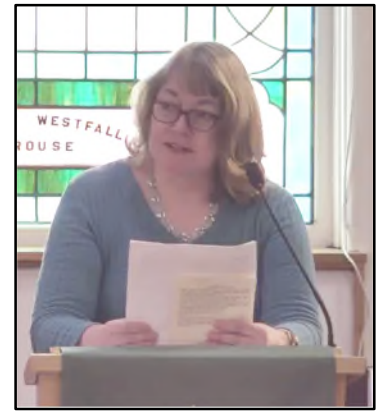
2. O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,
who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!
America! America! May God thy gold refine,
till all success be nobleness, and every gain divine.

3. O beautiful for patriot dream that sees beyond the years
thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears!
America! America! God mend thine every flaw,
confirm thy soul in self-control, thy liberty in law.

Opening Prayer Now Lord, as we turn our attention to All Saints Sunday, we offer our gifts in thanksgiving as an expression of our faith, following the patterns of the lives of the saints, the memory of whose holy living and victorious dying has strengthened our faith and devotion and enables us to have hope for reunion with them in the world to come and communion with them now in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Ad. from Worship & Song, Leader's Edition: not credited,
and The Episcopal Church © the Church Pension Fund,
admin. by Church Pub. Inc).

Call to Worship Grace to you and peace from God who is, and was, and is to come. And from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and ruler of kings on earth. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints (UM Book of Worship, USA, 20th cent. Alt.) as we worship today.



Music: In honor of all saints, let's sing our praises to the One who empowers saints to be saints.

For All the Saints

1. For all the saints, who from their labors rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

2. Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;
thou Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
thou in the darkness drear, their one true light.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

4. O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.

Alleluia, Alleluia!

6. From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Theme Today's story is abbreviated from "Freddie the Leaf" by Leo Buscaglia (booskallia). Here he is now...(Freddie, not Leo 😊) the leaf I mean... [Pull out the leaf]. and here is his story: Spring and summer had passed. Freddie the leaf had grown quite large. His midsection was wide and strong, and his five extensions were firm and pointed. He had started out as a small sprout on a large branch at the top of a tall tree. Freddie was surrounded by hundreds of other leaves just like himself -- or so



it seemed. But he soon found out that no two leaves are exactly alike, even if they are on the same tree. Alfred was the leaf next to him (to the left), Ben to his right and Clare was over his head. They all grew up together. They learned to dance in the spring breeze and relax under the summer sun and wash off with the cool rains. But it was Daniel who was Freddie's best friend. He was the biggest and oldest leaf on the limb. Freddie thought Daniel was the smartest leaf on the tree. It was Daniel who told them that they were a part of the tree, and explained they were growing in a public park. It was Daniel who told them about the trees strong roots hidden below the ground. He explained about the birds sitting on their branches singing morning songs, and also told them about the sun, moon, stars and seasons of the year.

Freddie loved being a leaf; loved his branch and his leaf friends. He loved being high in the sky, the wind that moved him around, the sun that warmed him, and the moon that covered them all with soft, white shadows. Summer was good. Many people in the park sat under Freddie's tree for shade. Daniel told him that this was part of his "purpose".

"What's a purpose?" Freddie asked. "It's a reason for being," Daniel answered. "To make things nicer for others is a reason for being. To give shade to people is a reason for being -- to provide a cool place for children to play is a reason for being -- to fan the picnickers when we sway in the breeze is a reason for being."

Freddie especially liked the old people, because they simply sat quietly on the cool grass and hardly ever moved. They talked softly about things in the past. But he also liked the kids' fast movements and laughter, even though they sometimes tore the bark of his tree or carved their initials in it.

Soon summer passed. It seemed to vanish one October night when it turned quite cold. All of the leaves were shivering and were coated in a soft white layer. It left quickly and left them wet with dew and sparkling in the morning sun. Daniel explained they had experienced their first frost of the season---a sign that Fall and Winter would be coming soon.

Almost at once the all the trees in the whole park began changing into a blaze of color. His friend Alfred went from green to dark gold, Ben became bright orange, Clare was copper, Daniel was a deep purple, and Freddie was a beautiful burgundy.



They were all beautiful and had turned their tree into a rainbow. "Why did we turn all these colors," Freddie asked, "when we're all on the same tree?" "Each of us is different and have had different experiences. We've faced towards the sun differently and we have cast shade differently---so why shouldn't we have different colors?" Daniel said matter-of-factly. He added that this season is called Fall.

One day something strange happened. The same breezes that had made them dance softly, began to push and pull at their stems, almost like they were angry. Some of the leaves were torn from the branches and swept up in the wind, tossed around and eventually dropped softly to the ground. The leaves were afraid. "What's happening?" they whispered. "It's what happens in Fall," Daniel told them. "It's the time for leaves to change their home. Some people call it 'to die'."

"Will we all die?" Freddie asked. "Yes," Daniel answered. "Everything dies, no matter how big or small, weak or strong. But we first do our job---we experience the sun, moon, wind and the rain. We learn to dance and laugh. Then we die." "Well---I'm not going to die," said a determined Freddie. "Will you Daniel?" "Yes--when it is my time," answered Daniel. "When is that?" asked Freddie. "No one really knows for sure."

Freddie noticed that the other leaves kept falling and thought, "It must be their time." He saw that some of them tried to hang on, while others simply let go and fell quietly to the ground. The tree was almost bare now.

"I'm afraid to die, because I don't know what is down there," Freddie told Daniel. "We all fear the things we don't know about, Freddie. It's natural. But you weren't afraid when Summer turned to Fall, because that is a natural change of season---so why should you be afraid of this season of death?"

"Does our tree die too?" Freddie asked. "It will someday---but there is something stronger than even the tree---it is called Life. That lasts forever and we are all a part of Life. "Where will we go when we die?" Freddie asked. "No one knows for sure--that's the great mystery!" said Daniel. "Well, do you think we will come back in spring?" asked Freddie. "We may not---but it is certain that Life will." Daniel told him. "Then what has been the reason for all of us? Why were we here at all if we were only going to fall off our tree and die?" Freddie continued to question.

Daniel answered him in the same matter of fact way, "It's been about the sun and the moon, about happy times together, and about the shade and the old people and the children. It's been about the colors of Fall, and about the seasons. Isn't that enough?"

That afternoon, in the golden dusk, Daniel let go, and fell softly and easily to the ground. He seemed to smile peacefully as he fell. "Goodbye for now, Freddie," he said. Freddie was the only leaf on his branch. The first snow fell the next morning, soft, white and gentle. But with no sun that day, it was very cold. Freddie noticed he was losing his color and becoming quite hard and brittle---it was always cold and the snow was heavy on him.

When it was just turning light the next morning, a gust of wind took Freddie from his branch---he fell gently and quietly---and it didn't hurt at all! For the first time, Freddie was able to see his whole tree. It was strong and firm and would live for a long time. Freddie was proud knowing he had been a part of its life. Freddie landed on a soft pile of snow -- somehow, it felt warm and safe to him. He closed his eyes and slept. He didn't know that Spring would follow Winter and that the snow would melt into water. He didn't know that what appeared to be his useless dried self would mix with that water and make the tree even stronger. Most of all, he didn't know that there, asleep in the tree and below the ground, was everything -- needed -- for -- "The Beginning."

Intro to Responsive Affirmation (LR: Lay Reader, PC: Pastor/Congregation)

On All Saint's Sunday, we recognize that we are always in a movement of the seasons, that saints are transitioning from the earthly to the heavenly, from the struggles of life to the victories of heaven. And that is why, officially, the church has not called it a fast day but a feast day. Not the solemn observance of a torn heart, (though hearts may well be grieving) but a festival of celebration of faith as our focus turns to our eternal hope for our loved ones as well as ourselves.

Responsive Affirmation (L – Lay Reader, C – Congregation)

L: We want you to be informed about death.

C: **We will grieve, but not as those who have *no* hope.**

L: We believe that Jesus died and rose again and will bring with him those who have died.

C: **How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?**

L: When you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a seed. God gives to each kind of seed its own body. The human body is sown physical, perishable, and mortal.

C: **It is raised in honor, in glory, and spiritual. Our mortal bodies will put on immortality.**

L: For we know that when this earthly tent (this physical body) in which we live in is destroyed, we will have an eternal building (a resurrection body), a home not made with human hands, but God-made, eternal in the heavens.

C: Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you in my Father’s house. I will come back for you.

L: “In the meantime, I give you my peace. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. I am the resurrection and the life.”

C: Everyone who lives and believes in Christ will never die.

L: For God created us for incorruption and made us in the image of God's own eternity. The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment will ever touch them.

C: They are at peace. They have the confident hope of immortality.

Inspired by 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 1 Corinthians 15:35,37-38,42b-44, 2 Corinthians 5:1, John 14:3, 27, John 11:25, Wisdom 2:23,3:1,3b,4b.

Music The story, the reading all point to something beyond what looks like an end – it promises a new season of new life... something we cannot fully grasp, but God has envisioned for us. Let’s sing Hymn of Promise...

Hymn of Promise

Words: Natalie Sleeth, 1986 Music: Natalie Sleeth, 1986

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In the bulb, there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

Pastor’s Prayer Eternal God, you gather and unite in the one body of Christ all your people of every time and place who have lived by your Word and died in your love. When we grieve, reassure us that our loved ones are not lost to you. Prepare

us for the day when we, too, will join with those who have gone before us in the grand celebration of life everlasting. Today, we look back and remember the saints, our spiritual parents and grandparents, who have brought our community to this time and place. Also, as people of faith, we not only look back and remember their work and impact, but we also look forward. We look forward to the reward in which they already share. We look forward to the tomorrow in which death and crying will be no more. We look forward to the fulfillment of your promises for us. Holy and loving God, as we honor these saints, we pray for your loving presence to be felt by these who have gathered in the room or online — and especially by those who are feeling some sort of struggle in life. **Praises and Petitions** We especially we pray for * the family and friends of Dick Amrhein, who passed away at age 92, we offer a praise for Charles Kirkpatrick’s successful surgery, * we continue to pray for Kathy Novak’s friend Beverly Wilkinson who was thought to be near the end, but now there is a glimmer of hope. * we continue to pray for * Fran * and Beckie * and Lynne, * and Brantley, * and Denise, *and Charlie, and any others that you may lay on our hearts and minds, (Pause) and now together we pray the prayer Jesus taught the saints to pray throughout the generations. **Lord’s Prayer**

Intro to Bible Reading

Lay Reader: All Saints Day honors those places in our lives where death has left a space in our life: the lives of our family members, our church family, and our community family. We name the reality of our loss, but we also proclaim Christ’s resurrection hope. The story of Lazarus reminds us of both loss and hope. He with his sisters Mary and Martha were good friends with Jesus. Lazarus got sick and died. Four days later, Jesus enters the area.



Bible Reading

When Mary reached where Jesus was waiting, she fell at his feet, saying, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. He said, “Where have you laid him?”

“Come and see,” they said. Now Jesus wept. The Jews said, “Look how deeply he loved him.” Others among them said, “Well, if he loved him so much, why didn’t

he do something to keep him from dying? After all, he opened the eyes of a blind man.” Then Jesus, again deeply moved, and anger welling up within him, arrived at the tomb. It was a simple cave in the hillside with a slab of stone laid against it. Jesus said, “Remove the stone.” ... Martha, said, “Lord, by this time there’s a stench, for he has been dead four days!” Jesus looked her in the eye. “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” Then, to the others, “Go ahead, take away the stone.” They removed the stone. Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, “Father, I’m grateful that you have listened to me. I know you always do listen, but on account of this crowd standing here I’ve spoken so that they might believe that you sent me.” Then he shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” And the dead man came out, ... wrapped from head to toe, and with a cloth around his face. Jesus told them, “Unwrap the grave clothes and let him go.”

From John 11:32-44 (MSG, NIV)

Music – Jesus proves God has power over death and life by raising Lazarus and even more so, by God raising him. So let’s sing of resurrection with all the saints.

Sing with All the Saints in Glory

1. Sing with all the saints in glory,
sing the resurrection song!
Death and sorrow, earth's dark story,
to the former days belong.
All around the clouds are breaking,
soon the storms of time shall cease;
in God's likeness we, awaking,
know the everlasting peace.



2. O what glory, far exceeding all that eye has yet perceived!
Holiest hearts, for ages pleading, never that full joy conceived.
God has promised, Christ prepares it, there on high our welcome waits.
Every humble spirit shares it; Christ has passed th'eternal gates.

3. Life eternal! heaven rejoices; Jesus lives, who once was dead.
Join we now the deathless voices; child of God, lift up your head!
Patriarchs from the distant ages, saints all longing for their heaven,
prophets, psalmists, seers, and sages, all await the glory given.

4. Life eternal! O what wonders crowd on faith; what joy unknown,
when, amidst earth's closing thunders, saints shall stand before the throne!
O to enter that bright portal, see that glowing firmament;
know, with thee, O God Immortal, "Jesus Christ whom thou has sent!"

Sermon The End, The Middle, The Beginning

The trees grow more restless; September winds weave through them. They shake their arms in dismay as if to fight the coming cold and the grief of leaves going. Autumn air does a heart dance on branches already gone barren; the misty air clings to golden leaves, making the trees bend even lower. It is a season to hold the trees close, to stand with them in their grieving. It is a time to open our inner being to the misty truths of our own goodbyes. Autumn comes... It always does. Goodbye comes... It always does. The trees struggle with this truth today and in our deepest being ... so do we.

Mary approached Jesus, saw Him, and fell at His feet..."Lord, if only You had been here, my brother would still be alive." John 11:32 (VOICE)

Every autumn, nostalgia fills us; every autumn, yearning cradles us. We cling to the ripeness of summer, knowing it will be many long months before we can catch the breath of lilac, or the green of freshly mown grass. And so we begin our fallow (inactive/plowed but not seeded) vigil, remembering the truth of all the ages: Unless the wheat seed dies, it cannot sing a new birth. Unless summer gives in to autumn, springtime will never embrace us.

This seasonal description comes to life for us as we watch the bright colored leaves - drop – some years gently, sometimes in more severe Falls, they fall like bricks to the earth.

Why is it, when we begin speaking of death, does it seem easier, gentler, to begin with the seasons? We speak of the natural passing of time, and the cycles inherent in all of life. Of course, we love to jump to the end. Read the last page first, some of us want to know the final score and not even watch the game. (The Astros are my favorite baseball team. I tune them in about the 7th inning to see what is going on, and if they are ahead, I'll watch, and if they aren't I'll turn it back off and tune back in a little later). It is too stressful to have to wait in the between time, so for us who are in that mindset:

[After Jesus prayed, he] called out in a thunderous voice... "Lazarus, come out!" Then the man who was dead walked out of his tomb bound from head to toe in a burial shroud. John 11:43-44 (VOICE)

Now that we know the end, we want to settle there and celebrate the final joy. Now that the beautiful leaves have fallen, we'd like to skip winter and jump to spring with its healing and new life. We don't like to dwell in the sad places. Hallmark and friends do a good job of helping us find words of sympathy when death is

unwillingly thrust upon us. But they do not do as well helping us (at least in the secular market) to celebrate All Saints Day; for people do not willingly flock to face mortality, others or their own.

Instead, companies offer to freeze us, store our DNA for when cloning is mastered, or they will seal a part of you in a paperweight or locket for your heirs. Whether these are helpful or not I will not argue, for some that is a great thing, for others, not so much. But it is disconcerting if we choose to live in *denial* of our own deaths, and are so uncomfortable with the topic that we put artificial timetables on grief — “That’s enough already, time to move on...” No...

And yes, spring is coming, but we never know when it is coming (especially in Michigan) -- and the same is true for life -- we never know when we will reach the end of the story, or is it -- the beginning?

So yes, we could begin with Jesus’ miracle, begin with the end of the story. And perhaps not even bother going back to the beginning or the middle. But maybe there is a reason there isn’t “only an end” to the story. It could have been written that Jesus came to the grave and called Lazarus out and nothing prior to that climactic moment, but it wasn’t. Comedians love to make fun, saying “We know Moses was a *real* man because a woman would have stopped after a week to get directions. Most men would have stopped by the 20th year, but not Moses, he was a *real* man -- he *never* stopped to ask, and it was 40 years before they found a way out. Of course, the truth is that God had the nation wandering for a reason – they had some maturing to do before they would be ready to enter the promised land. Life isn’t always about getting from point A to point B, about getting from birth to death in as straight a line as possible. It is what happens to us, what *needs* to happen to us on the journey, and sometimes that leads down winding roads. And sometimes, most times; we need to wander through some messy middles in our story, where the ending is not always already known. We live in what we could call Easter Saturday. That empty space between death and resurrection. We like to not deal with it. Just as we fill the day with coloring eggs and baking hams to distract us from thinking about it; so do we do this with much of the messy middle of life.

It is that time in between when we keenly feel the dread of the conflict but have not yet reached the shocking joy of eternal life. It was when the disciples hid themselves away, too afraid to grasp an idea of resurrection. It is when the wanderers grumbled in wilderness, to desperate to grasp the reality of a promised land. It is the dash between our birth date and our death date, and all we did in between.

I expect many of us have lived through or are currently living in a period of Easter Saturday: the deepness of sorrow that comes after a death or other dramatic life change, during an illness, or when everything seems to be falling apart. And in those times of suffering and trials we realize how hard it is to wait for the end of the story. And yet this is where we live most of our lives -- in the frozen, hard, slushy, messy middle.

When Jesus saw Mary's profound grief and the moaning and weeping of her companions, He was deeply moved by their pain in His spirit and was intensely troubled... "Where have you laid his body?" ... "Come and see, Lord." As they walked, Jesus wept... John 11:33-35 (VOICE)

Even though Jesus knows how the story will end -- Jesus still weeps. Today, with All Saints, we remember those we have loved in this life and who are no longer here to share this life with us. Today we consider ourselves -- and one another. Today we share tears with Martha and Mary and Jesus, and the gathered crowd who had nothing to offer but those shared tears. This is part of what it means to be a community.

We share with one another life's joyful passages: birth, baptism, graduation and marriage, grandbirths. We share with one another by also sharing the passages of goodbye: divorce, moving, illnesses and death. These are just some of the messy moments in the middle of this life.

That is why the Lazarus story is so riveting, for people have lived the story over and over again. In hospitals, in nursing homes, in personal homes. We have sat with friends and family as their loved one lay dying. Sometimes it is just me and the beloved, sometimes there are other family members too. At times we talk briefly, at times we laugh over memories, at times we cry, at times we hold hands, at times we pray, and at times we have even hummed or quietly sang hymns -- repeatedly. But most of the time, we simply breathed together, we were in each other's presence. No words... especially no platitudes... just breathing together, until the beloved one's breathing stops. Sometimes it is so peaceful we don't even know it has stopped; other times it is a more obvious transition. And then sometimes there are tears, and sometimes not, but there is almost always this connection of sadness and pain for the loss of the beloved, for the family, and for the community. Life, as this circle of people know it, has been diminished because one will now be absent from us.

Jesus wept alongside Mary and Martha and the gathered crowd. *Can we allow ourselves to be community for someone when we're needed?* There are challenges to weeping with Martha and Mary and one another. How do we discern when those in pain need us simply to be with them in their loss, and when they need us to gently push them forward? Or when to give them space? How can we help someone find the resources and space to weep deeply and fully when they need to, but also aid them in stepping out of the emotion long enough to take care of the ongoing necessities of life?

Each of us finds a different way: The first challenge is to be willing... To overcome fear -- fear of having to face our own weakness and mortality; -- fear of not saying the right thing, or saying the wrong thing, or of being able to say anything at all. To overcome these fears and offer our presence -- to simply listen deeply, and to be with; and for some of us -- to keep our mouths shut, and especially from those platitudes and clichés that we all hear and wonder how they could ever be said -- and (at least sometimes) the answer to that is -- they are said because we are afraid of our own, and so we want to cheer and fix -- so we don't have to linger in those dark moments. And we all know that that doesn't work. We need to be able to express the sadness of loss in whatever way works for us. May we be willing to connect and stand with one another in those times of pain.

And then... only when we are ready... may we find our way through the middle, to the spring, to the end, and into the new beginning, where we may sing the seeds of new birth, as the poem (somewhat paraphrased now) says:

Somewhere within, the seed has sprouted. Feel its movement; Sense its energy. Somewhere within, the rainfall has reached. The desert is gone, dryness has disappeared. Somewhere within, life is given again. So that even in the emptiness, life's fullness returns. Somewhere within, yearning has been met. The God of graciousness has graced, the God of tenderness has blessed. Somewhere within, the comfort of home is reborn. Enthusiasm re-energizes. Dreams are rediscovered. The circle of life's journey has once more come into its season of "spring" — The Beginning.

And may it be so for each of us here today... As we share and as we care -- as a community blossoming from the seed of that heritage that has been planted in us, and then in turn, planting seeds in each other. And so we say a prayer for ourselves who grieve, who remember, who recognize our loss, but also hold out a sure hope for their destiny and ours, who want to honor those who have gone before us and their influence on our lives. Let's pray responsively –

Special Remembrance

Everliving God, this day revives in us memories of loved ones who are no more. What happiness we shared when they walked among us. What joy, when, loving and being loved, we lived our lives together.

Their memory is a blessing forever.

Months or years may have passed, and still we feel near to them. Our hearts yearn for them. Though the bitter grief has softened, a duller pain abides; For the place where once they stood is empty now. The links of life are broken, but the links of love and longing cannot break.

Their souls are bound up in ours forever.

We see them now with the eye of memory, their faults forgiven, their virtues grown larger. So does goodness live, and weakness fade from sight. We remember them with gratitude and bless their names.

Their memory is a blessing forever.

And we remember as well the members who but yesterday were part of our congregation and community. To all who cared for us and labored for all people, we pay tribute. May we prove worthy of carrying on the tradition of our faith, for now the task is ours.

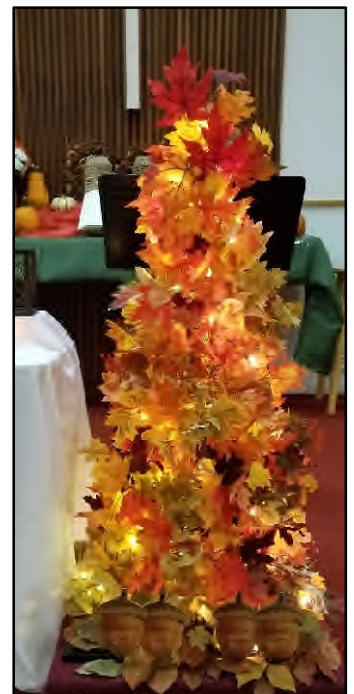
Their souls are bound up in ours forever.

We give you thanks that they now live and reign with you. As a great crowd of witnesses, they surround us with their blessings, and offer you hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

They are alive forever more. Amen.

(UM Book of Worship: Based on
Jewish Memorial Prayer, USA, 20th c.)

Tree of life... In the Bible, the books of Genesis and Revelation speak of the tree of {eternal] life, from which we are eventually barred in Genesis and in Revelation, those who have gone to heaven are given free access. While we also call this tree in front of us a tree of life, and the ideas overlap, it is not intended to be a representation of that tree, but one that points us to the seasons of life here as well as that final season of eternal life with God. And it to those saints that have gone before us that this day is dedicated and to whom we now turn our attention.



Certain monasteries have a roll call of their members. When they read the names of those who have died, monks in the room answer, "Present." They say that speaking their names aloud again and answering the roll is a reminder for us that we know where they are, and where we will be some day, that the dead in Christ are not gone for good, but rather gone on ahead. In our liturgical remembrance, we will not answer "present" for them on their behalf, but this is what we will do. Because the list is very long this year, the names have been randomly grouped. A candle will be lit, a group of names read. We recognize with each name, or couple, there is a life story that is remembered and could be told... but I can't speak to those, but I will lift up the story of a saint from various times and locations around the world -- reminding us that our faith is both timeless and global. We'll conclude each grouping with a ring of the bell and singing a prayer that asks God to shepherd us through our lives just as he did for the names we read...

Shepherd Me, O God

Words & Music: Marty Haugen © 1986 GIA Publications, Inc

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.
 ♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

[Light Candle 1] We remember these who have gone before us

Clair Cleveland	June Malott	Bill Carr
Margaret Cleveland	Barbara Kenel	Bonnie Smith
Bill Martin	Choyce Stayer	Robert Webber
Mark Johnson	John Williams Sr.	Ken Webber
Gary Johnson	Sylvia Williams	Jack McManus

And we remember the saints of India, such as Mother Theresa – who was so overwhelmed by her desire to share the joy of loving Jesus and following in his footsteps, that she, with a handful of her students, founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta to care for, in her words, “the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those people who feel un-wanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to society and are shunned by everyone.” What began from a small home in Calcutta grew to active homes in 133 countries across the world. For the stories of all of these men and women that we have named and their influence and impact on God's world, we remember and give thanks.



[RING STEEPLE BELL]

♫ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

[Light Candle 2] We remember these who have gone before us

Lee Martin Earl & Sally Warthman Charles & Arleen Sunderland Dale & Helen Sharlow Edward & Doris Ker	Paul & Dolores Stine Edward & Ada Ann White Bill & Regina Rice Jerry & Emma Burgess Charles & Janice Kirkpatrick Jr	Neal & Mildred Rix Ralph & Alice Wright Jay & Edith Gordinier Bill & Ann Carlson Douglas & Elva Sasse
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And we remember the saints of Greece, such as St. Titus - a well-schooled and wealthy Greek who, depending upon the tradition, went or was sent to Jerusalem to report on a popular “prophet” from Galilee, and became one of the 70 Jesus sent out to various towns. Or he was converted by Paul. Either way he was one of Paul’s beloved trainees. He was Paul’s example at the critical Council of Jerusalem as the early church decided whether non-Jews could become Christian without becoming Jewish. He was the man Paul sent to Corinth at the height of their conflict with Paul and each other. He was the man who was sent to work his entire life (minus a few mission trips) on the island of Crete, and from those Cretans (where they get the name), converted and equipped and constant stream of preachers and teachers and missionaries. For the stories of all of these men and women that we have named, and their influence and impact on God’s world, we remember and give thanks.

**[RING STEEPLE BELL]**

♫ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

[Light Candle 3] We remember these who have gone before us

Lloyd & Vivian Coleman Grayden & Stacia Allmand Garrett & Sharon Sunderland Parents of Pat & Bruce Harton Parents of Larry & Pat Schleh	Parents of Gary & Rosemary White Stewart Oldford Richard Rix Linda Foreman Gerald Coleman	Gloria Stone Ann Lilly Dorothy Toth Karen Tobias Thomas Wilkinson
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And we remember the saints of Germany, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His faith, love, and joy in the discipleship of following Jesus guided him through his work and suffering. He was firmly convicted that it is a Christian duty to oppose tyranny

(in his life – the Nazi movement). His influence and inspiration extended across time and denominations and ideologies – the civil rights movement, the anti-communist movement, and the anti-apartheid movement. He changed history and his martyrdom affirmed his faith. For the stories of all these men and women that we have named, and their influence and impact on God’s world, we remember and give thanks.



[RING STEEPLE BELL]

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

[Light Candle 4] We remember these who have gone before us

James Lent	Rolland Campbell	Phyllis Peck
Floyd Johnson	Larry Schleh	Mary Monroe
Kathryn Johnson	Joan Gofton	Nancy Honour
Flossie Walters	J.R. Newcombe	Kim Honour
Ginny Pinker	Barbara Wilkinson	Jack Welch

And we remember the saints of Italy, such as St. Francis of Assisi, who gave up the privileges of wealth in order to care for the wellbeing of the poor. His first rule was “to follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and walk in his footsteps.” His cheerful and melodious attitude attracted many to Christ and he emphasized that it is our duty to protect and enjoy nature both as stewards of God’s creation and as his creatures ourselves. In an effort to enable followers to contemplate Christ’s birth, he set up the first nativity scene. For the stories of all of these men and women we have named and their influence and impact on God’s world, we remember and give thanks.



[RING STEEPLE BELL]

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

[Light Candle 5] We remember these who have gone before us

Loraine Welch	William & Eloise Beam	Amanda Webber
Sarah (Mom)	Daryl Beam	Rev. Richard Youells
George (Step-Dad)	Esther Babcock	Janet Thompson
Dave Bennett	Thelma Sweeney	Lois Lane
Charles W. Babcock Sr.	Mary Matheson	

And we remember the saints of Canada, such as Kahkewāquonāby (caw cue ah cwan a bee) (also known as Peter Jones) – who was the first ordained Native

Canadian Methodist minister. He is remembered as the faithful and heroic Ojibway missionary and chief, the guide, advisor and benefactor of his people. In addition to bringing over half of his band of Mississaugas to Christ, he and his brother John began translating the Bible into Ojibway. His good works live after him in many grateful hearts. For the stories of all of these men and women that we have named and their influence and impact on God's world, we remember and give thanks.



[RING STEEPLE BELL]

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

[Light Candle 6] (This Year and Unnamed)

We remember the saints of Michigan, such as The Venerable Fredrick Baraga. Answering the call for priests to minister to the peoples of the northern Upper Peninsula of Michigan from his home in Slovenia, Father Baraga traveled hundreds of miles by foot and canoe in the summer and snowshoes in the winter to minister to the Native Americans in the area. When the mines brought in the mass migration of Europeans from different countries, his fluency in 8 languages prepared him to minister to them as well. For saints such as these, we remember and give thanks. And for *our* saints, the ones whom we have lost in this past year. We remember specifically



Ione Bennett	-- [light candle and bell]
Dennis Lemon	-- [light candle and bell]
Sharon Barrett	-- [light candle and bell]
Gary White	-- [light candle and bell]



And for all those who we did not name out loud but whose memories still ring loud in our minds -- those we name in our hearts, for all the excellent and praiseworthy things that they have planted in us that continue to grow and blossom, we remember and give thanks, and for those we may not even personally know, but because of their lives; our lives have been impacted — for these we have named and were beyond our ability to name; for the stories of these men and women and their influence and impact on God's world, we remember and give thanks.

[RING STEEPLE BELL]

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

(Christ) For all these saints, past, present, and even future, we give thanks and praise for the light they have given or will give their world; knowing that they could not have been faithful, that they could not have been saints, if it had not been for God's gracious faithfulness to them, to us, and to those to come -- through the life and light of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**[Light Candle 7]**

For the life of Jesus and his influence and impact on his world, we remember and give thanks.

[RING STEEPLE BELL]

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Communion

Invitation And we remember Christ not only through the candle and bell, but also through the Communion table, which he has opened to all who desire to receive God's grace, who will follow the example of everything excellent found in the faithfulness of the saints as they followed Christ — open to all who desire to bring honor to the God of creation and the God of new beginnings — open to all who are willing to see and work for His vision of healing, comfort, peace and wholeness... open to all who want to be found faithful .. This table is open for you, for Jesus has promised and continues to promise to his saints through ages past, present, and future, that he will be here for us now and forevermore. For we have already been reminded that Jesus is the source of resurrection and true life. It is in him that we have life and hope and strength. So let's prepare our hearts for this sacrament by singing once more our shepherd song - this time, two times.

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

♪ Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

Confession Let's continue to prepare our hearts by a time of confession. Lord, as our resurrection and life, we ask forgiveness when we receive this gift of life and waste it in foolish ways, We do not live in all things as if we were living it for you. In your life you were deeply compassionate for our pains and losses, and so we pray you forgive us when we diverge from your life and are dispassionate about

human sorrow. Forgive us when we become indifferent to life in the Spirit and to peace. Forgive us when we get **so** caught up in the needful important details of this life that we forget to lift our eyes to a higher plane of living. Heal us, revive us with life and with what is really living. Renew our lives, and inspire us to follow you in serving others, as did so many of these whose lights burn strong in our hearts today. Whatever good and holy things we have seen in them, may you enable us to put these excellent and praiseworthy things into the practice of our lives as well.

Assurance May we discover in our hearts what these saints have discovered through their journey, that the Lord God is merciful and gracious, endlessly patient, loving, and true, showing mercy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and granting pardon. Teach us to hear your voice, so that we may believe - and be confident that, by your grace and forgiveness, that as we turn to you, we will live and live again.

Thanksgiving With that assurance of forgiveness, we can say with confidence, The Lord will be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of everything that is. You gave us life. Even when we turned our love away, you remained faithful, you delivered us from captivity, promised to be our God, and called to us through the prophets and ultimately, through your Son Jesus Christ; to receive life again, so that with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. He came as the bread of life to nourish our spirits, as the light to guide our way, as the shepherd who leads, provides, and protects. By his suffering, death and resurrection, he delivered us from darkness and death and established a new covenant relationship with us so that in him we may have life and life after life -- because the source of life would always be with us, and with him, death is done away and there is life eternal.

So Almighty God, on this day when we honor the saints, pour out your Spirit on these people gathered here and at home, that we may sense your loving presence in us and on all the saints. Pour out your Spirit also on the bread and cup, making it be for us the body and blood of Christ, redeemed by his blood in which we find life.

Therefore, as your Son Jesus Christ gave himself to us, we in turn offer ourselves to him in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, equipped by your Spirit to make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and fulfills our proclamation of the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

So it is through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, that all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever, Amen.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, Jesus gathered the first Christian saints into an upper room, took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [Take & eat].

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for your sins and for the sins of many. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [Take & Drink]

Prayer Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves to others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Music So in union with the saints, and the sure hope of reunion with them, let us take up the torch of faith and follow their example. Let's sing

Rejoice in God's Saints

1. Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days;
a world without saints forgets how to praise.
Their faith in acquiring the habit of prayer,
their depth of adoring, Lord, help us to share.
3. Rejoice in those saints, unpraised and unknown,
who bear someone's cross or shoulder their own;
they shame our complaining, our comforts, our cares:
what patience in caring, what courage, is theirs!

4. Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days;
a world without saints forgets how to praise.
In loving, in living, they prove it is true:
the way of self giving, Lord, leads us to you.

Blessing Now as we go, bless God's holy name for all his servants who have finished their course and now rest from their labors. Give us the grace to follow the example of their faithfulness, to your honor and glory through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. (Adapted from UM Book of Worship England, 20th c. alt.)

Portions were adapted from an anonymous friend of pastor.
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