

Straight from the "Hart"

November 5, 2023 All Saints' Sunday

Finding Your Place Among God's People

 HARTLAND

Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve

Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in worship through this service script.



Opening Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, as it has always been with your people throughout time, it is only by your grace and gifts that your people are able to honor you by their lives. We offer our thanks /by giving ourselves to you. As we worship, grant that we may move a step closer to running the race of faith without stumbling – and obtain your heavenly promises like those who have gone before us. In Jesus name Amen.

Call to Worship

We have come because God has shown us -- in the lives of his saints -- patterns of holy living and victorious dying. Come and strengthen your faith and devotion - - that you may, like those who have gone before us -- be able to hold on to the promises of Christ and remain faithful through all adversity.

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Music Let's begin by answering the call that all saints throughout the generations have received -- to move together to fulfill God's purpose on earth. Let's sing Forward Through the Ages

Forward Through the Ages

Words: Frederick Lucian Hosmer, 1908 Music: Arthur S. Sullivan, 1871

1. Forward through the ages, in unbroken line,
move the faithful spirits at the call divine;
gifts in differing measure, hearts of one accord,
manifold the service, one the sure reward.

Refrain

Forward through the ages, in unbroken line,
move the faithful spirits at the call divine.

2. Wider grows the kingdom, reign of love and light;
for it we must labor, till our faith is sight.
Prophets have proclaimed it, martyrs testified,
poets sung its glory, heroes for it died.

Refrain

3. Not alone we conquer, not alone we fall;
in each loss or triumph lose or triumph all.
Bound by God's far purpose in one living whole,
move we on together to the shining goal.

Refrain

Theme

Do you remember the game called Simon says? (We're not going to play it 😊)
If the leader begins the sentence with "Simon says", then you do what Simon said.
If doesn't say "Simon says" or says "[someone else] says" it, then you don't do it.
And if you do do something when Simon isn't the one saying it, then you are out.
Yes, you know the game well. The potential moral of the game is that as we live
and grow, there are people who are going to tell us good things to do like Simon,
and there are other people that we shouldn't be listening to because they aren't
going to be telling us good things.

And it isn't just the words said, it is the actions done. So ask yourself this: Who
are the Simons of my life? Who do we watch and listen to so that we will know how
to go about living our lives well? So on this All Saints' Sunday, we take the time to
consider – and to celebrate all those who chose to be good Simons in our world -
- who made our world a better place by the way they lived and influenced us and
others.

But you know, it isn't just about others being Simons for us -- we are Simons for others too. Some of us have had more experiences than others -- who do you think the younger people look to to get those examples of how they are supposed to behave and live well? It is those of us who have more experience. This was initially a Children's Time experience. And there were two-year-olds up to 12-year-olds. So I was telling the older children that they were Simons for those younger ones because they figuring out how to act during Children's Time and church and Sunday School and VBS by looking to see how you are acting in those places.

[Pause] I'm debating about if I should tell you something about that children's time. I think I'll save it for another time. [laughter]

None of us are perfect, we all have our strengths and weaknesses, but we should all strive to be good Simons, strive to be a good example by our words and actions... I think I will, because now you are curious and you won't be able to get it out of your heads 😊... I am not sure exactly how it went, but we played the game a little bit, and of course the 2-year-olds didn't really get the concept, so when it wasn't Simon who said it, they would try to do it anyway, and some of it was doing things weird to the child next to them... Do you know the old saying, "You can pick your friends and you can't pick your nose, but you can't pick your friend's nose?" [laughter] I don't think we quite went there, but we came pretty close to it... [laughter]

Last week we heard the Bible say that those who were good [examples] were like trees by the streams -- flourishing and bearing fruit in its season. The Bible also speaks of the tree of [eternal] life. In Genesis, we were barred from it because we sinned. In Revelation, those who were accepted into heaven are given free access to it.

Pictured to the right -- we have what we call the tree of life -- and while it does overlap the seasons of innocence and of life after life, it also points us to *all* of the seasons of life. In fact, the Bible mentions it in Proverbs as well, several times; equating the tree of life in this season in which we now live on this earth to **wisdom**, making people happy who tightly embrace wisdom. The seeds of **good deeds** become a tree of life for that person and wins friends. **Fulfilled dreams** are a tree of life bringing hope. **Gentle words** are a tree of life because they do not crush the spirit like lies do.



These are some of the kinds of graces that may indicate that saints are saints -- and will receive God's promises. And it is to these Simons, to these saints that are around us and coming after us, but primarily who have gone before us that this day is dedicated.

Reading

Hear these words from the Wisdom of Solomon which speaks of the future hope of believers.

... righteous people are protected by God and will never suffer torment. It is a foolish mistake to think that righteous people die and that their death is a terrible evil. They leave us, but it is not a disaster. In fact, the righteous are at peace. It might appear that they have suffered punishment, but they have the confident hope of immortality. Their sufferings were minor compared with the blessings they will receive. God has tested them, like gold in a furnace, and found them worthy to be with him. He has accepted them... and the Lord will be their king forever. Those who have put their trust in God will come to understand the truth of his ways. Those who have been faithful will live with him in his love, for he is kind and merciful to the ones whom he has chosen.

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-6a, 8b-9 (GNT)



Music And now let's sing with confident joy over the blessed destiny and inheritance that Jesus has gone to prepare for them and for us...

For All the Saints

Words: William W. How, 1864 Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1906

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!
3. O may thy soldiers, 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!

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!

Special Reading

It is said in some places that it seemed Charles Wesley was almost envious of those who had already died and gone to heaven. But he did not live in denial of the loss he experienced. If I recall, it was at the death of a close friend that inspired him to write these words which recognizes the hope of heaven while also recognizing the depth of loss. We grieve, but not as people who have no hope... (See 1 Thessalonians 4:13)

I am going to read the words, but it is from the 1700s, so the language is a little bit archaic, so I am going to explain what he wrote for clarity and emphasis, just in case, because it is a little bit difficult to capture the meaning of the lines in an oral reading.

*If death my friend and me divide, thou dost not, Lord,
 my sorrow chide, or frown my tears to see;*

[God does not blame or criticize us for grieving, but also wants to comfort us in our hope, for he goes on to say]

*restrained from passionate excess,
 thou bidst me mourn in calm distress for them that rest in thee.*

*I feel a strong immortal hope, which bears my mournful spirit up
 beneath its mountain load;
 redeemed from death, and grief, and pain,
 I soon shall find my friend again within the arms of God.*

*Pass a few fleeting moments more
 and death the blessing shall restore which death has snatched away;*

[death snatched his friend away, but in time his own death will restore the blessing of that reunited friendship]

For me thou wilt the summons send,

[his own death will come - God summons him home to heaven]

and give me back my parted friend in that eternal day.

Music Let's stand and sing in celebration that our faith is in Christ who has conquered death, making our hope in God's promises possible.

Sing with All the Saints in Glory

Words: William J. Irons, 1873

Music: Ludwig von Beethoven 1824; arr. by Edward Hodges, 1864

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!"

Intro to and Bible Reading

On this All Saints' Sunday, we reflect on all those who have inspired us by their life of love. It is comforting to know that we can join them again someday in a new and different age. John envisioned it and then recorded what he saw:

I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people!

He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no



more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega -- the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children...”

Revelation 21:1-7 (NLT)

Sermon Finding Our Place Among the Faithful

“God makes his home with us” or as *The Message* puts it – “God has moved into the neighborhood,” which means God is at work and will continue to be at work with us in his world. It is an encouraging message of hope, especially on this All Saints’ Sunday as we reflect on all those who have inspired us by their life of love. It is comforting to know, as John, and Paul, and Peter, and Charles Wesley wrote -- that we can join them again someday in a new and different age.

I’ve never been, but I’ve read that if you visit the Billy Graham Library at Wheaton College, there is a special exhibit dedicated to telling the story of his life and ministry, recounting countless events where people were invited to faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior. The exhibit concludes with an experiential portrayal of the hope of the gospel message. You walk through a cross-shaped opening in the wall, which leads to a circular room where the central focal point is Jesus on the cross. From that room, you enter a dark, tomb-like chamber. It is pretty dark, but you can see a glimmer of light on the other side of the room. As you walk toward the light, music is heard and increases in volume until you enter that next room which is a bright, heavenly room, painted with blue skies and clouds, and the Hallelujah Chorus is playing.

Having said that, John is not trying to paint a picture a rapturous escape away from our created good-but-gone-bad world. And bad it was. John’s original readers were keenly aware of how fragile, temporary, and fleeting earthly blessings can be. Their world was falling apart. Comfort, security, and alleged control over life could be instantly stripped away from themselves or their loved ones. The threat of suffering, persecution, and martyrdom lurked around every corner. What could they expect from God in perilous times?

John was not telling these fearful, dispirited saints to dream of deliverance into a happy fantasy that ignores their present dilemma. He did promise a newness that

plunges them – and perhaps us – into the reality of the pain of what it sometimes means to live in this old world; and encourages them to stand strong and faithful, to continue to imitate their Lord who gave himself in self-sacrificing love for the whole world. We do this by living for each other in community and serving the world even under resistance from that world.

He reminds them that God and we his people are united in a holy, lasting covenant. He vows his heart to us no matter what we may experience together across the years... and promises that we will always be his people.

It is on this *spiritual* foundation that we find security and learn to navigate each day. Even while we continue to live in the old order with all of its potential pain and suffering, we are invited to be a new creation participating in God's ever new and growing kingdom, just as have all his saints throughout the ages, looking and working for the new order that God is establishing and will fulfill when Christ comes again.

As we look forward to that day and live in this one, may we find the peace of heart and soul in the hope of that reunion with God's saints in the new heaven and earth.

We remind ourselves, especially on days like this, in words of the hymnwriter:

We are grateful for the saints of old, of recent past, and of the present -
- who have been and are patient, brave and true, who toiled and fought and lived and died living for the Lord they loved and knew. They have been doctors and queens and shepherds, leaders and followers, rich and poor, old and young, but all of them saints of God... They loved their Lord so dear -- and his love made them strong, and they followed [what was] right for Jesus' sake the whole of their good lives long. The world is bright with joyous saints who love to do Christ's will. We meet them in school and on the street, in the store and in the church, by the sea and in the house next door; they are the saints of God, and we intend and hope to be one too. (adapted from the hymn *I Sing a Song of the Saints of God*)

We are grateful for those who guided us on our way to that hope, who helped us discover that God loves us in Jesus, who bolstered our faith, and showed us how to serve our families, our churches, and our communities. As Hebrews put it,

These were the true heroes, commended for their faith, yet they lived in hope without receiving the fullness of what was promised them. But now God has invited us to live in something better than what they had—faith's

fullness! This is so that they could be brought to finished perfection alongside of us.

Hebrews 11:29-30 (TPT)

(It's up to us to finish what they started). **The question is, then, Will those who preceded us find us faithful -- for their sake, for our sake, and for the sake of those that follow us?**

Just as John desired, his readers stood firm and continued Christ's meaningful work. But they have gone to be with the Lord, *and they are counting on us who remain.*

They are counting on us to join together, to pick up the torch, and carry on God's work until he chooses to bring it to completion, in us now, and in the whole of his world when he decides. God invites us, equips us, and will send us into this work, if we are willing and to let our desires to work be known. [Pause]

A character on a classic television show described the proper nature of that work this way:

One person was going through a crisis, wanting to be extremely inspirational in his work -- but it was to impress others. He was looking for recognition, encouragement, a pat on the back. He childishly lashed out and blamed everyone that didn't fit in with his agenda of impressing because he was thinking only of himself.

A second person was facing the greatest crisis mortal man can face -- the loss of his life. This man had every right to be selfish, but instead he chose to think not of himself, but of a close friend who was hurting.

And when the first man saw the dignity and the selflessness of the second man, he realized how selfish and petty he had been, and it made him see something more clearly than he had ever seen it before: God didn't put us here for that pat on the back, he created us so he could be here himself [through us], so that he could exist in the lives of those he created in his image.

(Adapted from Father Mulcahy's sermon in *Mash: Blood Brothers* S 9: Ep 18)

If we stand firm in selfless service, Paul promises that our work in the Lord will not be in vain. (See 1 Corinthians 15:58) It all begins, just as it did with all those who went before us, with our self-giving covenant relationship with God – which we remember through Communion.

Communion

Invitation Participation in the sacrament of Communion is open to all because it is Christ's table and Jesus invites everyone to come to him. Through this table, God nourishes faith, forgives sin, restores our spiritual life and renews his call to us to be servants of this Good News. By faith, we receive the elements as Christ's body and blood for the strengthening of our faith. Through this sacrament, we remind ourselves that our Communion is with God, and with each other, and especially on this day, with all the faithful throughout the ages.

① We remind ourselves of the saints of the Old Testament – people such as Abraham, Moses and Joshua, who introduce us to the possibility of being a faithful covenant people, and what that looks like. Saints such as Esther who risked everything to save the nation of God's people from execution, and Ruth, who showed us what it means to be faithful in our personal relationships.

For saints such as this, we remember and give thanks.

[A candle is lit, and the steeple bell is rung.]

② We remind ourselves of the saints of the New Testament – people such as Philip who spread the gospel wherever he went, and Titus, who was sent to Cretans and by his faithful, persistent teaching was able to send out from that place a constant stream of preachers and missionaries and all kinds of people. People such as Lydia, who played a major role in building the church at Philippi, and Martha, who teaches us how to serve faithfully, and her sister Mary who teaches us how to feel devotion and learn. –

For saints such as this, we remember and give thanks.

[A candle is lit, and the steeple bell is rung.]

Music Let's prepare for Communion by singing of God's love for them and for us through Jesus...

For the Bread

Words: Louis F. Benson, 1924 Music: V. Earle Copes, 1960

1. For the bread which you have broken, for the wine which you have poured, for the words which you have spoken, now we give you thanks, O Lord.
2. By this pledge that you do love us, by your gift of peace restored, by your call to heaven above us, hallow all our lives, O Lord.
3. With our sainted ones in glory seated at the heavenly board, may the church that's waiting for you keep love's tie unbroken, Lord.

Responsive Confession

Let's continue to prepare our hearts by a time of a responsive confession, the congregation reads the bold, black font.

Jesus, blessed Son of God, you demonstrated holiness in action by how you lived. You relinquished your power in order to serve others, teaching a new understanding of what it means to be blessed.

We confess how difficult it is to live and love as Christ did.

We confess how too often we focus on our own power and pleasures, while the news of the plight of others quickly fades from our awareness.

We confess that concern for our own agenda hinders our ability to care for the needs of others.

We confess that too often, we fail to act when we see weakness, pain, suffering and powerlessness. We are reluctant to love our enemies and to do good to those who don't care for us.

We confess the ease with which we conform to the world rather than being transformed by Christ.

Stir up your Spirit in us, Lord, that we may experience the blessing of being your disciples. Strengthen us to be people of love, who willingly serve, who seek justice and mercy for all, and who repent of past wrongs and look forward to a future of new starts.

Assurance

Based on God's work and promises, we hear again the word of truth: In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

You are forgiven.

ALL: THANKS BE TO GOD!

Almighty God, by believing in your Son and receiving your generous offer of forgiveness, we have communion with you, and with generations past, present, and future; from every nation, who join as one great united multitude to praise you.

3 We remind ourselves of the saints of the early ages. – people such as Tertullian, Irenaus, and Augustine — people who helped make clear how we understand Jesus and our faith. And for those who came together, often in

response to errant thinking, to hammer out a clearly defined statement of the basic tenets of our faith. Join me on the apostle's creed.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

For saints such as this, we remember and give thanks.

[A candle is lit, and the steeple bell is rung.]

④ We remind ourselves of the saints of recent ages. People such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Saint Teresa of Avila who challenged us to find a deeper personal relationship with God and with our community. And closer to home and time, we remember our loved ones who impacted us in various ways by their strengths and gifts. We name ...

[See the bulletin insert. Each name listed as having died more than a year ago is read]

For saints such as this, we remember and give thanks.

[A candle is lit, and the steeple bell is rung.]

⑤ We remind ourselves of the saints of the present age. People such as Gandhi, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King who struggled for the rights of all people as a brave expression of their faith in God and his people. For those of our loved ones who went home the last year.

[See the bulletin insert. Each name listed as having died less than a year ago is read, and candle lit, and the steeple bell rung,]

For all those named and those who we did not name out loud but whose memories still ring loud in our minds -- and that we name in our hearts, who, together with the ones we have named -- for all the excellent and praiseworthy things that they have planted in us that continue to grow and blossom in us.

For saints such as this, we remember and give thanks.

[A candle is lit, and the steeple bell is rung.]

Prayers

And included with these of the present age are not only the ones who have recently died but who are alive and well, and possibly not so well. We pray that we, the living saints, as we seek God's presence, will be made strong, not diverted by lesser passions and priorities. We open our lives to our community, our nation, and our world and to our Lord. which is why we take time to lift up these in prayer --

Praises and Petitions specifically today, we pray for * for the Gordoniers' friend Al Davis, whose leg was amputated so we pray for healing and adjustment to this new style of life he must live. * Becky Toth requests prayers for Ava Lewis. Her mother is 96 and is now in hospice. * For Jan Martin – who has leukemia and they are working on a treatment plan, We continue to pray * for wisdom and direction and comfort in the lives of Reese and Calvin, * for Linda and Bill Chenoweth -- * for Kathy Tomasheski, * for Scarlet, the 3 yr old girl with cancer, for Joyce Vahala, * for peace in the Mideast and other areas of the world where violence is the norm * for Sally's friend Wes, whose treatments are working really well, so keep praying * and for those not named, but you know them, Lord, for you are the Creator and everything and everyone belongs to you. Now defend us with your might. We seek and follow your path with all our hearts. Grant that as we celebrate the triumph of your saints in glory, we may benefit by their example and experience the inexpressible joys you have prepared for those who love you, and pray with them the prayer you taught us to pray, and today we sing it. **Lord's Prayer Sung**

The Great Thanksgiving

The truth of this prayer reminds us that God is with us.

So may the Lord 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. You are God of the faithful throughout the ages, of kings and priests and prophets, of the humble and servants, and pray-ers, of apostles and martyrs, of mothers and fathers, and of our heirs.

⑥ Therefore, We remind ourselves of the saints of future age. People such as our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren who by our light and example will continue to make a positive difference in the world, who will elevate themselves to the level of living that Jesus will call them -- and who will reply that they too, will be for Jesus.

For saints such as this, we remember and give thanks.

[A candle is lit, and the steeple bell is rung.]

If we look at all the candles and remember what they represent we see that life through the generations moves us as a people of faith and as individuals on a journey. If I asked you what your journey looks like, depending upon what life is throwing at you, we might have a wide variety of answers. But the hope is that whatever our journey is here and now, it is a part of our ultimate journey that leads to heaven and perfect eternal union with God.

The people, the saints we are honoring today, they faced losses — they said goodbye to friends and buried loved ones, many went before we would have expected or wanted. But their names will endure in the memory of God's people. Their lives keep speaking. And so do ours. No matter how brief the journey, we join a great crowd of witnesses to proclaim, "We are faithful because God was first faithful to us."

We talk about the Church as family and community. In our individualized society, it's sometimes hard to realize just how interrelated we are with others. And yet, our lives are intertwined with the lives of others in ways that we're sometimes unaware. Whether we like to admit it or not, we are social creatures. We also sometimes like to think that we're who we are because we have worked hard to make ourselves this way. That is, unless it's something that we don't like about ourselves, and then it's obviously due to those traumatic experiences of childhood, or something or someone else's fault.

But if we're truly honest, much of what we are as human beings we owe to other people. Especially in the church, for us, most of us had fathers and mothers or

others who influenced us along the way in the faith. Sometimes they were just people who loved us and were patient with us when we were bratty teenagers. Some were teachers, pastors, or Sunday school teachers, but in some small or maybe large way helped us grow and nurtured us... in life and in faith.

We always stand in a larger community than just those who are around us daily. For those of us who are older, many of the people who shaped our spiritual journey are now gone from this world. And while we may do it all year, this day calls us specifically to remember our fathers, and mothers and friends and neighbors and sisters and brothers in the faith. We truly are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who journey with us in our minds and hearts today.

Richard Moriarty shares a story called "The Train".

At birth we boarded the train and met our parents, and we believe they will always travel by our side. As time goes by, other people will board the train; and they will be significant, such as our siblings, friends, children, strangers and even the love of your life. However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on this journey alone. Others will step down over time and leave a permanent vacuum. Some, however, will go so unnoticed that we didn't realize they had vacated their seats. This train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells. Success consists of having a good relationship with all passengers requiring that we give the best of ourselves.

The mystery to everyone is: We do not know at which station we ourselves will step down. So, we must live in the best way, love, forgive, and offer the best of who we are. It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.

I wish you a joyful journey for the coming years on your train of life. Reap success, give lots of love and be happy. More importantly, thank God for the journey! Lastly, I want to thank you for being one of the passengers on my train!

For all these saints, past, present, and future, who have been stepping into our journey sometimes lightly and briefly, sometimes deeply and for many years, and then stepping out again through death or through divergent train cars or tracks, It

may make us wonder where we fit in to all this comings and goings from Adam and Eve and Abraham and Sarah right up to our present day and what we imagine will be our future.

So a father, eager to get his son on the right track after moving to a new community took his 7-year-old son to church. It was probably a day like today, for as they sat together in worship, the minister preached about the saints -- he talked about the history of the church, people like -- we've mentioned throughout these candles. While all this was going on, the little boy was fascinated by the stained-glass windows. It was a very bright, sunny day and it was if a rainbow had covered the church and the congregation with radiant shapes of red, green, gold, blue, and purple. Some of the windows had pictured some of the people the pastor was mentioning. The service ended and as the father and son headed home, the father asked his son what he thought of the church service. "I liked it," he said. "Did you listen to any of the sermon?" "A little." "What did he talk about?" "It had something to do with people called saints." "And who are the saints?" The boy said, "They are the people who the light shines through." We find our place among the faithful when we learn to allow the light of Christ to flow through us, becoming a rainbow of light and hope for those around us.

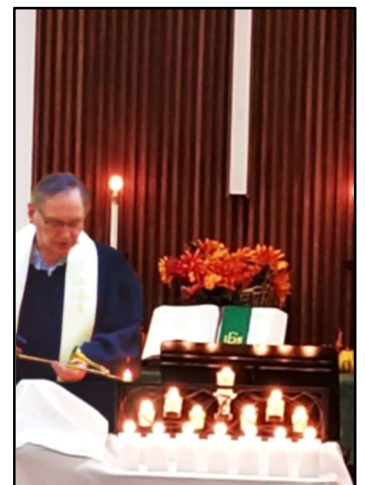
7 **We remind ourselves of the Light of the world**, knowing that the saints could not have been faithful, that they could not have been saints, if it had not been for God's gracious faithfulness to them, to us, and to those to come -- through the life and light of Jesus Christ our Lord who shined in his birth, in his death, in his resurrection, and through his covenant people who have shined his light in their world and in ours, and for whom we give thanks. And so, in remembrance of God's mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we too, offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

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

For Christ, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith, we remember and give thanks.

[A candle is lit, and the steeple bell is rung three times.]

If we are going to find our place among the faithful by allowing his light to shine through us, we need to make



ourselves available to our heavenly Father, to Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit to set up residence in our hearts. Let's pray this by singing Jesus We Are Here.

Jesus, We Are Here

Words & Music: Patrick Matsikenyiri
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Jesus, we are here; Jesus, we are here;
Jesus, we are here; we are here for you.

Spirit, we are here; Spirit, we are here;
Spirit, we are here; we are here for you.

Now pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be united in ministry to each other and the world until we join those who have preceded us and we feast together at his heavenly banquet where we will give you all honor and glory. Amen.

The Bread and Cup

On the night Jesus was betrayed and gave himself up for us, he gathered his disciples into an upper room, and he took the bread, and he gave thanks for it and he broke it, and he offered it to his disciples saying "This is my body which is broken for you. As often as you eat it, eat it in remembrance of me. [Take and eat].

When the supper was over, he took the cup, and he gave thanks, and then he gave it to his disciples, saying "This is the blood of the new covenant, my blood which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of your sins and the sins of many. As often as you drink it, drink it in remembrance of me." [Take and drink].

Music If comfortable stand, and remember as saints we are called to praise God not only with music and words, but with actions

Rejoice in God's Saints

Words: Fred Pratt Green, 1977 © 1973, 1980 Hope Publishing Co.
Music: Attr. to William Croft. 1708

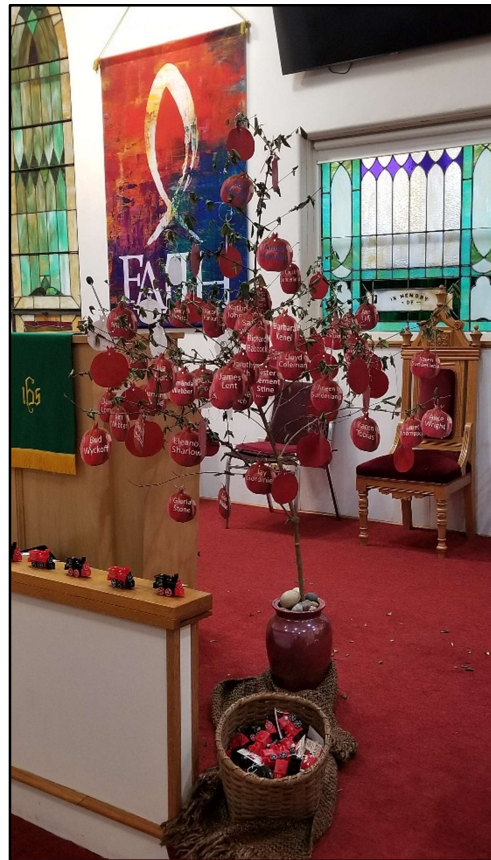
1. Rejoice in God's saints, today and all days;
a world without saints forgets how to praise.
Their faith in acquiring the habit of prayer,
their depth of adoring, Lord, help us to share.
2. Some march with events returned them God's way;
some need to withdraw, the better to pray.
Some carry the gospel through fire and through flood;
our world is their parish; their purpose is God.

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 rise from the table...may God grant us grace to follow his saints in all their virtues and godly living, that those who follow us will find us faithful until that day we may experience with them the new heavens and earth Amen.

CCLI # 2561297



Top left The 7 candles described in the service with the 7 in front for the 7 who were remembered that died within the last year, with the communion elements (cloth covered) to the left and the “tree of life” to the right. **Right** The tree of the saints who bore fruit in their season – the names of all who were remembered on each fruit, **Bottom left** The trains that were handed out.