

Harvest/Remembrance

for all the saints

AIM

Some stories, meditations, poems and prayer that could be used during All Saints-tide.

INTRODUCTION

During the period from the end of October to the beginning of November we have a number of different Christian celebrations that help us to remember the lives of those we have loved who have died and celebrate their gifts to us. You may want to offer some space in a small group or larger worship service or some resources to individuals to use on the theme of 'For all the Saints'. We hope some of these things will help you.

1. TIMES FOR REMEMBERING.

Let me tell you

Gilbert had come to the UK by ship from Jamaica in 1952. He had stayed, married and raised a family and never been back. When I asked him about this he said that about 6 months after he arrived in Britain he got a letter to tell him that six members of his family had been killed in an accident. They had all died together at the same time. The group included almost all of his closest family members. Only one sister had survived. He just felt he could not go back. He just couldn't face them not being there. Each year at All Saints he remembered them although in fact they had died in April but he found this a more fitting time to remember and pay his respects.

Invite participants to think about particular times they remember. Why do we remember these times and what evokes these memories for us? Offer people a safe way of sharing their memories: small post cards on which to write or draw the things they want to remember can be easier than saying things out loud. Here is a poem by Ian Fosten to think about.

In the event

In the event ...
and the future stops a little sooner
than we'd planned,
I'd like for you to hold fast to those things
which time cannot erode.

George Herbert wrote:
Teach me, my God and King,
in all things Thee to see',
and through my adult life
I've tried to do just that
and, in seeing God, have seen also eternal value
in eyes that met
and hands that held
and lips that touched, gently;
in funny words and names we shared;
in tears subsiding within
a warm and safe embrace;
in hearing, woven into laughter and favourite tunes,
the angels' song;
in learning that the fruit of honesty is truth,

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that questioning is a gift and not a sin;
in knowing that in being loved
the gate swings wide to let all others be.

In the event ...

you must have faith
that all which shall not be
will be, in God's economy of love,
eclipsed by all that, unexpectedly,
shall come to pass.

Meanwhile, still know me in the sights
and sounds and places I have loved;
see me in the quirks and mannerisms
of those who share my name;
know for now and always that love,
once given, can never be denied
and is the air – clean, sharp and sweet –
which breathes us into life.

To think about or discuss

The hymn writer, George Herbert wrote: Teach me, my God and King, in all things Thee to see', In what ways have you tried to do that? In what ways has this been difficult or challenging?

2. REMEMBERING PEOPLE

Let me tell you

Ian Fosten writes 'After my father died I wanted to think about him properly but it wasn't until 12 months later that the right time and place finally coincided.' Here is the piece Ian wrote about his father.

The Anniversary

In memories that mingle with
cheese wire and slab at David Grieg's,
or roasting coffee scented choux bun treats,
your childhood stories of street games,
sport at school and lone-ranging on
Hastings front, patterned my early years.
In knowing where you'd come from,
somehow, I came to see who I might be.

Years passed: decades of marriage,
parenthood, banking, and simply being you
engaged, amused, enriched so many lives.
But then, when all seemed smooth and safe,
the pathway changed, subtly; angled downward.
Fear insidiously displaced humour
and contentment; eye-sparkle

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lost ground to haunted weariness.
With murderous, demented stealth the hallmarks
of your provenance were rubbed out.
Then came an Autumn day when, like a leaf
from your beloved tree and drained of all
that speaks of life, you let go of the branch
and fell.

Swiftly raked then burnt within that tidy fire
which gives no heat, you left an emptiness
which neither squirrel gymnasts nor
the passing seasons could fulfil
until that evening
when something in the breeze
and the close darkness of a November night
enabled me to hear your voice declare
the mystery of continuity and say:
'Hello, mate' – and lightly touch my arm.

Activity with prayer

Invite participants to remember those they have loved. Have some candles people to light or a place where they can put a photo of their loved one or a message about them. Perhaps someone has written a piece about someone they remember that they would like to share or there is another prayer or poem that is particularly meaningful for them.

Prayer

Loving God

when people tell me that the one I love
is 'safe within the arms of Jesus'
I feel only the dullness of separation
and guilt at all that seems to still be part of me.

Help me to know your purposes instead
in terms of continuity.

So may I not cling on to what, in truth,
has gone, but celebrate and savour
what remains for now
and all eternity.

Amen.

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EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more seasonal material please revisit the website.

Acknowledgements

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HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk