

ALL SAINTS TO ADVENT

Not quite a season

Common Worship envisages a link between the Sundays from All Saints to Advent but is wary of seeing this as a season in the Church's Year in the fullest sense.

During the process of liturgical experiment and revision which has led to the calendar and liturgies of *Common Worship* it was suggested that this time in the Church's Year should be called the 'Kingdom Season'. The themes and biblical readings for All Saints, All Souls, Remembrance Sunday and Christ the King are about the Kingdom of God.

Some felt this provided too narrow a range of concepts to encompass a proper 'Kingdom Theology'. Others were concerned about creating a new season which might not stand the test of time. There were concerns too about doing so unilaterally (and so following a different pattern from other Christian denominations and churches in the Anglican Communion). In the end it was decided not to create a new season as such. So the Sundays are the last ones of Ordinary Time, and are named *Sundays before Advent* in the calendar, but the lectionary gives them readings reflecting Kingdom themes.

The 'season' begins with the celebration of All Saints on November 1st (with the possibility of transferring this to the Sunday between 30th October and 5th November, or of keeping both days in honour of the saints) and concludes with the feast of Christ the King and the days that follow leading up to Advent.

Many churches find that, for all sorts of reasons, pre-Christmas celebrations encroach

on the Sundays of Advent. So we can begin to explore some of the Advent themes in the weeks leading up to Advent Sunday.

- ? Is this time marking the end of the Church Year or anticipating the beginning of the new one?
- ? How does the answer to that affect our preaching and worship?
- ? Can we plan the preaching in our church to reflect the unified nature of these Sundays?

Times and Seasons provides material for the major days, and material which can be used throughout the season.

Hallowe'en

While not strictly part of the Church calendar (certainly in its commonly celebrated form!) Hallowe'en is one of the points in the year when the secular calendar is fed by the Church Year. Many churches encourage more positive images than the witches, ghosts and demons who go out trick-or-treating by holding a light party or All Saints' Eve all-age service.

All Saints

All Saints' Day is an opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for the grace of God active in the lives of people through the ages: a time of celebration and joy in the revelation of God's Kingdom. We remember both those saints widely known through the Church and through history, and those whose holiness has been revealed and acknowledged in their own communities. *Times and Seasons* provides a Litany of Thanksgiving for the Holy Ones of God - a wonderful celebration of the saints through the ages.

Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (All Souls)

This day, usually kept on 2nd November, is one of thanksgiving, remembrance and prayer for the departed and the bereaved. For some this will most appropriately be done at the Eucharist, but many parishes will invite those recently bereaved to a special service.

- ? What is the best way of using this day (or one near to it) to engage with the needs of the recently bereaved?
- ? Can we provide opportunities for people to remember loved ones at a Eucharist and in other settings?
- ? How can we make sure that children and young people have a chance to remember family and friends who have died?

Remembrance Sunday

Remembrance Sunday always falls on the second Sunday of November and so may be the third or second Sunday before Advent. It is a day for church parades, services at the war memorial and the like, which often involve young people's organisations and their parents. Whatever we plan should make allowance for this, and this can be quite a balancing act with the understandable desire of older people for reverence and solemnity.

Times and Seasons gives a service which can be used in ecumenical settings, or the material can be used selectively in a church's usual act of worship. Depending on the time of the start of the service, the actual Act of Remembrance may need to come at the very end, involving careful planning to arrive exactly at 11 am.

On this day we are given the opportunity to reflect on peace as well as on war, on loss, remembrance and the relationship between the values of God's Kingdom and earthly kingdoms.

As the two World Wars slip deeper into history we also need to remember more recent conflicts, and deaths from terrorist atrocities, which may have resonance for some in the local community.

- ? How do we appropriately mark this day in our worship?
- ? If a formal Remembrance service, maybe at the local war memorial, is the local expectation can we link this with the church's usual worship?
- ? What are the best ways to involve children and young people?

Christ the King

This Sunday at the end of the Church Year proclaims Christ's sovereignty over the universe. With that comes his judgement of the world - returning us to one of the great Advent themes.

- ? How can we end the Church's Year with a real celebration?

Liturgical Colours

Some churches use Red for Kingship throughout these weeks of the calendar, but there are other possibilities as well:

- ⇒ **Sundays and Weekdays** Those who prefer to stress that this is not a season of the Church Year in the full sense may choose to use Green.

- ⇒ **All Saints** Gold or White for celebrating a Principal Festival.
- ⇒ **All Souls** Often Purple for mourning and penitence, to contrast with All Saints' Day. Some churches will use White to stress the hope of resurrection, others Black to accentuate the more solemn and sombre nature of this commemoration.
- ⇒ **Christ the King** Red (consistent with using this colour on Sundays and weekdays through the season) or White for a principal festival (in common with some other Christian denominations).

Music

Singing 'For all the saints' is one of the most memorable aspects of All Saints' Day services for many people, as long as it keeps moving! Finding music which helps to set the mood is particularly important on Remembrance Sunday and at services commemorating the departed. Many songs in a more contemporary and upbeat style work very well at celebrations of Christ the King. 'Jesus, remember me' (from Taizé) is more subdued but still appropriate.

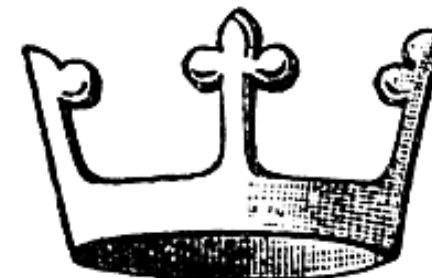
As at any time of year, joint planning by musicians and other worship leaders will make an enormous difference to the integrity of the services.



And finally - to think about

- ? Could a group meet from time to time to review recent acts of worship and consider the way the planning happens in our church?

The Christian Year



All Saints to Advent

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