

What to Do When All Saints Sunday & Advent 1 Coincide

by

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For congregations observing the extended Advent season, 2021 represents a year in which the celebration of All Saints Sunday coincides with the 1st Sunday of Advent. The general observance of All Saints Sunday seems to be a peculiarity of Anglicans – it does not feature in the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, and other calendars as such.

All Saints Day on November 1st has always been an important observance among Anglicans, especially as it is the last major feast of the liturgical year. However, in the contemporary world, it has become more and more difficult to keep any major feast which occurs on a weekday. As a result, in recent decades the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada have essentially moved the observation of All Saints to the first Sunday following November 1st – which this year puts it on November 7th. This is, of course, consistent with the general rule that every Sunday is a Feast of Christ – the only exception allowed for the substitution of a commemorative observance (from the *sanctorale*) is when a particular congregation's patronal or "feast of title" occurs on a Sunday.

All of this raises the question of how to handle the confluence of All Saints Sunday and Advent 1 this year or any year in which this occurs. For the purposes of liturgical planning, I identify fully five alternative approaches in Chapter 4 of *What Are We Waiting For? Re-Imagining Advent for Time to Come* (Church Publishing, 2017). Two of these are pertinent for this year.

Anticipating the Feast

Since All Saints Day 2021 falls on Monday, November 1, the easiest solution to the confluence is to move the observance of All Saints Sunday to Sunday, October 31st. To mark the feast on All Hallows Eve keeps the celebration as close as possible to the day itself rather than postponing it by an entire week. This tack also has the additional advantage of allowing Advent 1 of the extended season to occur on the first Sunday after All Saints Day as it would normally do. In this case, the Proper for All Saints Day would be substituted for that of 23 Pentecost (Proper 20) of the *Revised Common Lectionary*. Thus, this is the most expeditious solution to the problem.

Fashioning a Blended Liturgy

The other solution is to keep the celebration of All Saints Sunday on November 7th, but let the service itself make the transition from the last major feast of the Church year to the initial Sunday of the extended Advent season. This involves fashioning a liturgy for the day in which the transition takes place. Such a liturgical creation is not an anomaly: the liturgy for Palm / Passion Sunday, for instance, provides within itself a transition from triumphal joy to solemn commemoration in providing the transition from Lent to Holy Week. Thus the Gospel of royal

reception at the start of the liturgy is followed by the Passion Narrative which introduces the solemnities culminating in the *Triduum* – Maundy Thursday to Good Friday to Easter Vigil.

What might such a transitional or blended service look like in the All Saints Sunday/Advent 1 coincidence? Here is a suggested order of service and its rationale.

Suggested Ordo for An All Saints / Advent 1 Sunday Liturgy

*Prior to the liturgy the Paschal Candle is lit for All Saints (the first candle of the Advent wreath, set in its accustomed place, is **not** lit at the beginning of the liturgy, but later with a flame taken from the Paschal candle).*

Gathering Rite

Acclamation: First choice (“Kingdom”) with Baptismal additions

Hymn of Praise: *e.g.*, “For All the Saints” (*Hymnal 1982*, # 287) with procession of sanctuary party; *asperges* over the people

Salutation & Collect of the Day (All Saints’ Day collect)

Liturgy of the Word

Note: Year B in 2021

Year A

Revelation 7:9 - 17

Psalm 34:1 - 10, 22

1 John 3:1 - 3

Ephesians 1:11 – 23

Year B

Wisdom 3:1 - 9

Psalm 24

Revelation 21:1 – 6

Year C

Daniel 7:1 - 3, 15 - 18

Psalm 149:1 - 5

Gospel Procession Hymn: e.g., “By all your saints still striving” (H82, #231 with “All Saints” inserted in v. 2)

Matthew 5:1 - 12

John 11:32 - 44

Luke 6:20 - 31

Sermon / Homily

This is the obvious place to bring the themes of the two strands of the liturgy together at midpoint, e.g., in communion with the great cloud of witnesses, we are called to participation by Baptism into the Body of Christ to manifest God’s reign of justice, peace, and care for creation. Thus any or all of its congruent formulations may provide a focus, viz. Reign of God / Kingdom of Christ / Commonwealth of the Holy Spirit – themes directly associated with the eschatological season of Advent at the start of a new liturgical year.

Baptism / Renewal of Baptismal Covenant

Prayers of the People & Peace

*Nearly any form of the Prayers can be adapted to include both strands of this day. The one found in plenary form in Chapter 4: Resources of **What Are We Waiting For?** <http://www.theadventproject.org> is recommended here. The Prayers should conclude with the following Collect for Advent I (Sapientia / Wisdom):*

Eternal God, your Word of wisdom goes forth and does not return empty: Grant us such knowledge and love of you that we may perceive your presence in all creation and every creature, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Note: Prior to the Peace, the prayer of blessing over the Advent wreath is said, during which water from the Font or from the Asperges may also be sprinkled on the wreath as a sign of blessing. After this, the first candle of the wreath is lighted with a flame taken from the Paschal Candle. The exchange of the Peace follows this form of the Advent wreath blessing:

Holy and Eternal One, giver of life and light, bless we pray you this ring of evergreen and circle of candles, that as our way is illumined in this season by the growing radiance of Christ, so also we may be firmly grounded in your constant love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Liturgy of the Table

Offertory Hymn: *e.g.*, “Lo! he comes, with clouds descending” (H82, # 57)

Note: Charles Wesley’s poem set to the tune St Thomas provides an excellent All Saints/Advent 1 transition at this midpoint of the liturgy, speaking as it does of Christ’s full manifestation with “thousand, thousand saints attending”. It is a magnificent contribution to Advent music, but please consider omitting the second verse due to its all-too-easy anti-Semitic or anti-Judaism reading.

Sursum corda, 1st Proper Preface of Advent *Sanctus & Benedictus*

Proper Preface for the first four weeks of Advent:

Because in Jesus Christ you established your reign of righteousness and peace, giving us partnership in its manifestation and hope for its fulfillment. Therefore...
[and so on to the *Sanctus*]

The Great Thanksgiving: Prayer B (BCP 1979) & Lord’s Prayer

Breaking of the Bread and Holy Communion

Communion Hymn: *e.g.* “Let all mortal flesh keep silence” (H82, # 324)

Sending Rite

Either of two sending prayers (BCP 1979) following Communion

Seasonal Blessing:

May Christ, the Wisdom of God, keep you steadfast in faith;

May Christ, most merciful Sovereign, sustain you in hope;

May Christ, Sun of Righteousness, perfect you in love;

And the blessing of the Holy and Eternal Trinity be upon you and remain with you always. *Amen.*

Sending Hymn: e.g., “Prepare the way, O Zion” (H82, # 65)

Dismissal

The seasonal blessing near the ending of the rite references the Messianic titles of Christ that are taken from the Great “O” Antiphons and thematic for an expanded Advent (Wisdom, Sovereign, Morning Star). The blessing’s application of the effects of those titles also exemplifies the three-fold office of Jesus Christ as prophet, king, and priest. It also serves to bring the worshiping community into their formation as they are among the company of saints – a fitting conclusion to this blended and transitional liturgy.