

**All Saints Day,
Sunday, 1st November 2020**



Dear Friends,

'Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.'

(Matthew 5: 12)

This weekend we have an embarrassment of riches! On Sunday, November 1st, Christians all across the world observe the Principal Feast of All Saints' Day. Whatever our denomination, All Saints' Day is a joyful Festival day where we celebrate the 'cornerstones' of our faith – those steadfast Saints and Martyrs, both men and women, who have given their lives in selfless witness to their faith in Jesus Christ.

In the Anglican Communion, however, this important Feast has become somewhat eclipsed by the Lesser Festival of All Souls' Day, which falls on November 2nd. This day, sombre by comparison to All Saints' Day, commemorates the lives of the Faithful Departed, wherein we gather together to give thanks for the lives of our loved ones; bound together in a communion of prayer.



'Sanctuary Prayer' by Yoram Raanan

Yet these Festival days are not mutually exclusive. Far from it! Both celebrate an understanding of mutual and faithful belonging in Jesus. The Church commemorates the lives of those whom we have loved and the lives of those who have died since the beginning of time. All Saints' Day joyfully celebrates the many men and women in and through whose lives the Church as a whole has seen the grace of God powerfully at work. It is an opportunity for us to give thanks for that grace, and for the wonderful ends to which it shapes our human lives. It is a time which marks us out as Christians; a time for us to be encouraged by the example of the Saints and to recall how this rare and precious sanctity may grow in the ordinary circumstances of our own lives, as well as through the extraordinary crises of human living.

The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed also celebrates the Saints who have gone before us, yet in a more local and intimate way. It allows us to remember with thanksgiving before God those whom we have known more directly: those who gave us life, those whom we have loved, and those who have nurtured us in faith. It blesses us with space and time to come together in mutual empathy; to grieve and remember, and to lift up our emotions and hopes to God in a shared outpouring of prayer and thanksgiving for the love we have known with our beloved. We offer our hearts in prayer to God just as we offer up our pain and grief and tears, seeking Jesus' comfort and consolation in our loss; asking Him to reassure us that the eternal souls of our loved ones are safe in God's loving arms and glorying in His new life.



'The Communion of Saints' - source unknown

These gatherings help us to realise the importance of trusting and sharing our experiences and feelings; finding comfort amongst friends and strangers alike who share the bonds of grief and loss. It is here, in the deep mystery of our lives, that we are asked to put our trust and faith in our heavenly Father, whose eternal love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always endures. His love assures us that our loved ones are home with God, their lives complete.

All Souls' Day holds a special significance for us this year, as our world continues to be rocked by Coronavirus. Many of the festivals, rituals and 'rites of passage' experiences of the way we honour our loved ones have been changed, almost beyond recognition. Gone are the large gatherings at funerals we have valued as a mark of respect and support, both for the person who has died and for their family. Instead, we have needed to modify these important events to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions, whilst cleaving intimate spaces for close family and friends to grieve for and rejoice in the life of the person who has gone before us to heaven.



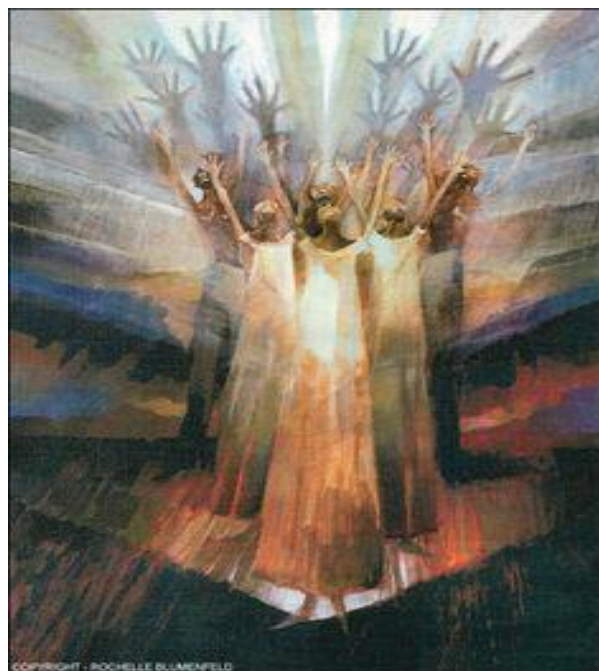
'Shine' by Mike Moyers

At All Souls' Services this Sunday, we will be lighting a candle, saying prayers and reading out the names of your loved ones. Because seats are restricted by necessity in our churches, many of you will not be able to join us in the way we would usually welcome you to do. Because of this I invite you to join us, from your own homes - maybe by setting aside some time to light a candle and pray, knowing there will be many of us around you, united in love despite the physical separations, which in and of themselves are in place to protect us all.

Our experiences of love and loss challenge and shape us, drawing us to believe in the mystery of the extraordinary: That a baby, born into the stark reality of poverty, could

become the embodiment of Love itself, breaking the bonds of death and blessing each of us with the power of new and eternal life. And, as we bring to mind the precious memories and the faces of our loved ones, so we also acknowledge the moments when Christ enters into our grief and sorrow to give us His comfort and peace.

In these spiritual spaces we find there is more love in the world than we could possibly imagine in the eternal truth of Love's embrace – an embrace which has the power to hold us all, wherever and whoever we are. In this glimpse of the enormity of Christ's love for us and the truth of His power over earthly death, we are brought full circle to an understanding of the meaning and purpose of All Saints' Day. From loss to life, from pain to joy. This All Saints' Day, I pray you will dance with Jesus and 'rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven'.



'Sing With Jesus, Sing To Jesus' by Rochelle Blumenfeld

Those of you who attend the Zoom Morning Prayer gathering on Tuesday, will have heard Charlotte Nash's rather wonderful reflection which draws together a number of themes which link the autumnal shifts and changes of our natural world to the focus of our spiritual hope: in the cycle of life and death and rebirth – for our planet as much as for our loved ones in the eternal glory of God. I pray you will find comfort and hope in her poignant and uplifting words, which are brought to you here, as you reflect on the felicity and joy your loved ones are now experiencing in the light and life of Jesus.

Yours, in the hope of Christ,

Jax

Rector, The Downs Benefice

An Autumn Reflection – Charlotte Nash, LLM

*'Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies,
it remains only a single seed.
But if it dies, it produces many seeds.'*

John 12:24



(Image: Ant Rozetsky @rozetsky | Unsplash.com)

In the early Celtic calendar autumn began on 1st August and the season was known as *Lammas*, an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'The Mass Loaf.' It was customary for people to bake a loaf made from the harvest of the new crop of grain and take it to church as a thanksgiving offering. In modern times, we recognise autumn as starting later. It's a time of thanksgiving for the harvest but it's also a season of letting go. Last weekend we put our clocks back, the days are growing shorter and cooler and the leaves are falling from the trees.

As we watch the changing colours of the leaves - the beauty of the oranges, reds, browns and golds with which we associate with this time of year, signal to us the end of autumn and the beginning of winter, yet I believe they hold a deeper message about life itself. The vivid autumn colours as the leaves die are a promise that this isn't the end, for these colours are not the colours of death but of glory. The leaves have to die so there can be new life in the spring.



In our garden there is a sycamore tree. As the leaves fall to the ground so do the hundreds of thousands of sycamore wings, each looking for a good place to spend the winter so their seeds can produce an abundance of baby sycamores in the spring.

Jesus says, *'Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.'* We know from the gospels that many people chose to follow Jesus and that great crowds used to gather around Him to listen to his teachings. In fact, so many did this, that on one occasion the Pharisees were heard to remark, *'The whole world has gone after him!'* (John 12: 9) Yet through His death on the Cross, His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, Jesus reaches out to even more people, throughout all times and all generations. He sends His Holy Spirit who comes to live in all who choose to believe in Him. Jesus' work is not done, it's not yet complete. His Spirit lives in us to comfort us, to bring us hope and to continue his work on earth.



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This coming Sunday is All Saints' Day, and our churches will gather to remember those who have gone before us. We will light candles in memory of our loved ones; we will pray and give thanks for their lives. We will remember with hope the promise Jesus gives us of eternal life with God for those who have chosen to follow Him; and the hope we have of being re-united with those we love in heaven, where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain.

God the Creator of all things speaks to us through His creation, through harvest fields of wheat, through loaves of bread and autumn leaves. Let us enjoy the glorious autumn colours and may this season not be just one where we feel loss, or fear of the approaching winter and what it may hold. As God's dearly loved people may we have hope as we watch the glorious changing colours of the leaves, knowing that in death there is the promise of spring and new life.

Let us put our hope in the one eternal God who never changes.

Yours in thanksgiving!

Charlotte

Charlotte Nash, LLM

Verses from Psalm 16

Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.

I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I keep my eyes always on the Lord.
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.



Schedule of Services for November and December 2020

Our churches are open for regular prayer and for Sunday services - please see our website for more details at: <http://downsbenefice.org/>

All seats at our services need to be booked in advance. Please see the table below and book your seats by either calling or emailing the **Benefice Office** on **(01962) 880845** or office@downsbenefice.org.uk. The Benefice Office is open from 9-5pm each day. Please do not leave it until the last minute to book as the churches need as much notice as possible to ensure correct social distancing measures.

(All services begin at 10am unless indicated otherwise)

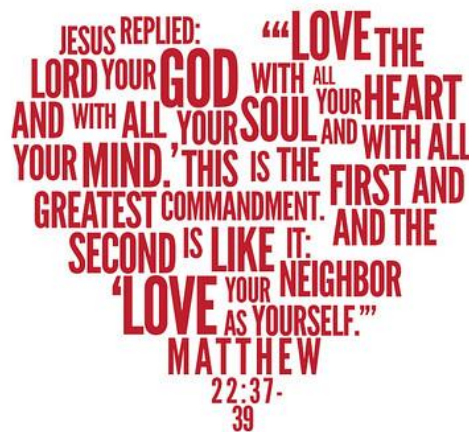
| Date | Service | Chilbolton | Crawley | Littleton | Sparsholt | Wherwell |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 8 Nov | <i>Remembrance Sunday</i> | 10.50am - Remembrance Service | 10.50am - Remembrance Service | 10.50am - Remembrance Service | 10.50am - Remembrance Service | 10.50am - Remembrance Service |

| Date | Service | Chilbolton | Crawley | Littleton | Sparsholt | Wherwell |
|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 11 Nov - Wed | <i>@ War Memorial</i> | X | X | 10.55am - Act of Remembrance | X | 10.55am - Act of Remembrance with the School |
| 15 Nov | | Closed | Closed | Closed – Wedding 14/11 | Holy Communion | 4pm – Evening Prayer |
| 22 Nov | | Holy Communion | Morning Prayer | Morning Prayer | Closed | Closed |
| 29 Nov | <i>1st Advent</i> | 4pm - Evening Prayer | Closed | Holy Communion | Closed | Holy Communion |
| 6 Dec | <i>2nd Advent</i> | Closed | Morning Prayer | Closed | Holy Communion | Morning Prayer |
| 9 Dec - Wed | | X | x | 9.30am - Mid-week Holy Communion | X | x |
| 13 Dec | <i>3rd Advent</i> | Holy Communion | Closed | Morning Prayer | 6pm – Christmas Music & Readings by candlelight | Closed |
| 20 Dec | <i>4th Advent</i> | Advent Readings & Prayers | 4pm – Readings & Music by candlelight | Morning Prayer | 4pm – Crib Service | 4pm - Evening Prayer |
| 24 Dec | <i>Christmas Eve</i> | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| 25 Dec | <i>Christmas Day</i> | Family Christmas Service | Family Christmas Service | Family Christmas Communion | Family Christmas Service | Family Christmas Service |
| 27 Dec | <i>St Stephen's</i> | Closed | Closed | Closed | Patronal Holy Communion | Closed |

An Urgent Appeal for Karis Kids

As new Coronavirus restrictions are put in place across our country, as Christians with an imperative to 'love one another,' we must also focus our attention on the plight of many across the world who are in desperate need. Our Benefice supports the work of Karis Kids, a Winchester-based charity, which works to support the poor and destitute in the slums of Kampala, Uganda. The Downs Benefice is linked with St Paul's church, Okuvu, led by Rev John Atiku. Many families and individuals within our benefice make regular donations to linked families to help pay for schooling, medical care and basic necessities and others have responded generously to recent appeals to help feed families in the wider slum communities who are in desperate need during the Coronavirus pandemic.

We are now making a fresh appeal to raise £1,500 to help St Paul's church's ministry in Okuvu. Rev John and church staff have not been paid since March, as this only happens when congregations bring cash offerings to services to help pay for community outreach, church running costs and staff salaries. Currently this isn't possible and there is great suffering within the church and the communities served. Any donation, however small, would be gratefully received. You can pay directly online <https://www.kariskids.org/> (which enables Karis Kids to collect the Gift Aid) or send a cheque, made payable to Karis Kids, to the Benefice Office, which we will pass on. Please contact the Benefice Office for more details or help.



Collect Prayer for All Saints' Day

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect,
In one communion and fellowship,
In the mystical body of Your Son, Christ our Lord:
Grant us grace, so to follow your blessed saints,
That we may come to those inexpressible joys,
That You have prepared for those who truly love You;
Through Jesus Christ Your Son, our Lord,
Who is alive and reigns with You,
In the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Collect Prayer for All Souls' Day

Everlasting God, our maker and redeemer, grant us with all the faithful departed, the sure benefits of thy Son's saving passion and glorious resurrection, that, in the last day, when thou dost gather up all things in Christ, we may with them enjoy the fullness of thy promises; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



Matthew 5: 1-12 – Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them The Beatitudes. He said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.