# All Saints COVID-19 Memorial Service

*Livestream November 1, 2021, 12:00 p.m. EDT, on the* [*United Church YouTube channel*](https://www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada)

## Prelude

“Pie Jesu” (Faure)

*Merciful Jesus
Grant them rest (everlasting).*

## Greeting and Welcoming

Grace and peace to you, in the name of Jesus Christ. I am Richard Bott, Moderator of The United Church of Canada. All of us who are facilitating this time of worship are glad that you are able to join together in a time of remembrance of all God’s saints—those who have entered God’s household through death, those who are yet living, and those who are still to come.

Let’s take a moment, in the quiet of this place, to prepare ourselves for worship.

## Territorial and Land Acknowledgement

Today, we gather with siblings from around the world—people here, on the lands many of us call Canada; and people who are in many other places, global partners in this work of living God’s love.

Each of us is connected to the land in many ways—not the least of which is the way that it nourishes us, and at our ending, we nourish it. As the storyteller of Genesis said, “From dust you come, to dust you shall return.” And so we honour the land, the water, the air, and all of the life that the Creator has made grow on it. We honour it with our words, but we also honour it with our actions of care—defending its health and well-being.

We also recognize that there are many stories that the land holds. Although I was born not far from where I speak today, I am a colonizer and descendant of colonizers of this land and of the people who were here for tens of thousands of years before my ancestors arrived. The history of colonization here—and in so many parts of the world—is a terrible one. It’s a history of oppression and broken promises, and it is a history that continues in contemporary policies, words, actions, and structural racism that works to take away the personhood of Indigenous peoples.

So, we also acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of this land of Turtle Island—the children, the adults, and the Elders. We give thanks that they have been, and continue to be, a vital part of these lands with histories. This day, I am coming to you from the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. This territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant—a covenant between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Confederacy of the Ojibwe, and the allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Toronto continues to be a meeting place and home to many Indigenous peoples from across this land. I am grateful to be able to live and work in this, their territory.

In acknowledging the people, I recommit myself to the work of right relations with Indigenous peoples across this land.

Would you take this time to do the same—to name the people upon whose territory you live, and to commit yourself to the *work* of Truth and Reconciliation?

## Interlude

## Words of Introduction

In December of 2019, the first cases of what would come to be known as COVID-19 were being reported. Within a few weeks, the world heard about the first deaths from this new illness.

Over the course of 2019 the virus spread around the world, touching every country with its presence—with people becoming ill, some with short-term effects, others with long-term effects, and others with death.

In Canada, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected people who are Indigenous and racialized, who have higher rates of infection and hospitalizations. The ongoing pandemic has showcased social inequalities within Canadian society created by systemic racism.

People have found many ways to live with the presence of COVID-19—wearing masks, washing hands, doing everything possible to physically distance, and—where governments have been able to get access to vaccines—getting vaccinated against the underlying virus.

Around the world, over 228 million cases have been reported.

Over 4.7 million people have died. People of all faiths and worldviews, people of every race and place and walk of life.

And, as people have been ill and their lives have changed, and as people have died—and the lives of their families and friends and communities have changed—there has been, and continues to be, much grief and loss.

In the calendar of much of the Christian community, today is All Saints Day, part of a trinity of days: All Hallows, All Saints, and All Souls. Within our part of the Christian church, this time has often been a time when we commemorate all those who have died, that great communion of saints who are yet part of God’s household in death, whose lives still touch those of us who are alive.

Although this is an ostensibly Christian celebration, we hold in love all of our siblings, the world around, whatever their religion or worldview may be, who have died. We grieve with all who grieve, mourn with all who mourn, and remember the lives of all who have died. For, in our understanding, *all* people are beloved of God. All who mourn need comfort.

So, our prayers and songs this day, while they speak in a United Church of Canada way, are for the whole world.

During this time of worship, we will share in scripture, in song, and in silence. People have shared with us the names of many who have died over the past two years, both here in Canada and in the lives of the global partners of The United Church of Canada. These names will be offered on the screen. We know that this is not a complete list. It would go on for far too long. But we hope that, as you experience these names, you will hold not only them (and the people who love them) in your heart, but that they will help you to remember others in your life and community, for whom we grieve tonight.

As we say in The United Church of Canada:
“In life, in death, in life beyond death,
 God is with us.
We are not alone.
 Thanks be to God.”

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with all creation.
We are never, ever alone.
God is present in this place and time, in all places and times.
Let us bring our remembering as an act of worship.

Let us join together in prayer, singing the words of “Abide with Me.”

## Opening Prayer

“Abide with Me,” *Voices United* 436

## Scripture

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1‒9

Listen to the words from the apocryphal book, the Wisdom of Solomon, chapter 3, verses 1‒9, and hear what God may be saying to you.

## Anthem

## A Time of Silence

Take this moment, and remember all those who have gone on before. Remember with tears and with smiles. With hope and with love.

## Scripture

Revelation 21:1‒6

The book of the Revelation of John is one that confuses and challenges, with much imagery that could only speak to the people of the day in which it was written. But, in it, through the author’s vision, we are given a glimpse of the hope of God’s presence with the world. Receive what God may be saying to us.

## Anthem

## A Time of Silence

Take this moment, and remember all those who have gone on before. Remember with tears and with smiles. With hope and with love.

## Scripture

John 11:32‒43

In the gospel of John, one of Jesus’ close friends, Lazarus, had died. Jesus saw the pain of those who were grieving Lazarus’ death, and he grieved. What might God be saying to us in these words?

## A Time of Silence

Take this moment, and remember all those who have gone on before. Remember with tears and with smiles. With hope and with love.

We trust in the love of God, embodied in Jesus’ grief and his calling out to Lazarus. As we remember all people in God’s hallowed creation, as we remember all the saints of the faith, as we remember the souls of the departed, let us know that God’s love is with us always―in our times of celebration and in our times of sorrow.

## Hymn

“Pues Si Vivimos,” *Chalice Hymnal* 536

## Communion

Friends, there is a table before us that stretches far and wide.
It’s not my table.
It’s not the table of The United Church of Canada.
It’s not even the table of the Christian community!

This is the table of Jesus Christ—and Jesus’ table touches all places, all times. It stretches back, to the beginning of the beginning; it goes on into the future…and it is right now. This table is not bound by time or space, by life or death. This is Christ’s table.

Who did Jesus break bread with?

Anyone who wanted to break bread with him!

The poor and the rich, people of all genders, the outcast and the powerful, people from all over the known world, people who agreed with him and people who didn’t—people who believed in him, and people who just couldn’t. He ate with people who were overjoyed and people who were broken by sorrow.

This is Christ’s table. So, whatever your relationship with Jesus might be, know that you are welcome here. So—come, come, eat and drink, as you desire.

### Hymn

“For All the Saints,” VU 705, verse 1

God is with you.
**And also with you.**Lift up your hearts,
**we lift them up to God.**
Let us give thanks to God, our God!
**It is right to give God thanks, and praise.**

It is right that we celebrate you, that we celebrate your presence, in all times and places, God of all creation.

From the moment that all things were given being, by your love, your word, your song, you have held what you created, in all of its possibility.

In the good and the bad, in all of its ugliness and in all of its beauty, in all of its joy and in all of its sorrow, you have held every moment, and every moment has held you!

Alleluia, loving God!
**Alleluia, loving God!**

### Hymn

“For All the Saints,” VU 705, verse 2

You have held all your creation, including us―human beings.
In all of our curiosity and stubbornness, in all of our wonder and our apathy, in all of our hope and all of our loss.

When we’ve wandered off, you’ve stayed with us.
When we’ve gotten lost, you’ve pointed the way home.

When we’ve forgotten who we are, and whose we are, you’ve sent teachers and preachers, prophets and storytellers, grandparents and children, to remind us of the covenants we share with you—and to call us back into communion, with you, and with that great cloud of witnesses, that communion of saints, of which we are a part.

Alleluia, loving God!
**Alleluia, loving God!**

### Hymn

“For All the Saints,” VU 705, verse 3

When the time was right, when we needed a new way of understanding your presence, your abundant love, Jesus came to be part of our world―your love embodied in a tiny baby, who would grow into our teacher, our healer, our Christ.

He laughed with those who laughed.
He mourned with those who mourned.
He healed and mended and loved into fullness so many people.

He taught us to share at the deepest levels, all that we have and all that we are—to bind up the broken-hearted, to seek justice with the oppressed, to set those bound up free.

And so we do share what we have, God of all.
Not just the bread and the cup that sit on your table, but those things that are needed for health and life—right now, the vaccines against COVID-19 that all your children, the world around, need.
Help us to make sure that this shield stretches to all, in justice and in love.

Alleluia, loving God!
**Alleluia, loving God!**

### Hymn

“For All the Saints,” VU 705, verses 5 and 6

On the night before Jesus was taken to what would be his death on a cross, he gathered with his friends for a meal. Like he did so many times before, he took what was in front of him to teach them something important.

He took bread from the table, and he gave thanks to you, God Most Holy.

He gave thanks to you, and then he showed the bread to those gathered around, and he said,
“Take this—all of you—and eat it.
This is my body, given for you.
Each time you eat, remember me.”

Later in the meal, he took a cup from the table, a cup filled with wine, and he gave thanks to you,
God of All Creation.

He gave thanks to you, and then he showed that cup of wine to those gathered around, and he said,
“Take this—all of you—and drink it.
This is my promise, in my life’s blood, that sin is forgiven.
Each time you drink, remember me.”

And so we eat, and we drink,
**And we remember.**

God, we ask that you would send your Spirit upon the bread and the cup that is before us on your table. We ask that you would send your Spirit upon each of us gathered around your table. May this be for us the true presence of Jesus Christ alive in the world.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and forever, amen.

The gifts of God, for the people of God!
**Thanks be to God!**

Eat and drink with all the saints,
for everything is prepared!
**Alelluia! Alleluia, amen!**(*Bread and cup are shared.*)

## Sung Prayer after Communion

« Demeure par ta Grâce », *Nos voix unies* 266

## Commissioning and Benediction

You are part of God’s communion of saints,
and are held not only by God’s love
but by the love and lives of that great cloud of witnesses.

As you go into the world,
may you find yourself drawn deep by the Spirit,
being bold in living love
and daring in seeking justice.

And remember this—
the Creator’s love holds you,
the peace of Christ enfolds you,
and the wings of the Holy Spirit carry you—
now, and forever more.

[COVID-19: Global Response](https://united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/covid-19-global-response)

With the goal of ending COVID-19 for all, the United Church joins in the worldwide call for a just and equitable global distribution of vaccines.