

SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

In 2015, 24 October to November 1 is Australia's National Children's Week.

In that week Christians traditionally observe All Saints Day (1 November).

Halloween (Saturday, 31st October), is a secular observation with both Christian and pagan roots.

Any or all of these can be a starting point for an all-age event.



Christian attitudes toward Halloween range from 'should not' to 'it's quite OK'.

There are valid arguments for both points of view.

This resource is not intended to promote Halloween for its own sake.

It is intended to encourage parents and congregations to consider and respond to Halloween as we do to other aspects of our culture.

It is an opportunity to engage people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of their everyday lives.

INTRODUCTION

At Halloween time, adults smile when they see young children dressed in cute costumes. Children smile when they receive a bag full of trick-or-treat lollies.

Christians have much more than these passing pleasures to smile about.

SMILE — God loves you!

SMILE — God is more powerful than death, the devil or any evil power!

SMILE — God guides and protects you!

SMILE — God has made you a saint!

SMILE — God made a way for you to live forever with God!

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WHY ALL-AGE CHURCH?

A WAY OF BEING CHURCH

Doing things together as an all age congregation is significant and beneficial both theologically and socially. It can also be good fun.

Grown-ups need children in church because children remind us of our humanity — they show us how to play, laugh, cry, inquire, learn, express sheer delight and joy, or become timid and afraid.

Children need adults to share experiences and understanding — of faith and life — through modelling, stories and conversation.

Worship is a significant part of being church, but not the whole picture. Being church is also service, fellowship, learning and evangelism. People of all ages can be engaged in all these activities; and grow in faith by doing so.

In a society where people have become more and more compartmentalized (or placed in age, gender, ability or ethnic 'silos') the church — 'the communion of saints' — is one setting where everyone has the same value and importance. It's a place where young children can serve and learn alongside older people — people they might never encounter in their lives apart from church. It's a place where teenagers can get to know and learn from middle aged people and where they can know and mentor children. In this way church is more like a family than any other unit of society

A HALLOWEEN IMAGE

Screeeam! Gruesome! Severed body parts are a common theme in horror films and stories and in the haunted houses sometimes set up for Halloween. Why? Because severed body parts are unnatural and scary. They cause people to scream and to be afraid.

The Bible gives us an image of the church as the body of Jesus Christ with many different parts, all connected with one another, all having different functions, but working and growing together.

Our holy God is a god of wholeness. One might wonder what God thinks when in our programming for the body of Christ, we tend to sever the body parts — cutting off one group of people from another.

Is it as foolish (or scary) as a foot saying it's not a hand and therefore isn't part of the body (see 1 Corinthians 12:14-27).

AN ALL SAINTS IMAGE

As you think about your church at All Saints time, think about this:

God wants *all* people to know Jesus and believe in him. Jesus died to make *all* people holy. Saints are God's forgiven people of *all* ages. In fact, Jesus pointed out that young people are highly significant in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus asked the children to come to him. 'Let the little children come to me,' he said. 'Don't keep them away. God's kingdom belongs to people like them. What I'm about to tell you is true. Anyone who will not receive God's kingdom like a little child will never enter it.' (Luke 18:16,17)

CHILDREN'S WEEK

Children's Week is celebrated in Australia annually during the fourth week in October. Children's Week celebrates the right of children to enjoy childhood. It is also a time for children to demonstrate their talents, skills and abilities.

Thousands of children and their families around the country are involved in activities and events during Children's Week through schools, playgroups and other organisations.

Universal Children's Day, Friday November 20, 2015, calls people of all nations to a greater response to the plight of many millions of children around the world who are denied the basic necessities of a happy childhood and the education to develop their capacities. It also calls us in Australia to consider those conditions in society that affect the lives and future of our own children.

Children's Sunday during Children's Week has become a special time for churches to organise child-friendly worship services and celebrate the spirituality of children and the contribution they make to the church family.

CHURCHES AND CHILDREN'S WEEK

In planning your church's observation of Children's Sunday, find out what children in your congregation and neighbourhood are doing in their schools, playgroups, scouting groups and other organizations during Children's Week.

Find ways to support and encourage these activities. For example, if you have a suitable hall, offer it to organisers to use for Children's Week activities

Plan a Children's Sunday worship that celebrates Children's Week activities and includes children sharing what they have been doing.

Plan a Children's Sunday worship that recognises work being done by organisations such as Uniting World and Uniting Care to assist children who are in need of basic services.

Organise a social event that raises awareness of and raises funds for one of these child-supporting initiatives.

TRICK OR TREAT IN CHILDREN'S WEEK

If the practice of trick-or-treating is becoming wide-spread in your community, churches can serve the community by cooperating with schools, Neighbourhood Watch, councils and police to establish policies and promote a safe and sane approach to the practice. For example:

- Set a specific time, say 6:30-8:00 pm, for trick-or-treaters to be out and about.
- Encourage householders to put on their front door lights (or use some other symbol) to indicate that they will welcome trick-or-treaters. Houses that do not display the symbol should not be disturbed.
- Encourage children to visit only houses of people they know and trust.
- For safety-sake, if not good nutrition, children accept only commercially wrapped lollies or age-appropriate, non-edible treats.
- Limit trick-or-treating to children under high school age; and possibly provide an alternative activity for older children.
- Young trick-or-treaters should always be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult.

TRICK-OR-TREAT FOR UNICEF

This campaign began over 50 years ago in the USA as a way for kids to help kids in need of more than candy. Since then, children have gone door-to-door with their UNICEF collection boxes on Halloween, calling out "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF!" Children in USA have raised more than \$175 million over the past 65 years.

In Australia, Trick or Treat for UNICEF supports the UNICEF's School for Asia program. To find out more about this approach to trick-or-treating see www.unicefusa.org/trick-or-treat

ALL SAINTS DAY & HALLOWEEN

If you go back far enough in Church history you find a three day celebration called Hallowmas or the Triduum of All Hallows.

The first day (October 31) was known as Halloween, a shortened form for 'the eve of All Hallows'

The second Day (November 1), known as All Hallows (or 'All Saints') Day, was a day for honouring the 'official' well-known saints.

The third day (November 2), known as All Souls Day was a day for honouring departed faithful Christians, unknown in the wider world, who are important to a local family or congregation.'

The distinction between the three days has become blurred, with Christians observing All Saints on a convenient Sunday (if at all) and the secular world becoming more and more intrigued with the celebration of Halloween.

Most scholars suggest that the Saints celebration was a Christianization of older pagan festivals. It may have developed in response to or opposition to harvest festivals and/or death rites.

ALL SAINTS

On 13 May in the year 609 or 610, Pope Boniface IV began the annual practice of honouring the Blessed Virgin and all the Martyrs.

The date of 1 November can be traced to eighth century, when Pope Gregory III dedicated an oratory in St Peter's Basilica for relics of 'all saints, martyrs and confessors, and all the just made perfect who are at rest throughout the world'.

The festival of All Saints was retained after the Reformation in the calendar of many Protestant churches.

In protestant Christian tradition, the word 'saint' refers to anyone who is a faithful believer. So this festival is both

- a celebration of the blessing God gives each of us that he made us saints, and
- a commemoration of the saints who have 'departed this life in faith and fear.'

In some congregations All Saints Day is a day to remember all those who have died who were members of the local church. A candle may be lit as each person's name is mentioned in worship.

Some people visit graveyards and decorate graves with flowers and candles. Some even hold worship services in cemeteries.

HALLOWEEN

Halloween activities include trick-or-treating, attending costume parties, carving pumpkins into jack-o-lanterns, lighting bonfires, apple bobbing, visiting haunted attractions, playing pranks, telling scary stories, and watching horror films.

There can be some occult undercurrents to Halloween, particularly for people already involved in or dabbling in occult practices.

Many Halloween traditions can be traced back to the Celtic festival of Samhain — the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter, the darker half of the northern hemisphere year.

Samhain was seen as a time when 'the door to the Otherworld opened enough for the souls of the dead, and other beings such as harmful spirits and fairies to come into our world'. People took steps to ward off these harmful spirits.

Wearing costumes may have originated as a means of disguising oneself from these harmful spirits/fairies.

According to Prince Conteh, senior minister at Carleton United Church, Ontario, Canada:

Even some Christians, believed that the souls of the departed wandered the earth until All Saints' Day, and All Hallows' Eve provided one last chance for the dead to gain vengeance on their enemies before moving to the next world. In order to avoid being recognized by any soul that might be seeking such vengeance, people would don masks or costumes to disguise their identities.'

Trick-or-treating may have originated with youths going door-to-door collecting food or firewood. By 'treating' them, the household could expect good fortune.

A Christian custom involved 'Souling' when groups of poor people, often children, would go door-to-door collecting 'soul cakes' from householders who saw the gift as a 'prayer' for souls in purgatory.

Making jack-o'-lanterns may have originated from turnip lanterns, sometimes with faces carved into them, used to represent the spirits/fairies as protection from them.

These 'Christian' beliefs and practices came under attack during Reformation.

In England, the rising popularity of Guy Fawkes Night (5 November) from 1605 onward absorbed some of the Halloween practices.

HALLOWEEN TRADITIONS

Halloween is observed in many parts of Europe. But Halloween is big business in the USA. Total Halloween spending was estimated at \$7.4 billion in 2014, with the average household spending \$77.52 on indoor and outdoor décor, costumes, and candy.

According to a NRF Foundations' Retail Insight Centre study, the following percentage of Americans will be involved in Halloween activities:

- handing out candy 75%
- decorating their yard or house 50%
- carving a pumpkin 50%
- dressing in a costume 45% (with millennials coming in at 75%)
- throwing or attending a party 40%
- visiting a haunted house 25%

And, for better or worse, this observance of Halloween is coming to a neighborhood near you in Australia.

PUMPKINS

In some translations of the Bible, the 'best and finest foods' of Isaiah 25:6 include 'marrow' or pumpkins.

Pumpkins ripen in the North American autumn, and are perhaps the most common symbol of Halloween. It is common to see pumpkins on doorsteps during the season.

The pumpkins are often carved to make jack-o-lanterns.



The top of the pumpkin is cut out to form a lid. The inside seeds are scooped out and a face is carved through the pumpkin's rind, exposing the hollow interior. A candle or tea light is placed inside the pumpkin and lit before the lid is closed. This creates the glowing lantern.

The carving of vegetables has not always been associated with Halloween. Apparently Maoris carved gourds to make lanterns as long as 700 years ago. There were similar practices in other cultures.

The pumpkins most commonly grown in Australia, the Kent/Jap or Queensland Blue —

though not the orange colour seen in Halloween artwork — may be used for carving jack-o-lanterns. Butternut pumpkins do not have the hollow centre required for carving.

In recent years, growers in northern Queensland have developed an orange 'Jacko' variety specifically for the Halloween market.

In a post on www.buildfaith.org (Oct 20, 2013) Sharon Ely Pearson writes:

...remember these words of St. Paul: 'Your attitude must be that of Christ. Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself... Because of this, God has exalted him.' (Philippians 2:6-9)

Pearson suggests:

Could there be a better symbol for our Christian life than the harvest time jack-o-lantern? Are not we, like Jesus, called to be emptied out and filled with light? That is scary, to be sure. But there is always a smile on the face of the Great Pumpkin.

WHEAT SHEAVES AND CORN

Northern hemisphere autumn is harvest time, and wheat sheaves, corn stalks and dried corn are often used for seasonal decoration.

In Australia, winter grain crops are harvested around Halloween time so it is possible to use similar decorations and even include a harvest thanksgiving element in your observance.

DARKNESS AND NIGHT

Halloween is a time of black cats and black—clad witches. Many people find darkness scary. Halloween events taking place at night raising the level of anxiousness.

We worship God who in creation brought light into darkness and as our Saviour is seen as a light in darkness and urges his followers to let their own lights of faith and good deeds shine.

[Jesus] said, 'I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life.' (John 8:12, CEV)

TRICK OR TREAT

The 'trick-or-treat' procession around the neighbourhood practiced today is a fairly mild version of older practices. At one time older lads made sure there was a serious threat involved for householders who did not produce the requested treat. The 'trick' or prank might involve property damage that would today be considered illegal. The request for a treat on the

part of younger children is no longer accompanied by a song or recited verse. All they need to do is show up in costume, perhaps not even requesting the treat — but generally coached to say 'thank you'.

Today some rural areas in USA have instituted 'trunk-or-treat'. This resembles a car boot sale, where a number of families gather in a car park. Costumed children can wander from car trunk (boot) to trunk and receive treats from all participating families in a safe environment with a clear time limit.

Like the older trick or treat custom, the Bible spells out a clear division. The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life.

God's free gift is far, far greater than a trick-or-treater's wrapped lolly. But it is not gained through a threat or earned by any good performance. Like most of today's treats, it is a free gift.

COSTUMES

Some people love dressing up in costumes; others really dislike doing so. Some adults enjoy costume parties at Halloween or any time of the year. Others find the idea tedious. Australian children traditionally have a chance to wear costumes during Children's Book Week, with parents either loving or suffering through the time and expense of providing the costume.

Costumes have a major place in the traditions of Halloween. Today's most popular costume choices are influenced by television and films and retail availability. For children, the most popular 2014 costumes were: princess, animal, Spider Man, *Frozen* character, action/super hero, *Batman* character, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, witch, pirate, Superman. For adults, the popular choices are: witch, animal, *Batman* character, pirate, zombie, vampire, doctor/nurse, action/super hero, princess, and wench.

The Bible speaks of believers being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. It also talks about putting on the spiritual armor needed to fight the good fight. Those are amazing costumes! We don't have to buy them or make them. And they'll always fit!

GHOSTS, WITCHES, BATS, BLACK CATS, HAUNTED HOUSES AND, GRAVEYARDS

All these symbols associated with Halloween are carry-overs from the pre-Christian Celtic Samhain festival.

Each is related to death or the unknown and can project an aura of fear, particularly for young children.

Mostly, however, unless children have been cultured to fear them, they are simply imaginary storybook 'bad guy' characters or settings.

There are many things in life that cannot be explained, proven or even disproved logically or by science, yet the Bible talks about angels and spirits, so we can suppose that God wants us to be aware of them.

If you are, or your child seems, unduly frightened by an experience, you can pray for God's peace and protection. You might even use this traditional Scottish prayer:

From ghoulies and ghosties
And long-leggedy beasties
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, deliver us!



HALLOWEEN AND FEARS

WHAT IS FEAR?

Fear is defined as an unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain or harm. Fear is an involuntary response.

The fear response is a gift of God in the makeup of human beings (and animals). It has helped preserve individuals and species by triggering a flight or fight response in the face of real physical danger.

Fear is a chain reaction in the brain that starts with a stressful stimulus and ends with the release of chemicals that cause physiological responses such as pounding heart, increased blood pressure, faster breathing, nervous perspiration and nervous stomach. The face of a person who is afraid shows wide eyes, dilated pupils, brows drawn together and lips stretched horizontally.

Various levels of fear are associated with words such as: terror, horror, alarm, panic, agitation, trepidation, dread, consternation, dismay, distress, apprehension, worry, unease, nervousness, timidity, foreboding, misgiving, and suspicion. Anxiety and phobias are unnatural fear-like conditions.

A third possible response to fear is 'freeze'. Fear, particularly when it continues over time, can be debilitating and disempowering. This phenomenon was referred to by American President Franklin D Roosevelt in his inaugural address during the great depression: 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself'. Martin Luther King used the same phrase in 1968 while urging action in the movement for racial equality.

'Fear' (in older usage) may also indicate a mixed feeling of dread and reverence, awe, wonder, amazement, veneration and respect — our response to God.

WHAT WE FEAR

Fear almost always relates to anticipated pain rather experienced pain.

People fear death and physical pain. They may also fear emotional, social or financial pain and loss, ranging from embarrassment to devastation.

Anything that seems out of place or doesn't make sense can be scary. Through conditioning, people can become afraid of a whole range of different stimuli.

People across all cultures fear monsters — non-human or semi-human creatures or those that have returned from the afterlife (ghosts, demons, spirits, zombies, vampires, or reanimated corpses).

Ghost stories were probably told around campfires in prehistoric times. 18th century 'graveyard poets' wrote about spiders, bats, and skulls. 19th century novelists like Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley carried on the tradition. Today scary stories and movies intrigue and excite us.

WHEN FEAR IS FUN

Fear can be exciting. Many people enjoy the physical sensations that accompany being scared.

Though no one wants to experience a truly life-threatening situation, some people who find everyday life to be routine and boring, actively seek out activities that involve fear. When they are scared they are fully aware, conscious and in the moment.

For almost everyone there is a feeling of satisfaction when we're able to endure and survive the threat and the anxiety. When emotional balance is restored and we realize we're safe, we may interpret the fearful state as a positive experience.

Being scared can also make us feel closer to the people with whom we experienced and survived a fearful situation.

Social psychologist Leon Rappoport goes so far as to suggest that for children, Halloween can provide an enjoyable and safe way to explore and experience fear, knowing that the goblins and witches stalking their neighborhood are only make-believe. Halloween allows children to work through and release pent-up emotions and anxieties. They're being given the license to probe at least the superficial anxieties about magical transformations, which, in the imagination of a child, are not completely foreign. The experience provides a sort of relief in much the way that an exorcism could be said to do.'

To really enjoy a scary situation, real or imaginary, we have to know we're in a safe environment. When it comes to children (in our families and communities) at Halloween, it is important that we ensure safety.

FEAR AND THE BIBLE

The first instance of fear in the Bible occurs in the Garden of Eden. After eating from the forbidden tree, Adam and Eve experience fear in the presence of God. *'I heard you in the garden,' the man answered. 'I was afraid. I was naked, so I hid.'* (Genesis 3:10)

This 'fear' was an appropriate response for a weak, sinful human to the holiness, power and awesomeness of God.

In 1 John 4:18 we read *'There is no fear in love. Instead, perfect love drives fear away. Fear has to do with being punished. The one who fears does not have perfect love.'*

The Bible narrative mentions the words 'fear' and 'afraid' some 450 times. It tells how God's perfect love drove out fear, and restored the relationship between God and God's people so that: *Through [Jesus] and through faith in him we can approach God. We can come to him freely. We can come without fear.* (Romans 8:15)

The Bible tells us that 'fear' is the appropriate response to the presence of God:

- *Moses ... turned his face away. He was afraid to look at God.* (Exodus 3:6)
- *God is King. He should be feared. He establishes peace in the highest parts of heaven.* (Job 25:2)
- *Earth, tremble with fear when the Lord comes. Tremble when the God of Jacob is near.* (Psalm 114:7)
- *The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.* (Proverbs 1:7, Proverb 9:10, Psalm 111:20 KJV). In light of the new covenant relationship God has made for us and in light of changes in our language — this verse is now translated *'If you really want to become wise, you must begin by having respect for the Lord.'* (NIRV)

People were afraid when they saw Jesus' power:

- *The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard about this. They began looking for a way to kill Jesus. They were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.* (Mark 11:18)
- *They found the man who was now free of the demons. He was sitting at Jesus' feet. He was dressed and thinking clearly. All this made the people afraid.* (Luke 8:35)
- *The jailer called out for some lights. He rushed in, shaking with fear. He fell down in front of Paul and Silas.* (Acts 16:29)

- *The Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus heard about this. They were all overcome with fear. They held the name of the Lord Jesus in high honour.* (Acts 19:17)

Under God's care, we need not fear anything else:

- *But don't be afraid of them [your enemies]. The Lord your God will be with you. After all, he brought you up out of Egypt.* (Deuteronomy 20:1)
- David also said to his son Solomon, *'Be strong and brave. Get to work. Don't be afraid. Don't lose hope. The Lord God is my God. He is with you. He won't fail you ...'* (1 Chronicles 28:20)
- *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid. You are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff comfort me.* (Psalm 23:4)
- *I trust in God. I will not be afraid. What can mere men do to me?* (Psalm 56:11)
- Zechariah's song: *'He promised to save us from our enemies, so that we could serve him without fear.'* (Luke 1:74)
- *Jesus could set people free who were afraid of death. All their lives they were held as slaves by that fear.* (Hebrews 2:15)
- *So we can say boldly, 'The Lord helps me. I will not be afraid. What can a mere man do to me?'* (Hebrews 13:6)
- *God didn't give us a spirit that makes us weak and fearful. He gave us a spirit that gives us power and love. It helps us control ourselves.* (2 Timothy 1:7)
- *But suppose you suffer for doing what is right. Then you will be blessed. Scripture also says, 'Don't fear what others fear. Don't be afraid.'* (1 Peter 3:14, Isaiah 8:12)

See also Psalm 56:3, Isaiah 42:13, Zechariah 8:13, Haggai 2:5.

Fear (and relieving fear) is referred to at both the start and end of Jesus' earthly life:

- *The angel said, 'Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit.'* (Matthew 1:20)
- *But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you.'* (Luke 1:30)
- *But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy. It is for all the people.'* (Luke 2:10)

- Jesus said to his disciples: *'I leave my peace with you. I give my peace to you. I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be troubled. And do not be afraid.'* (John 14:27)
- The angel said to the women, *'Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.'* (Matthew 28:5)
- The risen Jesus said to them, *'Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me.'* (Matthew 28:10)

Jesus spoke about fear

- *So don't be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows.* (Matthew 10:31)
- *'My friends, listen to me. Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but can't do any more than that. I will show you whom you should be afraid of. Be afraid of the One who can kill the body and also has the power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, be afraid of him.'* (Luke 12:4, 5)
- *Do not be afraid when you hear about wars and about fighting against rulers. Those things must happen first. But the end will not come right away.* (Luke 21:9)

The Bible recognises the existence of witches, sorcerers, magicians, astrologers and the Devil. It warns against worshipping or trusting anyone or anything other than God or becoming involved in occult practices.

- *Don't let anyone tempt you to bow down to the sun, moon or stars. Don't worship things the LORD your God has provided for all of the nations on earth.* (Deuteronomy 4:19)
- *Here are things you must not do. Don't sacrifice your children in the fire to other gods. Don't practice any kind of evil magic at all. Don't use magic to try to explain the meaning of warnings in the sky or of any other signs. Don't take part in worshiping evil powers. Don't put a spell on anyone. Don't get messages from those who have died. Don't talk to the spirits of the dead. Don't get advice from the dead. The LORD your God hates it when anyone does those things. The nations that are in the land he's giving you practice the things he hates.* (Deuteronomy 18:10,11)
- *Saul [who had sought out the witch of Endor] died because he wasn't faithful to the LORD. He didn't obey the word of the LORD. He even asked for advice from a person who gets messages from those who have died. He didn't ask the LORD for advice. So the LORD put him to death. He turned the kingdom over to David.* (1 Chronicles 10:13,14)

- *Do not listen to those who claim to have secret knowledge. Do not listen to those who try to explain your dreams. Do not listen to those who get messages from people who have died. Do not listen to those who practice evil magic.* (Jeremiah 27:9)
- *'From the beginning, the devil was a murderer. He has never obeyed the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his natural language. He does this because he is a liar. He is the father of lies.'* (John 8:44)
- *Put on all of God's armour. Then you can stand firm against the devil's evil plans. Our fight is not against human beings. It is against the rulers, the authorities and the powers of this dark world. It is against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly world.* (Ephesians 6:11-12)

See also 2 Kings 21:6, Isaiah 8:19, Micah 5:12, 1 Timothy 4:7, Revelation 22:15

The 'spookiest' scene from the Bible occurred at the moment of Jesus death — the most terrifying and awe inspiring moment in human history:

- *The temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook. The rocks split. Tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs. After Jesus was raised to life, they went into the holy city. There they appeared to many people.* (Matthew 27:51-53)

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| <p>Bible texts in this resource, unless otherwise noted are from the New International Reader's Bible.</p> |
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FEARS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Halloween has not yet registered on lists of fears for Australian children. However Halloween practices play on some common fears such as: the dark, scary beings: witches, clowns, ghosts, strangers and strange situations. As the observance of Halloween becomes more widespread we may need to be more aware of children's fears and how to deal with them.

The fears of children change over the years through experiences and conditioning. As they grow, children are exposed to different situations. The normal initial reaction to unfamiliar things may be fear. However, once a situation becomes normalised and children realise that (with help from family and friends) they can survive the new thing, the fear dissipates.

Bible stories and verses that describe God's love for them and God's power over things they fear can be very important to children. Parents who demonstrate their own confidence in God's love, power and care are even more significant.

Infants and toddlers often fear

- loud noises or sudden movements
- large looming objects
- strangers
- separation
- changes in their physical environment.

Preschoolers may fear

- the dark
- noises at night
- masks
- monsters and ghosts
- animals such as strange dogs.

Primary school children may fear

- snakes and spiders
- storms and natural disasters
- being home alone
- a teacher who's angry
- scary news or TV shows
- injury, illness, doctors, shots, or death
- failure and rejection.

In April 2007 the Australian Childhood Foundation, in conjunction with Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia at Monash University, commissioned Quantum Market Research to undertake a comprehensive survey of young people, using a representative sample of 600 Australians aged between 10 and 14.

The study revealed that:

- 90% described themselves as being basically happy.

The young people's concerns are conditioned by the modern world and media. They indicated concern, worry or fear about:

- 52% not having enough water
- 44% the future impact of climate change
- 43% pollution in air and water
- 36% terrorism
- 31% having to fight in a war
- 27% being a victim of crime
- 25 % that the world will end before they get older
- 57% what other people think of them
- 47% the way they look
- 41% that they never do well enough
- 18% being called names because of their culture, nationality or religion
- 57% being teased
- 54% not fitting with friends
- 52% being bullied.

The level of the young people's concern or fear about these situations was influenced by their sense of supportive or non-supportive parents and communities.



clothing and drink label

We, and our young people, are receiving contrasting messages about life and our attitude toward it. We need to help them find their way between extremes. Halloween may be a good time to start the conversation.



tag line from the 1986 film
The Fly

WHAT ABOUT HALLOWEEN?

A STUDY FOR YOUTH AND/OR ADULTS

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

This study is designed to be an interactive exploration rather than a presentation of facts. The facilitator's role is exactly that: facilitating.

- Have the required equipment at hand: whiteboard, markers and eraser (or poster paper and markers), Bibles and Bible reference books (or computer with access to internet), comfortable seating, appropriate lighting and temperature.
- Provide a safe emotional climate in which the exploration can take place.
- Guide the exploration using the following notes.
- Ensure that all participants (regardless of their age or faith stage) are welcomed, respected, and listened to and share the responsibility for the exploration.
- Take control of the discussion if — and only if — the group veers off track or seriously misrepresents the gospel. And then with gentleness and openness.

PART 1 – THE HALLOWEEN CONNECTION

Keep this activity light-hearted. Accept all suggestions.

- Begin with the letters of the word HALLOWEEN. Challenge the group to see how many shorter words they can make from the letters. You may work as a whole group, or form two teams, or have people work individually. You may use Scrabble-type blocks to help formulate your list.
- Ask a volunteer to write the complete list of words on a whiteboard or large paper.
- Ask people to volunteer to identify any word from your list that they think might have something to do with Halloween. Each person draws a pumpkin beside their chosen word and explains it's connection with Halloween, eg

| |
|--|
| <i>Allow 😊 Kids are allowed to dress up for Halloween.</i> |
|--|

| |
|---|
| <i>Owl 😊 Owls make scary noises on Halloween night.</i> |
|---|

When you have marked 5 or 6 words, move on to part 2.

PART 2 – THINKING ABOUT OUR FAITH

- Ask volunteers to identify any word that they think might have something to do with the Bible or their Christian faith. Each person draws a cross beside their chosen word and explains its faith connection. See the chart on the next page.

Ask the group to affirm suggestions they agree with. Use a printed Bible concordance or dictionary or an electronic resource such as *Bible Gateway* to check any responses that you or the group wants to challenge.

Through this exercise, you will hopefully discover that God is a part of all of life one way or another.

- Cross out or erase any words that you are not able to connect fairly easily with faith.

PART 3 – FAITH AND HALLOWEEN

- Form three sub-groups. Aim to have people with a range of different faith stages and experience in each group.
- Assign each group one of the following Bible verses. You may give them a printed copy of the verse or ask them to find the verse themselves in Bibles.

Proverbs 1:7

Romans 12:2

2 Timothy 1:7

The sub—groups' task is to read their verse, discuss what it may have to do with faith and Halloween, and prepare a short prayer based on the verse and their discussion.

PART 4 – CONCLUSION

Reform as a whole group.

- Ask each sub-group to report briefly on their verse and discussion and to lead the whole group in praying their prayer.
- You may conclude by thanking all participants, making any required announcements, leading the group in praying the Lord's Prayer and/or a blessing.

FAITH WORDS WITHIN THE WORD 'HALLOWEEN'

(Note: this list is not comprehensive. Faith connections are possible examples only.)

| | |
|-------|--|
| All | Jesus died for all people, Jesus took away all my sin. |
| Allow | God allows us to talk to him in prayer. |
| Awe | God is awesome |
| Ewe | If we are like sheep, some of us are ewes. |
| Hall | We worship in a hall. |
| Halo | In pictures (not the Bible) Saints wear halos |
| Heal | Jesus healed people with diseases. |
| Heel | God made all of me; including my heels. |
| Hole | People talk about our need for God as a God-shaped hole. |
| How | Jesus shows us how to live. |
| Lean | I can lean on God's strength. |
| New | Through Jesus, God makes us new creatures. |
| Now | God is with us now and forever. |
| One | There is One God. |
| Owe | I owe God my love and trust. |
| Owl | God made all creatures, including owls. |
| Own | I am God's own child |
| When | When I was baptised, I was made God's child. |
| Whole | He's got the whole world in his hands. |
| Woe | Woe to those who reject Jesus. |
| Won | Jesus won the battle over sin and death. |

Challenging (but not impossible) connections may include words like: loam, loan, low, wall, wheel.

ALL-AGE HALLOWEEN PARTY

A church-based, all-age Halloween party may be a way you can provide families in your congregation and community a safe way of celebrating the holiday.

All-age events have been identified as a key element of ministry that builds up the church as a 'family' and that helps people of all ages to develop as disciples of Jesus Christ through caring relationships.

BIG QUESTIONS

Before you decide to have an all-age Halloween party, you will need to be clear about several considerations.

Purpose — why you would have a party

The following questions will help focus your response to this. Knowing your purpose will also help you in evaluating the event.

Guests — who you would invite

- church members?
- other people in your community?
- young children with parents and other adults?
- children from a local school (with parents) as a Children's Week event?
- teens with their parents?
- people who are associated with your congregation through activities held on church property?
- seniors with their younger family members and friends?
- some other target group?

Format — what it will be like

- a social gathering only?
- a social gathering with a Christian message?
- a church gathering with some games and food?

Finance — How the cost will be covered?

- participants pay?
- church (or some ministry of the congregation) budget?
- donations of goods and services?

Or is the event itself a fund-raiser for a particular cause?

After those major questions are sorted out, and if you decide to have a party, you will need to consider details:

- **When** and **where** you will hold your party
- **Who** will make the party happen: inviting, catering, activity planning, security, setting up, cleaning up and other details of party organisation

SOME ACTIVITY IDEAS

Activities you choose for an all-age party must, for the most part, be suitable for, or adaptable to, the youngest participants.

Toddlers (and babies) can be carried through activities by their parents (or other trusted teens or adults).

Most adults will enjoy getting into the spirit of the event and participating alongside younger people in children's games. Those who are reluctant to actually play, for whatever reason, may be willing to help with organising, catering, supporting or cheering from the sidelines.

• Pumpkin piñata

Purchase or make a piñata decorated like a jack-o-lantern. Fill it with wrapped lollies and/or small treats.

To play: the piñata is suspended on a rope in an open space. The group stands in a wide circle around the piñata. Starting with the youngest, one person at a time is blindfolded and given a light-weight cricket bat (or similar). They have three chances (or 20 seconds) to attempt to swing at and break the piñata while the rest of the group cheers them on. Once someone has broken the piñata and the contents fall to the ground, everyone can scramble for a prize.

• Skeleton relay race

Purchase or make identical cardboard skeletons (no more than a dozen pieces/bones).

Form two or more teams with the same number and roughly the same age combinations. For each team the separate skeleton pieces are in a box at one end of their course. A frame is drawn on the ground at the other end of the course. Players must stand beyond the frame.

For the race, one player at a time runs from the starting frame to the box of skeleton pieces, picks up a bone and takes the bone back and places it in the frame. Once the bone is in place, the next player can run for another bone. Players who are not running are responsible for arranging the bones into a human skeleton.

Winning team is the first to complete the skeleton.

• Pin the smile on the pumpkin

Play as for 'pin the tail on the donkey' with blindfolded people adding a smiling mouth to a jack-o-lantern.

Alternatively, form teams of eight players. Have a pumpkin pictures for each team.

Have black cut-out shapes for each pumpkin: two round eyes, one triangular nose, one smiley mouth, one square stem and two half-circle ears. Use blue tack to secure the features on the pumpkin. One team member directs the play; the others are blindfolded and add their pieces to the team's jack-o-lantern face. You may award prizes for the funniest, the scariest and the most beautiful face.

- **Pumpkin search**

If your venue provides some interesting places to hide things, have a search for apples or small pumpkins, or wrapped lollies or pictures of Halloween items. Alternatively, use a 'Halloween' picture (see internet Images). Print the picture as large as possible, cut it into jigsaw pieces and hide the pieces. People search for the pieces and assemble the picture. They know they have found all the pieces when the picture is complete.

- **Pumpkin bowling**

Play a modified-for-Halloween version of ten pin bowling. For the pins, set up ears of corn (that you have sliced through so they will stand up). For the ball, use a small pumpkin. Watching the pumpkin wobble as you bowl it is *something to smile about*.

- **Spooky sounds**

Set up a sound booth, operated by someone with the necessary equipment. Early in the party, individuals or families go into the sound booth and record the spookiest sound they can come up with. The tech person makes a composite recording of all the sounds to play for the group.

You may use the recording in a number of ways, eg

- > vote on the all-time scariest sound
- > have a competition to identify the sounds
- > ask families or small groups to sit together, listen to the sounds. They talk about what the sound is and why people might be afraid when they hear it. They discuss whether it is really dangerous or not and what to do if it is.

- **Costume parade**

Invite people to come to the party in costumes (perhaps relating to a film theme). Let everyone parade around and show off their costumes. An MC may provide commentary on the costumes or interview people about why they chose their costume. Alternatively, to save people the expense of making or purchasing costumes, provide paper plates (or paper bags) and craft equipment so that each person can make a mask. Have a mask parade.

SOME FILM IDEAS

You may plan the night around a film/DVD.

Here are some films you might consider (age suggestions from commonsensemedia.org):

2+ *Barney's Halloween Party*

3+ *Pooh's Heffalump Halloween Movie*

3+ *Veggie Tales: Rack, Shack and Benny*

3+ *Veggie Tales: Tales from the Crisper*

4+ *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown*

5+ *Monsters, Inc*

7+ *ET*

7+ *The Nightmare before Christmas*

8+ *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*

8+ *The Never-ending Story*

12+ *To Kill a Mockingbird*

If you use a film

- be sure you have the required equipment and someone who can operate it
- avoid any film that promotes a stereotype that people with particular physical characteristics are to be feared
- make sure you have permission to use the film/DVD with a group
- preview the film and prepare some questions people can think about as they watch, or discussion questions for afterward. Remember, you can also pause a DVD and discuss what is happening.
- plan some activities that relate specifically to the film, or use ideas from the film for decoration or costumes.

SOME FOOD IDEAS

- Doughnuts
As a game, tie strings through the doughnut hole; suspend doughnuts so they are at about shoulder height, challenge hungry people to eat their doughnuts from the string.
- Anything made of pumpkin: soup, pie, ice-cream, scones
- Anything related to apples, eg fruit pies or cider. Consider challenging people to eat an apple from a plate without using their hands.
- Snake lollies, false teeth or other 'Halloween'-shaped sweets
- Popcorn made on site.

DECORATIONS

You can spend a lot of time and money on decorations. But that's not necessary.

Use an orange and black colour scheme. Simply drape a bit of crepe paper and add some balloons.

If you want to go further, making table decorations can be a party activity.

A HALLOWEEN MESSAGE FROM THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Here is a way of injecting a Gospel message into the party. It may be done at the end of a costume parade.

An actor is dressed as a sheep. They tell about their choice of costume using the 23rd Psalm as the theme;

I chose a sheep costume this Halloween because it reminds me that I never have to be afraid of anything, ever. You know why? Because Lord Jesus is like the greatest, strongest, smartest shepherd ever and I'm like one of his sheep.

Jesus, my shepherd, gives me everything I need. When I'm tired, he gives me a place to rest — in fields of soft, green grass.

When I'm thirsty, he leads me to fresh clean water. When I'm worn out, he gives me new strength to face whatever happens.

Jesus, my shepherd, goes ahead of me to show me the safe and good way to go. If I go off the path, he uses his shepherd's cane to pull me back on the track.

You know why? Because he loves me and wants me to do what is right.

So, if Jesus is our shepherd, we don't have to be afraid of anything. Not [name any scary things represented during the party, eg ghosts, spiders]. Not even death! Because Jesus, our good shepherd, is with us — always.

That's why I dressed as a sheep today.



SOMETHING TO SMILE ABOUT

A SAMPLE ALL-AGE WORSHIP SERVICE FOR ALL SAINTS DAY

(Spoken 'script' is in italics; comments and instructions are in plain type.)

OVERVIEW

The service is organised around a number of SMILES. Each one relates to something we have to smile about. SMILES include one or more worship elements and are illustrated by the work of an ARTIST who carves a jack-o-lantern 'saint'.

WORSHIP LEADERS

In addition to a regular hospitality team, tech team and musicians, this service is written to involve:

- a **WORSHIP LEADER** who connects the worshipers with what is happening in worship
- a **PRESENTER** who helps interpret what the artist's work shows about God and about God's saints.

There is no sermon, as such. The roll of PRESENTER may be taken by a pastor/minister/priest, with the option of expanding on the script

- a **BIBLE READER**
- possibly a **PRAYER LEADER** and **CONGREGATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE**
- An **ARTIST** who does not speak, but carves a pumpkin jack-o-lantern during the service.

PREPARATION

Because this service is significantly different from your usual worship plan, you will need to work through the script (or your adaptation of the script) with everyone involved in leading the service. Include your hospitality team, people who set up and decorate the church, the tech team, and the musicians. You may even hold a complete walk-through rehearsal.

The week before the service take photos of people smiling. Ask each person for their best or biggest smile. These will be shown on screen at the start of the service.

SET UP

If possible, arrange seating in a circle or semi-circle around a work table so they will be able to watch an artist at work during the service.

If seating is in rows, try to have the work table elevated, or have a camera on it with the images shown on screen from time to time.

You may invite families with young children to sit where the children can easily see the artist.

1. AS PEOPLE ARRIVE

HOSPITALITY TEAM greets people and helps them get settled in the worship area.

To start people thinking about the theme for the day, the **TECH TEAM** displays pictures of smiling people of all ages. You may mix in with the photos some 'smile statements' like those on page 1 of this document.

Instrumentalists from the **MUSIC TEAM** may quietly play some of the music that will be used during the service.

Alternatively, play a recording of Nat King Cole singing the Charlie Chaplain song 'Smile (when you're feeling blue)' as the pictures are displayed.

2. WELCOME & INVOCATION

WORSHIP LEADER: *Welcome to worship at [name of Church]. We are gathered here today because we have something to smile about.*

Actually God has given us lots of things to smile about.

We smile because God touches our lives in not just one, but three different ways: as a loving Father, as a Brother who died for us and as a Spirit that lives within us.

We smile because God is with us here and now as we come together to worship God.

3. WELCOME SONG



SMILE #1

We're welcome in God's family

SONG LEADER: *We smile because God has made us part of his own family.*

Australian sign language has a very interesting sign for family. [Demonstrate and practice]

The sign for **family**: hold up both hands in front of you, palms out, all ten individual fingers standing up like individual people. Then turn both hands around, with palms facing you and bring them together, little fingers touching (like family members together).

In this song, when we sing the word 'family' we'll make the sign for family.

We'll also use the Auslan sign for 'come' when we sing 'come'. It's really easy. [Demonstrate and practice]

The sign for **come**: beckon twice with pointer finger

You can sit down while we sing, but . . .

Any time the song mentions a group that you belong to, you may bob up. For example, if the song says 'brothers' and you are a brother, bob up.

Let's sing and do the actions.

TECH TEAM may display the song words as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation in the James Manley song: *Come in, come in and sit down. You are a part of the family.*

(Note: unless you are having Holy Communion as part of your service, omit the verse which relates directly to Communion.)

4. THEME INTRODUCTION

WORSHIP LEADER: We are part of God's family. Now that's ... something to smile about!

We're going to be using that phrase a number of times in this worship service. When I say the first part: 'Now that's ...' I'll pause so you can say the second part: 'something to smile about!'

Let's try it. 'We are part of God's family. Now that's...

ALL: ... Something to smile about!

WORSHIP LEADER: *I'm sure I saw some of you smiling during that song. That's great. We're talking about smiling today.*

Some of you may have celebrated yesterday as Halloween.

[If appropriate, invite several people to tell what they did for Halloween.]

It won't be long before we'll all celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

Like Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, Halloween [Hallows-eve] comes the day before something special. In the Christian calendar, Halloween comes before All Saints Day — today.

During our worship today [Name of ARTIST] is going to carve a picture of a saint to help us find out what saints are.

ARTIST (possibly dressed in an artist's smock or a chef's outfit) carries a large pumpkin to a work table that is already set up with a covering, carving instruments, a marking pen, a bowl for receiving scraps, a short, sturdy candle and matches.

5. GOD MAKES PEOPLE INTO SAINTS



SMILE #2

God makes people into saints.

During this section the **ARTIST** looks at the pumpkin from all angles, decides where to put face and draws on the features with a pencil or marker.

WORSHIP LEADER: *[ARTIST] is working with a pumpkin. He/she didn't choose that ordinary pumpkin because of what it is. [ARTIST] chose it because of what he/she can make it into.*

PRESENTER: *God chose you and me to be saints, not because of what we are, but because God had plans for what he would make us into.*

The Bible tells us about the first people Jesus called to follow him — the first Saints. Some were fishermen when Jesus chose them. And then there was Matthew.

BIBLE READER reads from a large Bible: *St. Matthew wrote: 'Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.... I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."' (Matthew 9:9-13)*

WORSHIP LEADER: God makes ordinary sinful people his Saints. Now that's ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

6. GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART



SMILE #3

God knows what's inside his saints.

During this section the **ARTIST** carves a round opening/lid around the stem of the pumpkin and removes it.

WORSHIP LEADER: *[ARTIST] needs to get inside the pumpkin, so he/she can work from the inside out.*

PRESENTER: *God looks at what's inside people. God works from the inside out when he makes people into saints.*

The Bible tells us about God sending Samuel to find the man who would be king of God's people. Samuel went to the sons of Jesse.

BIBLE READER reads from a large Bible:
*When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab. He thought, "This has to be the one the LORD wants me to anoint for him."
But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider how handsome or tall he is. I have not chosen him. I do not look at the things people look at. Man looks at how someone appears on the outside. But I look at what is in the heart."
(1 Samuel 16:6,7)*

PRESENTER: *In the end, God chose David — the youngest and least impressive of all the brothers. And God made him into Israel's greatest king.*

WORSHIP LEADER: God knows what's in our hearts. Now that's ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

7. SONG

SONG LEADER: *Here's a song that could be sung every day by people God is making into saints. We'll sing it to the tune of 'The Maori Farewell' and if you feel like swaying (and smiling) while you sing, that's OK.*

TECH TEAM may display the song words as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation singing a lively version of Search Me O God (words by James E Orr), verses 1-3 only

8. CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS



SMILE #4
God takes away all the bad stuff that's inside his saints.

During this section the ARTIST scrapes out the seeds and pith of the pumpkin.

WORSHIP LEADER: [ARTIST] needs to clean away all the un-necessary bits inside the pumpkin. He/she will get rid of anything that would spoil the finished product.

PRESENTER: Have you ever seen a bumper sticker with the words: 'Christians aren't perfect — just forgiven'?

That's two things to know about God's saints: We sure aren't perfect. We are forgiven. God's taking away all the bad stuff — is a huge thing for every saint.

WORSHIP LEADER: Now is the time for us to talk to God about the bad stuff. Please read with me.

TECH TEAM may display the words so the **CONGREGATION** can read the confession.

Dear Heavenly Father, we come to you as ordinary people, seldom very evil but certainly not always loving.

When we compare ourselves with the great saints of history, we feel discouraged and ineffective.

We go through life, trying to do our best, yet rarely achieving half of the good which we intended.

We are selfish when we should be generous; bitter when we should be forgiving.

Father, we are sorry for all that we have done or left undone that has hurt us and people around us. We pray for the forgiveness which only you can grant, and we pray for the new life which only your Spirit can give us.

Through Christ Jesus, our Saviour. Amen!

(Based on a prayer by Bruce Prewer)

Consider inviting young children to go to the ARTIST while the confession is read and to feel the icky-feeling stuff that has been removed from the pumpkin. [Have wet wipes available for sticky hands.]

BIBLE READER reads from a large Bible:
St Paul wrote: 'Here is how God has shown his love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' (Romans 5:8)

And St John wrote: 'God is faithful and fair. If we admit that we have sinned, he will forgive us our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.' (1 John 1:9)

WORSHIP LEADER: So, I can say to you: your sins are forgiven. God has cleared out the bad stuff inside his Saints.

Now that's ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

8. STATEMENT OF FAITH



SMILE #5
God shows us what God is like.

During this section the ARTIST carves the pumpkin's eyes.

WORSHIP LEADER: The next thing [ARTIST] is carving is some eyes.

PRESENTER: God's saints need to see what God is like so they can follow Jesus.

WORSHIP LEADER: Now is the time for us to tell one another what God has shown us about God. Let's sing it:

TECH TEAM may display the song words as **MUSIC TEAM** leads the congregation singing Hillsong's *This I Believe* or another musical version of the Apostle's Creed.

WORSHIP LEADER: We can see what God is like. Now that's ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

9. PRAYER



SMILE #6
God hears his saints when we pray.

During this section the ARTIST carves the pumpkin's nose.

WORSHIP LEADER: Now (ARTIST) is carving a nose.

PRESENTER: A nose! You can't expect me to make a connection between saints and noses! I suppose we all have noses, but . . .

BIBLE READER: How about this from the psalms?

Reading from a large Bible:

'LORD, I call out to you.

Come quickly to help me.

Listen to me when I call out to you.

May my prayer come to you

like the sweet smell of incense.' (Psalm 141,1,2)

PRESENTER: Of course. The prayers of God's saints are so important to God that God doesn't just hear them, God breathes them in. Our prayers smell sweet to God.

WORSHIP LEADER: So now is the time for us to pray.

WORSHIP LEADER (OR PRAYER LEADERS) lead the congregation in prayers for themselves and for others.

WORSHIP LEADER: God hears our prayers. Now that's ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

10. BLESSING



SMILE #7
God loves his saints and smiles on us.

During this section the ARTIST carves the pumpkin's smiling mouth.

WORSHIP LEADER: This is what we've been waiting for [ARTIST] is carving a big smile.

PRESENTER: We've been doing a good bit of smiling today, haven't we? We smile about things that make us happy. God smiles about his saints because we make God happy. God's smile is a way God blesses us

BIBLE READER reads from a large Bible:

'The LORD spoke to Moses. He said, 'Tell Aaron and his sons, "Here is how I want you to bless the people of Israel. Say to them,

""May the LORD bless you and take good care of you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD look on you with favour and give you his peace. ""

"In that way they will put the blessing of my name on the people of Israel. And I will bless them."" (Numbers 6:22-27)

WORSHIP LEADER: We can pray that same blessing for one another.

Please put your hand on the shoulder of someone near you. Look at that person. Smile at them. And repeat after me:

[Speak one line at a time for people to repeat.]

May the LORD bless you and take good care of you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD look on you with favour and give you his peace.

Amen.

WORSHIP LEADER: God smiles about us and blesses us. Now that's ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS, OFFERING, SENDING OUT



SMILE #8
God gives us light and we reflect the light to others.

During this section the ARTIST places a lighted candle in the pumpkin and closes the lid.

WORSHIP LEADER: [ARTIST] has finished carving the pumpkin. Now he/she is lighting a candle and putting it inside.

PRESENTER: Light drives away darkness. Light helps us to see the smile on the faces of our friends and family.

God is the source of all light. God's light helps us see the smile on God's own face.

BIBLE READER reads from a large Bible:

St John wrote: 'Jesus ... said, "I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will never walk in darkness. They will have the light that leads to life."' (John 8:12)

WORSHIP LEADER: Because [ARTIST] cleared away all the un-needed bits from inside the pumpkin, there is room for a candle. The smooth flesh reflects the candle light. We can see the light shining out from the face on the pumpkin.

PRESENTER: Like the inside of the pumpkin, God's saints reflect God's light.

BIBLE READER reads from a large Bible:
*St Matthew wrote these words of Jesus:
'You are the light of the world. A city on a hill
can't be hidden. Also, people do not light a
lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put
it on its stand. Then it gives light to everyone in
the house. In the same way, let your light shine
in front of others. Then they will see the good
things you do. And they will praise your Father
who is in heaven.'* (Matthew 5:14-16)

WORSHIP LEADER: God gives us light and we
reflect God's light. Now that's ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

**WORSHIP LEADER OR ANOTHER
CONGREGATIONAL LEADER** describes some of
the ways the saints in your congregation are
letting their light shine in the community.

They explain how the offering will help with the
light-shining and invite people to contribute if
they wish to do so.

OFFERING: The offering is received in your
regular way.

While this is happening, the
TECH TEAM may show a YouTube clip of Stephen
Curtis Chapman's song about everyday saints:
Do everything (see
www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVTelMursb8)

WORSHIP LEADER: We are God's saints, chosen,
forgiven, smiled on and blessed. We can reflect
God's light, his forgiveness and his smile in
everything that we do.

Now that really is ...

ALL: ... something to smile about!

12. FINAL SONG

SONG LEADER: Hey, fellow saints, let's sing one
more song before we leave.

TECH TEAM may display the song words as
MUSIC TEAM leads the congregation singing a
closing song.

Select a song that suits your congregation:

A contemporary worship song such as

- Reflector (Planet Shakers)
- Christ, be our light

A traditional hymn such as

- Blessed Assurance (Cosby)
- Lord, dismiss us with your blessing (Fawcett)
- Now thank we all our God (Rinkart)

The old favourite fun song

- When the saints go marching in

or for kids

- He's a mighty God and He's mighty strong
(Holmes)

As people leave, you may repeat the images
and music used at the start of the service.