

**November 6, 2022 All Saints Sunday**  
**Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope**

**Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18, Psalm 149**  
**Ephesians 1:11-23, Luke 6:20-31**

[Nora McInerny: [https://www.ted.com/talks/nora\\_mcinerny\\_we\\_dont\\_move\\_on\\_from\\_grief\\_we\\_move\\_forward\\_with\\_it?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/nora_mcinerny_we_dont_move_on_from_grief_we_move_forward_with_it?language=en)]

**Grace and peace to you, Beloved Saints of God. Amen.**

**As we worship this morning**, I'm mindful that the people of Zion Lutheran Church in south Minneapolis, at 33<sup>rd</sup> and Pillsbury, are today marking a Holy Closure.

After 129 years, the Zion Lutheran congregation is closing, and today is their final service.

Their building will become part of Simpson Housing Services.

The members of Zion will find other communities in which to worship and serve, to be grounded, fed and forgiven.

Zion's legacy in the Lyndale neighborhood is rich and deep.

You can imagine the tears of grief and gratitude.

As we worship, I ask you to hold in your prayers those saints at Zion.

**For many years I pastored a congregation called Salem English Lutheran, an easy walk from Zion.**

Like Zion, Salem is another congregation has gone through tremendous change.

Salem remains a congregation, but in the process of transformation

they said goodbye to a large and failing building,  
 entered into years of wilderness in interim spaces,  
 and finally, now, share a ministry center with two other congregation.

On Reformation Sunday in 2006 we closed the Salem building.

On the following Sunday, All Saints Sunday,

we began years of shared life in the church building of one of our partner congregations.

I have a memory of my colleague at the other congregation, Pastor Don,

standing at my side in their sanctuary,  
 and pointing up to the beautiful, exposed ceiling beams.

He commented how in worship he liked to imagine the saints lounging in the rafter beams, surrounding and supporting the current congregation.

Then Don smiled, and told me that he knew there was space for the Salem saints to join in too.

**I've carried that image for years.**

Now I don't believe that our blessed dead are confined to church buildings, no, not at all.

But I do believe that when we worship we are not alone.

The saints, those living and those who are at rest, come close, linger near.

And what a comfort, what a gift to worship together,

to quite literally share the Feast that is to Come, the feast of God's coming reign,

with blessed saints who have died

and those who are still living, those at our side this morning.

**Friends, our sanctuary has some fantastic beams and rafters** and they are full of the church triumphant,

singing with gusto,

weeping as we weep,

linking us to the past and present and future in God's holy mystery.

I shared this image this week with a dear friend,

a woman who lives at many intersections of race and queerness and disability.

She lost her father this year and said,

Oh, I love that, my dad and Harriet Tubman, they are right there together.

**This morning, Hope's saints are right here with us.**

These are church members who have died since last All Saints Sunday:

Nita Anderson, who for years sang in the alto section of the Hope Choir;

Mike Fingerson, a scientist and inventor and business man;

Steve Ganzkow-Wold, linking pastoral ministry with counseling and psychology and wholistic health.

Jerry Hanson who came to Hope in her later years, with roots in Albert Lea, and a love for needlework;

Phil Thompson, an art professor at Augsburg and an artist, whose artwork is all around Hope,

including this large piece, Madonna in the City, that graces the south transept.

**Now they are the Hope Saints**, but over the weeks, we've been compiling quite a list of saints.

Many names were quietly added,

but sometimes you sent a little note about those you wished included.

The saints we name today and for whom we light candles,

they are our parents and grandparents, partners and children.

They are our siblings, and aunts and uncles and cousins.

They are friends with whom we have laughed and learned, cried and danced,

alongside whom we've grown up and changed and done hard things.

They are the faithful, with whom we've prayed and labored,

knelt for communion and received forgiveness.

They are colleagues and mentors, musicians and pastors.

They are next door neighbors, and community and civic leaders.

They are co-conspirators in the movements for change.

These saints have rich, joys and burdens, when we slow down to listen.

One of you wrote of your saint, she was one of the original “Rosie the Riveters”.

As we read in Ephesians: “I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus...

and I do not cease to give thanks for you...”

**Clearly we each come** to this day with our particular stories, our memories, our tears,

and yet we know that the experience of grief is universal, it’s human.

Nora McInerney writes, **“You don’t move on from grief, you go forward with it.”**

And grief takes so many forms: anticipatory grief, knowing the loss is coming.

The ache and questions: Can I go on? What might the future hold?

Sometimes, even in grief, there’s relief.

**Often it’s complicated**, for the ones we love are complicated, and our relationships are complicated.

There’s a temptation to avoid this, to assume we are supposed to remember only the good.

But truly in the commendation in a memorial service,

we give all of who that person was back to God who created them,

God who knows us more than we know ourselves.

That’s grace, my friends, grace in Christ Jesus for those who have died,

and grace for we who are still living, making our way.

**The sheer fabric of this parament behind the choir is perfect today.**

Celtic Christianity has gifted us with the image of Thin Space, the nearness of heaven and earth.

And what is more of a Thin Space than All Saints Sunday?

**Beloved ones, I invite you to enter into this holy time,**

this Thin Space of remembering our saints.

We’ll intersperse the names with singing.

After that, we’ll have ample time to move around,

to light candles and name still more saints,

to pray and sing. Amen.

