

Halloween originally started as a holiday to celebrate the change of seasons. The Celts celebrated it as a time when the light turned into darkness. Some believe that it is the time between this world and the next are closest, the veil is the thinnest. The ancient Celts believed it was when the gods were closest to the earth. For Christians, the Halloween celebration started as Hallow Mass which was the mass before All Saints Day where we remember those who have left us. Today, I would like to celebrate Halloween with you by discussing community across the generations. I want you to walk with me through the life of the church, visiting different people along the way. As we journey together, I want you to ponder your part in the community and how you can form community across the generations. I want you to remember, to dream, to prophesy. This is a service of quiet reflection and thought so is okay if you close your eyes or something I say sparks a thought you want to explore...just go with what comes to you.

A baby is nestled inside its mother's womb, their hearts beat in sync with one another. The mother is excited but tired, wanting to cherish each moment but anxious for what lies ahead. She enters the church doors. There she is met by loving people who talk to her about her fears and share in her joy. They gift the baby with blankets and clothes and write notes to the little one explaining their joy at its arrival...and the baby does arrive, into its mother's arms and into the arms of the church.

The baby is such a gift to the church! He reminds some of when their own children were little. He brings hope that the church will continue. The baby coos and gurgles catch attention during the service, warming hearts and making folks smile. After service, the baby warms the arms of those long past having children, sparking memories and giving comfort. In return, the church members teach the baby about love and dependability. They rock him and walk him when his belly hurts, warm a bottle when he's hungry...the baby and the church are there for each other.

The baby grows into a toddler, running down the church aisles, sprinkling cookie crumbs throughout the narthex. The toddler's smile, with only a few teeth present, lights up the room. The church is filled with joy at the little one's exuberance and delights in sharing their cookies! The church helps the toddler learn to share with her friends and that she has a bigger community than mom and dad.

The toddler grows into a preschooler and begins pre-school at his church. He learns to write his name, to sing the alphabet, and to count. He shows off his skills during Sunday School where he learns that God is love. He belts out Jesus Loves Me during the Christmas Pageant, bringing laughter to the congregation. The preschooler reminds the church to use its imagination, to dream big dreams, and that Jesus loves them as well. The church makes the pre-school present and provides the leaders for Sunday

school, and song time. The church provides opportunity for this little boy to grow in love, to test his boundaries.

The preschooler grows up and begins elementary school. She begins to question her Sunday School teachers on what they are saying. She wants to know why if we love our neighbors as Jesus taught - there are homeless people begging for money down the street. This child challenges the church to live out its mission in the world. She challenges even the preacher's theology...closely listening to his sermon while kicking the seat in front of her. The elementary child is exactly what the church needs, she is the reminder that our work is never done. The church accepts her questions along with her wiggles. The church provides space for her to be herself and to question. The church provides fun in the summer through VBS.

The elementary child goes into middle school. He sits quietly in the back of the church...thinking. He reminds us that we must take time out for pondering, to reflect on where we have been and where we are going. He teaches us that sometimes, it is our presence that matters the most -just to be here, body, mind, and heart. The church provides him with comfort during this challenging time. Members of the body of Christ give him an outlet to test his thinking, things he cannot share with his parents or friends. The church provides love through its very presence and stability.

The seasons change, and the young woman enters high school. She helps with Vacation Bible School, participates in the youth group, and even occasionally attends church. She wants the church to have more people her age and to be busier...her attitude is let's go! She provides the church with enthusiasm, with hope for its future. She sparks the youth in many dry bones. The church continues to give her love, sponsoring her mission trip and helping with her class documentary. There are members who inquire after her future and others that attend her band concert. The church provides her with a stable home and a huge family cheering her on.

College begins in the fall, and the high-schooler moves on to a new stage of life. He is far from home and church. He doesn't realize it but he depends everyday on the skills and morals he developed through his church. He explores life to its fullest visiting during the holidays. The church remembers him in their prayers and occasionally sends care packages filled with cookies and spare change. The young man knows he is loved and missed; and the church knows its message is being carried out into the world.

Time passes, and children grown up and have their own children. The young family enters the doors of the church looking for a place of acceptance, somewhere to help them teach their children morals. They bring new ideas into the church and more activity. They sign on to committees and attend various activities as their time allows. The church is growing and is filled with the sounds of children playing and

adults talking. The church gives this family home, accepting them just as they are. The church gives them opportunities for fellowship, reflection, education, and helps them find their own spiritual center. For those with busy careers, the church service can be their only time of quiet. The church provides resources during times of trouble, with mysterious basket of food arriving at the door when the wife loses her job. The church shares in the joy of job promotions, adoption of children, and brightens their new home with gifts. The church gives the young couple time to themselves, a bigger family of support for children and careers. The church provides a space of friendship and a network for developing careers.

The couple ages, they live alone now and work has slowed its pace. For many, they are in the prime of their life. They increase their participation in the church by serving on committees and at activities. When the church needs something, they are the ones to answer the call. Reconfiguring the budget and unclogging toilets. They remember how hard it was when they were younger, so they reach out the youngsters in the church. They increase their financial giving and look to how to ensure the church's future. The church gives them a social world in which to move, and family to celebrate the holidays if needed. The church lifts them up during the loss of a parent and shares their joy at grandbabies, eagerly leafing through the latest pictures. The church is place of tradition, something that links their past with their present and their present to what lies ahead.

Time marches on and the baby has become the wizened elder. Each day is one of thanksgiving, and one of remembering. The elder sits in wisdom, marveling at the youth around her, wondering what lessons she should share and which are better off left unsaid. The youth challenge her ways of thinking while the busy youngsters provide hope for the church's future. She has and continues to be part of the legacy of the church. The church provides something to do, a purpose, a meaning for her life. The stories of the church help to form personal stories, and serve as a guide on this final leg of the journey.

The earthly journey has ended, the baby that entered the church what seemed only a moment ago, has moved on to new life. The saints that went before helped guide him through the mysterious door. Now we are left with his legacy and the call to continue on. We remember tradition as we move forward. There are many saints among us, not just today, but every day. Saints are not just those who have had a long life, but all of those who touched our lives, if only for a moment. Today I would like you to reflect on those who have touched your lives. What did they teach you? What can you give back to them?

I am going to read aloud some names of those whom we remember today as a candle is lit. After I finish reading names, please feel free to speak of those whom you hold dear.

Beverly Browne	Zachary Allums	Clifton Mentzer
Gloria McKee	Megan McGimpsey	
Russell McKee	George Roberts	
Joan Belmont	Glen Snyder	
James Belmont	Frieda Synder	

Now, if you will join me in a prayer of remembrance:

Holy One, who has knit us together, in one communion and fellowship within your mystical body: Give us the grace to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, so that we may know the unfathomable joys that you have prepared for all who truly love you; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen

We have walked together through the life of the church as far as we can go, for now. The scripture this morning spoke to us about how we are all one part of the body and must function together. We each have different gifts. I argue that our gifts and graces change as we change. To be one body, we must build community across the generations with those whom we are familiar such as our families and those whom are just walking through our doors. What did you remember today? What vision were you given? As we enter the busy season of the church, I ask you to continue to take some time to reflect on where we have been and where we are going as a church. Think about what it means to be in community, what generational differences are there and how do we bridge those.

We are going to have a few more moments of silent reflection and then we will finish the service with the offertory and few more hymns.