



# The Book of Uncommon Prayer

Contemplative and Celebratory  
Prayers and Worship Services  
for Youth Ministry

Steven L. Case



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The Book of Uncommon Prayer: Contemplative and Celebratory Prayers and Worship Services for Youth Ministry

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## A Service For All Hallows Eve

<b>Style</b>	Memorial, meditative, sorta creepy
<b>Location</b>	Cemetery or darkened sanctuary
<b>Length</b>	30 to 45 minutes
<b>Materials</b>	Bibles, boom box, candles, a thurible (a container for burning incense)
<b>Scripture</b>	1 Samuel 28:2-25; Job 4:12-21; Psalm 4, 23, 123; Ezekiel 37:1-14
<b>Music Suggestions</b>	“When All Is Said and Done” by Geoff Moore & the Distance, “Take Me to the River” sung by Annie Lennox ( <i>Medusa</i> CD), soft jazz or light classical music
<b>Comments/Ideas</b>	If you have any sparklers left from the 4th of July, use them to illustrate how we often “burn brightly” and then “go out.”

### Introduction

Don't freak out. This really is a worship service for All Hallows Eve—and it's really cool.

Centuries ago, the early church noticed that the druids were worshipping in the cemetery on one specific night of the year. They weren't offering human sacrifices—they were burning dried crops to their gods in thanks for a plentiful harvest.

When the early church began to create its calendar in the 800s, it placed All Saints Day on the day following the druid festival. Churches began worshipping in the cemeteries on All Hallows Eve as part of the All Saints Day celebration. It was a somber service about death and life-after-death.

The order of worship here is based on a service from the *Episcopal Book of Occasional Services*. You can add communion to this service as an example of everlasting life or as a death-is-not-the-end theme.

I first did this service with a group of teenagers in 1996. We were in a cemetery in Akron, Ohio. My assistant at the time knew a monk from a monastery in Cleveland. We invited him to come along. The cemetery was very old. It had a lot of statues and not much light. We used the

Annie Lennox version of “Take Me to the River” by the Talking Heads as a processional.

Brother Jacob brought a thurible (a swinging incense burner), and we walked through a cemetery and read Scripture about the dead coming to life.

This service is a wonderful way to bring some Halloween back to your church if you've had controversy in the past. It can also be used as a service in which your youth leads the congregation.

You can add music to this service wherever you feel it's appropriate. The best song I've ever used in the service is “When All Is Said and Done” by Geoff Moore & the Distance. It's an excellent closer.

Another cool idea is to have your psalm readers surrounding the congregation. Each reader takes one line of a psalm. This produces an “enclosed” sensation for those worshipping.

I've also used a variation of “The Shield of St. Patrick” as a closing prayer. It's very powerful, especially in the hands of a good reader. At the end of the service, invite those in attendance to stay as long as they'd like. When they're ready, have them blow out the candles and leave quietly.

# Order of Worship

## Opening Prayer

God, we gather in this place on this night to remember. We remember the words of your son when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life. If you believe in me, you will never die but have eternal life." Many of us have had someone close to us go home to be with you, God. We are selfish to want them here with us instead of with you. Watch over us here, God. It's only a matter of time before we're all together again in your arms. Guide us now as we come into your presence. *Amen.*

## Scripture

**Job 4:12-21**

## Reading

**Psalm 4**

*interpreted*

God, you are my guardian.

Listen to me again, God.

I've been in this spot before, and you helped me.

God, we chase after stupid things.

We fill our lives with worthless possessions

Because we don't know what's really important.

God, as we lay quietly in our beds searching our souls

Let us remember that we owe you—and not the other way around.

There are blessings all around us, Lord.

You give us all that we need.

We can lie down and sleep soundly.

We have no worries.

You will always be there to protect us.

*Amen.*

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Services

## Scripture

**1 Samuel 28:3-25.** *For this passage, assign the reading in parts and read the Scripture as if it were a script. You will need a narrator, Saul, Samuel, and a witch.*

## Reading

**Psalm 23**

*interpreted*

I am not alone.

God will lead me.

God will let me rest beside the water.

God will let me regain my strength.

It's a dark world.

It's full of scary people.

God is with me.

The Lord is with me.

All Hallows Eve

The creator of the universe is by my side.  
Nothing can harm me.  
God plans a party for me  
And all those who laughed at me will have to stand outside and watch.  
My glass will never be empty.  
God is with me every move that I make.  
I will live in God's house forever.  
*Amen.*

### **Lighting Candles**

*Instruct that the candle lighting is to be done in silence. Ask each participant to think about a departed loved one. You can send "lighters" into the congregation, or you can start one flame and allow it to be passed along until everyone has a light.*

### **Scripture**

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

### **Reading**

**Psalm 143**

*interpreted*

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Hear me God  
Hear my cries of for relief  
Save me.  
Don't judge me, Lord. Nobody is perfect.  
There are those who wait for me.  
They make me feel like I'm already in my coffin.  
My soul is weak  
My heart is confused.  
I read your Word  
I see your creation  
I am praying to you like a desert prays for rain.  
Answer me, God.  
Don't leave me down in this hole.  
Let hope come with the rising of the sun.  
You are my guide.  
Show me the way.  
I will trust you.  
Silence my enemies.  
I will give you my soul.  
Destroy my foes.  
I am your servant.

### **Closing Prayer**

I bind to myself today

The virtue of love,  
In the obedience of angels,  
In the hope of resurrection  
In prayers of patriarchs,  
In predictions of prophets,  
In preaching of apostles,  
In faith of confessors.

I bind to myself today  
The power of heaven,  
The light of the sun,  
The brightness of the moon,  
The splendor of fire,  
The flashing of lightning,  
The swiftness of wind,  
The depth of sea,  
The stability of earth,  
The density of rocks.

I bind to myself today  
God's power to guide me,  
God's might to uphold me,  
God's wisdom to teach me,  
God's eye to watch over me,  
God's ear to hear me,  
God's word to give me speech,  
God's hand to guide me,  
God's way to lie before me,  
God's shield to shelter me,  
God's host to secure me,

Christ with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ within me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,  
Christ in every eye that sees me,  
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I bind to myself today  
The strong virtue of Christ,  
I believe the Trinity in the unity of the creator of the universe.

### **Closing Song**

“When All Is Said and Done” by Geoff Moore & the Distance

