

October 2023

FAIRVIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Loving God & Loving Others = worship + missions

A PRAYER FOR AUTUMN DAYS

God of the seasons,
there is a time for everything;
there is a time for dying and a time for rising.
We need courage to enter into
the transformation process.

God of autumn,
the trees are saying goodbye to their green,
letting go of what has been.
We, too, have our moments of surrender,
with all their insecurity and risk.
Help us to let go when we need to do so.

God of fallen leaves
lying in colored patterns on the ground,
our lives have their own patterns.
As we see the patterns of our own growth,
may we learn from them.

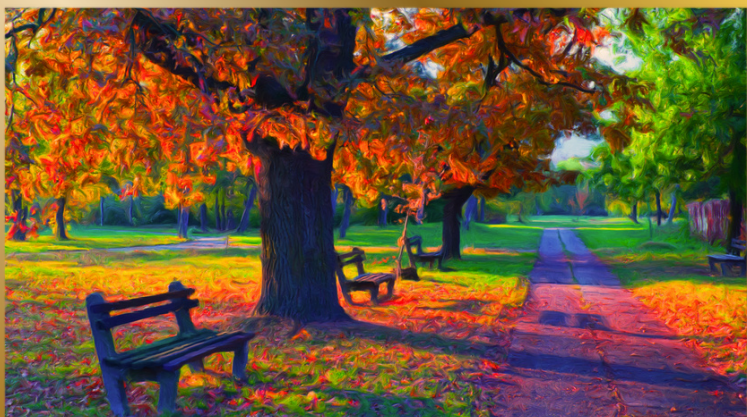
God of misty days and harvest moon nights,
there is always the dimension of mystery
and wonder in our lives.
We always need to recognize your power-filled presence.
May we gain strength from this.

God of harvest wagons and fields of ripened grain,
many gifts of growth lie within
the season of our surrender.
We must wait for harvest in faith and hope.
Grant us patience when we
do not see the blessings.

God of geese going south
for another season, your wisdom enables us
to know what needs to be left behind
and what needs to be carried into the future.
We yearn for insight and vision.

God of flowers
touched with frost and windows
wearing white designs,
may your love keep our hearts
from growing cold in the empty seasons.

God of life,
you believe in us, you enrich us,
you entrust us with the
freedom to choose life.
For all this, we are grateful.
Amen.



Taken from May I Have This Dance? published by Ave Maria
Press By Joyce Rupp

HALLOWEEN: THE MEANING, HISTORY AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

whatsinthebible.com

Halloween's origin can be found in the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced saw-en, meaning 'end of summer'). For the Celts who celebrated their new year on November 1st, the day marked the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter, the end of light and the beginning of darkness, the end of life and the beginning of death. The Celtic priests, called Druids, made large bonfires on hilltops around which the people gathered and offered sacrifices of crops and animals to the Celtic gods, as a thanksgiving offering for that year's crops and as an appeal for favor in the new coming year. Some have speculated that there were also human sacrifices at these bonfires, but modern scholars believe this not to be the case. This was viewed as a very spiritual time and divination was practiced especially in the form of fortune telling. It was widely believed that on this night young women especially can find whether they might marry in the coming year and even the identity of their future spouse.

It is also believed that on the eve of Samhain the line between the living and the dead became thin and the spirits of the Otherworld were allowed to roam the earth during this day, both spirits of departed loved ones during the previous year as well as evil spirits of ghouls and fairies looking to cause mischief and damage. The Celts, hoping for a visit from their departed loved ones, would set a place at the table for them and prepare a feast for them. They also set treats outside their house for the wandering spirits. To ward off evil spirits from their households, the Celts were known to set carved pumpkins (or turnips) in front of their doors. If they went out at night they wore costumes so that if they encountered an evil spirit they would be mistaken for an evil spirit themselves and thus be protected from evil and trouble.

By A.D. 43 the Romans had successfully conquered most of the Celtic lands. During the next 400 years Samhain was merged with two Roman holidays: Feralia, a day when Romans commemorated their dead, typically at the end of October, and secondly Pomona, a day of honoring the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. In 609 A.D. Pope Boniface IV established the Catholic feast of All Martyrs' Day in honor of the early Roman martyrs, and this feast was later expanded by Pope Gregory III to include all saints and is still practiced today on November 1st as All Saints' Day (known also as Hallowtide or All Hallows). November 2nd is also celebrated as All Souls' Day mainly to honor the saints and pray for the lives of the recently departed who have not reached heaven yet. Some of the Halloween traditions can be seen in the festival surrounding All Saints' Day. There were traditions of ringing bells for the souls in purgatory; poor people, mostly children, would go from house to house "souling" – they would get 'soul cakes' in exchange for prayers for departed loved ones; people even wore costumes in order to protect themselves from wandering souls of the dead.

With the Protestant Reformation in the 16th and 17th century, Protestant Christians reacted to Catholic Holy Days like All Saints' Day, primarily over Catholic beliefs considered errors, such as Purgatory. Purgatory derives its name from the idea that there still remains some sin, or impurity, that needs to be purged and cleansed before one is allowed into Heaven. It is therefore considered a holding place for souls not quite fit for heaven, but not so bad that they go to Hell. Protestant Christians held that after death, no amount of prayers or indulgences – payments made on behalf of departed loved one's to speed up their time in Purgatory – can help a loved one in this Purgative state. Instead, many Protestant Christians began to celebrate Reformation Day by providing different options for people who didn't want to celebrate the Catholic holiday. Some dressed up in Bible characters or reformers themselves and used the day as an opportunity to gather together and pray and fast. Today, many Lutheran churches celebrate Reformation Day with the traditional color of red which symbolizes the Holy Spirit and the Martyrs of the Saints. Martin Luther's Hymn, 'A Mighty Fortress is our God' is traditionally sung and many schoolchildren put on plays reenacting some of the events during the life of Martin Luther.

How do Christians respond to Halloween?

1. Some Christians reject Halloween altogether. There are many Christians today that look at Halloween as a pagan holiday during which the devil is worshipped and evil is glorified. They want nothing to do with the evil out there and will do everything in their power to shield themselves and their children from this devilish holiday. Many churches have replaced Halloween with Fall Festivals that are more family-friendly and allow a more safe environment and a fun alternative to trick-or-treating. Some choose to celebrate Reformation Day instead, but Halloween overall is something that must be rejected as a pagan holiday.



HALLOWEEN: THE MEANING, HISTORY AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSE (CONT.)

2. Some Christians accept it. Halloween, they say, is harmless fun, for kids to dress up, get lots of candy and have a good time. It's a time for cute decorations, parties, pumpkin carvings, lots of laughter and enjoying going trick-or-treating with their neighbors. Halloween is, for some, a non-religious festival altogether so they don't mind assimilating and being no different.

Is there a third way that Christians could potentially respond? Can Halloween be redeemed?

3. Some Christians redeem it. If we as Christians believe that Jesus came to redeem all things, to make all things new, we must answer with a resounding YES! Jesus says in Revelation 21:5, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Certainly, all things includes Halloween. But how? We are sometimes quick to pass judgment or skip over the topic instead of pausing to investigate and have conversations.

If we are quick to reject Halloween altogether, we might miss a couple of things. First, the assumption tends to be that it's evil, demonic, worldly. Jesus did say after all that we should live in the world, and not of it, right? Right. But what does that mean? Does that mean that evil is out there and as long as we close our doors and turn the lights out, evil will stay away? As Christians we believe that Scripture teaches us that evil is within us. In Mark 7:21-23, after naming what evil is, Jesus tells us 'All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.' It is because we are sinful that we sin (Romans 3:23-25, Romans 7:20). We could not make ourselves righteous; it is only by the blood of Christ are we seen as blameless in the sight of God (Romans 3:24). If we can look at Halloween not as a 'us versus them', but that we are all sinful in need of grace, maybe we can look at this holiday with more compassion and grace, rather than judgment.

Secondly, we can note some similarities between the old Celtic rituals and the Christian heritage. Introduced in Leviticus 7:11-15, thanksgiving offerings are found all over the Old Testament where God's people sacrifice offerings in recognition of how much God had blessed them. Remember how the Celts put carved turnips in front of their doors so that the evil spirits would pass them by? Can you think of a story in the Old Testament that reminds you of that? The Passover, yes, where the spirit of death passed over every Israelite household whose doorpost was marked with the blood of the sacrificed lamb. But we don't celebrate those any more, you say. We don't have to because Jesus has done it all! We have been passed over because of the blood of the Lamb. Imagine if the Christians who came in contact with the Celts long ago would have shared some of the similarities of our histories and pointed them to Jesus, what might have happened in terms of acceptance and faith in Christ, instead of outright rejection or co-opting of a cultural celebration? In Acts 17:22 and following, Paul does this very thing with the Greeks at Athens. He says, 'I perceive that you are very religious' and 'What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.' Paul then proceeds to tell the men of Athens about God and what Jesus has done for them. Paul wasn't afraid of the world out there, but faced it head on because Jesus has overcome the world (Matthew 16:33).

If we are quick to accept Halloween as it is currently practiced, we might fail to care and love our neighbors. "It's about the fun and the candy," so we put a bowl of cheap candy in front of our door and go help our kids bring in the loot! How can we be the light of the world even amidst the jack-o-lanterns? We can engage our community. Christians can practice hospitality – have the best candy so that your house will be the house people come to, and linger! Get creative – have spiced cider and pumpkin bread for the adults so that you can engage your neighbors in conversation, have a pre trick-or-treat dinner where you can talk about what Halloween means to them. Go to your neighbors' houses and get to know them. Be prayerful and present – ask the Spirit to lead you and give you wisdom.

For a Christian, there is no pressure to participate in this holiday. If your conscience leads you to abstain from participating or focus on the harvest festival parts associated with Halloween, wonderful. If, on the other hand, your conscience allows you to participate, the Bible gives you the freedom to wisely engage in living on mission even on Halloween. The apostle Paul tells us that 'everything is permissible but not everything is beneficial', and 'let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor' (1 Corinthians 10:23-33). In this tricky subject of Halloween, Christians must exercise discernment and be attentive to their conscience.



2 Corinthians 9:7-9 Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver. God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace. That way, you will have everything you need always and in everything to provide more than enough for every kind of good work. As it is written, He scattered everywhere; he gave to the needy; his righteousness remains forever [Psalm 112:9].

Why We Give

We give to minister in Jesus' name. Together, United Methodists do remarkable ministry around the world. We care for survivors recovering from earthquakes and storms; we invest, long term, in vulnerable communities; we implement the most effective solutions to diseases like malaria; we equip the next generation to lead the Church and society. In all of this, we share the good news of Jesus Christ. We give because God first gave to us. (UMC.org)

Generosity is a spiritual discipline. Not only does it help the people for whom we give, but it also improves our relationships with our resources of money, time, attention, skills, and more! When we gift what we've been gifted, we give glory to the giver!

In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, the Apostle Paul talks to the church in Corinth about a collection he is taking up for the poor.

- Many of us know the line, "God loves a cheerful giver." As you read that in the context of the sentences around it, what is Bible telling us about giving?
- Why does God call us to share what we have with others?
- When you think about God's generosity, what comes to mind? How has God been generous to you? To all of us?
- How is generosity a spiritual discipline? How does the practice of generosity help us to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ?
- Share a time when someone has been generous to you.
- When you have been your most generous, what have you learned about yourself? Your faith?
- Besides our money, with what other resources can we be generous?

Through our every Sunday giving and special offerings, we participate in the ministries of generosity of The United Methodist Church.

- What does it mean to you to be part of a generous denomination?
- Did you know about all the ways The United Methodist Church is being generous around the world? Learn more at UMC.org and UMCOR.org.
- What are some of the ways your congregation is generous in your community?

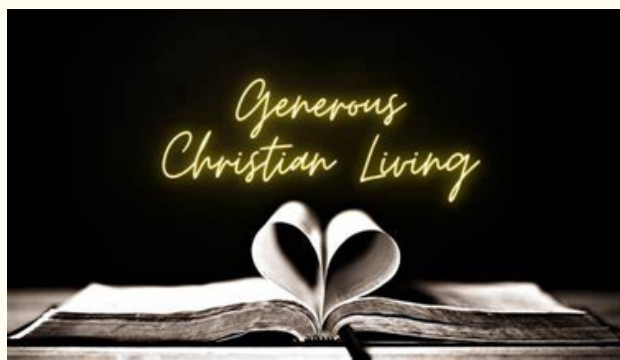
How are you a generous person of God?

- What steps can you take to boost your generosity?

Closing prayer:

Generous, loving God, You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.* Thank you for the many blessings you have shared with us. Teach and encourage us to be generous with others in the ways that you have been generous with us. In your Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

*Psalm 145:16



CHARGE CONFERENCE

Our Charge Conference will be held at the Wesley Chapel on Sunday, October 15th at 4:30 p.m.

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

On All Saints Sunday, November 5, 2023, we will once again recognize all those of the church or related to our church family, who have passed away since last All Saints Sunday.

We will have this special service during worship.

We invite all family and friends to attend this special worship service.

A list of those included will be posted the second week of October. Please review the list so that we can make sure it is complete. If we have missed someone, please call the office immediately.



OUR STAFF AND SERVICES AT A GLANCE

FAIRVIEW UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

3135 N. Cr 800e
Bath, Illinois 62617

10:00 AM Fairview Sunday School
10:50 AM Fairview Worship Service

Pastor: Joseph Tomich
Executive Administrative Assistant:
Jess Miller

Pastor's Phone: (217) 770-0099

Pastor's E-mail:

pjtomic@yahoo.com

Church Phone: (217) 452-3534

Church E-mail:

virgnumc@casscomm.com

Website:

<http://www.virginiaillumc.org>