



SAINT PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH FORT BENTON

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 2024

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FALL: EMBRACING CHANGE AND RENEWAL

As the vibrant greens of summer give way to the rich golds, reds, and browns of autumn, we find ourselves at the threshold of a season that is not only a visual feast but also a deeply spiritual time of year. Fall is often seen as a period of transition, a time when the natural world prepares for the dormancy of winter. However, for those who seek spiritual depth, fall offers a unique opportunity to reflect on themes of change, renewal, and the cyclical nature of life.

The Cycle of Life and the Seasons

From the earliest days of human history, people have looked to the seasons as a reflection of the cycles of life. Spring represents birth and new beginnings, summer is a time of growth and abundance, fall is a period of harvest and preparation, and winter symbolizes rest and reflection. These cycles are not only evident in the physical world around us but also in our spiritual lives.

Fall, in particular, is a season of harvest, where the fruits of the earth are gathered, and the hard work of the year is brought to fruition. It is a time when we see the results of our labors, both in the garden and in our lives. Spiritually, this can be a time of great insight and understanding, as we reflect on the growth we have experienced throughout the year and prepare for the quiet introspection that winter brings.

Embracing Change with Grace

One of the most profound aspects of fall is the way it teaches us about change. The beauty of the season lies in its impermanence; the leaves change color and fall to the ground, the days grow shorter, and the air turns crisp. These changes are inevitable and unstoppable, much like the changes we experience in our own lives.

Spiritually, fall encourages us to embrace change rather than resist it. Just as the trees must let go of their leaves to prepare for new growth in the spring, we too must learn to let go of things that no longer serve us. This might mean releasing old habits, relationships, or ways of thinking that are holding us back from spiritual growth. Letting go can be difficult, but it is a necessary part of the cycle of renewal.

In the Christian tradition, this idea of letting go is closely linked to the concept of surrender. Surrendering to God's will and trusting in His plan can be challenging, especially when we are faced with uncertainty or loss. However, just as the trees trust that new leaves will grow in the spring, we too can trust that God has a plan for our lives, even when we cannot see the outcome.

The Harvest of the Spirit

Fall is also a time of harvest, both in the physical and spiritual sense. In the physical world, farmers gather the crops they have nurtured throughout the year, bringing in the fruits of their labor. Spiritually, fall can be a time to reflect on the "harvest" of our own lives. What have we sown this year? What fruits of the Spirit have we cultivated?

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, speaks of the "fruit of the Spirit" as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These are the qualities that we are called to nurture in our lives. Fall is a time to assess how we have grown in these areas and to give thanks for the ways God has worked in our hearts.

This season of harvest is also an opportunity to share the fruits of the Spirit with others. Just as a bountiful harvest is shared with the community, the love, kindness, and goodness that we have cultivated in our lives are meant to be shared. Fall can be a time of renewed commitment to serving others, whether through acts of kindness, offering support to those in need, or simply being a source of encouragement and love in our communities.

The Call to Reflection and Preparation

As the days grow shorter and the nights longer, fall naturally lends itself to a time of reflection. The quieting of the natural world invites us to slow down and turn inward, to reflect on the year that has passed and to prepare for the season ahead. This period of reflection is essential for spiritual growth, as it allows us to take stock of where we are on our spiritual journey and to discern where God is leading us next.

Reflection during the fall season can take many forms. Some people find it helpful to keep a journal, writing down their thoughts, prayers, and reflections on the past year. Others may

choose more time in prayer or meditation, seeking God's guidance and wisdom. However we choose to reflect, the key is to be intentional about making space in our lives for this important practice.

Preparation is another key theme of fall. Just as farmers prepare fields for winter by clearing away old crops and fertilizing the soil, we too are called to prepare our hearts and minds for the season ahead. This might mean setting new spiritual goals, such as committing to a regular prayer or Bible study routine, or it might involve making practical changes in our lives to create more space for God.

In many Christian traditions, the fall season includes the observance of special holy days, such as All Saints' Day, which provides a structured opportunity for reflection and preparation. These observances can serve as a powerful reminder of the spiritual work we are called to do during this season. This might mean setting new spiritual goals, such as committing to a regular prayer or Bible study routine, or it might involve making practical changes in our lives to create more space for God.

Lessons from Nature: Patience and Trust

One of the most beautiful lessons that fall teaches us is the importance of patience and trust. The changing of the seasons happens slowly and steadily, reminding us that growth and transformation take time. In our fast-paced world, it can be difficult to embrace this slow, steady rhythm, but fall encourages us to do just that.

Spiritually, this means trusting that God is at work in our lives, even when we cannot see immediate results. Just as the trees shed their leaves and enter a period of dormancy, trusting that new growth will come in the spring, we too are called to trust in God's timing. This requires patience, especially when we are in a season of waiting or uncertainty.

Trusting in God's plan for our lives also means recognizing that we are not in control of everything. Fall teaches us to let go of the illusion of control and to surrender to the natural flow of life. This can be a humbling experience, but it is also incredibly freeing. When we trust that God is in control, we can let go of our anxieties and fears, knowing that we are in His hands.

Embracing the Beauty of the Season

While fall is a time of change and reflection, it is also a season of incredible beauty. The vibrant colors of the leaves, the crispness of the air, and the golden light of the autumn sun all remind us of the beauty that can be found in every season of life. Spiritually, fall invites us to slow down and savor the beauty of God's creation.

This season of beauty can also be a time to reconnect with the simple joys of life. Whether it's taking a walk in the woods, enjoying a warm cup of tea, or spending time with loved ones, fall encourages us

to find joy in the small things. These moments of beauty and joy can be a source of spiritual nourishment, reminding us of God's goodness and love.

In many ways, the beauty of fall reflects the beauty of a life well-lived. Just as the trees display their most brilliant colors before shedding their leaves, so too can we display the beauty of our faith through acts of love, kindness, and compassion. Fall is a reminder that even as we prepare for the quiet of winter, there is beauty to be found in every stage of life.

A Time for Community and Connection

As we reflect on the spiritual significance of fall, it's important to remember that this season is also a time for community and connection. The harvest season has traditionally been a time when communities come together to celebrate and give thanks for the bounty of the earth. In the same way, fall can be a time for us to come together as a spiritual community, to support one another, and to celebrate the blessings we have received.

Whether it's through attending church services, participating in a small group, or simply knowing that God is in control, we can let go of our anxieties and fears. Spending time with family and friends offers many opportunities to strengthen our connections with others. These connections are an essential part of our spiritual lives, as they provide support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging.

Fall is also a wonderful time to reach out to those who may be feeling isolated or lonely. As the days grow shorter and the nights longer, it's easy for some people to feel disconnected or downhearted. By reaching out with a kind word, a thoughtful gesture, or an invitation to join in community activities, we can help to bring light and warmth to others during this season.

Conclusion: Embracing the Spiritual Journey of Fall

The fall season is a rich and deeply spiritual time that offers us many opportunities for growth, reflection, and renewal. As we embrace the changes that fall brings, we are reminded of the cyclical nature of life and the importance of trusting in God's plan. By letting go of what no longer serves us, reflecting on the fruits of our spiritual labor, and preparing our hearts for the season ahead, we can fully embrace the spiritual journey of fall.

As we move through this season, may we find beauty in the changes around us, joy in the simple pleasures of life, and strength in our connections with others. And may we trust that just as the

leaves fall to make way for new growth, so too will God's work in our lives lead to new beginnings and renewed spiritual vitality.

In Christ's Love,

Tim+

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

September 8,	Morning Prayer, 10 AM
September 15,	Holy Eucharist and Homily at 10 AM - Bible Study to follow service
September 22,	Morning Prayer 10 AM
September 29,	Holy Eucharist and Homily at 10 AM - Bible Study to follow service
October 6,	Morning Prayer, 10 AM
October 13,	Holy Eucharist and Homily at 10 AM - Bible Study to follow service
October 20,	Morning Prayer, 10 AM
October 27,	Holy Eucharist and Homily at 10 AM - Bible Study to follow service

Please check the *River Press* for possible changes of service times

PRAYER REQUESTS

For comfort and healing for Celeste, Marcia, Shawn, and Wyley.

STAINED GLASS WINDOW REPAIR

We expect to receive an estimate for needed repairs to stained glass windows in the near future. We were very happy to receive a \$200 donation to support window repair from a visitor during Summer Festival. We also raised \$240 from the sale of note cards showing some of the church's windows. We have more available. The price is four note cards for 20 dollars, all proceeds go to repairing windows.

SOME WORDS FROM SAINT PAUL

The following Epistle reading for August 11 seemed too good not to read again.

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make

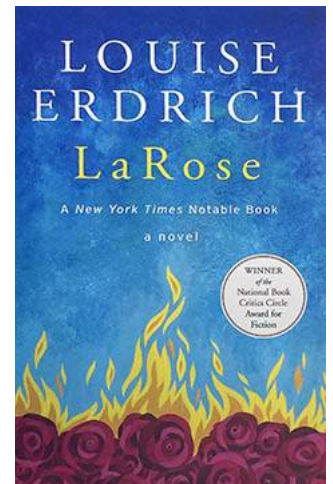
room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

NEW VIRTUAL BOOK GROUP

Beginning in October, Saint Paul's will host a discussion of Louise Erdrich's novel *LaRose*. We hope you will join us in this exploration of the theme of Forgiveness and Reconciliation.

There will be four 90-minute Zoom sessions, from 7:30-9 pm MT on the following Tuesdays:

- October 15, 2024
- October 22, 2024
- October 29, 2024
- November 5, 2024



The Zoom link will be emailed a day or two before each session. Discussions are most meaningful if all members have read the book, so **participants are expected to read the book before the book group begins**. You can pick up a copy at your local library or purchase it in a bookstore or on Amazon.

Your discussion leaders will be The Rev. Marcia Lauzon and Ginger Harstad Glawe. For more information or **to sign up, please call Ginger at 206-714-9442**.

We appreciate the grant from the Diocese that makes it possible for Saint Paul's to host this book group over Zoom.

Please send contributions for future issues to Dean Glawe, daglawe@earthlink.net, or call him (509) 332-9966, or mail to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, PO Box 463, Fort Benton, MT 59442.