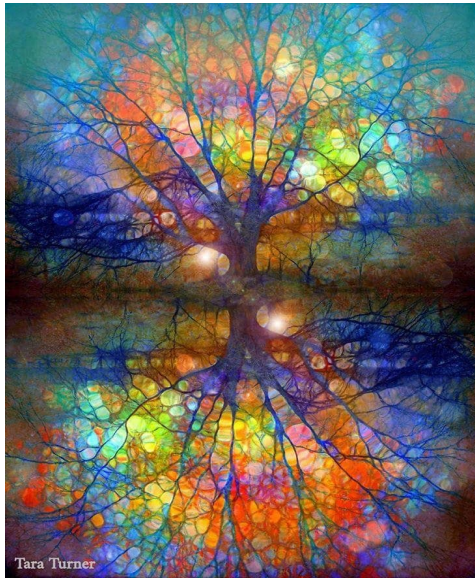


Use the following worship guide as we gather on Sunday morning via Zoom. Simply click here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2398495210>

** Announcements are at the end of this order of worship. **



The Service of Worship
First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ
Baltimore, Maryland

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – Year A
The Thirty-second Sunday of Physical Distancing due to COVID-19

October 18, 2020

10:30 a.m.

*Some portions of Zoom church may be recorded to share brief clips on our webpage.
All personal information or prayer concerns will not be a part of recorded information.*

Gathering Time

Q. What joys did you experience this week?

Q. For what are you grateful?

Welcome

The Rev. Kelly M. Sisson, Pastor

Please remember that during this time of physical distancing our mission continues, expenses continue, and staff continues to work. If you would consider making an offering through on-line giving, or mail your check to the church address, you can find all of that information on our church web page: first-ststephens.org

Lessons from the Psalms and Other Texts

And now, GOD, do it again—
bring rains to our drought-stricken lives
So those who planted their crops in despair
will shout hurrahs at the harvest,
So those who went off with heavy hearts
will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing.

Psalm 126:4-6

Like rustling leaves blowing in autumn wind,
bright with color, deep when gathered,
we fall into the presence of God.

Adapted by Maren C. Tirabassi from "Morning Has Broken."

Autumn is a season of exhilarating beauty.

It's also a season of steady decline and,
for some of us, deepening melancholy.

The days become shorter and colder, the trees shed their glory,
and summer's abundance starts to decay toward winter's death.

Parker Palmer in "Autumn: A Season of Paradox."

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Congregation responds: "Lord, hear our prayers."

Remember these known joys and concerns:

- Confirmation Participants - Madeline Wharton, Nate Arrington, and Trey Dufauchard
- Andrew Sisson, the pastor's brother, healing from COVID-19.
- Nellie Dufauchard, Len's mother, as she adjusts to health concerns.
- Trey Dufauchard – as he continues PT on his shoulders.
- Alex Vishio's father – recurring cancer
- Inbal Neun – living with breast cancer
- Barbara Joellenbeck living with cancer
- Stef and Colleen's friend, Val, in rehabilitation center after having legs amputated.
- Stef's brother, Dave, living with Alzheimer's
- All those living in this time of pandemic – healthcare workers, emergency responders, custodial helpers, grocers, food suppliers, scientists – especially local restaurants, nursing homes, hospitals, those struggling with physical distancing and mask wearing.

Needing the Darker Days of Autumn

A selection by David Bumbaugh

I need the darkness, the fallow time. I need to sit in the gathering gloom and allow that darkness to enter my soul to acknowledge it as part of my being. I need to sit and watch the cold autumn rain falling from the gray sky to puddle on a barren earth.

I need to watch the stiff dance of leafless trees out on a distant horizon. I need to see the birds wheel and turn in a sunless sky and the deer standing quietly in some leafless glade.

I need to decipher the meaning of this season for my own existence. I need time to enter into the dark core at the center of my own being, to confront my fears and frustrations and follies, to accept my limitations and inadequacies. I need time to consolidate the season of growth and open myself to possibilities beyond my dreaming.

I need the darkness of late autumn. I need to embrace it in the world and invite it into my soul. That, after all, is the meaning behind the myths clustered about this season. It is only when the darkness is complete that light is truly born in the world.

Late autumn is not our enemy, to be hurried through, to be struggled against and overcome. Late autumn darkness is an invitation to enter into the natural cycle, to see ourselves as part of the great process which is darkness and light and life and death and darkness again.

Late autumn is an invitation to find that quiet nurturing dark place at the core of our beings, to rest in that environing darkness and to wait for something to stir and to grow and to emerge for it is at the margins of existence that hope is born and light is kindled.

This late autumn, I pray you,
be not too eager to light the lights.
Embrace the darkness, the still, quiet, nurturing darkness
out of which all light and hope emerges.

Sharing this Autumn's Season of Your Soul, Our Soul

*What do you expect your autumn to be like this year?
What is especially unsettled, turned under, or in transition for you this year?*

Music for Meditation "Morning Has Broken"

Autumn Sending Prayer From *Autumn Meditation* in "Water from Rock"

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 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. Go in God's peace. Amen.

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NEXT SUNDAY – We will hear from our confirmands and support them as they are confirmed into the membership of First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ. The service is planned for outside at the church. If that needs to change due to weather, it will be posted no later than 9a.m. on Sunday, and we will gather on Zoom.

Our **Fall Business Meeting** is scheduled for **Sunday, November 1** after the worship service. Plan to attend via Zoom. All persons have voice; members have vote.

Budget 2021 – If you would like a copy of the proposed budget to review before the business meeting, please place your name and email address in the chat of Zoom on Sunday or email the pastor.

Fall Back! Next Saturday night ends Daylight Saving Time. Plan to turn your clocks back, or arrive early to church.

A Season of Prayer – Come together between 7 and 7:45p.m. on Monday, November 2 for a time of prayer for our nation, our candidates, and voters on the night before the election. All are welcomed. The Zoom address will be posted the next two Sundays.

The Dulaney Day School is in session in a limited access to our building. **Now that they are present, ALL persons who need to enter any part of the building for any reason need to wear a mask and practice social distancing.** Unless you are on official business, please stay out of the building until further notice.

Have you considered joining the membership of First and St. Stephen's? If you are interested in learning about membership at First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ, please let the pastor know of your interest. She will contact you. We are still receiving new members during our time of physical isolation.

Call to Action - Please make sure you are registered to vote and that you have a voter plan. If you have already done so, you might offer to help other members of your congregation do the same. Members of the Central Atlantic Conference may check their registration and register to vote at our [Faith & Democracy 2020 Election Center](#) on the homepage of LetJustice.org.

If you would like to receive the worship materials, hymns, etc. for Sunday, please place your email in the chat column of Zoom at the end of the service, or email the pastor at fssuccpastor@gmail.com



Food & Supplies Collection
for ACTC (Assistance Center of Towson Churches)

Ongoing Needs →

Please drop off bagged items:

- Canned: peas, carrots, diced tomatoes
- Canned pasta meals & hearty soups
- Apple sauce, Cereal, PB & Grape jelly
- Oatmeal, Pasta, Spaghetti sauce
- Paper goods, & Toiletries

Drive up & Drop off into Truck:

- Mondays 12-2
Parking lot across from
Ascension Lutheran
7510 York Rd. 21204
- Thursdays 12-2
Trinity Episcopal parking lot
120 Allegheny Ave
- Thursdays 5-7 PM
Valley Baptist parking lot
1401 York Rd

If you'd rather make a monetary donation:
<http://www.actconline.info/>

If you need to **speak with the pastor** during this time, her phone number is: 410-832-3974. Or, you can email her at: fssuccpastor@gmail.com

Message from the Re-Entry Task Force:

At our meeting on October 10th, we reevaluated our plans for reopening the church building for worship services. We had hoped that the issues related to the pandemic would have allowed for a safe opening later this month. When we more closely evaluated the currently circumstances, we have decided to put re-entry on hold at this time. After reviewing the

results of the Survey Monkey where congregants had an opportunity to have their say in the speed of reopening, we know that this news will hit some people harder than others. No one solution will meet everyone's needs, but we are choosing to put safety first.

Following advice from our conference leaders, instead of having a set date in mind, we will reopen when all safety issues have been adequately addressed. At this time, the Dulaney Day School is open and using part of the building. While no other group has been allowed to use the building, evidence of people being in the staff areas are concerning. We will soon open the basement area for 12-Step programs to resume once set guidelines can be established with the groups. We feel strongly that during the holiday season, we must provide what we can to help others and this can be a tough time of year to manage sobriety.

Other factors we considered included statements from Dr. Fauci and other scientists are saying/predicting things won't be back to normal until the end of next year. Very few other UCC churches in our conference are opening yet. Data show that Covid cases are still concerning. Also, the two staff members most impacted by being back in the building, Kelly and Nancy, do not feel safe yet and we need to respect that.

Many of us are grieving for the loss of the many wonderful aspects on live church services that we miss. We must not ignore this grief. We will welcome hearing your thoughts and feelings at the Fall meeting on November 1st right after church.

As it stands now, we hope to have outside services, weather permitting, through this month and then make future choices as time goes on. Our next meeting to discuss re-entering the building will be held November 5th.

Join us again next Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

If you would like to receive the worship materials, hymns, etc. for Sunday, please place your email in the chat column of Zoom at the end of the service, or email the pastor at fssuccpastor@gmail.com We will be outside again next week. If weather prohibits our gathering outside, a message will be posted on Facebook by 9a.m. stating such.