

# The Tidings, November 2011

## Salem United Methodist Church

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Salem's Mission is to GROW disciples of Jesus Christ.



From  
*Pastor Linda*

The ancient Sanctus prayer of the Liturgy of the Holy Communion proclaims: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory." I feel this most deeply when I experience the glorious colors of a bright autumn day. The trees in their changing splendor proclaim the divine mystery of God's creative power in all of creation. Autumn is all about change and yet it is not fearful change but *glorious* change. In my devotional book, *Prayers for a Planetary Pilgrim*, Edward Hays writes ...

I am surrounded by a peaceful ebbing,  
as creation bows to the mystery of life;  
all that grows and lives must give up life,  
yet it does not really die.  
As plants surrender their life,  
bending, brown and wrinkled,  
and yellow leaves of trees  
float to my lawn like parachute troops,  
they do so in a sea of serenity.

I hear no fearful cries from creation,  
no screams of terror,  
as death daily devours  
once-green and growing life.  
Peaceful and calm is autumn's swan song,  
for she understands  
that hidden in winter's death-grip  
is spring's openhanded  
full-brimmed breath of life.

It is not a death rattle that sounds  
over fields and backyard fences;  
rather I hear a lullaby  
softly swaying upon the autumn wind.  
Sleep in peace, all that lives;  
Slumber secure, all that is dying,  
For in every fall there is the rise  
whose sister's name is spring.



What carries me through autumn with great hope is that November also ushers in the Advent Season. The harvest fields are cleared, and when it appears that all is barren, God makes his biggest announcement; "Christ is on the way." He is coming! In the deep darkness of winter we hear the news that light is coming. In our darkest night, he kindles a fire that never fades away.

What if we see autumn as a time of change, and we ask the following questions: What must change within me this season to prepare for the arrival of Christ in my heart each day? What must die that Christ might live more fully in me? What am I missing in my life that is part of God's glorious creation? What grace can I claim, and what wonderful things have happened in my life for which I have cause to celebrate and praise God?

I'm aware that autumn is also the season of homecoming. When the kids were teenagers, this was an entertaining time of year. Carrie and Amy would shop with me for their homecoming dresses and go with all their friends to the game and then the dance. We would take tons of pictures and remember our own youth. It is strange but in those moments, I would realize, as if by surprise, that they were growing up and would soon be gone. Homecoming was kind of like the first day of kindergarten for me. It awakened the knowledge that things would not continue on in quite the same way, and yet I was excited for what would come next.

In faith, we know that Christ is always waiting for us to return to him, he is our homecoming destination and our faithful companion during all the autumn changes of our life. He is also the bearer of our hope that if we die with him, we will be raised with him. He is our "full-brimmed breath of life." In Christ we can be peaceful and calm, for our lives are hidden in Christ as we "hear a lullaby, softly swaying upon the autumn wind" ... Christ is here.

In autumn faith, Pastor Linda