

West Branch Friends Meeting

September 2023

“Autumn as Teacher”

“The world is holy. We are holy. All life is holy. Daily prayers are delivered on the lips of breaking waves, the whispering of grasses, the shimmering leaves.”

— Terry Tempest Williams



I have been participating in a journey with an organization called “Waymarkers”. This journey follows the rhythms of the seasons and helps us learn to listen to what each season can tell us and what we can learn from Creation in each season. It has been a remarkable journey — begun last Autumn. I have been so delighted in what I’m learning, experiencing, feeling, and putting into practice, that I have decided to go “around the wheel” again. Letting Autumn teach me is a far more extensive process than I can relate here. There are a few things, though, that can get us started.

By tuning into these seasonal cycles, we reconnect to the reality that every season is mirrored within our bodies and our souls. Autumn is represented in the cardinal direction of the West, the element of Water, and the sacred bioregion of the Watershed. It is a time to tune into where our water comes from and the effect we have upon our watershed — the water itself, certainly, but also all of those members of our region who drink from it. It is also a time to ask ourselves a few questions about how we live out, express, and show forth Autumn.

Mary DeJong, leader of Waymarkers says this about letting Autumn be our teacher: “Autumn asks if we too will let fall our leaves; if we will let down our energies and allow the natural rhythms find residence in our bones. This season we are being called by ancient and sacred patterns to see our work become wisdom, our knowledge become a deep knowing, and look towards the western horizon, a time that casts darkening shadows. How do we learn to move into a season that calls us to slow down our production and take joy in the harvest; that demands we recognize that resources aren’t endless, nor is energy. All things have a westward movement towards setting down — be it the sun, the tree, the project. Autumn asks: are you willing to fall with me into the depths of who you really are?”

Some questions to ask yourself as you look at yourself as Autumn: What is Autumn like inside you? Where within you do you experience equal light and dark? (Fall Equinox) Where do you find darker places within you? Where are your lengthening shadows? What leaves need to fall in your life? What harvest is ready to be put up? Whose wisdom stream do you follow towards your setting sun? When things begin to feel dark, where do you find your courage?

These questions may sound somber — even a bit ominous — all of this talk of darkness. Honestly, though, Autumn is my favorite. I learn a great deal when I let myself experience the rhythm of this season. I hope you’ll join me in exploring some spiritual practices that allow Autumn to live in our lives.

Slow Cooking Spirit Food

From the kitchen of Sara Gada (and as published in Friends Journal)

Written in the style of: *A Quaker Woman's Cookbook: The Domestic Cookery of Elizabeth Ellicott Lea*

Sara is a 40-something Quaker who works for Friends Publishing. Sara believes in cooking with the resources of each season as much as possible. Cooking, for her, is also prayer. This means slow cooking and food that feeds the spirit. A key component of slow cooking your own spirit food is time and ample rest. She shares the recipes below as they might be found in a favorite Quaker cookbook: *A Quaker Woman's Cookbook*. This means that those of us who rely on published measurements for each recipe may have to experiment with each of these a time or two to get it where we want it! Enjoy!

Spring: Strawberry Rhubarb Pie

Store-bought pie crust saves the time and energy needed to host. Set it aside, and bring to room temperature. Remove rhubarb leaves (poisonous if ingested), and chop rhubarb stalks. Cube unsalted butter. Corral your sugar, chopped strawberries, and orange juice (keep separate for now). Melt butter. Cook in the crockpot on low for several hours, or simmer on the stove top to expedite the process. Assemble pie crust in your pie tin. Decide whether you want to use the second crust as a lattice. Par bake the first crust. Remove from the oven, and add the rhubarb and strawberry mixture on top. Build your lattice. Put a light egg wash on top. Return to the oven. Bake until bubbly. Don't burn the top.

Summer: Bread and Butter Summer Pickles (adapted from my neighbor Sally)

Take that whopper of a summer cucumber, and slice it thin. Follow with a similarly sliced red onion. Mix well with mustard seeds, white sugar, distilled white vinegar, celery seed, and ground turmeric. Simmer in your crockpot on high for several hours or on the stove until the cucumber is tender and your onion is translucent. Transfer to sterile containers. Seal and chill in the refrigerator until serving. It is perfect as a topping for grilled salmon or a side salad.

Autumn: Miso Soup

Sauté sliced onions in oil until fragrant; add garlic, then mushrooms. Transfer to crockpot, set to low. Do this in the morning. Drain and press extra-firm tofu while onion, garlic, and mushrooms sauté. Then chop tofu, and add to crockpot. Add hot water, then vegetable stock and miso paste. Stir together. Chop bok choy; then add. Cover and cook while working. Finish with sliced scallions and a dash of red pepper flakes.

Winter: Sausage Kale Sweet Potato Stew

Layer sweet potato then sausage at the bottom of the crockpot, add sliced or chopped veggies, if using. Pour hot water over; stir in vegetable stock, plus sherry and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Add torn kale to the top, and cover. Cook on low for several hours. Eat with crusty, toasted bread or tortilla chips.

What Are Your Gifts?

On the last Sunday of August, we talked and pondered together about our gifts and how we can live them in the world. I have done a great deal of discovery work about my own gifts, and there are several tools that have been helpful to me. One of these is the Strengths Finder.

The Strengths Finder helps us determine our 5 top signature strengths. Research has shown that living and working from our strengths leads to greater happiness and productivity. Instead of constantly worrying about how we measure up, strengths finder helps us know the great gifts we bring and explore how to share them, live from them, and stop the constant comparison game — no one ever measures up when they spend their lives comparing themselves to others!

What I particularly love about working with strengths finder is that it not only help identify strengths, it gives you information on how YOU uniquely present these strengths in the world. For example: one of my top 5 strengths is “Learner”. Now, obviously, there are others in the world with this strength. Strengths Finder helps you see how YOU live as a learner in the world — your unique imprint in the world through this strength.

I would like to invite everyone/anyone who is interested in this work to send me an email at deaconchris@peculiarpilgrimage.org. We can spend some one-on-one time learning about your strengths, reading about them, researching them, and plotting how they might be lived out in the world — for your benefit AND the world’s.

The staff at my previous church each took the strengths finder inventory and presented our findings. Then we mapped our strengths as a whole — noting the things each of us brought to the table, but also noticing if there were particular areas of strengths where there were “holes”. This helped us determine when we needed to bring in others on a particular project, and what strengths we were looking for. Overall, I would have to say that we had more fun, and “clicked” better together after discovering and working from our strengths.

My top 5 signature strengths? They are: Input, Learner, Connectedness, Positivity and WOO. Curious? Join me in a fun exploration of what you bring to the world. Email Pastor Chris at deaconchris@peculiarpilgrimage.org to get started on your Strengths Finder journey today!

BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS

Our Senior Friends

Darlene Baum

Pat Bradley

Maria Denmead

Fran Fritz

Larry Reiner

Lois Semotan

Nancy Stax

Mildred Torkelson

Joys & Blessings

A passerby found Justin unconscious in his delivery van and called 911, saving Justin's life

The meeting house renovations are beautiful!
Many thanks to Allan and the trustees for their coordination of and faithful work on these projects!

Meeting new F/friends at the New Association Meeting

Malia & Tali are staying longer in West Branch

The Ecumenical World Prayer Cycle for September

Aug 27-Sept 2: Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal

Sept 3-Sept 9: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo

Sept 10-Sept 16: Ghana, Nigeria

Sept 17-Sept 23: Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay

Sept 24-Sept 30: Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru



Requests for Prayer

Eddie recovering from shoulder surgery

Anita for continuing back trouble

Anita's brother David

Joan's brother with 5 vertebrae fractures & considerable pain

The people of Maui

Justin, recovering from heat stroke

September Worship Servants

September 3: (Pastor Chris out on vacation)

Message: Tom Long

Facing Bench: Maxine Koepp

Greeter: Joan Blundall

Zoom Host: Teresa Winder

Special Music:

Children's Message:

Piano: Julie Tallman

September 10 (Pastor Chris at New Association of Friends Meeting)

Greeter: Lyn Kane

Zoom Host:

Special Music:

Children's Message:

Piano: Gwen Senio

September 17

Greeter: Gordon Edgar

Zoom Host:

Special Music:

Children's Message: Joan Blundall

Piano: Julie Tallman

September 24

Greeter: Stan Hinkhouse

Zoom Host:

Special Music:

Children's Message:

Piano: Gwen Senio



August Anniversaries and Birthdays

Birthdays

September 1: Suzanne Wedeking

September 4: Teddy Bowers

September 6: Morgan Draiocht
John Yapp

September 7: Brent Waters

September 8: Ben Bowers

September 16: Brantley Alvarez

September 25: Lyn Kane

September 29: Geery Howe
Joseph Cermak

September 30: Caleb Dlouhy

Anniversaries

September 14: Allan & Teresa Wind-
er

September 15: Dustin & Cassey Bow-
ers

September 22: Jim Glasson & Kath-
leen Darling

Upcoming Events

September 3: Guest Preacher Tom Long

September 4: Labor Day

September 5: M&C 7:00 pm

September 9: New Association of Friends
Business Meeting

September 12: Endowment/Stewardship 7
pm

September 17: Monthly Meeting 11:45 am

September 24: Special Offering for Operation
Backpack

Gathering Music each Sunday 10:20 am

Meeting for Worship Sunday 10:30 am

Prayer Group Mondays 9:30 am