

## Changing Seasons

“We’d best get there early. You need to help start the fires so we can get the hotdogs and marshmallows done before that cool front comes.” My job at the annual church Fall Picnic was an easy one—help start the three or four fires used for cooking hotdogs and making smores. There would be other activities besides eating—a haunted hayride, singing fun songs around the big fire, watermelon seed spitting—but mostly I liked standing next to a good fire in the cool evening. I was a bit disappointed that it was so warm. It was going to be hot next to the fire, even in shorts and a t-shirt.

Even though it brims with warm weather, September conjures thoughts of cool breezes and clear crisp mornings—a hopeful time at the end of summer. Maybe that’s why, at that little church so long ago, the Fall Picnic was the best-attended function of the year. It just seemed right to gather with joy.

Although not noted for epic celebrations, this month is one of anticipation. The fall season kicks off a procession of holidays—the really good ones that include feasts and gifts and football watching. I’ve noticed that, at least in my life, September is a time of optimism charged with energy. Shortening days lend an urgency to doing things that have been postponed (remember that procrastination is one of my superpowers). Excitement fills the air as kids and grandkids return to school—excitement for the grownups as well as the children!

Autumn is a suddenly beautiful period of yellow and red and orange—more stunning to me than the more subdued transformation of spring. Have you noticed that September seems to be a time of positive personal change as well as that of nature. New Year’s resolutions don’t hold a candle to the kind of introspection that this time of year beckons us to.

I feel especially good going into autumn this year, and I hope you do as well. Our summer has been mild, without the burden of smoke that normally wearies us by now. As always, we have high hopes for a wet winter. But this year, there is an even greater sense of optimism that 2022 will end well.

Unfortunately, our picnic didn’t end so great—or maybe it did.... The year 1993 didn’t have smart phones giving us constant weather updates. That “cool” front came a bit early, darkening the sky about the time we were ready for smores. We quickly doused fires as a gale blew icy-cold raindrops sideways through a celebration now turned to rescuing tablecloths and paper plates. The hayride was taking a shortcut back, children squealing as parents became human seatbelts for them while bouncing over open pasture. Best of all, a comically surreal sight—ghosts and the mummy that had been enlisted for the “haunted” part of the hayride. They were running, or maybe they were flying with their costumes turned to sails.

After what my mind has turned into an instant, our daughters were in their car seats and we cranked the heater up to the high setting, now safe and secure from wind and rain. One with each other, we joined the caravan of vehicles driving through the pasture gate. I don’t remember much about other picnics, but I remember that one....

I suppose seasons don't always change like we think they will, or like we think they should. But I believe seasons are good. Without them, I might not get anything done.... What is your favorite "changing seasons" memory?

*God has not left himself without a witness in doing good – giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy. Acts 14:17*

Be the church, --pastor tony