In autumn we feel our mortality. The air grows colder. The leaves, suddenly turning brilliant shades of color, just as suddenly disappear from the trees. The darkness closes in. It feels good to dash inside and shut the door when chased by a howling wind. In this season a fire can warm us thoroughly, but only temporarily. Take a few steps away, and the chill sets in again. In autumn we are grateful for bountiful food and a tight roof, because we know, deep in our bones, that we are tiny, vulnerable creatures—and that one bad harvest, one act of violence, one wrong turn in an early blizzard can mean the difference between comfort and contentment on the one hand, and misery and death on the other.

Spring is full of hope and optimism, and during summer we are busy and happy out of doors. These are the carefree times, when the present gives us everything we could need. It is during autumn, however, that we cannot help but think, and think deeply. We’re caught between the easy times of spring and summer, and the long, difficult winter to come. We might be well fed, but we are nevertheless anxious about the challenges ahead. Like no other time of the year, we are fondly looking backwards, cherishing the sun’s dwindling warmth, and uneasily looking toward the future.

It is autumn that makes us philosophers—lovers of wisdom.

As the Psalm reads, the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom; the consciousness of our limitations is the first step towards understanding. Socrates got this, too, of course; he went around asking people what they knew, and why. It didn’t take him long to realize that no one really seemed to know what they were talking about; he concluded that he was a step better off than the rest of them in terms of wisdom, merely because he knew he didn’t know anything.

But let’s set Socrates aside, and look instead closer to home. There’s one American author who is always in my mind come autumn: Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne is a New Englander of New Englanders, having added the W to his last name in order to distance himself from his Hathorne ancestors, grim Puritans who helped run the Salem witch trials a bare century prior to his birth. In his dark and spooky tales, Hawthorne probes human shortcomings, superstitions, and evils. Melville considered him nearly Shakespeare’s peer in this regard.

Yet not all is dark in Hawthorne. He sees our limitations, to be sure, but that’s the beginning of wisdom, not its completion or realization. One of Hawthorne’s greatest strengths as a writer is in showing how our present existence is merely the tail end of a long, storied past, and the beginning of a future that stretches far beyond us. Looked at in isolation, we’re not much, but through reflection we can come to understand how we fit into that very human tale.
Hawthorne is best known for *The Scarlet Letter*—a true classic in Mark Twain’s sense of the word: “a book which people praise but don’t read.” Less well known, but just as thoughtful and praiseworthy is Hawthorne’s essay on the Old Manse, an ancient but sturdy parsonage at the edge of the Concord battleground, where the minutemen drove back the redcoats. Ralph Waldo Emerson lived there for a time, composing his essay “Nature.” In 1842, the Hawthornes moved in. Nathaniel proceeded to write a series of tales, which were bound together as *Mosses from an Old Manse*.

The introductory essay describes the Manse itself, along with its surroundings. Although the reader might be tempted to skip over this, in order to get to “Young Goodman Brown” or “Rappacini’s Daughter,” this opening piece merits close attention. For in this account of his surroundings, Hawthorne beautifully connects his brief stay in the Manse with past generations and those to come. In one of the best parts of the essay, he talks about the large apple orchard near the house. Here’s his account:

> This [orchard] was set out by the last clergyman [who lived in the Manse], in the decline of his life, when the neighbors laughed at [him] for planting trees, from which he could have no prospect of gathering fruit. Even had that been the case, there was only so much the better motive for planting them, in the pure and unselfish hope of benefitting his successors—an end so seldom achieved by more ambitious efforts.¹

Consider the significance of this act. An old man planting trees. Why? Presumably, he feared God. He was a clergyman, after all. But why plant trees? Why not simply recognize weakness, his dependency upon God, and then fade out of this life? That’s a kind of wisdom, right?

Hawthorne pegs it here. The elderly clergyman planted those apple trees as a pure and unselfish gift to those yet to come. This was a pure and unselfish hope of benefitting others—if such others were ever to be born and live in this house—or even just pass by on the road. He has no assurance that this will happen, or that someone won’t cut down the orchard to build a strip mall. Nevertheless, he sows, and tends, without any expectation of reward. There’s a wisdom in this that goes beyond a knowledge of what is just, or what is due to others. It’s a wisdom born of humility and of a call to service.

This is not the end of the story, though. Hawthorne notes that the clergyman lived to be ninety, and picked and ate barrels of apples for decades before his death. His intent looked far beyond his own life, but happily his life was long and pleasant—contrary to everyone’s expectations.

Hawthorne notes that one of the most overwhelming emotions he experienced, while living at the Manse, was when he found himself “the sole inheritor of the old clergyman’s wealth of fruits . . . . pluck[ing] the fruit of trees that he did not plant.”

The clergyman gave selflessly to future generations; Hawthorne, in turn, benefitted from that gift years later. In the next paragraph, Hawthorne himself looks to the future, this time in his vegetable garden:

¹ “The Old Manse” is available online at [http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/tom.html](http://www.eldritchpress.org/nh/tom.html)
Multitudes of bees used to bury themselves in the yellow blossoms of the summer-squashes. This . . . was a deep satisfaction; although, when they had laden themselves with sweets, they flew away to some unknown hive, which would give back nothing in requital of what my garden had contributed. But I was glad thus to fling a benefaction upon the passing breeze, with the certainty that somebody must profit by it, and that there would be a little more honey in the world, to allay the sourness and bitterness which mankind is always complaining of. Yes, indeed; my life was the sweeter for that honey.

We’re here today to recognize and to celebrate those who have entered public service. It’s a noble calling, even if most elected officials fall far short of our expectations. Keep Hawthorne’s clergyman as an example. Plant trees of all kinds. Do what you can to add a little more sweetness to the world, even if you won’t be among those enjoying the full fruits of your labors. After all, you’ve benefited every day from the wise actions of untold multitudes, stretching far back into history. You’ve received their gifts, and you are now called to contribute yours—for the sake not only of the present Augie community, but of many generations to come. To act in such a manner requires great wisdom—but first, humility.
Morning Worship
Monday, October 14, 2013

Prelude　Variations on “Earth and All Stars” by Robert Powell
Welcome/announcements
Invocation
Prayer

Hymn　“Earth and All Stars”　ELW # 731 vv 1, 4, 5
Scripture　Psalm 111
Sermon　Autumn in the Old Manse
Joel Johnson, Govt/Intl Affairs

Hymn　“We Plow the Fields and Scatter”　ELW # 681 v 1,3
ASA Installation
President Matt Anderson & Vice President Krista Youngberg
Treasurer Seth Vogelsang & Director of Communications Aimee Fisher

Senior Senators: Amanda Johnson, Emily Grandprey, Emily Weber, Jesse Fonkert & Jessica Johnson
Junior Senators: Brittany Dardis, Leah Murfield, Hanna Werling, Taylor Lambert, Joel Hermann
Sophomore Senators: Elliot Blue, Katherine Van Gerpen, Matthew Bell, Naras Prameswari, Jesse Nelson
Freshmen Senators: Daniel Schmidtman, Javier Darce Spiny, Katelyn Johnson

North Side Senators: Crystal Ortbahn and Kirsten Titze
Off-Campus: Maggie Dally
Theme House and Apartments: Samuel Hoskins and Scot Missling
Adult Learner: Kale Merrell
South Side Representative: Kaitlin Romano
International Senator: Ray Asmah

Benediction
Postlude　“Earth and All Stars” by Keith Kolander

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Benediction
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WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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<td>Tues, 10/15</td>
<td>Common Ground, 9 pm</td>
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<td>Wed, 10/16</td>
<td>Holy Communion, 10 am, Laurie Jungling &amp; Augustana’s flute choir</td>
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<td>Fri, 10/18</td>
<td>Worship, 10 am, Pastor Paul, Augustana Choir 7 Honor Guard Hospitality</td>
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<td>Sun, 10/20</td>
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CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVING THE BANQUET - Campus Ministry is sponsoring a night to serve at the Banquet - the downtown soup kitchen. We will be serving on Monday, October 21 at 5:15 pm. Sign up sheet is on the Narthex Table.

On Sunday, October 20th, Campus Ministry is taking a worship outing to spend an afternoon of praise with our partner congregation, PUEBLO DE DIOS. The service will start at 2pm and the group will meet at 1:30pm in the Commons circle to carpool over to Augustana Lutheran Church. Come spend an hour discovering the power and excitement that comes when we worship with our Latin brothers and sisters! Questions, contact Shane LeClaire.

CAMPUS MINISTRY TRAVEL

Spring break—HOLDEN VILLAGE, Chelan, WA March 7-16, 2014. We ride Amtrak to this remote, intentional Christian community in the Cascade mountains of Washington. We’ll work half time, worship daily, snow shoe and ski in 200+inches of snow! $550 (Group size limited to 20 on a first come/first served basis with $200 deposit.) Deposits are due by Nov 15 - balance due by Jan 15.

May 25 – June 6, 2014 Walk 100 miles of the Camino de Santiago, Spain, the oldest pilgrimage route in Europe with Pr. Paul and Spanish Professor Sam Ogdie. $1500 plus airfare.

June 7, 2014 A week at Taize, the ecumenical monastery in rural France that has devoted their ministry to the renewal of faith among young adults. With thousands of young adults from all over the world, we practice listening to God’s spirit and each other, live in solidarity with the poor, and pray and study serving God’s peace. $500 plus airfare. clearance forms. The forms need to be turned back into the chapel by October 15.