Autumn Prayer Tree

There are variations on this depending on whether you want to use real leaves or not and how messy you want to get!!

You can either:

1. Draw out a tree Trunk then print and cut out a number of leaves (left) and paste them together.
2. Print/cut out leaves and decorate a "homemade" trunk *(to make the trunk, trace your child's arm from the elbow up, including the fingers, like the picture)*
3. Draw the trunk and decorate with "Finger-paint" leaves
4. Write your prayer on each leaf, or the name of someone you would like to remember or pray for!
5. You can also go outside and collect real Autumn leaves and paste those on like the picture to the right.

Materials:

Printer, paper, scissors, glue, something to colour with,
You will also need finger-paints if you choose the second option.

You will need to collect some leaves from outside if you choose the fourth option.

Instructions:

- Draw out or make your home-made trunk
- Cut out the leaves. This step may require adult assistance. Don't worry too much about getting them cut out perfectly.
- Colour pieces, as necessary. *(For a change of pace, try using different mediums than you typically do, such as paints, crayons or pastels*). Pastels smudged make really nice Autumn leaves!
- Write your prayer on each leaf, or the name of someone you would like to remember or pray for! Maybe get family, friends to do there's'!!
- Glue the coloured leaves together or make handprint leaves, depending on the alternative you chose.
- You can glue the entire tree to a decorated background
- *(blue construction paper, with green tissue paper for grass and white cotton balls for clouds works very nicely!).*

An Autumn Prayer

We see signs of summer's passing in golden leaves,
shortening days, misty mornings, autumn glow.
We sense its passing in rain that dampens, winds that chill,
Harvest's bounty placed on show.
Creator God, who brings forth both green shoot and hoar frost, sunrise and sunset,
we bring our thanks for seeds that have grown, harvests gathered, storehouses filled, mouths fed. And, as your good earth rests through winter's cold embrace,
we look forward to its re-awakening when kissed by Spring's first touch. ***Amen***

HALLOWEEN

A bit of history . . .

Halloween is shortened from "All-hallow-evening," the eve of All Hallow's Day, which is now known as All Saints Day. *(All Saints Day became was placed on November 1 by Pope Gregory IV in 835; All Souls Day on November 2 in 998.)* Millions of children celebrate Halloween each year with costumes, parties, and hi-jinks.

But what are they celebrating? Where did these customs arise?

Where does the word come from? - Halloween is short for "All-hallow-evening." That means the evening before All Hallows' Day. All Hallows' Day is now called All Saints' Day.

All Saints' Day is a Christian feast on 1 November. On that day Christians give thanks for all faithful people who have lived and died in Christ. They are often called saints, which simply means "holy ones."

What was Samhain?

Samhain *(say "SOW-in")* was a Gaelic festival. Gaelic means the culture of Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. Samhain marked the end of the harvest and the start of winter. It was a time to gather in food and bring animals inside.

Samhain is *sometimes called* the "Celtic New Year." Historians disagree about this. It is a modern name. We do not know for sure that ancient Celts saw it as a new year.

In old Irish stories, Samhain was seen as a time when the line between this world and the world of spirits felt thin. Later folk tales added ideas about ghosts, harm to crops, bonfires and dressing up. We have only limited early evidence. Much of what we know comes from much later stories. Historians are not certain about the details.

What we can say plainly is this: we do not have good proof that ancient Samhain involved a "lord of death," witch-burning, or costumes to scare evil spirits. Those dramatic ideas came much later.

What did Christians do? - Over 1,000 years ago, Christians wanted to give a different focus at this time of year. Instead of fear of death and evil spirits, they pointed to hope.

They kept the feast of All Saints. At first in Rome this feast was kept in springtime. In the eighth century - the 700s - it was moved in Rome to 1 November. The Eastern Church (mainly the Orthodox churches in the east) still keeps All Saints on a different day: the first Sunday after Pentecost. Pentecost is a feast 50 days after Easter when Christians celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In 835, Pope Gregory IV asked that 1 November be kept as All Saints' Day more widely in the west. The reasons are debated. Some historians think it was meant to offer a Christian alternative to harvest customs like Samhain. Others think it was more practical, because there was more food after the harvest to feed pilgrims who came for the feast. We cannot be sure.

The next day, 2 November, is All Souls' Day. On that day many Christians pray for all who have died. This was not started by Pope Gregory IV. It was started in 998 by Odilo, the Abbot of Cluny, for his monasteries in France. It later spread more widely.

What about today?

Today Halloween is a mix. For many it is costumes, parties and harvest fun. For Christians it is still the evening before All Saints. It can be a time to remember that life is more than what we see now. The Bible speaks of this hope:

"In our union with Christ Jesus he raised us up with him to rule with him in the heavenly world. He did this to demonstrate for all time to come the extraordinary greatness of his grace in the love he showed us in Christ Jesus." - ***Ephesians 2:6-7***

Jesus also spoke of preparing a place for us. Christians believe God's love is stronger than death. Christ brings light and life. He has won the victory over evil.

We can celebrate with joy and kindness. We can give thanks for creation. And we can look forward to the final harvest at the end of time, when "God shall be all-in-all." - **1 Corinthians 15:28**

You are warmly invited to use this season to remember with love, to give thanks, and to share hope.