

# JOURNEYS

Theme Packet for November 2014

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

# Courage



<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/16799/take-courage/>

**Take courage friends.  
The way is often hard, the path is never clear,  
and the stakes are very high.**

**Take courage.  
For deep down, there is another truth:  
you are not alone.**

*~ Wayne B. Arnason*

If you've picked this up in a hard copy, and would like to receive these monthly packets by email, sign up to be on UFP's email list, by sending a request to [unitarianchurch@cogeco.net](mailto:unitarianchurch@cogeco.net).

## WONDERINGS *on the theme of* COURAGE

In the last days of October, our nation watched as a gunman entered the House of Commons in Ottawa and opened fire. We watched as the 'first responders' ran down the corridor TOWARD the gunfire. We also saw a passerby, a lawyer named Barbara Winters, sit with the dying Corporal Nathan Cirillo, telling him repeatedly that he was loved, that he was good, that he was brave. These were truly acts of courage.

We hear stories of courage all the time...the person who risks their life to pull a stranger from a burning car...the person who stands up to an abusive spouse and asks for a divorce...the civil rights activist who is willing to go to jail. Such stories, and such times, lead us to wonder about our own degree of courage. How might we respond? What would we be willing and able to do to protect or support someone else? Could I be this brave?

And yet, courage is required of us daily. It is really quite ordinary. It takes courage to be vulnerable in our relationships. It takes courage to stick our necks out for something that matters to us. It takes courage to look honestly at ourselves and to see what needs to be changed.

It takes courage to choose kindness when it would be easier to be rude. It takes courage to stick up for your vegan self over and over when your family suggests that you are being disrespectful by choosing not to eat what's on the table. And, it certainly takes courage to be religiously different, or even religious at all, in our culture. And, in this 'pledge month' at UFP, it takes courage for us to dream big and to talk openly about the role of money in our spiritual community.

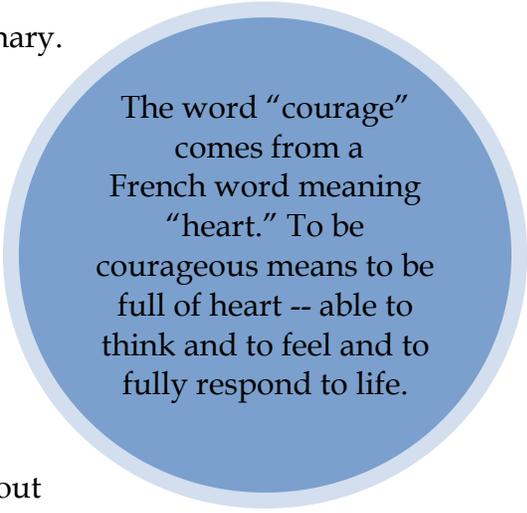
The list is long. Turn down that drink one day at a time. Get out of bed when depression would keep you there. Hold your partner's hand in public. Relinquish your need to control. Stick to a difficult commitment. Choose the road less traveled. These are ordinary acts of courage...and heroism.

To be sure, there are days when we are tired. There are days when we are scared. Lots of times we forget how important our ordinary courage is, and we lose sight of how much our daily heroism matters. And that's why we need each other.

We all need a smile of encouragement, an arm of support, a spoken assurance that we're going in the right direction. We need the time and space to reflect on what we are being called to do and to be.

Take courage, friends. You are not alone.

~ Rev. Julie



The word "courage" comes from a French word meaning "heart." To be courageous means to be full of heart -- able to think and to feel and to fully respond to life.

Next month's theme: **COMMUNION**

Do you have ideas for resources? A favourite novel, blog, poem, or movie? Maybe you've taken a photo or done some artwork for the front page?

Email your suggestions to [unitarianchurch@cogeco.net](mailto:unitarianchurch@cogeco.net)

## STORIES *about* COURAGE

A psychology professor at the University of Miami knew his students expected a terrifyingly long final exam. To play with their minds a little (what do you expect from a psychology professor?) he only put ONE question on the final exam. He watched the reactions of the students as they all opened the exams and saw the one question. Initially they all looked relieved, but as the difficulty of the question began to sink in, those relieved faces sagged to confusion and consternation. All, that is, except for one student. He read the question, tapped his pencil into his palm a few times, then jotted something down on the test paper. He walked up to the professor, handed him the final, and walked out. The professor blinked in surprise, looked at what the student wrote, and smiled. The professor wrote "100%" on the top of that student's test.

The question: What is courage?

The student's answer: This is.

### **Catch the Wind** – *a tale from the Desert Fathers*

A brother came to the abbot pastor and said, "Many distracting thoughts come into my mind, and I am in danger because of them."

Then the elder thrust him out into the open air and said, "Open up the garments about your chest and catch the wind in them."

But he replied, "This I cannot do."

So the elder said to him, "If you cannot catch the wind, neither can you prevent distracting thoughts from coming into your head. Your job is to say 'No' to them."

### CHALICE LIGHTING *on* COURAGE

You may possess only a small light, but uncover it, let it shine, use it in order to bring more light and understanding to the hearts and minds of men and women.

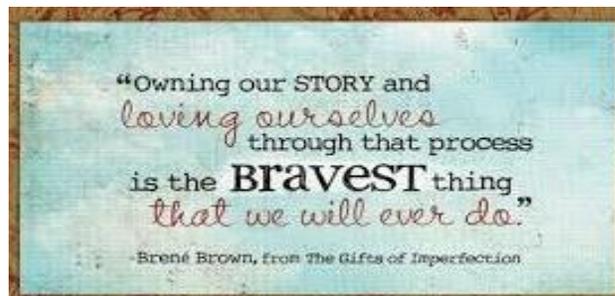
Give them, not hell, but hope and courage.

- John Murray (*adapted*)

- When have you had the courage to admit you were wrong?
- Have you ever turned your back on courage? Is there any way to make up for that now?
- When have you been surprised by your own courage? Where did that courage come from?
- Do you have the courage to ask for help? Is that courage needed in your life right now?
- Who has been courageous on your behalf?

### QUESTIONS *for reflection on* COURAGE

- Whose courage has inspired you? Has their courage been contagious?
- Are you as 'courageously vulnerable' as you'd like to be?



## INSPIRATIONS *on* COURAGE

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things  
I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.  
~ Reinhold Niebuhr



Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak;  
courage is also what it takes to sit down and  
listen.  
~ Winston Churchill

The great courage is to stare as squarely at the  
light as at death.  
~ Albert Camus

I shall take my voice wherever there are those  
who want to hear the melody of freedom or the  
words that might inspire hope and courage in  
the face of despair and fear. My weapons are  
peaceful, for it is only by peace that peace can  
be attained. The song of freedom must prevail.  
~ Paul Robeson

The courage of the early morning's dawning,  
and the strength of the eternal hills,  
and the peace of the evening's ending,  
and the love of God,  
be in our hearts.  
~ Anonymous

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes  
courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day  
saying, "I will try again tomorrow."  
~ Mary Anne Radmacher

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather  
the judgment that something else is more  
important than fear.  
~ Ambrose Redmoon

Any fool can make things bigger, more  
complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of  
genius, and a lot of courage, to move in the  
opposite direction.  
~ E. F. Schumacher

Courage is a love affair with the unknown.  
~ Osho

Have the courage to follow your heart and  
intuition. They somehow already know what  
you truly want to become.  
~ Steve Jobs

Courage is doing what you're afraid to do.  
There can be no courage unless you're scared.  
~ Eddie Rickenbacker

Courage: the most important of all the virtues  
because without courage, you can't practice  
any other virtue consistently.  
~ Maya Angelou

Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but  
the form of every virtue at the testing point.  
~ C. S. Lewis

The first and greatest commandment is, don't  
let them scare you.  
~ Elmer Davis

A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but  
he is braver five minutes longer.  
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

The reward for conformity was that everyone  
liked you except yourself.  
~ Rita Mae Brown

A ship in harbour is safe – but that is not what  
ships are for.  
~ John A. Shedd

When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There  
is a microscopically thin line between being  
brilliantly creative and acting like the most  
gigantic idiot on earth. So what the hell, leap.  
~ Cynthia Heimel

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts  
to improve the lot of others, or strikes out  
against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of  
hope...and, crossing each other from a million  
different centers of energy and daring, those  
ripples build a current that can sweep down  
the mightiest walls of oppression and  
resistance.  
~ Robert F. Kennedy

## PRACTICING COURAGE

Daily, ordinary courage is too often overlooked. Below are several different ways to engage in the ordinary bravery of your life. Chose one, or two, and practice courage!

### **A. Take a day or two and live out of your best “counter-cultural self.”**

Each of us have counter-cultural leanings that we don't lean into as fully as we might wish. Set aside a day or a weekend or even a week in which to be your counter-cultural self. Maybe it's no TV, or eating vegetarian, or buying nothing, or wearing a Pride T-shirt to the gym. Maybe it's asking a friend to UFP for 'bring a friend Sunday' on Nov 16. Whatever it is, just try 'leaning in.'

### **B. Have the courage to 'stop and listen' rather than 'stand and shout.'**

We so often associate courage with aggressive acts...doing, challenging, pushing through, fighting, demanding. But sometimes the most courageous thing to do is to be quiet and listen deeply to the other side. Sometimes what's needed is for us to bravely be open to them changing us. Sometimes staying takes more courage than leaving.

### **C. Thank someone for their courage.**

Figure out a way to celebrate the courage of someone else. Thank the people whose courage inspires you. Write a letter, give a gift, say it aloud for once...find a way to tell them that their bravery is seen and that it matters.

### **D. Reflect on a time when your courage failed you.**

Figure out how best to do this reflection...through writing, or art, or conversation. Consider why your courage failed you...what happened, what led up to that moment?

Ask yourself what you wish you had done. Create a movie in your head of how wish it had gone. What would have enabled you to do the courageous thing?

Finally, ask what you can do know. If you can't go back and make up for it, how might you return to it in some other way?

### **E. Choose one of these passages for prayers and meditation. Sit with it each day.**

I will not die an unlived life.  
I will not live in fear  
of falling or catching fire.  
I choose to inhabit my days,  
to allow my living to open me,  
to make me less afraid,  
more accessible;  
to loosen my heart  
until it becomes a wing,  
a torch, a promise.  
I choose to risk my significance,  
to live so that which came to me as seed  
goes to the next as blossom,  
and that which came to me as blossom,  
goes on as fruit."

— Dawna Markova, *I Will Not Die an Unlived Life: Reclaiming Purpose and Passion*

### *Meditation for Courage*

~ Rudolf Steiner

We must eradicate from the soul all fear and terror  
of what comes to meet us out of the future;

We must look with absolute equanimity toward  
whatever comes,

And we must think only that whatever comes is given to  
us by a world direction full of wisdom.

It is part of what we must learn in these times.

Namely to live out of pure trust, without any security in  
existence,

Trusting only in the ever present help of the spiritual  
world;

Truly nothing else will do if our courage is not to fail us.

Let us discipline our will,

and let us seek the awakening within ourselves,

Every morning and every evening.

## Resources on COURAGE

### On the Web

Playwright Eve Ensler explores our modern craving for security – and why it makes us less secure.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/eve\\_ensler\\_on\\_security](http://www.ted.com/talks/eve_ensler_on_security) or in text:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/laura\\_trice\\_suggests\\_we\\_all\\_say\\_thank\\_you](http://www.ted.com/talks/laura_trice_suggests_we_all_say_thank_you)

Stefon Harris, jazz musician, says that many actions are perceived as mistakes only because we don't react to them appropriately.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/stefon\\_harris\\_there\\_are\\_no\\_mistakes\\_on\\_the\\_bandstand?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/stefon_harris_there_are_no_mistakes_on_the_bandstand?language=en)

Ash Beckham: We're all hiding something. Let's find the courage to open up.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uq83IU6nuS8>

A story about Pete Seeger's courage:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PW4XxX06AmA>

The story of Reverend Carlton Pearson, a renowned evangelical pastor in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who cast aside the idea of Hell

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/304/heretics/>

Joe Kowan talks about how he conquered stage fright.

[http://www.ted.com/talks/joe\\_kowan\\_how\\_i\\_be\\_at\\_stage\\_fright.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/joe_kowan_how_i_be_at_stage_fright.html)

### Movies

*A Mother's Courage: Talking Back to Autism* (2009, Documentary) A mother is determined not to accept the pessimistic prognosis for her son.

*The Help* (2011, PG-13) Details the African-American maids' point of view on the white families for which they work, and the hardships they go through on a daily basis.

*Brokeback Mountain* (2005, R) The story of a forbidden and secretive relationship between two cowboys.

*The Most Dangerous Man in America* (2009, Documentary) Tells the story of Daniel Ellsberg's crusade to out the lies of the government during the Viet Nam conflict.

*Shut up and Sing* (2006, R, Documentary) The story of the Dixie Chicks and their decision to stand up for what they believed.

### Children's Books on COURAGE

*Courage*, by Bernard Waber

*The Sissy Duckling*, by Harvey Fierstein

*Granddaddy's Gift*, by Margaree King Mitchell

*The Story of Ruby Bridges*, by Robert Coles

*The Deep*, by Tim Winton

*Very Last First Time*, by Jan Andrews

*The Little Yellow Leaf*, by Carin Berger

*One*, by Kathryn Otoshi

*Chopsticks*, by Amy Rosenthal & Scott Magoon

### Books

*A Better Way of Dying: How to Make the Best Choices at the End of Life*, by Jeanne Fitzpatrick, Eileen M. Fitzpatrick and William Colby

*A Year to Live*, by Steven Levine

*Plainsong: A Novel*, by Kent Haruf

*Behind the Kitchen Door* by Sara Jayaraman

*Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*, by Doreen Rappaport

### Table Grace on COURAGE

With the help of this nourishment,  
may we find the courage to be people of peace;  
To forgive when we have been hurt;  
To trust when we might doubt;  
To be hopeful in the face of despair;  
And to shine our little lights  
Wherever they are needed.  
(After a prayer by St. Francis of Assisi)

*Thanks to all who helped create this packet by writing text, suggesting resources, offering artwork and providing feedback!*

*We subscribe to "Soul Matters" a curriculum from Rev. Scott Taylor. Service Leaders and Covenant Group Facilitators work with Rev. Julie Stoneberg to incorporate the theme into our programming & Sunday Services. Would you like to share your talents?*

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