



JOURNEYS
Theme Packet for March 2016
The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough

What does it mean to be people of
Liberation?



We are not trapped or locked up in these bones. No, no. We are free to change. And love changes us. And if we can love one another, we can break open the sky.

~ Walter Mosley

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WONDERINGS *about* LIBERATION

“True wisdom comes in understanding that sometimes, you are both the prison and the key.”

~ Johnathan Jena

When I imagine liberation, I see crowds of citizens celebrating the end of a period of occupation, or prisoners of war stumbling out of freed barracks, or refugees making it across a border onto peaceful soil. When I imagine liberation, I think of great liberators...people like Che Guevara, Simón Bolívar, Abraham Lincoln, and Nelson Mandela. Liberation is a big word reserved for heroic efforts in the name of freedom.

Yet liberation is very personal. It is an aching dream for any who are oppressed, captured, or put behind bars (literally or figuratively.) It is a real life longing for anyone entangled in self-loathing, or weighed down by expectations, or trapped in poverty. And when liberation comes, it is a feeling like none other.

Can I be a person of liberation? I was, by a blessing of birth, born into a free country that acclaim 'liberty for all.' I have never been in jail, or a victim of war, or persecuted for my beliefs or lifestyle.

Still, even in my privileged life, I know what it means to be limited by societal expectations, to be trapped by my own behaviours, and to sometimes be (seemingly) unable to unlock a life of limitless possibility and unrestricted personal expression.

To attain liberation, we need to do a clear-eyed assessment of our choices. This month, in addition to increasing our awareness of others who experience oppression, let's look honestly and hopefully at ourselves...how we might forgive and free ourselves from the cage of resentment. Or let go of jealousy. Or stop playing the self-defeating games of status, money and beauty. We don't have to keep telling ourselves that life is unfair and we've been cheated. We can let the chips fall from our shoulders and freely move on. We are more powerful than we realize, or want to admit.

lib · er · a · tion

libə' rāSH(ə)n/

noun

1. the act or process of freeing someone or something from another's control
2. the removal of traditional social rules, attitudes, etc.
3. a movement seeking equal rights and status for a group

synonyms: setting free, salvation, emancipation, unchaining, release

Israelmore Ayivor, writes, “You have the right to suppress yourself, oppress yourself and depress yourself. You also have the right to impress yourself. And let yourself feel happy too!” As we explore liberation, let's see if we can attain Ayivor's balance between being critical and kind, confrontational and inspirational. May we honour the fact that there are bars that hem us in, but also invite ourselves to notice when the key is sitting right there in the lock.

May this be the month when we notice and turn that key.

~ Rev. Julie



STORIES *about* LIBERATION

The Starfish

Once a man was walking along a beach. The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day. Off in the distance he could see a person going back and forth between the surf's edge and the beach. Back and forth this person went. As the man approached, he could see that there were hundreds of starfish stranded on the sand as the result of the natural action of the tide.

The man was stuck by the the apparent futility of the task. There were far too many starfish. Many of them were sure to perish.

As he approached, the person continued the task of picking up starfish one by one and throwing them into the surf.

As he came up to the person, he said: "You must be crazy. There are thousands of miles of beach covered with starfish. You can't possibly make a difference." The person looked at the man. He then stooped down and pick up one more starfish and threw it back into the ocean. He turned back to the man and said: "It sure made a difference to that one!"

The (North) American Dream

A businessman was standing at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The businessman complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish. "How long did it take you to catch them?" the businessman asked. "Only a little while" the Mexican replied.

"Why don't you stay out longer and catch more fish?" the businessman then asked. "I have enough to support my family's immediate needs" the Mexican said.

"But," the businessman then asked, "What do you do with the rest of your time?" The Mexican fisherman said: "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening where I sip wine and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, *senor*."

The businessman scoffed: "I have an MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds you could buy a bigger boat and, with the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats. Eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you would sell directly to the consumers, eventually opening your own can factory. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then LA and eventually NYC where you will run your expanding enterprise."

The Mexican fisherman asked: "But *senor*, how long will this all take?" To which the businessman replied: "15-20 years." "But what then, *senor*?"

The businessman laughed and said: "That's the best part. When the time is right, you would announce an IPO - an Initial Public Offering - and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions." "Millions, *senor*? Then what?"

The businessman said slowly: "Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take a siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the

evenings where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos..."



INSPIRATIONS *on the theme of* LIBERATION

Hope is the seed of liberation. ~ *Jon Sobrino*

No one can be perfectly free until all are free. ~ *Herbert Spencer*

The revolution and women's liberation go together. We do not talk of women's emancipation as an act of charity or out of a surge of human compassion. It is a basic necessity for the revolution to triumph. Women hold up the other half of the sky. ~ *Thomas Sankara*

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. ~ *Nelson Mandela*

Don't rely on your mind for liberation. It is the mind that brought you into bondage. Go beyond it altogether. ~ *Nisargadatta Maharaj*

It takes so much energy to lie. I wish people could grasp and sense the freedom and liberation which comes with being honest and genuine. ~ *Mama Zara*

There are two paths to liberation for a soul. The path to happiness is the longest and the path of renouncing happiness and pain is the shortest. ~ *V. Hema Chander*

I freed a thousand slaves. I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves. ~ *Harriet Tubman*

We are not limited by our old age; we are liberated by it. ~ *Stu Mittleman*

It is only through disruptions and confusion that we grow and are set free, jarred out of ourselves by the collision of someone else's private world with our own. ~ *Joyce Carol Oates*

Liberation begins with an acceptance of a past we can't change, an unrelenting conviction that the future can be different, and the stubborn wisdom to use the past to make the future what the past was not. ~ *Craig D. Lounsbrough*

We will find the key to our liberation only when we accept that what we once did to survive is now destroying us. ~ *Laura van Dernoot Lipsky*

Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about. ~ *N.T. Wright*

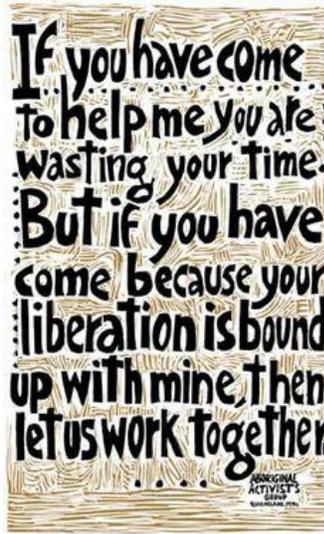
This moving away from comfort and security, this stepping out into what is unknown, uncharted and shaky - that's called liberation. ~ *Pema Chodron*

Comfort..was the key ingredient to making the prisoner crave the prison. ~ *Ashim Shanker*

Blame is very tricky in that it seems like a way out when it is really a form of imprisonment. ~ *Bryant McGill*

None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free. ~ *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

When personal guilt in relation to a past event becomes a continuous cloud over your life, you are locked in a mental prison. You have become your own jailer. Although you should not erase your responsibility for the past, when you make the past your jailer, you destroy your future. It is such a great moment of liberation when you learn to forgive yourself, let the burden go, and walk out into a new path of promise and possibility. Self-compassion is a wonderful gift to give yourself. ~ *John O'Donohue in Eternal Echoes*



Chalice Lighting *on* LIBERATION

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:15)

Let this light go before us,
strong in hope, bright in faithfulness,
clear before our struggling steps.



Practicing LIBERATION

Option A: MARK (AND TAKE CONTROL OF) YOUR TIME!

Hour by hour, we give up intentionality and let life happen to us. This exercise invites us to liberate ourselves by waking up to what our hours actually look like.

For at least 2-3 days, either in a row or at different times, use an alarm to set off an hourly alert/chime for the entire day, from the time you get up to the time you go to bed. Every time the alarm goes off, make a one-word note in a journal or notepad that captures what you are doing in that moment. For instance, one day's worth of entries might look like: worrying, staring, working, working, working, eating, complaining, dreaming, emailing, working, commuting, cooking, emailing, dog-walking, nodding-off.

Notice the patterns and determine if/how you want to change them. What list would you feel good about at the end of the day? It's all about consciousness. It's all about liberating yourself by simply noticing. It's all about living life rather than letting life live you!

Option B: IN ORDER TO REMAIN ENGAGED

The task of creating a society in which none are oppressed and all are liberated is demanding and often discouraging work. The author and activist Alice Walker knows this work well: for 40 years she has been "standing on the frontlines of healing America's own violent history." She shares seven steps for how to remain a Love Activist without getting dragged down or burnt out:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Recommit Every Day | 3) Embrace Your Joy | 6) Spread Forgiveness |
| 2) Protect What Matters Most | 4) Stand for Truth | 7) Love the Earth |
| | 5) Be Courageous | |

Read through the list and choose the one that calls to you the most. What do you need to liberate from within you in order to remain engaged in the wider work of liberation? Once you have your answer, take some time this month to enact that step. More here: <http://tinyurl.com/jlo9dkb>



Option C: DANCEBREAK!

Do you need a bit of music and dance to help you step back from the stress...a bit of rhythm and joy to free you from your worries? This exercise asks you to let music and/or dance interrupt your weekly routine.

DANCEBREAK was created by Rev. Scott Rudolph, a UU minister.

By signing up, you will receive a weekly email that has a song/video to dance along with. The vision is explained here:

<http://dancebreak.weebly.com/about-dancebreak.html>

Sign up for DANCEBREAK! at

<http://dancebreak.weebly.com/join-the-dance-party.html>

If you want a dancebreak more than once-a-week, then set an alarm on your calendar and visit the DANCEBREAK archives: <http://dancebreak.weebly.com>

And if you're up to it, post DANCEBREAK worthy songs on the Soul Matters Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/soulmatters/>) throughout the month of March. Tell why you picked the song and what it liberated you from.

If you need more inspiration than the dancebreak songs, try out these links:

<http://tinyurl.com/hbd943s> <http://tinyurl.com/hxpfzax> <http://tinyurl.com/plpfpb2>



Option D: LET YOUR PRECIOUS GO

In J.R.R. Tolkien's classic, *The Lord of the Rings*, we watch a creature named Gollum give his life and soul over to his "precious." That which empowered him, ended up destroying him. That which was meant to feed and protect him, depleted and betrayed him. This trap is also commonplace. All of us do things that we think will make us feel better but end up making us feel worse. We all have our "precious" that ends up betraying us.

This exercise simply asks you to use this month to work on facing your "precious" and making some small step in letting it go. How can you liberate yourself from your "precious?"

Here is some inspiration and guidance: <http://tinyurl.com/hsov9w8>

Questions for Reflection *on the theme of* LIBERATION

- From what do you need/long to be liberated? Who or what holds the key?
- "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." ~ *Lila Watson*
In what ways is your liberation bound up in the liberation of others, and vice versa?
- How might you better balance spiritual/personal liberation and social/political liberation? How do they feed or fight one another?
- Is the thing you do to feel better actually making you feel worse? Has what you turned to for liberation become a bit of a trap?
- In what ways might you forgive (and free) yourself?
- Are you looking for liberation and freedom in faraway places? Where does liberation reside for you?
- How might kindness be a force of liberation for someone else, or maybe even for yourself?
- What is your question about liberation?

MUSIC

Blowing in the Wind by Joan Baez and Bob Dylan
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFvkhzkS4bw>

Ella's Song by Sweet Honey In The Rock
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2T216XgiO0>

Take My Hand, Precious Lord by Ledisi
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxVpHiyT5kE>

One Day by Matisyahu
Pressure by David Bowie

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoDh_gHDvkk

Revolution by Tracy Chapman
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNSxk0wPDXc>

Lift Me by The Bengsons
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9262w6umIM>

I Wanna Get Better by The Bleachers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khPf88uxyFo>

A Change is Gonna Come by Sam Cooke
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEBlaMOmKV4>



April's theme:

Transformation

Email your ideas for themes, or suggestions for resources to share in this packet to uurevjs@gmail.com

Resources on LIBERATION

ON THE WEB

Missing Out: Liberating Ourselves from the Curse of Our Unlived Lives - An effort to help liberate us from our culture so plagued by the fear of missing out on what might have been or what others have.

<http://tinyurl.com/ja6cret>

A Simple Way to Break a Bad Habit - TED Talk

Can we break bad habits by being more curious about them? <http://tinyurl.com/zur4rbx>

Hearing the Right Voices ~ Cami Applequist

A woman reflects on what happens when she listened to “all of the wrong voices” about her body, and how two young girls liberated her.

<http://tinyurl.com/zk6z3wk>

What is Liberation Theology? ~ Tony Campolo

Liberation theology is “the simple belief that in the struggles of poor and oppressed people against their powerful and rich oppressors, God sides with the oppressed.” <http://tinyurl.com/jl4br3x>

Pope's Focus on Poor Revives Scorned Theology ~

Jim Yardley & Simon Romero

A report on how Pope Francis is reviving liberation theology.

<http://tinyurl.com/hn589e9>

The Exodus Story and the Necessity of Desire for Liberation - This

podcast explores the story of Exodus as a story of liberation, happening over and over again.

<http://tinyurl.com/jyfy3a4>

Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance

On a July day in 1990, a confrontation propelled Native issues in Kanehsatake into the international spotlight. This powerful documentary takes you right into the action of an age-old Aboriginal struggle.

https://www.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake_270_years_of_resistance

Liberation as Harmony with Nature and Another Person <http://tinyurl.com/z22g96x>

Somewhere in America

A liberation poem performed by three young women who bravely speak unspoken truths that are all too often silenced. <http://tinyurl.com/gwkqu9g>

BOOKS

A Theology of Liberation, Gustavo Guitierrez
Pioneering approach to theology placing the exploited, the alienated, and the economically wretched at the centre, at the expense of those who either maintained the status quo or who abused the structures of power for their own ends.

Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community, Leah Gunning Francis
Interviews with faith leaders and with movement organizers take us behind the scenes of the continuing protests, and demonstrates that being called to lead a faithful life can take us to places we never expected to go, with people who never expected us to join hands with them.

Liberation: New Works on Freedom from Internationally Renowned Poets, Mark Ludwig (ed) - A collection of poems from around the world that explore the question, What does it mean to be free?

The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching, Thich Nhat

Hanh - Intro to the core teachings of Buddhism, including teachings on the Three Doors of Liberation.

The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk, Randy Shilts - Milk's personal life, public career, and final assassination reflect the dramatic emergence of the gay community.

The Third Reconstruction: Moral Mondays, Fusion Politics, and the Rise of a New Justice Movement, William J. Barber II and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove - A modern-day civil rights champion tells the stirring story of how he helped start a movement to bridge America's racial divide.

The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon
A psychiatrist who took part in the Algerian Nationalist Movement provides a brilliant analysis of the psychology of the colonized and their path to liberation.





Children's Books on LIBERATION

Daddy, There's A Noise Outside by Kenneth Braswell
Dreams of Freedom: In Words and Pictures by Amnesty International

Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music by Margarita Engle

Last Stop on Market Street by Matt De La Peña

Stuck by Oliver Jeffers

The Day the Crayons Quit by Drew Daywalt

The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore by William Joyce

The People Could Fly: The Picture Book by Virginia Hamilton

The Red Pencil by Andrea Davis Pinkney

The Runaway Teddy Bear by Ginnie Hofmann

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka

Two White Rabbits by Jairo Buitrago

Wild by Emily Hughes

MOVIES

A Force More Powerful (1999)

A documentary collection of six shorter films, each profiling a successful nonviolent social movement.

Auntie Mame (1958 - A)

A woman breaks from society's expectations, saying, "Life's a banquet, and most suckers are starving to death."

Freedom Writers (2007 - 12A)

A high school teacher who helps her students find their voices through writing, and subsequently change their lives.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (2002 - PG)

Harry ignores warnings not to return to Hogwarts, only to find the school plagued by a series of mysterious attacks and a strange voice haunting him.

Living Out Loud (1998 - 15)

The story of a woman's journey to put her life back together after a divorce...about freeing oneself from fear and self-loathing, finding who we really are.

Munyurangabo (2007 - PG)

Two friends in Rwanda dealing with the fallout from the genocide which lingers in their consciousness and souls.

A list of ten movies about women's liberation and feminism (March is Women's History month)

<http://nonfics.com/10-great-womens-history-films-watch-month/>

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1975 - 18)

A look at how much social and cultural norms function to contain us... and what happens when one man questions 'the system' and sparks others to do the same.

Romero (1989 - 15)

The life and work of Archbishop Oscar Romero who opposed, at great personal risk, the tyrannical repression in El Salvador. (March is the month of Romero's death)

Strictly Ballroom (1992 - 15)

A champion ballroom dancer gets bored with dancing by the rules and creates his own steps. The moral: "A life lived in fear is a life half lived."

The Color Purple (1985 - 15)

Based on the novel by Alice Walker, this follows the life of Celie, a poor uneducated black girl living in the rural South, as she gradually wakes up to her power and frees herself from limiting beliefs inside her and around her.

The Shawshank Redemption (1994 - 15)

Two inmates form a friendship that changes both their lives as they go through interminable days, months, and years in prison. Powerful ending.

Thelma and Louise (1991 - 15)

Two women who take their lives into their own hands and hit the road.

Table Grace on LIBERATION

I send prayers of gratitude to all that has
freely given of itself on this day.

The strong bean, the hardy grains,
the beautiful leafy green plants
and the sweet juicy fruits.

I thank the sun that freely warmed and vitalized
them, just as it does me, and
the earth that freely held and nourished them, just
as it does me, and the waters that freely bathed
and refreshed them, as they do for me.

I thank all that has offered me my sustenance and
my freedom. ~ Sedonia Cahill (adapted)

The Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough
Sunday Services @ 10am @ 775 Weller St

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