

A Reflection from Rev. Steven
The Path of Courage

“Courage is the measure of our heartfelt participation with life, with another, with a community, a work, a future. To be courageous, is not necessarily to go anywhere or do anything except to make conscious those things we already feel deeply and then to live through the unending vulnerabilities of those consequences. To be courageous is to seat our feelings deeply in the body and in the world: to live up to and into the necessities of relationships that often already exist, with things we find we already care deeply about: with a person, a future, a possibility in society, or with an unknown that begs us on and always has begged us on.”

-David Whyte

The Soul Matters theme for October is “The Path of Courage”. What does courage mean? When we hear the word courage, most often we think of facing fears or finding strength to deal with pain or grief. The word courage comes from the Latin word "cor", which means heart. Courage means having the confidence to act in accordance with your beliefs and values, which is your 'cor', your center, your authentic self. Perhaps the real act of courage is the ordinary work of being ourselves and living a life of integrity is to be courageous. Last Sunday during our National Coming Out Day, we heard stories about people who had the courage to come out, to reveal who they are as LGBTQ+ people, to take the risk of being their authentic selves.



As Unitarian Universalists, our faith requires spiritual courage, to trust in the fact that we don't have all the answers to life's deepest questions. It requires us to leave behind the comfort of what is known, to open our hearts and minds to new ideas, to discover new things about ourselves. But this is work we don't have to do alone. Our Third Unitarian Universalist Principle speaks of encouraging one another to spiritual growth. The word courage is part of encourage, which means to offer someone support, confidence, hope. One of the many gifts of community is inspiration and the help we need to grow spiritually, which is easier when we witness others growing spiritually and others offer us confidence and courage to continue our journey.

I really like the definition of courage by poet David Whyte. For Whyte, courage is not about heroic acts, going anywhere or doing anything beyond becoming more aware of those things we know in our hearts and then living out these truths. The poet tells us that courage is really about commitment. About tending to what we already have and putting our energy and time into things we care deeply about,

including the future. Part of our shared journey and ministry to each other is helping each other live up to those things we care deeply about: one another, the possibilities before us as a congregation and a society, a future inviting us forward, a future that will depend on the choices we make.

In this liminal time, where so much is unknown, we will need the courage to continue to tend those things we care about, keeping the flame of our liberal faith burning bright, and also being open to new ideas, new ways of being a community, the many opportunities that will present themselves as we seek to spread our wings and serve the world in ways we haven't yet discovered, and are asked to give of ourselves even more fully than we do now. As new people seek us out, curious as to who we are and what we believe, it will take courage to welcome them and to share our community with them. It will also take courage to go out into the world to share our message of love and hope, inviting others to join us as we continue doing the work that, as Unitarian Theodore Parker said, bends the arc of the Universe toward justice, a future we care deeply about.

Here are some questions for reflection:

1. Where do you find courage when life is hard?
2. How does your spiritual life help you find courage and act in accordance with your beliefs and values?
3. How do we participate more fully in life, with each other, with our community?

Journeying with you in our covenant of belonging, mutual love, and respect,

Rev. Steven