



## Spiritual Courage

BY BARBARA WELLS TEN HOVE, CO-MINISTER,  
CEDARS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH,  
BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WASHINGTON

Many years ago I learned this poem by  
Edna St. Vincent Millay:

*The courage that my mother had/  
Went with her, and is with her still:  
Rock from New England quarried;/  
Now granite in a granite hill.*

*The golden brooch my mother wore/  
She left behind for me to wear;*

*I have no thing I treasure more:/ Yet, it is something I could spare.*

*Oh, if instead she'd left to me/ The thing she took into the grave!-  
That courage like a rock, which she/Has no more need of, and I have.*

My mother is not dead, and she will assure you proudly in her Southern accent that she is not any kind of rock from New England! Yet somehow this poem always reminds me of her.

My mother will be the first to tell you she is not brave. She is afraid of flying and not crazy about heights. No, my mother is not brave. Then why does a poem about courage make me think of her?

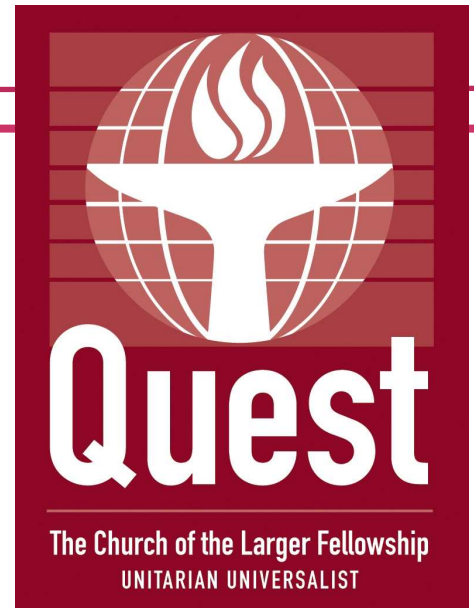
Courage and bravery, in my view, are not necessarily the same thing. Bravery, as I understand it, suggests a kind of fearlessness. Brave people face danger willingly, even eagerly, for they are not afraid.

But courage is different. Courage is less about fear and more about something deeper, something, I think, that has to do with one's spirit or soul. Courage is doing the right thing, even in the face of those who tell us we are crazy or stupid. Courage is taking a stand and living with it. Courage is also about growth: about a willingness to change one's mind if that is the right thing to do. A brave person may fight when called upon. A courageous person may choose not to fight even if it means certain death.

My mother, and many of the mothers and others I have known, are not noticeably brave. But their courage can be astonishing. My mother, for instance, in defiance of the times and her Southern heritage, became, alongside my father, a worker for civil rights for all Americans. My seemingly-typical-suburban-housewife Mom regularly testified for abortion rights when she served on the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation board, and taught me and my sisters never to let anyone raise a finger to hurt us no matter how much he might say he loved us. We listened, and grew strong under her care.

My mother's courage is not unique. Perhaps you have stories of your mother, or your father, or other people in your life who have taught you the meaning of courage. But it is not enough just to remember and celebrate those who are courageous. It is essential, I believe, to understand why courage, in particular moral courage, develops in people, and how it is lived out in ordinary and extraordinary times.

Some years ago I had the opportunity to read *Conscience and Courage - Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust* by Eva Fogelman. The book is a collection of stories of people who showed tremendous moral courage during the most difficult of times. Here was courage and bravery all rolled into one. Here were people who did things that most of us pray we'll never have to do. Here were people whose choice to act



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What makes the elephant  
charge his tusk  
in the misty mist, or the  
dusky dusk?  
What makes the muskrat  
guard his musk?  
Courage!  
—The Cowardly Lion

A monthly for religious liberals

### THINKING ABOUT COURAGE

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courageously not only saved the lives of Jews during the Second World War, but also transformed their own lives forever.

The acts of courage described in this book are tremendous. Here are just a few: a 17-year-old Polish girl who hid 13 Jews in a small apartment; a young boy who took only half of his medicine at the hospital so his Jewish “brother” could have the other half as he lay sick in hiding; and an entire village in France who hid and saved hundreds of Jewish children for the duration of the war. All these acts and many more were the deeds of children, women and men who, for some reason, displayed extraordinary moral and physical courage. While others participated in the violence, or watched and did nothing, these people risked their lives to help others. Why? What made these people courageous and others not?

The author, Eva Fogelman, is hesitant to draw too many generalizations. Much depended upon the circumstances. But there are a few important things she noticed in her interviews with hundreds of these rescuers of Jews during the Second World War that allowed her to draw at least some tentative conclusions about how and why people are courageous in the face of injustice.

Most of these rescuers, she says, were raised in homes that honored difference. Our own religion suggests we do the same. A small personal example from my family speaks to this. My grandmother Stella Sumner was born and raised in the Deep South, only two generations removed from the Civil War. Yet during the 1930s and 40s, when the social segregation of black Americans was the accepted custom in her small town in Georgia, she nonetheless taught my mother to call all black men Mister and all black women Missus and to treat them with respect. This may sound like a small thing, but in those days and in that town it was not. All black men were called Uncle,

and all black women Aunt. For my grandmother to teach my mother to give these men and women the kind of respect usually given only to white people seared into my mother the notion that all people have worth and dignity.

Role models are critical. Eva Fogelman’s research on rescuers of Jews during the Second World War showed that an astonishing 89% “had a parent or adult figure who acted as an altruistic role model.” One of the rescuers described her mother as “a wonderful woman who always had an open heart for anybody who needed help.”

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I believe that we are going to need moral courage in ever greater amounts as we move deeper into the 21st century.

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A woman told Fogelman of her mother’s willingness to barter away all their valuable goods to provide supplies to political prisoners. One day she watched as her mother opened up a box that held 12 beautiful place settings of silver that had been a treasured wedding gift.

*I was with her when she opened the box...she took out one of the spoons and I saw her hold and weigh it in her hand, apparently far away in thought.*

*“Wouldn’t you rather keep it” I asked, and anxiously waited for her reply.*

*“Keep it?” she repeated after a long silence.*

*The spoon was engraved with her initials. She looked at them and suddenly smiled as if something had occurred to her. Putting the spoon down, she turned to me and took my hand... “You must learn to understand that only what you give, you’ll have.”*

That daughter learned to value people over things. This instilled in her the courage to stand up to others who would deny human rights to those who were different. By modeling selfless love, this mother taught her daughter a profound lesson about moral courage.

If we human beings are going to develop moral courage, we also need to be taught to be independent, able to make decisions on our own, willing to do the right thing even if it means breaking the rules.

Rescuers in Nazi Germany broke laws that, had they been captured (and many were), would have led to their deaths. Throughout history people have made decisions to disobey authority even if it meant punishment. I think, for instance, of Unitarian Henry David Thoreau, who, because he was opposed to the Spanish American War, refused to pay his poll tax and was thrown in jail.

The story goes that Ralph Waldo Emerson came to see him in the Concord jail and asked him what he was doing in there. Thoreau replied, “What are you doing out there?” Most of us, we hope, will never have to test our courage the way these people during the Second World War did. Yet courage is still needed today. In our own country, hate crimes against gay and lesbian people still happen far too often. Immigrants from other lands are being imprisoned and denied human rights on our borders. Racism still engenders fear and violence. Where is our moral courage today?

I believe that we are going to need moral courage in ever greater amounts as we move deeper into the 21st century. Our world and our nations are becoming ever more diverse. Competition for scarce resources will increase. Hate and the actions hate engenders did not go away with the Nazis. We need to ask ourselves, “What will be my response? Will I be able to show moral courage when necessary?”

I like to think that if the need arises, we will be able to respond. But I also believe we can't do it alone. We need to trust in each other. We need to know that the values we affirm are shared by others. Knowing that others share our deep-seated belief in the dignity of human life and the sacredness of creation, we can feel strong and capable even if circumstances demand we act alone. Once I stood in the National Cathedral along side scores of Muslims, Christians and Jews, and for a moment I believed that the insanity of hatred that seems to thrive among religious groups might just disappear. I don't believe it will happen in my lifetime, but the seeds we plant today can blossom in our children and in their children—if we will do our part to make the world a little more just every chance we can.

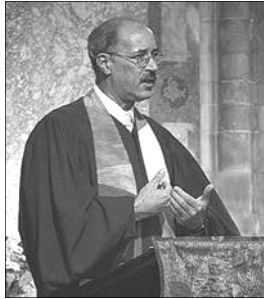
When Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote her poem about her mother's courage many years ago, she might have been speaking to me. There are times when my heart is deeply burdened, when I think there is nothing strong in me, no ability to respond with courage to the challenges of life. Yet, like the poet, I can remember my mother, and be grateful to her for instilling in me a sense of what is good and right and true. I can reflect on those brave souls who took their lives into their own hands and did the right thing by rescuing Jews. And I can think of my religious community. When I think of you, and remember I am not alone, I discover in myself seeds of courage.

Are they growing in you? Who has planted them? Who will water them? When called upon, how will you respond? These are religious questions no one can answer for you. But I believe our faith is a strong one that will sustain us even in times of devastation. Let us commit to growing that courage in our children, and in ourselves, so that one day the world may be more just, more kind, and more loving. ■



## Finding the Blessing

BY **BILL SINKFORD**, SENIOR MINISTER,  
FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PORTLAND,  
OREGON, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UUA



I was standing beside a small mountain waterfall at a Shinto shrine in the mountains outside Nagoya during

my first visit to Japan. The Guji, or head priest, of the Tsubaki Grand Shrine had invited me to take part in a Shinto cleansing ritual called misogi. The ritual practice involves stepping into the waterfall and allowing the water to cleanse not only the body but also the spirit.

Unitarian Universalism has had a long relationship with the Japanese religious community. Each UUA president makes the pilgrimage to Japan to renew and strengthen those relationships.

Shinto is the indigenous faith of Japan. Shinto understands that, in living our daily lives, we are drawn away from what they call *the way of the Kami*, the way of the Spirit of Life, and our lives get out of balance. They don't use the language of sin, but there is a profound appreciation for human fallibility. The cleansing rituals are designed to restore balance, to recognize our interdependence and help people move back toward right relationship when they become alienated from the Kami.

Did I mention that it was November and a light snow was falling? Or that I was wearing only the ritual loincloth and headband?

The Guji led us in ritual exercise and prayer, which made the cold more bearable. He taught us the prayer to say under the waterfall, holding our hands

together with the middle fingers extended. It translates roughly as "purify my soul, wash my spirit, purify the five senses and my mind." He also told us not to obsess about remembering the Japanese. The goal was to be present to the experience and allow the Kami, the spirit, to cleanse the soul.

I was expectant and terrified. One of my predecessors told me that during his misogi, he was so cold he didn't even attempt the prayer. He simply shouted: "Sweet Baby Jesus" over and over. But I knew that I had to "do what the spirit says do."

I loved the experience. It was unbelievably cold, and I mangled the prayer. But a priest had to pull me out. I would have stayed too long for my own good. All my concerns were driven from my mind. I could only focus on that moment. And I emerged from the water feeling...not forgiven exactly...cleansed really is the only word that comes close. I felt like I was starting afresh.

The day before my visit to the Tsubaki Grand Shrine found me in Hiroshima. Much of the town has been rebuilt, but the memorial is surrounded only by the emptiness that remained after our attack. The museum shows the devastation, the tens of thousands of non-combatant civilians killed by the atomic blast and its aftermath. The images of the suffering and the death were hard to view.

I placed a wreath at the memorial, offered a silent prayer for forgiveness and confronted the reality that it was my country that had intentionally dropped that bomb.

How do we deal with collective responsibility? How do we deal with our participation in identities that we did not choose? With decisions we did not make?

I am a citizen of the United States, an American. But I certainly did not make the decision to drop that bomb on Hiroshima. How can I be responsible?



How can I have any accountability for that devastation? Does the accident of my birth mean that I am personally culpable? Do I need to ask forgiveness? Who would I ask?

If you have had the privilege of traveling abroad you have been in the conversation that goes: “We love the American people. It’s the US government we hate.” In many places, we’re getting a bit of a pass these days with Obama in the White House, but I’ve had that conversation many times, and it always makes me uncomfortable.

That conversation lets me off the hook just a bit too easily. The reality is that the “fall out” of that day in Hiroshima has shaped me in ways that are real, though often hard for me to see. I am a baby-boomer who grew up with an image of America as the most powerful nation on earth, an image made possible by Hiroshima. I grew up in a long period of economic expansion, made possible by the victory in Japan. I grew up being taught that the US was justified in dropping the bombs because it saved many American lives. I saw that story told at the Harry S Truman museum just this summer.

Author James Baldwin said: “What passes for identity in America is a series of myths about one’s heroic ancestors.” Our civic culture tells us that America has always been in the right, despite the voices on the margins that have offered an alternative narrative. But standing at the memorial in Hiroshima, I knew that I could not avoid my place in history. As an American, I could not avoid responsibility.

It’s like the many conversations I’ve had with white people about race. “I’m not prejudiced. I’ve never kept black people down. I’ve worked hard all my life. Some of my best friends are....”

All of those statements can be true, and often are, but by living in a society that was built on prejudice and which depends on the presence of a permanent underclass of people of color, white

people cannot avoid participating in a system that oppresses, a system that has privileged them. It’s not about individual guilt or innocence; it’s not about individual culpability. It is a collective reality in which we all live.

My hunch is that queer folks, disabled folks and recent immigrants remember conversations that sound eerily similar.

It is easier, often, not to know some things. And far more comfortable not to ask some questions.

Brewster, Massachusetts, is on Cape Cod. The UU church there is quintessentially New England: white clapboard, tall steeple, beautiful windows,

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### What would collective forgiveness look like?

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right on the town green. The congregation is made up of good progressive folks. They have worked hard for justice, most recently around marriage equality and BGLT rights.

But the church was built by wealthy merchants and sea captains in the 18th century. The walls of the fellowship hall are lined with pictures of sailing ships, which they were proud to display.

A few years ago, one congregant asked what might seem to be an obvious question: “What were those ships carrying?” They took the question seriously, did their research, and found that many of those ships had been slavers and that, in fact, a good bit of the money that had built that beautiful church had come from the slave trade.

Knowing that history was challenging for them, especially for the few descendants of those captains who were still members. But it proved to be a blessing. They were able to reclaim their history and create a narrative about how that congregation had grown, had struggled to know what they were called to do and been transformed in

the process. It was a narrative that acknowledged their past but did not leave them trapped in it.

Unitarian Universalists affirm as one of our seven principles “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” We normally understand that statement as an affirmation of our part in the natural world, and it supports our work for environmental justice. But the interdependent web is also geographical. We are a part of a world community. The web does not stop at our borders, no matter how tall the fences we may build.

And the interdependent web also exists in time. It connects us to our history, to the history of our nations and to a future. This is a faith of both memory and hope.

That evening in Japan, the Guji hosted a dinner for us. The senior priests were there and members of the shrine’s board of trustees, including Mr. Feruta, a retired nuclear physicist and chair of the Grand Shrine’s board. We celebrated our long history of partnership.

But even as I enjoyed the warm hospitality, I was still trying to process my visit to Hiroshima, to understand my place in that story. I finally asked the question that was in my heart. How could the Japanese people have forgiven America for dropping those atomic bombs, for killing so many innocent civilians?

It was a conversation stopper. After a moment, Mr. Feruta thanked me for the question. He said that in his decades-long contact with Americans, no one had ever asked. He asked if he could think before responding and the conversation at the table started up again.

Later in the evening Mr. Feruta offered his answer. He said: “Yes, we have forgiven you. We have not forgotten. So many families had members or friends who died as a result of the bomb.

We were able to forgive you because we have come to see the bombs, finally, as a blessing.

Japan was on a dangerous course in those days," he said. "If America, if you, had not dropped those bombs and ended the war, we would have continued on that path. We would still be a militaristic nation, searching always for more raw materials, more territory, and more glory.

If you had not dropped those bombs, we would have become you...and it would have crippled our spirit."

"We would have become you."

Never have I felt the weight of being an American press on me so heavily. But the blessing for me was to know the reality of which he spoke. The knowing allowed me to sleep that night.

What would collective forgiveness look like? It's hard to imagine. The Episcopal Church has offered a formal apology to the African and African-American communities for their role in the transatlantic slave trade. I think that was a good thing for them to do, after careful discernment and investigation of their history.

Might it be more helpful, though, for us all to know our story fully enough so that we can avoid the harms that demand forgiveness? Aren't we now, as a nation, creating yet more need for forgiveness?

The poet Maya Angelou writes: "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."

The first step in finding forgiveness is knowing, knowing that forgiveness is necessary. If we can know our past and our present, not just the heroic version; if we can resist denial of our participation in the systems of privilege we would change, then perhaps we can, in fact, summon our courage and help the universe bend toward justice. ■

## Online Class

### Metaphor and Meaning

March 7—April 4

[www.clfuu.org/learn](http://www.clfuu.org/learn)

Poetry allows us to describe the indescribable through metaphor and imagery. This course will use reading and writing poetry as a spiritual practice to help clarify our understandings of ourselves, our significant relationships and the Divine.

*The teacher for this course, Rev. Dr. Lynn Ungar, is both a published poet and the CLF's minister for lifespan learning. ■*



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## Never Too Late

Bravery is a choice. It is a decision to enter into the fray no matter how illogical and crazy things are. Even as our friends, family and common sense recommend that we stay away.

In our life, we are surrounded by people, events, circumstances that offer continuous proof of how bad things are, including bad people who don't seem worth struggling for.

We did not plan to live in such a crazed world. Very few of us have been prepared by life circumstances to deal with the levels of fear, aggression and insanity we now encounter daily.

When we were being trained to think, to plan, to lead, the world was portrayed as rational, predictable, logical.

But now? Ever-present insanity, illogic, injustice, illusion.

This is just the way it is and will continue to be.

We can't restore sanity to the world, but we can still remain sane and available.

We can still aspire to be of service wherever need summons us. We can still focus our energy on working for good people and good causes.

It is never too late to be brave. ■

*from Perseverance  
by Margaret J. Wheatley,  
published by Berrett-Koehler in 2010*





## From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY  
SENIOR MINISTER,  
CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

As I have held the idea of courage in my mind, preparing to write this column, I have seen and heard it all around me.

A friend confronts a drinking problem, becoming one of the millions who gather each week and pray for “the courage to change the things I can.”

A woman moves into a senior facility, leaving her beloved home of 52 years, so that her kids don’t have to make the decision for her later.

A man tells his boss about a mistake he made, one that could cost him his job and his family’s livelihood, because he can’t live with the secret.

In a 1952 book entitled *The Courage to Be*, theologian Paul Tillich wrote, “Courage is self-affirmation in spite of that which tends to prevent the self from affirming itself.”

There is so much that prevents us from affirming our true selves. The deep desire to be a little better than we are. Fear that our true selves will be punished or judged. That long list of isms, including racism and sexism, ableism and heterosexism, which declare that some people’s authentic selves are not worthy of affirmation. In the face of all the obstacles to self-affirmation, when any individual does exhibit courage, it makes the entire human race a little bigger.

Consider how contagious courage is. A friend takes a risk and shares something deeply vulnerable. In return, you are moved to share some of your own struggle, telling a story you hadn’t thought of for years. A co-worker challenges negative practices at work. Though you are silent at the time, you

go to him later and think about how to change the work environment together.

At their best, our faith communities are laboratories of en-courage-ment, where our authentic selves are affirmed, strengthening our ability for self-affirmation.

When I listened to Rosa Parks’ memorial service on the radio, I heard a piece of her story I hadn’t heard before. Eleanor Holmes Norton shared that prior to Parks’ courageous act of resistance, she had been at the Highlander Center, in worship services which repeatedly affirmed the equality of all before God. On that bus, it was her deep resonance with the truth of this cosmic equality which offered Parks the courage to risk her safety and thereby to change history.

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“Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”

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Not all acts of courage are recorded in books, but I believe that they ripple out just as surely as Parks’ historic act. We can’t always see the effects that courage has but each small act of courage alters the world, just as acts of fear, whether in secret or broadcast for all the world to see, contract and diminish the whole world community. In other words, acts of courage take place in a field of energy. Courage is a team sport, not a solo act.

This, of course, is not what we learn about it in western myths. For me, as a kid, courage was embodied in “The Man from U.N.C.L.E.,” a TV show featuring two white male (handsome!) stoic secret agents who were prone to witty quips when tied up and about to be tortured and killed. This, I thought, was the definition of cool, and I would never be it! The lead agent was even named Solo—Napoleon Solo. (Only as I write this does it occur to me that the Harrison Ford character in the Star Wars series is also named Solo—Han Solo.)

So, though we’ve learned in TV and movies that courage is a Solo act, perhaps what makes a good script about heroism on TV is actually part of “what tends to keep the self from affirming itself.”

The Buddhists have a concept known as dependent co-arising. This concept holds me when I feel most hopeless or discouraged. I first encountered the belief in Joanna Macy’s book *World as Lover, World as Self*, as the notion that “things do not produce each other or make each other happen, as in linear causality; they *help* each other happen by providing occasion or locus or context, and in so doing, they in turn are affected. There is a mutuality here, a reciprocal dynamic.” Unitarian Universalists would call this the interdependent web.

This concept gives me hope and courage because it implies there are connections I can’t see, but which are all around me. If I embody the most authentic self I can muster, and act in the ways which are most authentically mine to act, I will be part of an energy field around the world which is seeking liberation and expansion. (When I embody the scared, inauthentic self I am also part of an energy field, of course.)

It is my deepest hope that being part of the CLF community will inspire acts of courage, because our authentic selves are strengthened in this vast web of connection around the globe. Where do you feel out of connection with your authentic self? What small act of courage might you take today to address that imbalance? How might the CLF community help you with that?

Dorothy Bernard said that “Courage is fear that has said its prayers.” May we remember that we are never alone, that our small selves and actions are part of a larger web of being. And may this larger web give us strength and courage. ■





March 2011

## REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR, MINISTER FOR LIFESPAN LEARNING, CHURCH OF THE LARGER FELLOWSHIP

Isabel, who is ten years old, gave us permission to share this essay that she wrote on courage, the theme of this month's Quest:

*Courage, courage is something that eats up the stomach, it pushes past the brain and leaps at you when it's not expected. It's a power you never knew you had, and when you need it your gut lets it loose until you are filled with the power of it. Should I or should I not? I think will the other kids like me? The thought pushes over me like a storm with its thunder, rain and finally a rainbow. With every step I've taken this will be my hardest and maybe greatest. For will the outcome be good or bad? I sit there wondering and thinking maybe yes maybe no. It seems like a million choices but there are only 2. Finally I decide. I walk slowly into the computer room where my mom is. She turns around and faces me "do you need anything honey?" she says. I think about the words I'm about to say, then I take a deep breath and count to 3 before I say. "I want to go to Camp Miller" A smile spreads over her face; she looks proud of me, "That's great sweetheart" she says. All of a sudden I'm smiling too, is it? Yes I'm actually excited instead of nervous, and I'm smiling now too! That night I pack my bags with all the stuff I will need. When it's time to go to bed mom kisses me good night, I fall asleep dreaming of all the new things I will learn and all the memories I will have and share with my family. Courage is a thing that gets you past a time when you don't know what will happen; it eats up old feelings leaving you with new ones. In the end I end up making new friends and learning tons of stuff. Courage is our friend I think, yes courage is our friend.*

**Isabel**



That sums up the topic of courage pretty nicely, I think. "Courage is a thing that gets you past a

time when you don't know what will happen; it eats up old feelings leaving you with new ones." Of course, getting past those scared, "what will happen?" feelings isn't easy. After all, everyone has things that they're scared of. What's interesting to me is that what people find frightening varies so much from person to person. My daughter is happy to go on the biggest, fastest, scream-inducing roller coasters she can find, but wouldn't be caught dead in a haunted house. I'm happy to talk or sing in front of 1,000 people, but I get anxious when I have to make a phone call. My friend likes to paddle through crashing white water in a kayak, but runs screaming from the room if she sees a spider.

And then she has the pleasure of sharing her courageous choice with her mom. Isabel feels the special glow that happens when someone else recognizes and honors the ways that you have challenged yourself and grown from the experience.

I think being in a UU community is a lot like that. We all have to take responsibility for not only our own lives and choices, but also for our own beliefs. No one can assure us that God or heaven or hell is real or not real. We each have to start with what we see for ourselves, what we feel for ourselves, what we, ourselves, puzzle out. It takes courage to faithfully pursue your own spiritual path, choosing to follow what you understand to be true, rather than following what is easiest or most popular.

But it helps to know that there are people rooting for you, people who want to hear the stories of what you

## Other people can't do much to get you past your fears, but you can do a lot for yourself.

The other thing I find interesting is that it really doesn't do any good for other people to tell us that something isn't scary. If you're afraid of monsters under the bed, it doesn't matter how many times your parents tell you that monsters aren't real. Maybe they're imaginary, but they're still terrifying. Fear is just a really personal thing.

And so is courage. Other people can't do much to get you past your fears, but you can do a lot for yourself. No one else can tell you that there are no monsters under the bed, but sometimes you can work out for yourself that if there weren't monsters there last night, there probably won't be tonight either. Isabel lets her own mind figure out what could go wrong with sleepover camp, and what could be really amazing. She takes some deep breaths, and she realizes that being nervous about something doesn't mean you shouldn't do it anyway. She goes face to face with her fear and finds her courage.

find on your journey, people who will honor the places your courage takes you.

"Courage," as Isabel says, "is our friend." But it's also easier to be courageous when you have friends who will back

you up, who celebrate your victories, learn from your bold steps, and share their own courageous journeys. Somehow it's easier for me to pick up the (ugh!) telephone and call my senator when I picture UUs in their yellow-orange Standing on the Side of Love t-shirts marching or chanting or even getting arrested for the cause of human rights. Our fears and acts of courage are individual, unique—but it is easier to be brave in a community of courage. Each one of us can take a deep breath and step forward and join what songwriter Carolyn McDade called "a people so bold." ■





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## Courage

*excerpted from a sermon by Judith Meyer, minister emerita, Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Santa Monica, California*

We may never know  
when we will be asked to prove ourselves  
or if the next plane trip  
will test our capacity for heroism.  
But we do know that every day  
tests our character,  
and gives us opportunities to build it.  
Every day we find the courage to speak words of truth  
or encouragement to others.  
Every day we make choices  
about what kind of life we should lead.  
Every day we know fear,  
and summon our will to overcome it.

