

UUCMC Covenant Circle **October 2017: *Courage***

Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:

“Courage doesn’t always roar.” ~ *Mary Anne Radmacher*

Please pass the reading of this passage around the group one paragraph per person.

What Does It Mean To Be A People of Courage?

Courageous people change the world. There are so many examples of that this month. October is LGBTQ history month and reminds us of the many who bravely moved (and continue to move) our world toward greater acceptance and affirmation. The revolutionary prophet of peace, Mohandas Gandhi, was born on October 2. Our Christian friends celebrate Reformation Day and Martin Luther’s courage that changed how we all think about religious authority. We rightly honor such giants. The problem is most of us aren’t that tall.

Or are we? Here’s what we have to help each other remember: In addition to the heroic acts that alter history, there are also the daily choices that prevent history from altering us. Battling evil and bending the arc of the universe toward justice deserves praise, but there’s also the ordinary work of integrity and not allowing yourself to be bent. This needs to be noticed as well. There’s the bravery of embracing your beauty even when it doesn’t fit the air-brushed images surrounding you. There’s the courage of calling out the micro-aggressions that happen almost every day at work. And what about resisting the persistent seduction of status and stuff? The list is long: Turning down that drink one day at a time. Making yourself get out of bed when the depression tells you to stay there. Holding your partner’s hand in public. Make no mistake, there are dozens of ordinary acts of bravery we rise up to everyday!

Or maybe we should say there are dozens of ordinary acts of bravery we help each other rise up to every day. Courage is not only noble; it’s contagious. The bravery that makes it into the history books may save the world, but our ordinary courage keeps each other going. Watching someone else make it through another day helps us endure. Witnessing someone else confront bigotry allows us to bravely be more open about who we are. They say that courage is found by digging deep, but most often it is passed on.

So don’t worry so much if you haven’t changed the world yet. And certainly let’s stop comparing ourselves with those giants. Our work rests less in looking up to them and more in looking over at and gaining strength from each other. And remembering that others are looking over at and needing strength from us.

Reminder of our Covenant:

Let folks know we are bound by a shared covenant of how we want to be together. Remind them of the pieces of it you think they need to be reminded of.

Check-in/Sharing: Maybe 3-4 minutes apiece

Topic/Activity: 45 minutes. Today we are going to talk about *a community of courage*.

Wise Words

1. Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Do not be afraid. ~ *Frederick Buechner*
2. All around you, people will be tiptoeing through life, just to arrive at death safely. But dear children, do not tiptoe. Run, hop, skip, or dance, just don't tiptoe." ~ *Shane Claiborne*
3. Safety is not the thing you should look for. Joy is what you should look for. Security and joy may not come in the same package. They can, but they also cannot. There is no guarantee. ~ *Neale Donald Walsh*
4. What the world desperately needs is more dangerous disciples of an unsafe God. You can only be safe if you've fashioned for yourself a God small and tame...because grace is a dangerous thing...and real love is never safe. There are Pharisees — and I've been one — who are alive and well and who feel far safer with a dead God, one they seal up in a coffin of mere theory, one they bury under the sod of human rationality and tidiness...Maybe faith isn't as much formula as the mystery of being drawn to, surrendering to, the overwhelming love and will of the most dangerous Reality in all the universe?...Those who have [God's dangerous love] in their bones aren't ever safe. Open flames are always dangerous. ~ *Ann Voskamp*
5. It's a shallow life that doesn't give a person a few scars. ~ *Garrison Keillor*
6. It simply isn't an adventure worth telling if there aren't dragons in it. ~ *J.R.R. Tolkien*
7. To get something you never had, you have to do something you never did. ~ *Unknown*
8. Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. ~ *Ambrose Redmoon*
9. Don't be afraid of your fears. They're not there to scare you. They're there to let you know that something is worth it. ~ *C. JoyBell*
10. Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love. ~ *Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet*
11. Our word 'courage' comes from the French word coeur, 'heart'. Courage is a willingness to act from the heart, to let your heart lead the way, not knowing what will be required of you next, and if you can do it. ~ *Jean Shinoda Bolen*
12. Courage is when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what. ~ *Harper Lee (To Kill a Mockingbird)*
13. Softness is not weakness. It takes courage to stay delicate in a world so cruel. ~ *Beau Taplin*
14. 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*
15. The reward for conformity was that everyone liked you except yourself. ~ *Rita Mae Brown*

16. Courage is acting out of self respect for doing the right thing. To not act, or to do something different other than the right thing, is soul murder. Not being true to oneself and others leaves one diminished and in some ways less than human. ~ *Harry Holleywood*
17. A hero is no braver than an ordinary person, but they are braver five minutes longer. ~ *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
18. Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace. ~ *Amelia Earhart*
19. Fear by *Shel Silverstein*

Barnabus Browning
Was scared of drowning,
So he never would swim
Or get into a boat
Or take a bath
Or cross a moat.
He just sat day and night
With his door locked tight
And the windows nailed down,
Shaking with fear
That a wave might appear,
And cried so many tears
That they filled up the room
And he drowned.

Silent Reflection

Your Question

As always simply pick the single question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is to figure out what being a part of a people of courage means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains “your work”?

1. Is it time to bravely start trusting people again?
2. Is it time to tell someone how scared you really are?
3. Is it time to bravely admit, “I was wrong”?
4. Is safely tiptoeing around “it” making you ill?
5. Where are you saying “yes” when you need to courageously say “no”?
6. Have you mistakenly convinced yourself that courage can come without sacrifice?
7. Who says it’s always courageous to never give up? How might life be calling you to bravely let it go and walk away?

8. How might your life change if you saw optimism as our time's most courageous act?
9. Has your courage been bought off by money and status? Has comfort led you to forgetting what courage feels like?
10. Does your faith make you dangerous? Has your religion or your God become small and tame?
11. Instead of standing up and speaking out, is courage now asking you to sit down and listen?
12. Who in your life needs their courage affirmed and celebrated? Who needs told that their courage is contagious and helping you be more brave?
13. What's your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Housekeeping Details: 5 minutes - Next meeting. Questions or thoughts on logistics?

Check-out:

Please let's go around quickly. Just say word or two about how the session went and/or how you are feeling or anything else you didn't get a chance to say and want to say before the time together ends.

Closing Words: ~ *N.D. Wilson*

Sometimes standing against evil is more important than defeating it. The greatest heroes stand because it is right to do so, not because they believe they will walk away with their lives. Such selfless courage is a victory in itself.