

Not all those who wander are lost.

—J.R.R. Tolkien

*Do not follow where the path may lead.
Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Welcome

Rev. Clare L. Petersberger

The Covenant

First Parish of Norwell Unitarian Universalist

**WE PLEDGE TO WALK TOGETHER
IN FELLOWSHIP AND LOVE,
TO CULTIVATE REVERENCE,
TO PROMOTE SPIRITUAL GROWTH
AND ETHICAL COMMITMENT,
TO MINISTER TO EACH OTHER'S NEEDS
AND TO THOSE OF HUMANITY,
TO CELEBRATE THE SACRED MOMENTS OF LIFE'S
PASSAGE,
AND TO HONOR THE HOLINESS AT THE HEART OF BEING.**

Opening Words

“The Journey”

Mary Oliver

Today we conclude our exploration of the spiritual question “What does it mean to be a people of journey?”

Mary Oliver answered this question describing the inner journey towards life more authentic and abundant.

In her poem, “The Journey,” Mary Oliver wrote:

One day you finally knew
What you had to do, and began,
Though the voices around you
Kept shouting
Their bad advice,

[The poem continues by describing the clamor of voices asking that you “mend my life!” even as nature itself—wind, stars, fallen limbs and stones—commanded your attention. But slowly, you left the voices to attend to a voice your slowly knew to be your own. The poem concludes:

“ . . . a new voice,
Which you slowly
Recognized as your own,

That kept you company
As you strode deeper and deeper
Into the world,
Determined to do
The only thing you could do,
Determined to save
The only life you could save.”]

Chalice Lighting

“The Journey”

David Whyte

(Read responsively)

[This poem begins by describing the silhouettes of geese against an open sky, musing that sometimes things need to be written across the sky so that one can find a single line of one’s own story, a bit of freedom in one’s own heart. The poem concludes with these lines:

Sometimes with
the bones of the black
sticks left when the fire
has gone out

**SOMEONE HAS WRITTEN
SOMETHING NEW
IN THE ASHES OF YOUR LIFE.**

You are not leaving
you are arriving.]

Prelude

“Swimming to the Other Side”

Pat Humphries

Deborah “Spice” Kleinmann, voice and guitar

Story

“Frank Lloyd Wright and the Journey”

From *Soul Matters*

Our story is about a boy named Frank, who discovered the gifts he was given to share—and how they had been with him since his life’s beginning!

When his mother was pregnant with Frank, she read books about architecture, praying that he would grow up to be an architect. When he was a child, she gave him a magnificent set of blocks created to increase his skill as an architect. Frank played with the blocks in his room. His room was the entire attic. He preferred it to every other room in his family’s house, which were darkened by velvet drapes. The attic had many windows

with no drapery. Sunlight streamed into his room during the day and at night Frank could see the moon through all the windows. He called his room, “My attic treehouse.”

But Frank also spent a lot of time on his uncle’s farm in Spring Green. When Frank was nine years old, he and his uncle walked across the snow covered field of his uncle’s farm. Frank’s uncle stopped the young boy and pointed to the tracks they had left in the snow. Frank’s meandered all over the place, while his uncle’s went in a straight line from start to finish. “Notice how your tracks wander aimlessly from the fence to the cattle to the woods and back again,” his uncle said. “And see how my tracks aim directly to my goal. There is an important lesson in that.”

Years later Frank Lloyd Wright was a world-famous architect. He invented the Prairie style of architecture. His buildings are beautiful, colorful, and have secret hiding places. As an adult, Frank Lloyd Wright pointed to the important lesson he learned from his uncle as they walked in the snow. It was not the lesson his uncle had intended him to learn. “I determined right then,” said Frank Lloyd Wright, “not to miss most things in life, as my uncle had.”

Frank Lloyd Wright was born into a Unitarian family and identified as a Universalist throughout his life. He believed that journeying was more important than the destination. Unlike his uncle, Frank Lloyd Wright did not want to let the treasure waiting at the end of the journey make him miss many other treasures along the way.

Song

“Don’t Worry, Be Happy”
Bobby McFerrin

Prayer

“Step Zero”
Adapted from The Rev. Gretchen Haley
Delivered by Lora Powell Haney

In the spirit of worrying less, let us continue in the spirit of prayer with a spoken meditation by The Reverend Gretchen Haley.

If you had the chance to start again
To make your life from scratch
To decide what sort of person you would be
Who you would love, and how
The content of your days, your hours
What songs would you sing to yourself,
or with others?
What prayers would you let fall from your lips
Urgently and with praise,
With mercy, or hope?
What blessings would you name
and share,
with strangers, and friends?

If you could take now that first step
what journey would you begin
across deserts, or mountains—
or would you take to the sky,
which, despite the bitter cold
is still vast, and filled with light?
What work would you take,
what mischief would you make
with boldness, and bravery,
what failure would you embrace, and
what would you release,
and where
in the end,
would you return, and call home?
In this new day
no magic wishing or wondering
is required
for such a chance
is always available
As with the in, and out of our breath
to begin now
to live like we mean it
to see with new eyes
the life that is already and always available,
to respond to this gift
with wonder,
and gratitude
to join in this partnership
to tend this flame
even when it breaks our heart
to keep showing up
to go with courage
into this day,
into this week,
knowing that journeying is more than the destination,
journeying is more.

Musical Interlude

“Power and Glory”

Phil Ochs

Spice Kleinmann, voice and guitar

Reflections

“The Journey”

Sheila Helgerson and two residents of Earl’s Place

[The text of the three guest speakers’ talks is not available.]

Offertory

“The Circle Game”

Joni Mitchell

Spice Kleinmann, voice and guitar

Sermon

The Journey

Rev. Clare L. Petersberger

What does it mean to be a people of journey? Our Soul Matters theme-based ministry resources point out that often the story of a spiritual journey begins with a leaving, a separation. Certainly Mary Oliver’s did as she left the voices crying “Mend my life” and strode into the world determined to save the only life she could save—her own. Her poem reminds me of the journey of adolescence and young adulthood leaving the expectations of others—both parents and peers—behind in order to form one’s own identity.

Albert Schweitzer wrote: “The path of awakening is not about becoming who you are. Rather it is about unbecoming who you are not.” And this “unbecoming who you are not,” is not a one-time event in our lives.

David Whyte wrote his poem “The Journey” not for an adolescent, but for an adult friend who was ending a significant relationship. David Whyte went on to say, “One of the difficulties of leaving a relationship is not so much, at the end, leaving the person themselves—because, by that time, you’re ready to go; what’s difficult is leaving the dreams that you shared together. And you know that somehow—no matter who you meet in your life in the future, and no matter what species of happiness you would share with them—you will never, ever share those particular dreams again . . . And so there’s a lovely and powerful form of grief there . . .”

Joseph Campbell traced how the hero’s journey begins with departure, which often involves grief and loneliness. The hero separates from family and friends—from the familiar. *The Wizard of Oz* begins when Dorothy is swept away from Auntie Em and Uncle Henry by a tornado in Kansas and ends up in Oz. Dorothy *does* have Toto the dog with her.

In the Matrix, Neo, a computer hacker, is at his computer when he connects with another hacker, Trinity, who instructs him to follow the white rabbit. As a result, Neo receives a literal call from Morpheus and faces the choice of staying in The Matrix or entering the real world. George Lucas used Joseph Campbell’s template to create *Star Wars*. So Luke Skywalker is an ordinary farmer when he finds a message from Princess Leia stored in R2-D2: “Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi. You’re my only hope.”

You may not have been lifted by a tornado in Kansas or followed a white rabbit to a club or heard a call for help in R2-D2, but you probably remember at least one experience on your life journey that took you away from people and a place you knew, the grief and loss you felt even as you arrived at a new place and new friends. Sometimes the journey is not related to a stage in life—like going off to college; moving to a new job; getting married; starting a family; empty nesting; moving to a retirement community. Sometimes the journey is related to our relationship to ourselves.

The photograph on the cover of your order of service is in honor of Portia Nelson’s poem “Autobiography in Five Short Chapters.” She describes the journey of growing up and taking responsibility for one’s own life using the metaphor of a hole in the sidewalk. She begins by blaming others for landing in the hole. She

describes the struggle to free oneself from bad habits, addictions, and patterns of unhealthy relationships for which we, alone, are responsible. I love her image of first choosing to walk around the hole and finally choosing to walk down another street. Portia Nelson's "Five Short Chapters" lift up how much work it can be to un-become who we are not.

Of course, our journey also includes discovering and celebrating who we are. A journalist named Larry Smith was reminded of this walking down the Atlantic City boardwalk with his grandfather. His grandfather was named Morris Smith, and affectionately nicknamed Smitty. Smitty had immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1911 and become a small town pharmacist. As Smitty and Larry made their way down the boardwalk, Smitty stopped to talk to everyone—customers, and college friends. He greeted and stopped to talk to strangers. He was a true people person.

On one of these walks, in between greeting people, Larry said to his grandfather, "I don't really know your story. Tell me your story."

And his grandfather replied, "My story? Who would be interested in *my* story?"

But Larry was persistent. He replied, "I have a new video camera. Why don't you tell me your story so I can learn how to use this video camera and see how it works." His grandfather agreed to this. His grandfather began to tell his story. He finished talking two and a half hours later. That's when Larry realized that we all have a story to tell about our lives—about our journey through life. He founded a website called "Smith" to offer writing prompts to help people to tell their stories.

It turned out the most popular writing prompt was based on a story about Ernest Hemingway. Legend has it that Hemingway was challenged in a bar to write a novel in six words. Hemingway is reported to have offered this: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." I couldn't find whether Hemingway won the bar bet. I did find that some people now call it his best work.

On his website, Larry Smith invited people to contribute their six-word memoir. He was floored that within two days, 10,000 people of all ages had e-mailed him their responses. 10,000 people. We humans have a great need to tell our stories, for in so doing, we discover more about ourselves and our place in the world.

Not too surprisingly, many of the e-mails from children were about living in the moment. One eight-year-old offered, "Life is better in soft pajamas." One ten-year-old offered, "I'm ten and have an attitude." But one philosophical and spiritual nine-year-old posted, "Nine years stacked within my soul." Her mother reports her daughter spent several hours sitting in front of the computer before settling on the memoir: "Nine years stacked within my soul."

She wasn't the only profound grade school student. Another nine-year-old who survived thyroid cancer posted, "Cursed with cancer, blessed with friends." You might expect that from someone in their sixties. But a nine-year-old wrote, "Cursed with cancer, blessed with friends."

Other submissions were lighter. One teenager e-mailed: "We're the family you gossip about." What is striking about the six-word memoir is just how much you can convey in six words! Larry Smith invited well-known people to contribute their six-word memoir. Amy Tan, author of *The Joy Luck Club*, shared: "Former boss:

Writing's your worst skill." The comedian and *Late Show* host Stephen Colbert sent: "Well, I thought it was funny." And the spiritual author, Deepak Chopra offered "Danced in fields of infinite possibilities."

Larry Smith has turned six-word memoirs into a book—which, appropriately, has a six-word title: *Not Quite What I Was Planning*. My favorite in the book lifts up death, birth, and beauty in only six words: "Dad's funeral; daughter's birth; flowers everywhere." My own six-word memoirs include loss and life that yet blooms.

In the Soul Matters Sharing Circle, participants were recently invited to write a six-word memoir as a way to practice being a people of journey. Two participants gave me permission to share theirs: Karyn Marsh wrote: "Recreating myself, again, again, and again." And Monica Sweidel wrote: "My sadness and fear become love."

This spiritual exercise reminds me of our Tree of Life Book. Some entries are more than six words—but not much more than six words. The entries lift up birth and death, health and illness, joy and sorrow, love and unrequited love, addiction and recovery, trials and triumphs, despair and hope, unfairness and justice, on our journey through time. There is an underlying tenderness in the entries along with other emotions, such as sadness and wonder, humor and happiness, fear and hope.

Larry Smith discovered that in inviting people to tell their stories he did not just learn about individuals. He found himself in a community of people with a story to tell, hoping others would be kind enough to listen. We are all on a journey. Part of why we come together is to share that journey, if not in six words, then in stories during coffee hour, before or after a meeting or choir rehearsal, in an adult religious education class, at a rally . . . In this community we share stories of our unique and unrepeatable journey through time. Here we affirm that journeying is more than the destination. Here we support one another as we "un-become who we are not." Here we celebrate one another for becoming who we are—individually and collectively. And here, we extend the invitation to lean on each other on our journeys to help us to carry on.

Hymn

#1021 "Lean on Me"

Closing Words

Rev. Eric Williams

The Reverend Eric Williams offers this benediction:

Blessed is the path on which you travel.
Blessed is the body that carries you upon it.
Blessed is your heart that has heard the call.
Blessed is your mind that discerns the way.
Blessed is the gift that you will receive by going.
Truly blessed is the gift that you will become on the journey.

GO NOW IN PEACE.