

## **Courage**

Unitarian Society of Germantown, Philadelphia, PA, March 2013

### **Chalice Lighting**

Many people think “courage” means “not being afraid.” But, courage is a quality that people can draw on when they must do something, even when they are afraid. Courage is what allows you to be yourself, to take risks, to have convictions, and to stand up for what you believe, even when it is hard to do so.

**Check-in** *Share briefly what’s been on your mind lately or your highs and lows since we last met.*

### **Readings/ Quotes**

“Change is involved in the progress of any society, and it often takes courage to enact fundamental change, which is typically sought for the purpose of mutual betterment. Yet courage is ambiguous; it can enable evil...A suicide bomber can act in an ostensibly courageous manner by sacrificing his life for a cause; but the effect is usually chaos... History teaches us that there is a fine line between stupidity and courage. What is proper or wise in any circumstance is a matter of knowledge and reason.”

-Wiley Sword (Courage under Fire)

“Conscience is the root of all true Courage.” -James Freeman Clarke

“It is curious that physical courage should be so common in the world and moral courage so rare.”

-Mark Twain

“It takes a lot of courage to show your dreams to someone else.” -Erma Bombeck

“It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.” -E.E. Cummings

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

-Winston S. Churchill

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.” -Ambrose Redmoon

“Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.” -Anais Nin

“Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.”

-Lao Tzu

### **Spiritual Exercises**

*Read aloud the spiritual exercise on the Additional Resources page.*

### **Sitting in Silence**

*Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts related to courage.*

### **Questions for Contemplation:**

- 1) What are the moments in your life when you have felt called to take a courageous stand, or to be courageous? Reflect on what happened when you were courageous.
- 2) When do you wish you could have been more courageous? What held you back?

- 3) Over the past several days/weeks/months, have you seen examples of people being courageous?
- 4) Has anything happened in the course of your day/week/ month where you had to summon up courage?
- 5) What was your experience of the Spiritual Exercise that you did this month?

### **Sharing/Deep Listening**

*Respond with your thoughts/experiences with the Spiritual Exercises.*

### **Reflection**

*This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared.*

### **Singing**

Song of the cowardly Lion The Wizard of Oz

If I only had the Nerve

Life is sad believe me Missy,  
When you're born to be a sissy,  
Without the vim and verve  
But I could change my habits/never more be scared of rabbits  
If I only had the nerve  
I'm afraid there's no denyin/ I'm just a dandelion  
A fate I don't deserve  
But I could show my prowess/ be a lion not a mou-ess  
If I only had the nerve

### **Extinguishing the Chalice**

“God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference” -Reinhold Niebuhr

## **Additional Resources and Spiritual Exercises**

### **Spiritual Exercises**

Is there something you have been thinking about doing but haven't had the courage to do? Is now the time for you to do it? If you are still struggling, what help do you need or what steps can you take towards doing it.

Additional reading: Books by Pema Chodron:

- Comfortable with Uncertainty: 108 Teachings on Cultivating Fearlessness and Compassion
- The Places that Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times
- The Fearless Heart: The practice of living with courage and compassion