



Beacon Unitarian Church

# COURAGE

April 2015 theme

This month we reflect on courage, personal courage to live and die, and the courage to stand up and speak up when we are compelled. We will also reflect on the times when our courage failed and we needed encouragement from others to stay the path. Maybe we take too much for granted and that is why we are sometimes surprised by ordinary moments that require great courage? Perhaps we take for granted that our hearts will keep pumping and our lungs will keep filling up with oxygen. Perhaps we take for granted that we live in a democracy whose values are aligned with ours, and where each citizen has inherent dignity and respect. Maybe we will be surprised by the courage we have.



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Recently a family member received news that his cancer had spread. I have been deeply moved by his simple, yet profound courage to keep his heart and mind open to the present moment. Let us not forget that there are those around us, maybe even yourself, who are courageous in facing each day with hope.

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I believe that for too long we have taken our peaceful democracy for granted, and turned a blind eye and covered our hearts, to the poor, the struggles of aboriginal peoples, immigrants and in particular people of the Islamic faith, who every day must courageously face unjust cruelty and hatred on the streets where they live.

I believe that courage is not the absence of fear. It is about taking the next step or speaking up, even when you are afraid. I hope that this is a fruitful time of reflection for you. *Warmly, Rev Debra Thorne*



When Things Fall Apart by Pema Chodron “The next time you encounter fear, consider yourself lucky. This is where the courage comes in. Usually we think that brave people have no fear. The truth is that they are intimate with fear. When I was first married, my husband said I was one of the bravest people he knew. When I asked him why, he said because I was a complete coward but went ahead and did things anyhow.”

## Questions to Live Into:

- Can I speak truth with respect and compassion, for myself and for others?
- Pema Chodron says that ‘fear is the vanguard of courage’. Can I choose to be afraid?
- Moral Courage is speaking up when others want you to sit down. When have I? When not?

## Suggestions for Spiritual Practices

- Look up the story of someone you feel lived a life of courage. Which of their life choices inspires you?
- Reflect on the first principle ‘the inherent worth and dignity of every person’ and commit to seeing each person you encounter in your day, through this lens. Notice when it is effortless and when it requires effort, or when you notice resistance.
- Practice living from a ‘courageous heart’ by being willing to be seen as your most vulnerable self.
- Commit to speaking your truth this month, or at least for a day, or even just once!
- Reflect on a time in your life when your courage failed you. What do you wish you had done? How can you honour what you wished you had done?
- Find a special object; put it in your pocket, to remind you of your courage.

## Children's Books and Films

- Wizard of Oz, Brave,
- Hooway for Wodney Wat by Helen Lester, Lynn Munslinger
- Courage by Bernard Waber
- How to Train your Dragon by Cressida Cowell
- Paper Bag Princess by Robert Munch
- Call it Courage by Armstrong Sperry
- Brave Irene by William Steig



## Adult/Young Adult/Youth Books and Films

- BOOKS: *The Diary of Anne Frank* (YA); *Hatchet* (YA) by Gary Paulsen; *Safe as Houses* (YA) Eric Walters; *Divergent* (YA); *The Hunger Games* (YA); *Enders Game* (YA) by Orson Scott Card; *The Giver* (YA) by Lois Lowry, most of these are also films. *The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kidd; *RU* by Kim Thuy; *i know why the caged bird sings* by Maya Angelou; *Crashing Through: a true story of Risk, Adventure, and the Man Who Dared to See* by Robert Kurson
- FILMS: *Unbroken* / *Glory* / *Selma* / *Live and Become* / *Mandala* / *The Winslow Boy* /



## The Screw Tape Letters by C. S. Lewis

As Demon Screwtape the Senior Devil says: "We, [in Hell] have made men proud of most vices, but not of cowardice. Whenever we have almost succeeded in doing so, the Enemy [God] permits a war or an earthquake or some other calamity, and at once courage becomes so obviously lovely and important even in human eyes that all our work is undone, and there is still at least one vice of which they feel genuine shame...." (For an audio version of *The Screwtape Letters* read by John Cleese go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBxpcGfznos>)

**Irshad Manji** is Ugandan, educated at UBC, now teaching at New York University, writer, TV producer, and advocate for 'reformist' interpretation of Islam. In Arabic, Irshad means "guidance." Her mission: to help people live with integrity and wholeness, especially those who feel limited by culture, religion, or society. This mission has been a life-long journey.

Growing up in a violent household, I made a commitment to use my education for good. That meant finding my voice, asking questions, and thinking for myself.

At my Islamic school, I asked too many questions, and got expelled at age 14. Later, studying Islam on my own, I made a truly surprising discovery: It is possible to reconcile faith with freedom.

Check out **MORAL COURAGE TV**, the work of Irshad Manji at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-\\_th8IAil8w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_th8IAil8w)



**Creative Courage** is the **REDRESS PROJECT** <http://www.redressproject.org/>

The Redress Project is an aesthetic response to the more than 1,000 missing and murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada. It is an installation art project using 600 red dresses that will be hung in public places like parks and city streets in Winnipeg and across Canada as a visual reminder of the number of women who are no longer with us. The artist, Jamie Black, a Metis multidisciplinary artist living in Winnipeg, wants to draw attention to the gendered and racialized nature of these violent crimes.



Check out the Beacon webpage at: [beaconunitarian.org](http://beaconunitarian.org)