



Soul Matters

March 2017

***What Does It Mean To Be
A Community of Risk?***



**Resources & Inspiration
For Worship**

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I. Calendar Inspiration: Important March Dates

National & Cultural:

- Women's History Month (learn more [here](#))
- Irish American Heritage Month; (learn more [here](#))
- Season for Nonviolence - 1/30-4/4 (learn more [here](#))
- First jazz recording commercially released - "Livery Stable Blues" - Mar 7, 1917 (learn more [here](#))
- International Women's Day - Mar 8 (learn more [here](#))
- Daylight Savings Begins - Mar 12
- World Water Day - Mar 22 (learn more [here](#))
- Archbishop Oscar Romero dies - Mar 24 (1980) (learn more [here](#))

Religious:

- Lent (Christian) - Mar 4- Apr 14
- Purim (Jewish) - Mar 12
- Magha Puja Day (Buddhist) - Mar 12 (learn more [here](#))
- Holi (Hindu) - Mar 13 (learn more [here](#))
- Equinox (Wicca/Pagan) - Mar 20 (learn more [here](#))

Unitarian Universalist:

- James Reeb dies (1965) - Mar 11 (learn more [here](#))
- Susan B. Anthony's Death - Mar 13 (learn more [here](#))
- Climate Justice Month - Mar 22 - Apr 22 (learn more [here](#))
- Viola Liuzzo dies (1965) - Mar 25 (learn more [here](#))

For Fun and On the Fringe:

- Tolkein Reading Day - Mar 25 - (learn more [here](#))
- Pi Day - Mar 14 (learn more [here](#))

**See more inspiration about these special dates in the "Calendar Connections" section below*

II. Chalice Lightings/Opening Words

The Element of Fire By Sarah Lammert, with adaptation

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/element-fire>

The element of fire represents passion, authenticity, vitality and [risk].
If the chalice is the supporting structure of Unitarian Universalism, then we are the flame.
We are the flame, fanned strong by our passion for freedom, our yearning for truth-telling,
our daring to [take risks] with one another, and the vitality we sustain in our meeting together.

[We light this chalice in the hope that the boldness and bravery of our intentions may shine on and guide our days.]

We Cast Not Our Eyes Below By Ma Theresa Gustilo Gallardo, with adaptation

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/281683.shtml>

We cast not our eyes below, we say to ourselves we are how we came, wounded from struggles [and risks],
triumphant in our survival, entitled by birthright to belong to this the only humankind there is, saying I am
included, I belong, I am here, and I will be and do. I will breathe joy into a desolation, I will breathe peace
into conflict, I will breathe life into destruction. [I will breathe boldness into fear. I will be the earth I wish
to see. I am growth, and hope, [and courage,] and glee.

Put Away the Pressures of the World By Erika A. Hewitt, with adaption

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/5184.shtml>

*Note: This call to worship was written to be preceded by the first three sentences of "Wild Geese" by Mary
Oliver (Singing the Living Tradition #490 & <http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/geese/geese.html>).*

As we enter into worship, put away the pressures of the world
that ask us to perform, to take up masks, to put on brave fronts.
Silence the voices that ask you to be perfect.

This is a community of compassion & welcome. [Do not be afraid to risk being who you are and showing
your full self.] .

You do not have to do anything to earn the love contained within these walls.
You do not have to be braver, smarter, stronger, better
than you are in this moment to belong here, with us.

You only have to bring the gift of your body, no matter how able;
your seeking mind, no matter how busy;
your animal heart, no matter how broken.
Bring all that you are, and all that you love, to this hour together.
Let us worship together.

The Only Ones Who Ever Win by Eileen B Karpeles
<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/184540.shtml>

Out of our separate lives we come,
to walk this path together for an hour or a day,
for a week or a month or a series of months and years.
For this space of time we travel together,
making much or little or nothing at all of the fact
that another walks beside us.

We can keep our eyes cast down
protecting ourselves from the pain we risk
whenever we allow another human being to touch us,
living safe little lives inside our sterile wrappings.

Or we can reach out,
risking a little or a lot or every coin we have,
because we believe that loving and being loved
is the only game in town.
The choice is ours.
Those who risk much lose much.
But they are also the only ones who ever win.

To Remember Our Promises by Sarah C Stewart, with adaption
<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/remember-our-promises>

Bring who you are as you enter our church this morning.
[Risk] your best self and your struggling self;
bring your mistakes and your triumphs;
[risk] your shortcomings and your re-commitment to good.

Bring yourself here and open your heart to beauty, to truth,
to the door that is open to the presence of God.
Here in this church we are trying to walk together on the peaceable way;
trying to hammer out division, and hatred, and all that separates one from another.
We try, and we will fall short, but held in love, we [risk trying] again.
We come together this morning, as a church, to bow our heads in prayer,
to raise our voices in song,
to remember our promises and vow to live by them once again.

III. Meditations & Prayers

A Blessing for Risk-Takers and Failures by Robin Tanner

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/blessing/blessing-risk-takers-and-failures>

Today we share in a blessing for losers, risk-takers, all failures far and wide....

Blessed are they who fall in the mud, who jump with gusto and rip the pants, who skin the elbows, and bruise the ego, for they shall know the sweetness of risk.

Blessed are they who make giant mistakes, whose intentions are good but impact has injured, who know the hot sense of regret and ask for mercy, for their hearts will know the gift of forgiveness.

Blessed are they who have seen a D or an F or C or any letter less than perfect, who are painfully familiar with the red pen and the labels as "less than," for they know the wisdom in the imperfect.

Blessed are they who try again, who dust off, who wash up, who extend the wish for peace, who return to sites of failure, who are dogged in their pursuit, for they will discover the secret to dreams.

Blessed are they who refuse to listen to the naysayers, for their hearts will be houses for hope.

Blessed are they who see beyond the surface of another, for they will be able to delight in the gift of compassion.

Blessed are they who stop running the race to help a fellow traveler, who pick up the fallen, who stop for injured life, for they shall know the kindness of strangers.

Blessed are they who wildly, boldly abandon winning, for they shall know the path of justice.

IV. Rituals

None this month, but keep an eye out on our [leaders support facebook page](#) for fellow leaders who often share successful rituals throughout the month.

V. Music and Hymns

From the UU Musicians' Network:

This is a spreadsheet of choral music by theme. Find the link here:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1e9lAQhk4sC02fg7988b3-0y3KzjOaFpihLAutGTgfXY/edit#gid=97>

There is no tab entitled risk but here are a few songs from spreadsheet that are applicable:

- Life is not a Garden by Elizabeth Alexander,
- May This Be a Working Alleluia by Elizabeth Alexander
- Oath Taking by Elizabeth Alexander
- Cherish your doubt by Elizabeth Alexander
- Trust the seeds by Elizabeth Alexander
- No one gets a program by Elizabeth Alexander

MARY GRIGOLIA COMPOSITIONS

See link below for music written by Soul Matters minister Mary Grigolia:
<http://marygrigolia.com/music/music-soul-matters/>

First Universalist Church of Denver, Co Recommendations

Music suggestions courtesy of John Hubert at First Universalist Church of Denver, Co:

Title	Composer	Part	Notes	Video Link
The Music of Living	Dan Forrest	SATB with piano	"I want to feel the music of living and not fear the sad songs, but from them make new songs composed of both laughter and tears"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LNXL3GW4o
Grace before Sleep	Susan LaBarr	SSAATTBB	"Each one of us has walked the storms and fled the wolves along the road."	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwqEU-sn3k8
Bambelela	Leonorah Kunene	SATB with Soloist	South African freedom song: "You must never give up"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvAUGj7AFk

I'm a rollin'	Paul Rardin	SATB with piano	"I'm a rollin' through an unfriendly world, O sisters won't you help me to pray"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldQHiEkdewU
Zion's Walls	Aaron Copland	SATB with piano	"O fathers don't you feel determined to meet within the walls of zion"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwL-PLGLP0
Walk a mile	Mark Hayes	SSAATTBB	A vocal jazz piece that invites us to see things from another perspective	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imG2TKqCCwg
Elijah Rock	Jester Hairston	SATB (opt percussion)	Spiritual that speaks of becoming a prophet and speaking out against sin (Satan)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVcTb26PRc
Won't be shaken by no storm	Erika Chambers arr. Jason Shelton	SATB with band	Can also be done by solo voice with band	http://www.sbmp.com/SR2.php?CatalogNumber=548
How did the Rose?	Joan Szymko	SSAATTBB and piano	Hafiz poem: How did the rose ever open its heart and give to the world all of its beauty?	http://www.sbmp.com/SR2.php?CatalogNumber=548
Invictus	Josh Rist	SATB, piano and cello	Intense and empowering setting of the William Ernest Henery poem	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=626Ru8CC6s
Step out of the	Glen Hansard	A capella	beautiful piece for one singer in	https://w

Shadows		solo piece	an easy middle range	www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTjRpurJK0
The Climb	Miley Cyrus	Solo with band	Great pop song around overcoming struggle	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpTYG_Sqgdg

Washington Ethical Society Recommendations

Music suggestions courtesy of Bailey Whiteman from the Washington Ethical Society

Title	Composer	Parts	Copies	Links	Notes
Brave	Bareilles, Sara	SAB	29		Jack Antonoff, arr. Audrey Snyder
Being Alive	Sondheim, Stephen	4 part/solo	25		#12 missing
Im Ein Ani Li Mi Li	Beth A. Schafer	unison	25		From Tzedek Tirdof, The Social Action Songbook, pub. by Transcontinental Music
Everybody Hurts	REM	solo	1		
You Are the New Day	David, John arr. Knight, Peter	SATB	20		
Would You Harbor Me?	Barnwell, Ysaye				
We Are A Gentle Angry People	Near, Holly arr. Rickey	unison			

Somewhere Bernstein, Leonard Arr. SATB 9
 Young, Carlton

Let It Be a Dance Mastin, Rick unison

Contemporary suggestions:

- Experiment by Cole Porter <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIYExz44k0Q>
- Walk on the Wild Side
- Everybody Says Don't from Anyone Can Whistle <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0VZKItFr1g>
- You'll Never Walk Alone
- Take a Chance On Me by Abba <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-crgQGdpZR0>
- To Dream the Impossible Dream from Man of La Mancha <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Mfd4E7kpv>
- Take a Chance On Love by Ella Fitzgerald <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrnDYriNH5A>
- My Way
- The Gambler
- Satisfied by Jewel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArAlk3yf5hl>
- Angel Flying Too Close to the Ground by Willie Nelson
- Breakaway by Kelly Clarkson <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-3vPxKdj6o>
- Try Everything from Zootopia <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nX5gd4GXcv0>

Hymns

Music suggestions courtesy of Sara Jo Brandt-Doelle from First UU Society, Syracuse:

- 17 Every Night and Every Morn
- 119 Once to Every Soul and Nation
- 150 All Whose Boast It Is
- 151 I Wish I Knew How
- 154 No More Auction Block for Me
- 169 We Shall Overcome
- 170 We Are a Gentle Angry People*
- 172 Siph' Amandla*
- 293 O Star of Truth
- 301 Touch the Earth, Reach the Sky!
- 304 A Fierce Unrest
- 351 A Long, Long Way the Sea-Winds Blow
- 368 Now Let Us Sing
- 391 Voice Still and Small
- 396 I Know This Rose Will Open
- 1015 I Know I Can
- 1019 Everything Possible
- 1020 Woyaya
- 1023 Building Bridges
- 1026 If Every Woman In The World

1034 De Noche

1040 Hush

VI. Stories for All Ages

Night Running by Elisa Carbone

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/931825.Night_Running?ac=1&from_search=true

It's 1838, and James has made a secret plan to escape Master Graham's farm—and slavery. James tells his dog Zeus he has to stay behind: he's simply too noisy to bring along on a dangerous nighttime journey. But when two white men capture James soon after he runs, he's grateful his faithful hunting dog didn't obey. Zeus has followed behind, and the scrappy hound rescues James from his captors. An author's note describes the real life inspiration behind the book: James Smith, a slave who escaped with the help of his dog and went on to become a farmer and Baptist minister.

One Well by Rochelle Strauss and Rosemary Woods

http://www.betterworldbooks.com/one-well-the-story-of-water-on-earth-id-9781553379546.aspx?utm_source=blog&utm_campaign=book&utm_medium=onewell

Every raindrop, lake, underground river and glacier is part of a single global well, and it's all at risk! Discover the many ways water is used around the world, and what kids can do to protect it.

Chester the Brave by Audrey Penn

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13435280-chester-the-brave?ac=1&from_search=true

Little Chester Raccoon, the beloved character who has helped so many children with issues in their lives, learns the meaning of bravery and a method for overcoming his fears in this new

Don't Be Afraid, Little Pip by Karma Wilson

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5992182-don-t-be-afraid-little-pip?ac=1&from_search=true

Nothing scares Little Pip more than the thought of swimming in the deep dark ocean -- she would much rather learn to fly just like other birds do. But soon it comes time for all the young penguins to learn how to swim, and while Little Pip might not be able to fly the way she wants to, she discovers she can soar in ways she never thought possible.

Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah

by Laurie Ann Thompson

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/21965198-emmanuel-s-dream?ac=1&from_search=true

This picture book biography tells the true story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah, who bicycled across Ghana--nearly 400 miles--with only one leg. With that achievement he forever changed how his country treats people with disabilities, and he shows us all that one person is enough to change the world.

A Sweet Smell of Roses by Angela Johnson

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/272412.A_Sweet_Smell_of_Roses?ac=1&from_search=true

There's a sweet, sweet smell in the air as two young girls sneak out of their house, down the street, and across town to where men and women are gathered, ready to march for freedom and justice.

Inspired by the countless young people who took a stand against the forces of injustice, two Coretta Scott King Honorees, Angela Johnson and Eric Velasquez, offer a stirring yet jubilant glimpse of the youth involvement that played an invaluable role in the Civil Rights movement.

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers by Mordicai Gerstein

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/15790852-the-dark>

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers From a highly respected picture book author/illustrator comes a lyrical evocation of Philippe Petit's 1974 tightrope walk between the World Trade Center towers.

The Way Back Home by Oliver Jeffers

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2277310.The_Way_Back_Home

When a boy discovers a single-propeller airplane in his closet, he does what any young adventurer would do: He flies it into outer space! Millions of miles from Earth, the plane begins to sputter and quake, its fuel tank on empty. The boy executes a daring landing on the moon . . . but there's no telling what kind of slimy, slithering, tentacled, fangtoothed monsters lurk in the darkness! (Plus, it's dark and lonely out there.) Coincidentally, engine trouble has stranded a young Martian on the other side of the moon, and he's just as frightened and alone. Martian, Earthling—it's all the same when you're in need of a friend.

VII. Sermon Inspiration

For more inspiration, see the Soul Matters Small Group packet.! Many sermon themes/angles can be found in the exercises, questions and recommended.

A Note About Organization: The sermon inspiration resources for this month are grouped into the following sub themes: Individual Risk, Community Risk and Calendar Events (resources for specific events that are happening in March)

Individual Risk

Poem/Reading: To Risk

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/risk>

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk exposing our true self.

To place our ideals—our dreams—before the crowd is to risk loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.
To live is to risk dying.

Reading #658 from the Unitarian Universalist Association's Singing the Living Tradition.

Poem: To live is to risk dying by Janet Rand

To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.

See full text here:

<https://literatureenglish.wordpress.com/2010/02/14/risk-by-janet-rand/>

Book: The Courage to Be by Paul Tillich

https://www.amazon.com/Courage-Be-Third-Terry-Lectures/dp/030018879X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1482437404&sr=1-1&keywords=the+courage+to+be

Originally published more than fifty years ago, *The Courage to Be* has become a classic of twentieth-century religious and philosophical thought. The great Christian existentialist thinker Paul Tillich describes the dilemma of modern human beings and points a way to the conquest of the problem of anxiety. This book explores how we can move towards wholeness or find the “courage to be” in spite of life’s threats to our non-being (e.g., anxiety, meaninglessness, death, fear etc.,).

Book: Out of the Flames: The Remarkable Story of a Fearless Scholar, a Fatal Heresy, and One of the Rarest Books in the World

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B001NJUP2K/ref=dp-kindle-redirect? encoding=UTF8&btcr=1>

Unitarian, Michael Servetus is one of those hidden figureheads of history who is remembered not for his name, but for the revolutionary deeds that stand in his place. Both a scientist and a freethinking theologian, Servetus is credited with the discovery of pulmonary circulation in the human body as well as the authorship of a polemical masterpiece that cost him his life.

Article: On the Path to Competence

By Susan Leem

<http://www.onbeing.org/blog/path-competence/2645>

“Risk is a necessary ingredient of how people learn to become masters of their work... The scariest part of learning a new skill is taking into daily life what you’ve learned in a purely theoretical setting, and then applying it to worldly problems. You can see the safety net erode...”

“To become expert, one must take risks.”

—philosopher Hubert Dreyfus

If you are ambitious and a perfectionist but extremely risk averse, these words of advice may create a lot of cognitive stress for you, as they do for me. But risk is a necessary ingredient of how people learn to become masters of their work.

In 1980 at the University of California, Berkeley, brothers Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus wrote an influential 18-page paper on the stages of directed skill acquisition. They say a student passes through five distinct stages on their way to learning a skill: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. And this model was named after the pair: “the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition.”

Article: Showing Up Whole, Despite All the Risks

BY COURTNEY E. MARTIN (@COURTWRITES), COLUMNIST

<http://www.onbeing.org/blog/courtney-martin-showing-up-whole-despite-all-the-risks/8948>

“Here’s what I’ve discovered. In a world where we are crafting our identities more conscientiously than ever before — picking particular shots of our lives to share on Instagram, liking certain posts on Facebook — it takes a certain kind of modern courage to stop crafting. To say, enough with the curation. Enough with the control. I’m just going to be myself — warts and all....”

Reflection: Richard Rohr, On Vulnerability

<https://cac.org/vulnerability-2016-09-27/>

“It is a risky position to live undefended, in a kind of constant openness to the other—because it means others could sometimes actually wound us. Indeed, vulnera comes from the Latin for “to wound.” But only if we take this risk do we also allow the opposite possibility: the other might also gift us, free us, and even love us.”

Reflection:: The Risks We Take by Daniel Gregoire

<https://www.questformeaning.org/spiritual-themes/the-risks-we-takequest-for-meaning-june-2014/>

“It was more than a choice of how to get home; it was a choice of how I would live my life. Am I going to take the most familiar, safest routes or will I open myself to new possibilities and new ways of doing things? Such untrodden paths might challenge me, reveal my inexperience, my biases, and expose the soft underbelly of my vulnerable, human self.”

Reflection: Embracing the Dangerous and Sacred by Suzie Spangenberg

<https://www.questformeaning.org/spiritual-themes/embracing-the-dangerous-and-sacred-excerpt/>

“If we don’t stretch ourselves we become disconnected from our humanity. Spirit is about breaking open our hearts and minds and embracing all that life holds--not just the safe and sacred, but also the dangerous and sacred.”

Community Risk

Reflection: A People of Relationship, Remembrance, and Risk.

by Rev. Suzelle Lynch

<http://uucw.org/62-religious-education/1123-we-are-a-people-of-resistance-our-january-ministry-theme>

Right now, across the nation, across the world, Unitarian Universalists have been hearing voices of fear and hate—and saying “We resist!” [Unitarian Universalist] resistance means having a theological viewpoint based on three “R’s”: Relationship, Remembrance, and Risk. For Resistance against forces of oppression to succeed, we must know each other; we must remember our heritage, our values, and act together from a place of love; and we must take the risk of “staying awake” once we have awoken to the tyranny of our times.

Scientists Can Now Watch the Brain Evaluate Risk by Ed Young

<http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/03/turning-risk-takers-into-risk-avoiders/474888/>

“The study reveals something about how we make decisions and where our attitudes toward risk come from. It’s not about what we gain from winning, but about how we deal with losing.”

Calendar Connections

Featured Special Dates

Lent (Christian) - Mar 4- Apr 14

Archbishop Oscar Romero’s Death - March 24, 1980

Viola Liuzzo’s Death - Mar 25, 1965

Viola Liuzzo and the Call to Selma

<http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/river/workshop5/175807.shtml>

Killed For Taking Part In 'Everybody's Fight'

<http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/08/12/209595935/killed-for-taking-part-in-everybody-s-fight>

Viola Liuzzo inducted into the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame

<http://www.uuworld.org/articles/uu-civil-rights-martyr-posthumously-honored>

The Beatification of Oscar Romero By Carlos Dada

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-beatification-of-oscar-romero>

Words of Oscar Romero

From Romero’s Homilies, Speeches and Writings

<http://www.albertus.edu/alumni/documents/from-romeros-homilies-speeches-and-writings.pdf>

Lent and the Unitarian Universalist

<https://findingmygrounduu.wordpress.com/2012/02/26/lent-and-the-unitarian-universalist/>

Lent for Atheists

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vlad-chituc/lent-for-atheists_b_1297654.html

Lent and the Science of Self-Denial by Jeffrey Kluger

<http://ideas.time.com/2012/02/23/lent-and-the-science-of-self-denial/>

The hidden health benefits of religious rituals that require willpower

VIII. Recommended Sermons

Finding Our Way in the Wilderness by Susan Frederick-Gray

2014 Version: <https://www.questformeaning.org/spiritual-themes/finding-our-way-in-the-wilderness/>

2010 version: <http://www.phoenixuu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/101010.pdf>

Sermon Excerpts:

I fear the possibility that when we put our toe in the water, when we see it disappear, we will pull back and not venture further.... But more than any of this, my fear lies in knowing the depth of the truth that lies in that ocean...then reaching for it...and failing”

On May 29th, 2010, not even 6 months ago, the Rev. Peter Morales, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association stood in this pulpit and said that the greatest challenge for our congregations was to find a way to create a new culture--a multiracial, multicultural spirit that could celebrate the growing diversity of our communities, speak to the realities of our children--who are increasingly identifying as multicultural--and to be authentic to the deep theological message of our Universalist faith--“that humanity--indeed all of creation--is ultimately united in a common destiny” (Paul Rasor’s definition of Universalism from Can Unitarian Universalism Change? UU World, Spring 2010, p. 38).

Maybe you have your own story of going through a big life change, or a major loss, a crisis of faith, and all of a sudden the things you long took for granted about yourself, and how you defined yourself seem to evaporate. Familiar roles and qualities like husband, wife, good son, active, healthy, provider, successful, home owner--life circumstances, sometimes by choice and sometimes without our consent change on us. And we don’t just suddenly find new definitions--its rarely that easy.

There is a period of real struggle, grief, even destructiveness sometimes, as we journey into the “boundless territory of the soul” to discover our grounding, who we are, and the new path ahead. We make mistakes in the wilderness. And anyone who has been there would attest to Sarah York’s description of it as a place where “there is danger and possibility, risk and promise.” But these times of being in the wilderness are also times of renewal and transformation, even if in the middle of it--it does not feel that way.

Hope with Feet: Stepping into the Great Turning by Karen G. Johnson

<http://blog.awakeandwitness.net/wp/2013/06/hope-with-feet-stepping-into-the-great-turning/>

Sermon delivered at the Village Church, Cummington, MA on June 2, 2013

This sermon discusses the life of Oscar Romero and ties together themes of risk and hope. Sermon excerpts:

I live not that far from Amherst, so perhaps what I am about to say is, at best, ungracious, and at worst, disloyal, but...I am not fan of Emily Dickinson's poetry. I think her most famous line, "Hope is a thing with feathers..." is one that ensnarkens me the most. I want Hope with feet.

Hope with feet helps me to keep time with the crab scuttling rhythm of progress and change. I may be clumsy, even ungainly, as I follow this irregular and difficult-to-anticipate choreography, but there is something authentic, hopefully endearing, about such clumsiness. Hope with feathers would never allow me to hold that ax but hope with feet places me solidly in the doorway of that emergency so I can not only break down the door, but also walk out and into action.

I want my hopeful feet planted solidly on the ground – not to stay in place, but to move without being swayed. If I'm going to change my course – and I hope and assume I will, because I haven't lost the potential to learn and change – I want it to be intentional, with a kind of spiritual fluidity, not that I was blown off course.

I think of another modern Christian martyr: Archbishop Oscar Romero nearly thirty years ago. Originally a cautious and conservative leader in the powerful Catholic Church in El Salvador, Romero was so moved by the injustice, the poverty, the violence, the cruelty experienced by the peoples of his land. He began to speak out against the government and military violence. The following words are often attributed to him:

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

He knew what he was doing was dangerous, but he also knew there was no other choice. On March 24, 1980 he was murdered. Is this what Rebecca Solnit meant, from today's first reading, when she said, "Hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed?"

Relative Risk by Galen Gingrich

<http://www.allsoulsnyc.org/atf/cf/%7B641C68F5-A0A1-4017-851B-66985A3B0DF3%7D/Relative%20Risk%203-30-14.pdf>

A sermon preached at All Souls Unitarian Church, New York City March 30, 2014.

Moving towards what is possible is always a risk worth taking. Sermon Excerpts:

Given the events of the past few weeks, one could certainly be forgiven for thinking the world is a risky place and getting riskier by the day. A little more than three weeks ago, on an otherwise ordinary Saturday morning in Malaysia, a Boeing 777 took off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing. During the handoff from Malaysian to Vietnamese air traffic control, the airliner and its 239 souls on board made an abrupt turn to the southwest, setting a new course, apparently for oblivion.

There are geopolitical risks that add to the sense of danger, topped in recent days by Vladimir Putin's petulant belligerence. But there's nothing like a missing plane, or a building blowing up, or a devastating mudslide to foster our feelings of vulnerability. The world is a risky place. Here's the irony: the risks we face are mostly where we aren't looking. Your chance of dying in a plane crash is one in 11 million, while your chance of dying in a car crash is only one in 5,000.

I began thinking about the issue of relative risk – whether it's ultimately riskier to avoid risks or to expose ourselves to them – when I came across Hanna Rosin's cover story in the current issue of *The Atlantic* magazine. In an article titled "The Over-Protected Kid," she argues that our preoccupation with children's safety has stripped childhood of independence, risk-taking, and discovery – without making it any safer.

This is good advice: look both ways, and then go for it. Sometimes things won't work out, of course. But you need to take some risks in order to learn what you need to know about your life and how best to live it. The risk of not finding out is, well, the risk that you will never find out. Sometimes you have to go for it and see what happens.

Go back to school. Go back to work. Move in together. Move into your own place. Apply for a marriage license. File for a divorce. Begin therapy. Quit counseling. Start taking classes. Stop taking lessons. Make the call. Cancel the appointment. Wherever you need to go, look both ways and go for it.

No matter how far we get on our journeys, there will always be farther to go. Wherever we go, the experience of God unites us with all that is present in our lives and our world, as well as all that is past and all that is possible. Moving toward what's possible is always a risk worth taking.

No Risk, No Reward by Rev. Barbara Prose

<http://allsoulschurch.libsyn.com/no-risk-no-reward-a-sermon-by-rev-barbara-prose>

A sermon preached at All Souls Unitarian Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma on June 7, 2015.

Sermon description:

On June 6, 1944, President Eisenhower took a risk. He made the decision to move forward with the Allied forces landings on the beaches of Normandy, even though the weather conditions were horrible. On that day, German forces suffered 100 casualties, while Allied forces suffered 10,000. Despite the many deaths and the many battles to come, D-Day led to the liberation of Europe from Nazi control.

As summer begins and our routines are interrupted, we have an opportunity to liberate ourselves. What are we willing to risk in order to break free from familiar patterns of behavior and thought, from the wrong job, or a bad marriage? Is there something new, waiting for you, this summer?

If we try something too risky, we will hurt ourselves or someone else. If we don't dare risk at all, we won't learn or grow. What D-Day risk are you ready to take? What D-Day sacrifice is yours to make?

The Risk of the Clean Slate by Rev. Diane Rollert

<http://www.ucmtl.ca/sermons/2015/9/22/the-risk-of-a-clean-slate>

A sermon preached at the Unitarian Church of Montreal, 20 September 2015

The risk of forgiveness: Sermon Excerpts:

It's interesting that so many religious traditions have rituals and practices for forgiveness. As Unitarian Universalists, we've chosen to move away from traditions that instill too much guilt in the individual. That can be very liberating. Yet each of us has to consider how we will live with ourselves and how we will live in relation to others. Without a strong communal practice that calls us back to a place of forgiveness, how do we return to our potential for greatness year after year? Is it too easy for us to believe that we have done no wrong? How do we find our way back into relationship with that which is greater than ourselves, whether we call that God or something else? How do we find our way back into relationship with each other if we don't call each other back into a place of light?

I'm not saying that we should let go of the anger, the sadness, disgust or fear in our lives. I'm not saying that each of us should aspire to be as incapable of holding memories of wrong in our hearts as Abraham Lincoln. We can't all be saints. But we can call each other to be honest with ourselves, to care as deeply about the one who sits beside us as the one suffering far away. We can take a risk to seek forgiveness and to offer forgiveness in order to wipe the slate clean, to begin again for another year. Maybe that's a spiritual practice for every day, a way to realize greatness, as Emerson would say.

Spiritual Courage by Barbara Wells

<http://www.pbuuc.org/sermons/archive/sermons0102/courage.html>

A sermon preached at the Paint Branch UU Church, May, 12 2012

Sermon Excerpts:

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.

I believe that courage is a spiritual value, one that could use some exploration by all of us. Millay's poem challenges me to think about courage, and why it is something I hope for and pray for and believe is necessary for a meaningful life. I understand the poet's longing for courage, courage which she has need of in her life. I, too, at times, long for courage, and look to people like my mother to help me understand what simple courage looks like.

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 had shown 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. Here were people whose choice to act courageously not only saved the lives of Jews during the second World War, but also transformed their own lives forever.