

Preparation T378 – What does it mean to be a people of Courage

Introduction:

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.

Further exploration:

For more resources based on this month's theme, see the October 2017 Journal (first newsletter of the month) on our church website. There are links to videos, podcasts, books, movies and music.

The journal also contains a selection of Spiritual Exercises based on the theme of the month. We challenge you to try choose one and try it out. Please share your experiences in your group, over coffee in Hattie Porter Hall, and in our September Soul Matter Reflections Circle.

Your Question:

Don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal is not 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"? What insights that you have gained could be applied to our congregation?

1. Where are you saying "yes" when you need to courageously say "no"?
2. Who says it's always courageous to never give up? How might life be calling you to let it go and walk away?
3. How might your life change if you saw optimism as our time's most courageous act?
4. Instead of standing up and speaking out, is courage now asking you to sit down and listen?
5. Who in your life needs their courage affirmed and celebrated? Who needs to be told that their courage is contagious and helping you be more brave?
6. How do you feel our congregation is setting an example of courage in the larger world? What are the results for you and for the community?
7. 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.