

Ice Cream for Astronauts,

Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis

12/30/2018

Reflection and Discussion: Ice Cream for Astronauts, Pt. 1

The theme we've been reflecting on this month is Mystery, and we've talked about many facets of the mysteries we encounter in life, in religion, and in ourselves. There is another set of mysteries that we often find ourselves considering this time of year: the mystery of the joys, fears, and motivations that have filled our most recent past, and the mystery of what lies just ahead in the new year, and what intentions we will bring to it. You may approach the new year with many feelings, perhaps differing ones at the same time, held in conflict.

Perhaps you are coming to the year of 2019 with expectation for joys anticipated. Perhaps you come with trepidation, uncertain what the year will bring. You may be glad to put 2018 in your rearview mirror, ready to move onto a new year with a fresh start. You may want to hold onto it a little bit longer, not ready to let go of a time when you can still say "this year I saw my dear ones." We have said goodbye this year to many who have touched our lives--some with whom we got to say a few extra words, although the time is never enough. Some we didn't, and that one last conversation would be so precious. For myself, I struggle a little bit with the goodbyes of New Year's Eve, and looked forward to the hello of the new day, the new year. A new and unexplored set

of possibilities, which is the theme we will be exploring in January, beginning with Rev. Kathleen's sermon next Sunday, *Possibly Not Just Yet*. For now, though, it's a mystery.

I've always been a little bit in awe--perhaps even a little bit envious--of those of you who are adventurers. In my family, I'm outnumbered, with two people who love to explore the unknown. Now, don't get me wrong, I do love to explore...but I prefer my exploration to be seasoned with a solid bit of the familiar. We have a running mock argument, Terrell and I, about the buttons in the car. Anytime we're in a new vehicle, say a rental car on a trip, if I'm driving he will *invariably* find a button that neither of us recognize. "What's this?" he'll say. "I don't know," I'll respond. "Why don't you look it--" but before I can complete my suggestion to check the manual, he'll say "Let's find out!" and push it. Now, usually nothing bad happens (although you can ask him about that escalator button in Italy!) but my response is always the same: "What if that was the eject button?!" Our daughter Kate has been the same from day one: our little explorer. In fact, that was the theme of her first birthday party--the female explorers and inventors who have shaped our world, our universe, with their willingness to head out into the great unknown. I love to imagine the possibilities, as I talked a little bit about last week, but I'd rather not be the one headed off into a jungle all on my lonesome. I can't imagine what it's like to be a Marie Curie, a Mae Jameson, a Michelle Obama or a Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Here's the thing about legends, though, including living ones: the real ones are very seldom legends in their own heads. I've always been fascinated with biographies and autobiographies, and I especially love hearing about how people like the women I mentioned, or like Harvey Milk, Alan Turing, George Washington--or George Washington Carver!--or Barack Obama, who changed history, how they found the place from which to do the things they've done and some of them continue to do. And it usually comes back to one thing--they're not really heading out into the unknown alone. They bring a little bit of home with them, they bring the strength of their community, of the influences that have shaped them. Even astronauts like to have ice cream.

Discussion questions: What do you need in order to feel supported in your own adventures? What brings you back to your roots? Share with a neighbor.

Video: Get Back Up Again from the movie Trolls

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFuFm0m2wj0>

Reflection and Discussion: Ice Cream for Astronauts, Pt. 2

Bravery is not generally just about us, though. Have you ever been to a football game and seen how the teams enter the field? They don't come quietly in at the beginning, slipping tentatively onto the field and benches. No, they come running in with their fans cheering them on. Having the support of our communities is one of the things that helps us be brave. A seminary colleague of mine shared a story about something one of her professors did

recently. It was finals and everyone was exhausted. When the class walked into the room, the chairs were set up a little differently, in a circle with a chair in the middle. The professor asked them to interview each other about something they wanted to celebrate, and then they took turns being the one in the middle as their accomplishments were cheered and celebrated by their classmates. There's something meaningful about knowing you have a cheering section. So, it's your turn; I'd like us to do a little bit of that for each other. Turn to your neighbors and share with them about the discussion questions up on the screen.

Discussion questions: What/who helps you to be brave? What do you want to be brave for or about—what brave things are ahead for you? Finally, the last question—what “big brave” thing can your neighbors celebrate with you? It can be something that you consider small, but that took a lot of bravery for you to tackle. Make sure you exchange names and remember what your neighbors tell you!

[After discussion] Now we have a chance to all celebrate together. One of the things that scientists tell us about the mind is that positive reinforcement—celebrating the things we want to do more of—helps keep us motivated. So we're going to be each other's cheering section as we head into the adventures of the new year. The Hitchcock family is coming to lead us in singing the song Brave. I'd like you to all join in on the chorus, and while we're singing, I invite you to come line up at the microphone. After the first verse and chorus, I invite you to share one word about

what makes you brave, or what you want to be brave for. But we tend to downplay our own successes, so after the second verse—when the song invites us to show how big our brave is—I want a new group to come up and this time share about the bravery you heard from your neighbors. After each one, we're going to cheer each other's awesomeness, and then sing one last chorus together to celebrate everyone!