



TOUCHSTONES

Journey

July 2021

We begin a new Touchstones Year and a new month. This month's assigned theme is journey.

"Journey" comes from an old French word which refers to a "day's travel" or the "work of the day." It's original meaning was closer to our word "commute" now — a sense of a daily movement from one place to another. But it also referred to the distance a person would travel in a day — just as the sun would travel from one horizon to the other each day.

The ritual scholar Arnold van Gennep studied the way in which society's would mark the stages of a person's life journey. He noticed that each ritual that he studied had a time "before" the transition and a time "after." This can be a coming-of-age ritual, a wedding, a joining ceremony, a commissioning, or coronation, and so forth. Even a regular weekly worship service. And in-between the "before" and the "after" is the space in between. He called this liminal space (between limits) and it was a magical, powerful, and disorienting space. The ceremony has begun — you are not married yet, but you are not really unmarried either. You go out of the wilderness walk when you are 13 — a child when you leave, an adult when you return, but what are you "in-between"?

The Rev. Susan Fredrick-Gray, UUA President, has been talking about how we are in a liminal space right now, when it comes to our return from the pandemic. It is not over. But it is not in the worst of it either. We are coming back — but we are not fully back. And we do not know what the new "normal" will be. This is liminal space. This is the middle of the afternoon on the day's walk, it is the part of the journey where you sense you are getting somewhere - but you are not there yet.

Liminal space can be disorienting. You are not sure what you are. It can also be deeply sacred time, and a time to experiment, try things, and rediscover who you are. It can be a time to reshuffle your core values and commitments. It can be time to choose a new name (indeed, the practice of a person having the same name throughout their lives is unusually modern. Perhaps we would be better served if we let youth select their own name (and name their correct gender, if any) at their own time.)

We have liminal times in our life's journey, too. When we are about to graduate, move, or retire. Pregnancy is a liminal time. When our kids go to college. When we change careers, or relationships. All the times on our journey are a time to notice who have been, who we are becoming, and who we are.

This month, as we explore what it means to journey, I invite you to reflect on your journey. Perhaps you would like to try — just for the month — to keep a journal. (It is the same French word, of course). Write down whatever comes to you, about your life, your journey, and your path ahead. Re-read what you wrote the next day and write some more. See how it goes.

Looking forward to our conversation — and to our journey.

In faith,
Matthew

Readings from the Common Bowl



Day 1: "And you? When will you begin that long journey into yourself?" Rumi

Day 2: "The beautiful journey of today can only begin when we learn to let go of yesterday." Steve Maraboli

Day 3: "Sometimes the hardest part of the journey is believing you're worthy of the trip." Glenn Beck

Day 4: "In the middle of the journey of our life I found myself within a dark wood where the direct way was lost." Dante

Day 5: "Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey only has one: the step you are taking right now." Eckhart Tolle

Day 6: "Your soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has the map of your future; therefore, you can trust this indirect, oblique side of yourself. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more important it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey." John O'Donohue

Day 7: "We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us." Marcel Proust

Day 8: "My favorite journey is looking out the window." Edward Gorey

Day 9: "...there ain't no journey what don't change you some." David Mitchell

Day 10: "May I share with you a formula that in my judgment will help you and help me to journey well through mortality... First, fill your mind with truth; second, fill your life with service; and third, fill your heart with love." Thomas Monson

Day 11: "The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours—it is an amazing journey—and you alone are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really begins." Bob Moawad

Day 12: "We're not on our journey to save the world but to save ourselves. But in

doing that you save the world. The influence of a vital person vitalizes." Joseph Campbell

Day 13: "It may be that when we no longer know which way to go that we have come to our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings." Wendell Berry

Day 14: "The journey itself is my home." Matsuo Bashō

Day 15: "All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware." Martin Buber

Day 16: "A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it." John Steinbeck

Day 17: "Losing your way on a journey is unfortunate. But, losing your reason for the journey is a fate more cruel." H.G. Wells

Day 18: "There is meaning in every journey that is unknown to the traveler." Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Day 19: "And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our own feet, and learn to be at home." Wendell Berry

Day 20: "Some beautiful paths can't be discovered without getting lost." Erol Ozan

Day 21: "A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us." John Steinbeck

Day 22: "Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming, 'Wow what a ride!'" Marjorie Pay Hinckley

Day 23: "The spiritual journey is individual, highly personal. It can't be

organized or regulated. It isn't true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth." Ram Dass

Day 24: "My invitation, my challenge to you here, is to journey into a deeper intimacy with the world and your life without any promise of safety or guarantee of reward beyond the intrinsic value of full participation." Oriah Mountain Dreamer

Day 25: "The Sun will rise and set regardless. What we choose to do with the light while it's here is up to us. Journey wisely." Alexandra Elle

Day 26: "My dad used to say that life's a journey, but somebody screwed up and lost the map." Rachel Caine

Day 27: "All great literature is one of two stories; a ...person goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town." Leo Tolstoy

Day 28: "As you start traveling down that road of life, remember this: There are never enough comfort stops. The places

you're going to are never on the map. And once you get that map out, you won't be able to re-fold it no matter how smart you are. So, forget



the map, roll down the windows, and whenever you can, pull over and have a picnic with a pig." Jim Henson

Day 29: "In every journey comes a moment... one like no other. And in that moment, you must decide between who you are... and who you want to be." J.C. Marino

Day 30: "I guess that's the thing about a hero's journey. You might not start out a hero, and you might not even come back that way. But you change, which is the same as everything changing. The journey changes you, whether or not you know it, and whether or not you want it to." Kami Garcia

Day 31: "The journey is part of the experience—an expression of the seriousness of one's intent. One doesn't take the A train to Mecca." Anthony Bourdain

Family Matters

Adventure Play: The Benefits of Risk Taking

Jenna Stadsvold

...Play has been called the work of children and is an important part of their development. It helps introduce kids to the world and to each other while also helping them build skills and confidence. ...Where does risky play or adventure play fit in?

The research is still developing, but it appears that risk taking and fear are an important and natural part of childhood play. Researchers have observed that all kids push their boundaries and take part in some level of risky play, such as climbing up high or going fast. It appears that kids have an understanding of their own boundaries, ...and will attempt risky play that just reaches those boundaries.

... Ellen Sandseter ...defined six categories of risky play: play at heights, play with high speed, play with dangerous tools, play near dangerous elements, rough-and-tumble play, and play where kids could become lost. These are areas that kids will explore through play as they build confidence and increase their skills. ...So, kids who experience risky play are better at perceiving risk and have higher competence at navigating these risks.

...Part of play and adventure for kids is trying new things and learning to test ...limits, and sometimes kids may go beyond their limits and fall. Turns out this is also a natural part of childhood that actually provides some benefits of its own.

...The goal in life is not to be fearless; fear is a natural part of life.... Through adventure play, kids can improve their skills for dealing with risky situations and reduce their likelihood of developing fears that could hold them back.

Source: <https://headrushtech.com/blog/adventure-play-benefits-risk-taking.html>

Kids Need Adventure

Stuart Wickes

The value of outdoor adventures, little or large cannot be underestimated. And it's not just about thrills and spills or

building a bank of rose-tinted memories of childhood. Whether building a tree house, camping and stargazing, fishing..., or exploring the local environment on foot or by bike; active adventures bring real health and developmental benefits. When children are helped and allowed to experience risk, even in a semi-controlled way, it helps develop their ability to deal with it and builds self-confidence. It encourages them to think for themselves and develops their resilience. It readies them for dealing with the risks and uncertainties that are part of the big wide world.

Source: [https://](https://www.familyadventureproject.org/kids-need-adventure-parents-need-to-teach-them-how/)

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Family Activity: Pilgrimage

Consider what trips you have taken in your life. Were some of them to special places and for which you have special memories? Sometimes going to a home of your childhood can be a pilgrimage. Share some of these experiences with your children. Then invite them to talk about special places that they would like to visit and why.

Family Activity: Sauntering

As a family, go on a leisurely walk in a place that is beautiful and interesting. Walk slowly and pay attention to what surrounds you. Prompt discussions with your children about what they see, what they like, and why.

Family Activity: Adventuring

As a family, brainstorm a list of ideas for adventures and write each one on a slip of paper. Put them in a small box or jar, and select one each week to do. If you need ideas, go to <https://redtri.com/outdoor-adventures-to-do-before-your-kids-turn-10/>.

Life is a Way of Going

Desert Spring

Rev. Victoria Safford

They had no idea where they were going, when they left that night, in the dark, without lights, without shoes, without bread, their children smothered against them so they would make no noise.

They had no idea what they were getting into, following this Moses, this wild-eyed one who claimed visions and made promises but who after all could guarantee them nothing, except death if they were caught.

They had no idea, these slaves, what it could mean, this promise of land ... and life abundant. Of freedom, they knew nothing, except what they could taste by living in its opposite, slavery, and that taste became a hunger, and that hunger became insatiable till they were ravenous for freedom, and they went out then—but no one knows ... whether they were led by Moses or by ...something eternal..., or whether their own human, hungry-will made them flee that night from Pharaoh.

They went into the wilderness. There they wandered forty years.... Forty was a good, old age, so many of them died before getting anywhere, and many were born in the desert and grew to adulthood knowing nothing but the journey—not slavery, not freedom, just the going. They whined and complained and muttered, and some mutinied, for they were a stiff-necked and rebellious people...; ungrateful people, even when manna rained down from heaven and quails were sent to feed them; unhappy people, longing, out loud even, for the familiar security of Egypt, of all places, where at least they knew what to expect, as awful as it was; impatient people, making cheap little idols and gods of metal to bargain with....

...The promised-land is not a destination—it is a way of going. The land beyond the Jordan... is planted in your mind and heart already, ...what you need to do is stand up and walk forward. Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/desert-spring>



The Unitarian Universalist Church
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-Coffee Hour on Sunday. 337-267-3668. 11:10 a.m. Grab a cup and jump on to say hello!

- Touchstones: contact your touchstones group facilitator for the time and meeting ID, if you do not already have it.

Want to have a group – a book group, a parent group, a “circle supper”, or whatever you like?
– just email Autumn at office@uurockford.org and she can give you the Zoom login and password

Journey & Deepening Connections

While we often think of a journey as being something long and, sometimes, arduous, the original meaning of the word was limited to a day’s work or a day’s travel. Perhaps in any journey, we should value time more, hold each day precious as the primary cycle in the larger cycles that we journey through the four seasons as well as the seasons of our life and the cycle of years. There are different kinds of journeys. Some we take by ourselves as we seek to deepen our connection with our deepest self. A vision quest is such a journey. Other journeys, like a pilgrimage, also a deepening, are often in the company of others: companions, those with whom we literally share bread, a communion of people.