



The Unitarian Church in Westport

SERVICE TRANSCRIPT:

The Science of Wandering, and Two Poems

By Cheryl Dixon

Sunday, June 30, 2019 10 AM

We Bid You Welcome

By Retired UU minister Rev. Richard S. Gilbert

We bid you welcome, who come with weary spirit seeking rest.
Who come with troubles that are too much with you, who come hurt and afraid.
We bid you welcome, who come with hope in your heart.
Who come with anticipation in your step, who come proud and joyous.
We bid you welcome, who are seekers of a new faith.
Who come to probe and explore. Who come to learn.
We bid you welcome, who enter this hall as a homecoming,
Who have found here room for your spirit. Who find in this people a family.
Whoever you are, whatever you are, wherever you are on your journey,
We bid you welcome.

Curiosity has been my companion in life; it came from an unlikely source, My Father.

Dad, Bob, was an aloof and distant man to his children. It was hardly his fault as his own father was an alcoholic who eventually left their family, not a good role model. My dad did the best he could; he worked hard at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft – second shift for most of his work life with bouts of third shift, (meaning he was never home at dinner time during the week). He worked hard every weekend on our house; the yard and gardens were his domain as well. //Something else took hold of Bob though every August. A switch flipped inside him, the aircraft had Shutdown – no one worked, there was no a/c. He was like a kid freed from school. We would pack up our camper for parts unknown. Zigzagging across the United States and Canada, each year a different destination. Sweltering heat in Houston so he could get a tour of Mission Control, steering my brother past the tabletop

dancers in the alleys of New Orleans, keeping us from falling into the vats of chocolate at the Hershey factory in Pennsylvania – back then there were no glass partitioned walls. Once we were on our way to Lake Richardson in Maine and he saw a small sign on the side of the road, 'Observatory'. He turned the car with the camper up that steep hill to find out the hours of operation so we could return one night that week. He planned those trips up to a point, always leaving room for an adventure. Like meeting the clam and muscle seller in Prince Edward Island while on a walk, he even dug up a few himself and bought lots more for our supper that night. His curiosity and excitement was contagious. He spoke easily and in a friendly manner with everyone we encountered, getting them to tell him a good story. Wonderful wanderings, sigh, and then returning home to the more familiar, distant relationship. Why couldn't we have that August dad the rest of the year?

The following heretical statement was said by the famous mentalist (or mind reader) Derren Brown, 'Fighting life's currents with fierce determination and positive thinking is a recipe for disappointment and frustration'. He has studied the Ancient Greek Stoics and Roman Philosophers. He suggests we make peace with the fact that life is full of curve balls and wrong turns - it is the dynamic of life. Don't carry around the false idea that we can control everything in life to line up with our goals. He gives us the following scenario: you are on the bank of a river and see a village on the other side where you want to go. There are friends and cheerleaders behind you who say, "do it, go ahead, jump in". You jump in the river to swim across. What you haven't taken into account is the strong currents, which pull you very far from your planned destination. Fighting life's currents didn't help you in this situation. All of this positive thinking places too much responsibility on the individual saying that it's your fault you didn't succeed... We are all going to be dragged off course. The Stoics say we should actively distinguish what is in our power to change and what isn't. That means you have a choice to choose to be the best you can be and feel good about it. Your goal is to do your best and be your best self. Success isn't about an end result or reaching distant goal. There is another village down the river.

How can I let go of the outcome and just enjoy the journey every day? Well, I'm not going to let those nay say-ers describe my wanderings in negative terms – aimless, adrift, rootless. I try to stay curious, eager, engaged, appreciative. My journey has been to find delight in one on one interactions – every day meetings that can be life changing, whether I am the student or the teacher, the buyer or the seller, the speaker or the listener. My goal isn't to be happy but to be my best self. Our first Unitarian Universalist principle is to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. I am working on honoring my own inherent worth and dignity through these interactions. My wanderings don't take place in far off distant lands but on trips to the farmers market and the dog park, lectures and meetings, potlucks and tag sales.

I have saved up all the memories of those Augusts, they still nourish my soul: Northern lights, the constellations, cold summer nights by the campfire in Maine. What I would have missed if my father weren't a wanderer at heart.

Natural History

By E. B. White

The spider, dropping down from twig
Unwinds a thread of her devising,
A thin premeditated rig
To use in rising.

And all that journey down through space
In cool descent, and loyal-hearted
She builds a ladder to the place
From which she started.

Thus I, gone forth, as spiders do,
In spider's web a truth discerning,
Attach on silken strand to you,
For my returning.