

Introduction and Conclusion to the Reflections

ST. DAVID'S UNITED CHURCH

Sunday, April 25th, 2021

BRAVING THE WILDERNESS

Introduction to the Reflectors (Fran, Marilyn, Colin and John)

This winter, our Monday Night Book Study welcomed from 35-40 different people – mainly from St. David's – but living beyond our congregation from Vancouver Island to the west, and Toronto, Ontario in the east.

While we could not meet face-to-face during this term we attracted a fine group of Canadian participants because of Zoom.

My thanks go to Deb. Charnuski for helping us work technically and to Brenda Wallace and Joan Gray for collaborating with me in the presentation of ten 90 minute sessions.

This time, we selected the psychologist and Texan Brene Brown as the author of our study-book "Braving the Wilderness"

This morning four participants who were involved in the study join me to share their reflections with you. I thank them all in advance --

Fran Burrell, Marilyn and Colin Outrim and John Widdon from Medicine Hat join me to share with you some of their discoveries.

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We alternate between Theology and Spirituality in the books we select and try to make new insights accessible to all joining with us. Over the years we have welcomed hundreds of students and are grateful that we can keep offering high quality material to work with.

So, how might I introduce this study?

Brene Brown, the author of “Braving the Wilderness” gives us this suggestion – “when we encounter life’s difficulties and its shadow-side we can learn to become the better for it”. That is one of many great insights and we want to share more of them now.

Nancy Erikson has introduced us to several key insights from Brown’s book.

She has also introduced us to two key passages of scripture – The Children of Israel and Jesus himself experiencing the wilderness (slide one).

(Slide two)

Wilderness – the most important image in the book.

It is a fearful place, a resting place, a place of transformation and transition, purification and preparation.

(slide three)

Israel spent forty years in the wilderness after being liberated as slaves from Egypt and before entering the promised land. The wilderness was the interim place between slavery and freedom.

(slide four)

Jesus spent forty days and nights in the wilderness, prior to beginning his ministry. It was a kind of “vision quest” for him.

We kept revisiting the Hebrew and Christian bible passages about “wilderness” because they provided important complements to the contemporary psychological insights Brown kept offering us.

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Now – Fran, Marilyn and Colin, and John will offer us their perspectives in that order, and without further introduction.

(end)

SUMMARY TO THE PRESENTATIONS

Fran Burrell – dehumanization and the learnings around that

- **A consciousness of our language with modification to prevent hurt and damage.**
- **All of life is inextricably inter-connected**

Marilyn and Colin Outrim – better ways to resolve disagreements

- **Can we join the Wild Heart Club?**

John Whiddon – we are wired for connection

- **We need intentionality to be with people different from us**
- **Our sense of belonging does not come from beliefs or ideology**
- **True belonging is not passive – it requires vulnerability**
- **A soft and open front is not being weak; it's brave, from being in the wilderness**
- **Our lack of tolerance for vulnerable, tough conversations drives our self-sorting and disconnections**

These insights help us to work toward a better future for ourselves and for St. David's.

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