

'Creativity is sacred, and it is not sacred. What we make matters enormously, and it doesn't matter at all. We toil alone, and we are accompanied by spirits. We are terrified, and we are brave. Art is a crushing chore and a wonderful privilege. The work wants to be made, and it wants to be made through you.'

- Elizabeth Gilbert, from 'Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear'



My sincere gratitude to everyone who helped create and/or participated in this year's Fall Program. To our education team, our small group hosts and facilitators, our Sunday worship team, and every one of you who chose to go deeper into your sacred processes of creative living... I honor you, I thank you, and I celebrate you.

- Rev. Eileen Stulak

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unity[®]
of Traverse City

2016 Fall Program

Creative Living Beyond Fear

September 25 - October 30, 2016

UNITY OF TRAVERSE CITY

Fall Program 2016

'Creative Living Beyond Fear'

SUNDAY CELEBRATION SERVICES - 10:30 a.m.

September 25 thru October 30

CELEBRATION CIRCLES (small group study circles)
Weekly, beginning September 25, 2016Locations, Days and Times will vary
by group host and facilitatorSunday services and group discussions
supported by 'Big Magic: Creative Living
Beyond Fear', by Elizabeth Gilbert

CELEBRATION EVENT AND FUNDRAISER

We're Off to See the Wizard!

- ◇ Hors D'oeuvres
- ◇ Opening of Silent Auction
- ◇ Dinner
- ◇ The Magic of Ben Whiting
- ◇ Live Auction

Saturday, November 5
6:00 - 10:00 p.m.Unity of Traverse City Campus
Tickets \$20.00 each at the door

Youth (age 13-17) tickets \$5.00, children under 12 are free

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Dear Friend,

Welcome to our Fall Program Series for 2016 - 'Creative Living Beyond Fear'. This year, we are all about opening avenues through which the creativity within us can come forth. We'll explore how our innate qualities of divine courage, persistence, and more can serve to move us beyond any fear and into living expanded and fulfilling lives.

Over the six weeks of our Fall Program this year, you will be provided with various resources and tools to support you as you uncover more of your creative self and bring it into greater expression in your life. You will be offered: best-selling author Elizabeth Gilbert's book, 'Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear', our weekly inspirational Sunday Celebration series, and this specially created study guide for further personal study. In addition, our small groups will form and I encourage you to step into the power of sharing with others of like mind and belief. The support, sharing, and bonding that take place are such sacred gifts to offer and to embrace.

Our Fall Series is always designed with an intention for it to be an experience of deepening your faith, as well as your connection to your beloved spiritual community. It also offers the opportunity to form and deepen lasting friendships as you bring forth more and more of your unique Christ light into expression.

This year is one in which we are on a **JOURNEY TO THE REAL YOU**. I look forward to joining you as we give new life to the creative power within us. Who knows what wonderful expressions of God will come forth and bless us all?!

Abundant blessings to you,
Rev. Eileen Stulak

FACILITATOR NAME _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

STUDY GROUP MEMBERS

NAME _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Your Extra Mile:

1. Spend time in your daily prayers opening to new and exciting ways to express your own divinity.
2. Set an intention to embrace your gifts and to see yourself each day as a creation of God, living beyond fear or limitation.

Scripture:

‘You shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merry-makers.’ ~ Jeremiah 31:4

Looking Ahead:

1. If your group has been working on a project or activity together, finalize your plans for its completion and/or sharing with the congregation.
2. Consider ways in which the group can remain connected now that the series is reaching its end.
 - a. Attend the Fall Celebration Event and Fundraiser together on Saturday, November 5.
 - b. Meet for coffee and conversation once a month?
 - c. Connect at the Thanksgiving potluck at the church on November 20?

Closing Prayer:

Dearest Father/Mother God, we are so grateful for cracking open a world of wonder and joy through courage, enchantment, permission, trust, and divinity. We open our minds and hearts to all we trust to be revealed in the right time and right way through the divine wisdom within us. Thank you, God. And so it is, amen.

**Week 6 - 'Dancing With the Divine'
Theme: Divinity**

**Welcome and Opening Prayer - Fall Program Prayer (p. 5)
Read Group Shared Agreements (p. 5) and Check In**

Week 6 Reading: Pages 265-273 (including the Conclusion)

This week's Affirmations:

1. I partner with God in all I do.
2. I open to deeper learning about myself as I live a creative life.
3. I dance peacefully with the paradoxes in life.

Quote (s):

'I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.'
- W. E. Henley

'The treasures that are hidden inside you are hoping you will say yes.'
- Elizabeth Gilbert

Questions:

1. Describe how you 'dance' with God, the divine in you?
What additional ways might you try having completed this book?
2. How could you be more playful with divinity?
3. What treasures do you believe are hidden inside of you? How will you bring them forth to share with the world?
4. What other insights have you received from reading this book and taking part in the Sunday services and/or small groups?

CREATIVE LIVING BEYOND FEAR SERIES PRAYER

I am a divine creation of God and I am here to live a creative life. I am strong and courageous, open to Spirit's inspiration in all its many forms. I give myself permission to be my authentic self, bringing forth the very best of who I am. I release all resistance, fears, and concerns for what others may think, and instead; I trust in the benevolent nature of the Universe. I listen to my soul, I embrace my uniqueness, and I show up each day in eager anticipation of all that wants to express through me. I am grateful to learn more about myself as I step into creative living. It is so, amen.

GROUP SHARED AGREEMENTS

1. I agree to be on time, ready to go, and to remain in our circle until it is complete.
2. I commit to be prayed up and current on my reading and any other preparation work that is mine to do.
3. I listen deeply for the voice of Spirit in all communication.
4. I communicate using 'I' statements so as to honor the unique perspective that we each have.
5. I respect others by being open to different perspectives as well as by being mindful of sharing in a timely manner.
6. I honor the sacredness of our community by holding in strictest confidence all that is said in our circle each week.
7. I understand that my presence is important and will contact the facilitator if I am unable to attend.
8. I contribute to building a trusting community where all are free to explore, grow and express new facets of their True Self.
9. Thank You God!

Week 1 - 'Amp Up Your Life!'**Theme: Courage**

Welcome and Opening Prayer - Fall Program Prayer (p. 5)

Read Group Shared Agreements (p. 5) and Check-In

Week 1 Reading: Pages 1- 27

This week's Affirmations:

1. I let go of fear and embrace curiosity.
2. I create a bigger, happier, and expanded life!
3. I courageously bring forth my creativity and originality.

Quote(s):

'A creative life is an amplified life . . . creative living is a path for the brave.' - Elizabeth Gilbert

'Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather, the judgment that something else is more important than fear.' - Ambrose Redmoon

' . . . if you can't learn to travel comfortably alongside your fear, then you'll never be able to go anywhere interesting or do anything interesting.' - Elizabeth Gilbert

'That's kind of the definition of a passion . . . an interest that you chase obsessively, almost because you have no choice.'
- Elizabeth Gilbert

Questions:

1. In terms of creative living, what does the phrase 'Amp Up Your Life' mean to you?
2. Describe a time or times when you felt truly light, joyous, and creative in your own skin. What qualities, beliefs, faith, etc. were present for you in those experiences?

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Questions - Continued

3. Have there been times when fears have held you back from bringing forth something you desired? What were they? Are any of them still present today? How might you begin to release them and embrace creative living beyond fear?

Your Extra Mile:

1. My intention for this series is _____
_____.

Scripture:

‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me.’ ~ Philippians 4:13

Looking Ahead:

1. Discuss the possibility of a group activity or project based on the qualities of creative living being offered in the book. See what form your inspiration may take. This could be anything - the creation of a collective vision board of inspired ideas, a poem created as a group, a collage of what each member sees as their unique gifts, and more. Let your imagination guide you!
2. Send stories, successes, photos, etc. for the church website and/or sharing in the Sunday bulletins.
3. Read pages 29-78 for next week.

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, I call forth your presence in me, and affirm the release of any fears and the embrace of divine courage, strength, love and grace. Your presence offers me consolation and perseverance to face the fears, to stand up for who I truly am, to live my beliefs, and to be a blessing to others in all that I do. Thank you for your ever-present love, a love which is beyond comprehension. And so it is, amen.

NOTES**Your Extra Mile:**

1. Take time in prayer this week to reflect on your beliefs around your own creative nature.
2. Invite God's presence in you to open new avenues of inspiration and creativity. Affirm your willingness to trust in this divine process unfolding in your life with grateful anticipation and ease.

Scripture:

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart.' ~ Proverbs 3:5

Looking Ahead:

1. Discuss the possibility of a group activity or project based on the qualities of creative living being offered in the book. See what form your inspiration may take. This could be anything - the creation of a collective vision board of inspired ideas, a poem created as a group, a collage of what each member sees as their unique gifts, and more. Let your imagination guide you!
2. Send stories, successes, photos, etc. for the church website and/or sharing in the Sunday bulletins.
3. Read pages 265-273 for next week

Closing Prayer:

Dear God, help me to have an unwavering trust in you. Help me to lay aside my own agenda and focus on the perfect plan you have for me. I trust and I am confident that together, we now bring forth the best plan for my life. Help me to trust and to walk by faith, not by sight. Spirit, I trust in your presence in every situation in my life, for I have in your promise to take all things, good or bad, and use them together for good - not only for my good and the good of others, but also that your presence within each of us may be expressed and glorified through all that we do. And so it is, amen.

Week 5 - 'It's All About the Yes'
Theme: Trust

Welcome and Opening Prayer - Fall Program Prayer (p. 5)
Read Group Shared Agreements (p. 5) and Check-In

Week 5 Reading: Pages 199-264

This week's Affirmations:

1. My soul is an expansive and fascinating source of guidance.
2. Inspiration is always trying to work with me.
3. Spirit sends me messages in every form It can.

Quote (s):

'The work wants to be made, and it wants to be made by you.'
~ Elizabeth Gilbert

'I believe that curiosity is the secret. Curiosity is the truth and the way of creative living.' ~ Elizabeth Gilbert

'That's kind of the definition of a passion . . . an interest that you chase obsessively, almost because you have no choice.'
~ Elizabeth Gilbert

Questions:

1. Far too many creative people have been taught to distrust pleasure and to put their faith in struggle alone. What have been some of your struggles in which you have placed your faith?
2. What beliefs do you hold around creativity? What is your stance on creativity being an act of prayer?
3. In what ways do inspiration and creative ideas come to you?
4. When has curiosity led you to something more wonderful that you thought it would, or even something entirely unexpected?

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Week 2 - 'Get Out From Under the Boulder'**Theme: Enchantment**

Welcome and Opening Prayer - Fall Program Prayer (p. 5)

Read Group Shared Agreements (p. 5) and Check-In

Week 2 Reading: Pages 29 - 78

This week's Affirmations:

1. I cooperate fully, humbly, and joyfully with inspiration.
2. I share my gifts with an open heart and no expectations.
3. I open to the free flow of creative ideas in and through me.

Quote(s):

'I believe that creativity is a force of enchantment - not entirely human in its origins.' ~ Elizabeth Gilbert

'I believe that our planet is inhabited not only by animals and plants and bacteria and viruses, but also by *ideas*. Ideas are a disembodied, energetic life-form. They are completely separate from us, but capable of interacting with us, albeit strangely.'

~ Elizabeth Gilbert

Questions:

1. The author believes all ideas are swirling around us in the ethers searching for someone to bring ideas into the world. If you do not respond or notice, said idea will travel to another. What happens when you say 'yes', and can you give an example of when you have said 'yes' and when you have said 'no' to an idea or ideas?
2. The book notes that there is a different way to respond to an idea. That is, to respond to an idea as 'inspiration'. Pages 40-42 explain the meaning of 'a different way'. Think about what this means to you. If you have experienced true inspiration, how was that different than how you have handled other ideas? If you have not had this experience, do you now believe you can recognize and truly accept inspiration?

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NOTES**Questions - Continued**

3. On pages 64-68, Elizabeth Gilbert speaks of 'Hard Labor vs Fairy Dust'. There are many names: voodoo-style magic, eudaimonia, divine creative spirit guide, in the flow, or being in the zone. How often have you experienced 'Fairy Dust' or have seen others do so? If you watch sports, have you seen athletes 'in the flow'? Are you ready to open up and receive this creative spiritual guidance? How can you be even more receptive to it going forward?

Your Extra Mile:

1. For this week read pages 68-72, about being 'Pinned Beneath the Boulder'. Check in with yourself to see if you hold any beliefs that there is only 'the top' and the only way is down if we feel we have reached it. If so, consider how you might retrain your thinking into belief that inspiration is God-given and is always present within you and all around you. The gifts await you and are ready for you to receive and to give. Let's do it!

Scripture:

'Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.' ~ 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

Looking Ahead:

1. Discuss the possibility of a group activity or project based on the qualities of creative living being offered in the book. See what form your inspiration may take. This could be anything - the creation of a collective vision board of inspired ideas, a poem created as a group, a collage of what each member sees as their unique gifts, and more. Let your imagination guide you!
2. Send stories, successes, photos, etc. for the church website and/or sharing in the Sunday bulletins.
3. Read pages 79-136 for next week.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Spirit, we stand in love and gratitude for the divine inspiration and gifts that we receive and that we give. Thank you, thank you, amen.

NOTES**Your Extra Mile:**

1. Read pages 139-140, 'Taking Vows', and create your own sacred ritual in which you will take a vow to commit to your creative life the way you want to.
2. Share what you create with your group next week.

Scripture:

'Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.'
~ 1 Timothy 4:14-15

Looking Ahead:

1. Discuss the possibility of a group activity or project based on the qualities of creative living being offered in the book. See what form your inspiration may take. This could be anything - the creation of a collective vision board of inspired ideas, a poem created as a group, a collage of what each member sees as their unique gifts, and more. Let your imagination guide you!
2. Send stories, successes, photos, etc. for the church website and/or sharing in the Sunday bulletins.
3. Read pages 199-264 for next week

Closing Prayer:

Mother, Father God, thank you for blessing me with the light of your creative spirit within me. Please, help me hold myself together through all the phases of creation. May I be courageous enough to explore my own creativity, open enough to stay curious and to keep wondering, inspired and connected enough to keep creating no matter what, and trusting enough to know that you have my back and that you are there with me always. And so it is, amen.

Week 4 - 'It's Never Too Late'
Theme: Persistence

Welcome and Opening Prayer - Fall Program Prayer (p. 5)
Read Group Shared Agreements (p. 5) and Check-In

Week 4 Reading: Pages 137-198

This week's Affirmations:

1. I start living my creative life whenever I decide to start.
2. Frustration and progress work hand in hand.
3. Creative living may not always be easy, but it is always possible.

Quote(s):

'Over years of devotional work, though, I found that if I just stayed with the process and didn't panic, I could pass safely through each stage of anxiety and on to the next level. I heartened myself with reminders that these fears were completely natural human reactions to interaction with the unknown.' - Elizabeth Gilbert

'How you manage yourself *between* those bright moments, when things aren't going so great, is a measure of how devoted you are to your vocation, and how equipped you are for the weird demands of creative living.' - Elizabeth Gilbert

Questions:

1. Looking back, can you see your emotional patterns of creativity? How do you deal when you lose heart for a project after a few weeks of excitement?
2. Do you feel like you scare away your creativity? How?
3. Imagine: What could possibly take you so far out of yourself that you forget to eat, forget to pee, forget to mow the lawn, forget to resent your enemies, forget to brood over your insecurities? How would it feel? Connect to that feeling!

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Week 3 - 'Permission Granted'
Theme: Permission

Welcome and Opening Prayer - Fall Program Prayer (p. 5)
Read Group Shared Agreements (p. 5) and Check-In

Week 3 Reading: Pages 79-136

This week's Affirmations:

1. I am alive; therefore I am a creative person.
2. I am allowed to be here; I have a unique voice and vision to share.
3. Others' judgements of me are none of my business.

Quote(s):

'You do not need anybody's permission to live a creative life.'
~ Elizabeth Gilbert

'But in order to live this way - free to create, free to explore - you must possess a fierce sense of personal entitlement, which I hope you will learn to cultivate Creative entitlement simply means believing that you are allowed to be here, and that - merely by being here - you are allowed to have a voice and a vision of your own.'
~ Elizabeth Gilbert

Questions:

1. Do you see yourself as a creative being? If yes, how so? If no, what is preventing you to do so?
2. What could you create that would cause a revolution in your heart?
3. How do you deal with the inner nasty voices?

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NOTES**Your Extra Mile:**

1. Read page 94 in the book and take your stand, make your declaration, and claim yourself as a creative being!
2. From that new stand, how will you address the nasty voice? What can you put in place to remind you to redirect your attention to your creative voice?

Scripture:

'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ~ Genesis 1:27

Looking Ahead:

1. Discuss the possibility of a group activity or project based on the qualities of creative living being offered in the book. See what form your inspiration may take. This could be anything - the creation of a collective vision board of inspired ideas, a poem created as a group, a collage of what each member sees as their unique gifts, and more. Let your imagination guide you!
2. Send stories, successes, photos, etc. for the church website and/or sharing in the Sunday bulletins.
3. Read pages 137-198 for next week.

Closing Prayer:

(Elizabeth Gilbert) 'I am a child of God, just like anyone else. I am a constituent of this universe. I have invisible spirit benefactors who believe in me, and who labor alongside me. The fact that I am here at all is evidence that I have the right to be here. I have a right to my own voice and a right to my own vision. I have a right to collaborate with creativity, because I myself am a product and a consequence of Creation. I'm on a mission of artistic liberation.' And so it is, amen.