

Unitarian Society of Hartford
Dancing on One Leg
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Dancing on One Leg

Robert Bly wrote:

So what if you had an unhappy childhood?
You can dance with one leg.

What would THAT look like?
And what would the **one** leg have to be like?
Sometimes one good thing is enough.

One of my favorite stories is about a young Indian boy
who on his first day of school learned about **one**.
Holding his tiny chalk board, sitting in the dirt,
He drew the number **one**, and was amazed.

The teacher quickly went on, telling about other things.
But the little boy just kept drawing 1.
In a few weeks the teacher sadly reported to the parents that
They could take the boy out of school, send him to work
with the girls...because he could not learn.

Years later a beautiful school had been built in the village.
The boy had grown up and gone away, and there were rumors
that he had become important in some strange way.

So once when he came home to visit his family, they asked him
to speak in the laboratory amphitheatre class room,
which had a huge black board stretching all the way across the wall.
Everyone gathered in curiosity.
The boy, now grown, walked to the front,
picked up a piece of chalk, and wrote on the blackboard
the number 1.

The blackboard, and the entire wall, cracked open!
And one. The power of one.

If you had to tell what UUism means to you, on a brief elevator ride,
what one thing would you say?

If you had to boil down your faith,
all your beliefs and assumptions about reality,
all the implications of those beliefs,
all that they require of you....
What would you say? What one thing?

Some days I think my elevator speech, the one leg I could dance on, the one thing that could crack the wall..... would be,
There is more.

Have you ever had the dream where you find
a new room in your house?
It's your house. And you just happen to notice a door that
wasn't there before, which you open, and wow!

There's a whole new room.
And that experience brings a feeling,
of expansiveness, lightness, awareness that the
walls do come down on occasion, that things are possible.

You laugh at how long you've been limited by your own
lack of vision, and you know that something wonderful
is going to happen, that there is more.....

Last Sunday afternoon I was scurrying around in a classroom
getting ready for a meeting.
I needed a pitcher of water and some glasses so,
being near the elevator, I took it downstairs.

Knowing that nobody else was in the building,
I expected it to be pitch dark down there and was imagining myself feeling around for some
switch when the doors opened.

And not only was it not dark, it was all alight.
The smell of good food was in the air,
And there was a room full of people, eating and talking,
and little children playing with toys to one side.
Almost everyone in the room was African American
and I saw only one person I knew.

There is more.....another room in the house.
Quickly regaining my composure I smiled and made my way
to the kitchen, where someone offered me a bowl of collards,
my favorite food. **There's more.**

Maybe we **are** part of something more than our small community. Maybe there are more
rooms in our house.

Maybe we are co-creators with the mysteries and forces of life.
Maybe there **is more**....

Maybe it is possible to dance on one leg.
As a child, I lived in a remote area and had one playmate before
I started to school, whose name was Danny.
Our parents would visit after church meetings and we'd get to play.

I began to notice that Danny wasn't always as energetic as I.
Eventually one of Danny's legs went bad somehow.
They folded it up in a sling and got him some crutches.
You wouldn't believe how he could get around on that one leg.

One October Sunday afternoon we were in his back yard.
His dad had been cleaning gutters and the ladder
was leaned against the house.
Danny said, "Let's climb the ladder."
We went over and tried it out, but the folded leg was no good
and the crutches didn't help.

So I got Danny to stand on one leg behind me, drop the crutches,
and put his arms around my neck, and I climbed the ladder,
with Danny hanging on.
At the top I dumped him over onto the roof,
and we crawled up to the chimney.
We stood up, and holding onto the chimney, we began hopping around it and laughing down
into the black hole.

Our parents came tearing out,
and I was in big trouble for endangering Danny.
He died shortly after that—leukemia.

There is more. When we have ideas, "let's climb that ladder,"
when we try them out together, **there is more**.
When we recognize our smallness and our fears
and go ahead anyway.

Some people say that at best we are in the doldrums,
At worst we are going to hell in hand basket.
What with the state of the world and politics not to our liking...
Which ever side of the aisle we're on,
politics and the world are rarely to our liking.
We are stressed, struggling,
know scarcity and a strange lassitude
such that we don't feel like holding our arms up anymore.

But...what if there is more?
What if, by continuing even though we make mistakes,

Even though sometimes good intentions are not enough,
Even though we experience despair,
What if by continuing to let go of outcomes,
continuing to trust that the process will take us...
We find **there is more.**

What if it's not all up to us?
What if we are yoked with amazing resources?
What if, in spite of not seeing how it could be,
we just keep acting as if one can dance on one leg?

Our musicians just sang,
"In this place, the gifts of heaven are ours.
While love grant it, we can sing and chant it.
WE are delighted and invited.."
to a mirthful dancing ground round that chimney on the roof.

Life together, in a one legged dance, can be lovely indeed.

Benediction:

What life have you if you have not life together?
There is no life that is not in community,
and no community not lived in praise of God.

T. S. Eliot