

“Befriend the Gifts of Time”

Reflection by Rev. Rebecca Bryan

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My grandfather loved trains. His great-grandfather, my great-great-grandfather, operated steamboats up and down the Missouri River. My grandfather's father, my great-grandfather, worked as a superintendent for the St. Louis Public Service Company's streetcars, until the streetcars were replaced by buses in 1966.

My great-grandparents had a trolley permanently installed in their backyard, and my grandfather grew up playing on it. This likely explains both his fascination with trains and my love of the Box Car Series of children's books, which began in 1924 and are still being published today.

My grandfather spent his life loving trains. He had a dream of taking a train around the United States and had purchased a USA Rail Pass from Amtrak in his later years. He never had the opportunity to use that pass, as his health failed. It was buried with his ashes on the property he and my grandmother owned on Cape Cod, along with a necklace my two-year-old daughter had strung for him on twine. We all knew there was little more he needed to be at peace. His dream of taking a train around the country gave him such pleasure, though he never got to actually do it. You can view that as sad or hopeful. He died with dreams, and he was a happy man.

Befriend our dreams. Allow them to show us who we are, including what we struggle with and what we are trying to resolve in our lifetime.

I didn't take up my grandfather's love of trains but did take up his love of writing. Like him, I struggled for years with the desire to write a book and the inhibitions from doing so. He eventually did self-publish his book. I am still in the struggle.

I wish I weren't struggling about whether, when, and how to write this book – but I am. It teaches me a lot about myself. I am persistent if nothing else. I love words and appreciate the value of stories. I am also hard on myself and at times my own worst enemy.

Where your dreams live, your heart lives. Where your dreams are hidden, a part of who you are is hidden from yourself and the world. Let us honor our dreams. Let us see their gifts. Measure them by their existence, not their results.

Cairns are stone markers made by people to be used as markers, to show the way forward or to honor those who have died. They have been used for thousands of years, sometimes to the concern of naturalists, always as a representation of what is in our hearts.

I'm going to invite us to co-create cairns for our dreams. These may be dreams you are seeking to realize or dreams that come to fruition. They may be dreams you have struggled with for months, years, or even generations.

Whatever, however, they deserve a place in our lives and our collective community.

When you are ready, come forward with your stone, and place it on one of the cairns being created. There are more up front if you need to add more than one.

I invite those online to watch the images of the cairns on the screen and to imagine creating our cairn of dreams. Perhaps you will even build one later today.

As you place your stone on the marker, do so with gentleness, self-love, and, if need be, forgiveness. Place your stone to let a dream go. Place a stone to thank a dream for coming. Place a stone to represent your commitment to bringing a dream into fruition.

As we go forward, may we celebrate and treasure our dreams, for all that they are and all they offer us.

Amen and blessed be.