

## “Freedom From Fear”

by Rev. “Twinkle” Marie Manning delivered Sunday, April 26th, 2026

“Freedom From Fear”

It’s one of those phrases that feel *less like language* and more like a horizon—something we walk toward, even if we never fully arrive.

Spoken into history by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who imagined a world where nations would reduce armaments so profoundly that no country could threaten another with violence.

We are a long way from that dream coming true.

Yet even if every weapon were laid down, fear would not disappear. Not immediately.

Because fear is not only built into systems—it lives in us.  
In our bodies.  
In our thoughts.  
In our relationships.

We have been conditioned towards fear and to worry.

It has been said that worrying is like praying for things you don’t want. Yet, in the world we live in, it is valid to feel fear.

In 2022 I wrote a sermon entitled, *The Shoreline of Courage* that identified *that* shoreline as the place of the present moment where we acknowledge that which we are most afraid of.

That shoreline, like the landscapes of each of our lives, looks different for every person.

It struck me while writing that sermon that most of us do not carry with us, visit or encounter, only *one* thing we are afraid of.

No, the maps of our lives are marked with many fears.

Our fears, like all our emotions and feelings, are accompanied by Biochemical Reactions and Emotional Responses.

Whether our fears are phobias or generalized anxiety disorders and trauma responses, they are often accompanied with other co-morbidities. Each stripping away pieces of our peace.

Peace of mind,  
Peace in our hearts,  
and the ability to see beyond the fear.

Always ... Always... Compassionate and Empathetic *action* is needed when facing our fears.

Because facing our fears requires us to be open to discerning what is real and what is imagined.

*That sermon* looked at several of the phobias that are commonplace. And how, when we reach *The Shoreline of Courage* we are confronted with an understanding of our fears, obstacles - real and imagined - and we discover the ways we can muster courage.

*This sermon* addresses fear on a different level.

Courage is part of it.

Yet, not merely to overcome a fear (like fear of spiders or fear of heights) But, rather, in regards to things we cannot change that are reasonable reasons for fear (like corrupt politics and the environmental crisis).

How can we acknowledge fear, yet not be held in the grip of it?

What would it mean for us to be Free from Fear?  
Not the absence of the thing feared.  
But experiencing liberation even amidst it!

Now, to dismiss fear entirely would be lying to ourselves.

Fear is not foolish.  
It is ancient.  
It is the body's way of saying:  
*Pay attention.*  
*Something matters.*  
*Get ready.*

Yes, We live in a world where fear is often valid. It's often called for.

There are neighborhoods where safety is uncertain.  
There are wars beyond control and our imaginations.  
There are systems that feel extractive,  
                    politics that feel domineering,  
                    and an environment that is undoubtedly in distress.

Fear, in such a world, is not a defect.  
It is a signal.

But a signal is not a command.  
It cues us to *listen*, lest it be *weaponized*.

Fear weaponized:  
It is amplified through media that prioritizes alarm over understanding.

It is used in political messaging that divides people into enemies and allies.

It is embedded in systems that convince us there is never enough.

It is whispered through narratives that make us suspicious of one another.

It is even used in personal relationships to control or silence.

Fear, in this form, does not guide—it governs.

And when fear governs, everything begins to feel like an emergency.

An “emergency” is by definition: a sudden, urgent, dangerous situation requiring immediate action.

But what happens when everything feels urgent?  
We begin to live as though the house is always on fire or a tsunami is perpetually ensuing and chasing us.

Our bodies tighten.  
Our thinking narrows.  
Our compassion shrinks.

We *react* instead of *respond*.

A caution that the counter to fear is  
*Not* denial.  
*Not* pretending everything is fine.

The counter to fear is preparation.

Preparation is a quiet form of courage.  
It says: *Even if something happens, I am not helpless.*

Preparation looks like building strong relationships so we are not alone.

It looks like learning practical skills—emotional, financial, relational.

It looks like caring for our bodies so our nervous systems can recover from stress.

It looks like choosing depth over constant exposure to fear-driven information.

It looks like practicing presence.

Ancient Roman Stoic philosopher, Seneca discerned,  
*“We suffer more often in imagination than in reality.”*

Preparation gently brings us back to reality—back to what we can actually do.

And, while doing so, we are present to the fact that there are things that we cannot immediately change.

- We cannot *singlehandedly* stop war (so that our sons do not have to go fight - and our daughters).
- We cannot *instantly* transform unjust systems.
- We cannot *immediately* resolve environmental crisis or political imbalance.

The path to *Freedom from Fear* calls us to acknowledge conditions that remain yet do not let it define us.

Freedom from fear is aspirational.  
It is also actionable.

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It is also actionable.*

Regarding the coalescence of climate and human-created catastrophes and the inevitable collapse of environmental and social structures, renowned author and consultant Margaret (Meg) Wheatley who applies systems theory and complexity science to leadership, promoting resilient, community-focused approaches to global and environmental crises.

She acknowledges there is no Quick Fix for the Planet.  
That very likely there is no way to prevent the collapse.

Even so, she says:  
“We need to restore sanity by awakening the human spirit.”

She says,  
“We can achieve this only if we undertake the most challenging and meaningful work of our leader lives by *Creating Islands of Sanity*.”

An **Island of Sanity** is a gift of possibility and refuge created by people’s commitment to form healthy community to do meaningful work.

It requires sane leaders with unshakable faith in people’s innate generosity, creativity, and kindness. It sets itself apart as an island to protect itself from the life-destroying dynamics, policies, and behaviors that oppress and deny the human spirit.

No matter what is happening around us, we can discover practices that enliven our human spirits and produce meaningful contributions for this time.”

The Approach is based on the simple premise that:  
“Whatever the problem, **community** is the answer.”

Community has always been the answer!

American theologian and farmer, Clarence Jordan knew this as he longed for an integrated world. Living during segregation in the deep south in the city of Americus, Georgia, he and his wife Florence, along with Martin and Mabel England, envisioned an interracial community where blacks and whites could live and work together in a spirit of partnership.

And they did just so. They founded the First interracial farming community in 1942. They called it Koinonia.

Koinonia Farm was a Christian community and working farm.

Members committed to the following principles:

1. Treat all human beings with dignity and justice;
2. Choose love over violence;
3. Share all possessions and live simply;
4. Be stewards of the land and its natural resources.

It served as a beacon of racial equality, nonviolence, and shared living during the Jim Crow era.

Clarence called it a Demonstration Plot.

An agricultural term designed often on small-scale, to showcase, test, or compare agricultural techniques or sustainable farming practices.

As a Community, their Demonstration Plot demonstrated how Americans could live, work and worship integrated.

Yet they did not live in a vacuum.

Even if they wanted to, the bigots of the surrounding towns in Sumter County, GA persecuted them, especially in the 1950s even engaged in acts of terrorism such as:

- dynamiting Koinonia's roadside produce stand,
- firing shots into the compound,

and

- threatening phone calls and letters.

At one point the local Ku Klux Klan drove a 70+ car motorcade to the farm to intimidate them.

Clarence and the Koinonian's knew they couldn't change segregation for the entire country, or even in their neighboring communities, but they could create this Demonstration Plot and show how it works.

They did not wait for the world to change.  
They demonstrated and lived it another way.

Over the years it transformed.

In the 1960s, with the help Millard and Linda Fuller, Changing its name from *Koinonia Farm* to *Koinonia Partners*, the community refocused itself as a social service organization.

The organization initiated several programs in partnership with its neighbors, chief among them *Koinonia Partnership Housing*, which organized the construction of affordable houses for low-income neighboring families previously living in shacks and dilapidated residences.

Using volunteer labor and monetary donations, Koinonia built 194 homes from 1969 to 1992.

The Fullers brought this vision to a worldwide scale, founding *Habitat for Humanity* in 1976. Since then, volunteers and homeowners have built more than 500,000 houses in more than 100 countries. It is headquartered to this day in the city of Americus, GA.

Koinonia, making the improbable possible with their Island of Sanity.

“Whatever the problem, *community* is the answer.”

Because even in fear—something wonderful can emerge.

“Emergence”: the process of coming into being.

From fear can emerge clarity  
—what matters becomes unmistakable.

From fear can emerge courage  
—the quiet kind that acts anyway and where kindness comes forward.

From fear can emerge connection  
—people reaching for one another.

From fear can emerge creativity  
—new ways of living, building, responding.

Fear can be the beginning of the new story.

When given time to  
create spaciousness between fear and reaction.

A breath.  
A pause.  
A widening.

In that space, we return to presence.

And presence - it asks:  
What is actually happening right now?  
What is real—not imagined, not amplified?  
What is within my reach?

What is possible?  
And even more deeply:

What seems impossible that, when called into community, can be made possible?

Remembering, *Freedom from Fear* does not mean fear disappears.

It means fear no longer decides.

It becomes a signal—but not a ruler.

A presence—but not a prison.

Within the blessing of Presence:

We begin personally.

We create habits that steady us instead of inflame us.

We limit the constant intake of fear-driven information.

We cultivate stillness —through reflection, prayer, meditation or quiet presence.

We care for our bodies so they can hold stress without breaking.  
and

We choose honesty in our relationships.

Doing so helps create an inner environment where fear does not rule.

We expand socially.

In a world that often divides, connection becomes resistance.

We build relationships rooted in trust.

And then we imagine communally.

What would it look like for our neighborhoods, workplaces, or communities to become demonstration plots?

I believe this Congregation serves as a Demonstration Plot in our community!

- Publicly promoting All Are Welcome.
- Being Allies to Vulnerable People and to the Environment.
- Vocally. Demonstratively.

- Feeding our Neighbors.
- Gathering together for support and for fellowship.

We do all this and more as a demonstration to our wider community of what can be done everywhere.

And in doing this, we transform fear.

Fear about isolation  
- becomes community-building.

Fear about instability  
- becomes preparation and skill-sharing.

Fear about injustice  
- becomes collective action rooted in care.

We do not eliminate fear.

We respond to it creatively.

And by modeling this, we extend our visions of Freedom From Fear to:  
A world where fear is no longer  
the easiest tool to use.

A world where people are  
prepared, connected, present.

A world where small *Islands of Sanity*  
begin to link together.

As iconic singer, Nina Simone famously said about freedom as a state of being during an interview in 1968, she said:

*“I’ll tell you what freedom is to me: no fear.  
I mean really, no fear!”*

She’s talking about that feeling.

Not free from reality—but free from the grip of fear.

And, from within that space, miracles are possible.

I will leave you with two questions to consider:

**Who would you be if you were totally free?**  
and  
**What would you create for a Demonstration Plot  
as an Island of Sanity?**

Think about that.

And, when you are ready, come talk with me about what you envision!!

[www.TwinklesPlace.org/freedom-from-fear](http://www.TwinklesPlace.org/freedom-from-fear)