

The “Road Less Traveled” Is Often Dark

by Peter Covington

Venturing on to “the road less traveled” usually involves lots of walking in the dark, heightened senses and fear around the corner. I didn’t consciously choose that road, but my nature and curiosity have often led me into unknown territory where there are few signposts, little light, and contradictory advice about how to proceed. I gravitate to scenery that seems more interesting.

For example, when I taught high school English, I often gravitated to the emotional connection to literature I could create rather than following the “correct” and more reverential approach. Once I was teaching a novel that was a long string of adolescent memory. So I walked my students to the middle school they had attended, sat them on the bleachers and had them journal about things that had happened in that space.



A teacher at the middle school had a few sharp words for my unorthodox methods as did the principal who had lost an entire classroom full of students. Over time I learned to look over my shoulder a little more closely and fear not so much the results, but the perceptions of what I was doing.

So if there was a “program” to follow I did that, and I did my best to include things that were not naturally fun like grammar. One class had no interest in “The Grapes of Wrath” and I had no further interest in dragging them through it, so I dropped kicked across the classroom to huge applause, but had no idea what to do next. I invented something, but I thought of reasons to quit afterwards and feared being caught by the literature police for sometime. I was truly walking in the dark, outside of guidelines and good advice, marching to a different drummer, but as I reminded my students, “Most people lead lives of quiet desperation.” So why take that path? Walking in the dark has its moments of anxiety, wondering where you are or where to go next of if there is some greater good that is being neglected

Many of us can relate to the process of coming out when we did not know what was coming next or perhaps did not understand what our same sex attraction could mean. We left homes and families and ways of living, sometimes by our choice, sometimes not, sometimes just drifting away, but we have professionally or personally chosen to follow the road less travelled. Of course, we are sometimes unsure of our original decision to choose that road as we are pointed to places we have never been, and then have to learn how to walk yet again.

But oh, thank God for the places these roads have taken me once I overcame fear and for the things I was able to experience and do.