

Betwixt and Between – April 3, 2016

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In the late 20th century, the concept of liminal time was developed by anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep and later taken up by Victor Turner.

The word liminal comes from the Latin word limen, meaning “a threshold.” Now in anthropology, liminality is the quality of ambiguity that occurs in the middle stage of rituals, when participants no longer hold their pre-ritual status but have not yet begun the transition to the status they will hold when the ritual is complete. During a ritual’s liminal stage, participants “stand at the threshold” between their previous way of structuring their identity, time, or community, and a new way which the ritual establishes. The word threshold has several definitions. It can be the sill of a doorway or the entrance of a building. But ultimately, it means any place or point of entering or beginning. Therefore, liminal time literally means the act of leaving one experience behind and having not yet made the transformation to the next. It’s that moment when something changes from one state to another. Examples would be dawn, the morning sun rising high enough in the sky to bring daylight. Or the evening sun sinking into the horizon bringing nightfall. Liminal spaces are thin places occurring on boundaries between spaces. This includes places like the boundaries between properties where fences or trees mark them. Also edges between water and land or even between plains and mountains. We also have liminal times not of our choosing, and fail to see what they are until they are behind us. We can learn to recognize and use these periods for the best outcome personally, and for all of those that we are in relationship with. Because while the transformations come in various forms, it’s always with an improvement in some way. Now as a congregation you no longer hold the same pre ritual status that you had over the past years, but are now on the threshold ready to open yourselves up to possibilities and restructuring your community into something new. In his meditation book *Dancing in the empty spaces*, Rev. David Rankin tells us that we are creatures of sheer ambiguity, who grow only through enduring the tension and exploring the boundaries of the unknown. So, he continues saying we should be nimble and quick, and dance in the empty spaces. That’s where you and I are now, in the empty space ready to change an attitude from morose to cheerful, behaviors from aggressive and unkind to compassionate and caring as we intersect, and journey together for a while. During this period there will be highs and lows, but hopefully we are able to share these as well as the joy and pain that occur. As life altering as all of these changes are, I expect there will also be some changes that will occur from within, because I believe some individuals will also experience spiritual growth. Embrace the collective wisdom in this congregation, embrace your sacred power and all that is possible for you to create within the next year and a half. There are always opportunities for transformation within communities of faith, and together we are poised on the precipice for great change. We have this great opportunity to reevaluate plans and goals for the future. For some this may appear scary, but being willing to embrace the changes proactively, will have lasting effects that are emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually transformative. I want us to see this threshold as potential, as the opportunity to birth something new, a time for embracing what is coming in. Choose to see this challenge of transition as a source of hope, and choose to visualize a healthy sense of wholeness for this community of faith. From my heart to yours, may it be so.