

THE JOURNEY: A Guide for Reflection

Thresholds

(September 2025 | Volume 5, Issue 1)

Welcome to the start of the 2025-26 church year!

As you begin to meet together in your Journey Group, I hope you find inspiration in the words and ideas shared, a sense of companionship for the life journey, and useful challenges to your thinking and believing that open up new paths of thought and a sense of belonging.

Mirroring our congregational movement across the threshold of a new building and of a new church year, our theme for September is THRESHOLDS.

We meet thresholds in life whenever we move from one state of being to another, from one place to another, or when we encounter ideas that bring us into a new state of understanding or consciousness. Thresholds are represented in many of life's transitions such as relocating to another city, walking across the stage for graduation, entering the military, voting for the first time, entering a new workplace, becoming a parent, and so forth. Some people note incidents or experiences that represent significant milestones in their development such as embracing their sexuality, discovering their life's work, or starting or changing a spiritual practice.

Most of these transitions in our lives include changes in our understanding of ourselves, of each other, and of the world at large. When we cross a threshold, we may look back at our lives and see that we have changed physically, mentally, spiritually, philosophically. Sometimes it can feel as though our eyes, ears, and minds have discovered a whole new reality that we were unaware of before.

We like to think of thresholds as leading to moving or traveling forward in the right way. However, there are times when the choice we make to cross a threshold has the potential to lead to painful, hurtful, or unhealthy outcomes. It is especially helpful in those times to have a community of acceptance and support that is there to listen, reflect, and to offer their perspective on what we are moving toward. Heeding wise counsel can save us from making decisions that don't service us well. On the other hand, some of us "learn the hard way" and apparently must experience things for ourselves, painful or otherwise, to pass through the threshold.

Use September's theme to ask yourself how you have already changed, what thresholds you have already experienced, and the shifts you have noticed. Consider how these realizations influence your moving forward in life and approaching new thresholds that come your way.

Blessings as we move into fall - a time of beauty and of preparation, and a reminder of the passing of time. Rev. Victoria Ingram

This Month's Important Questions

These questions are not intended to be “homework” nor do you need to try to answer every single one. Instead, make time to meditate on the list and then pick the one or two question(s) that speak to you most. The goal is to figure out which question represents the call of your inner voice. Once you’ve figured that out, consider what that question is trying to get you to notice or acknowledge. If you want some help in discerning which of the following are the questions for you, it can help to read the list to a friend or loved one and ask them which question they think is the one you need to wrestle with!

As always, if the questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear what your life may be saying. Or maybe the question or call you need to hear is waiting in one of the quotes listed in this packet. Consider looking there!

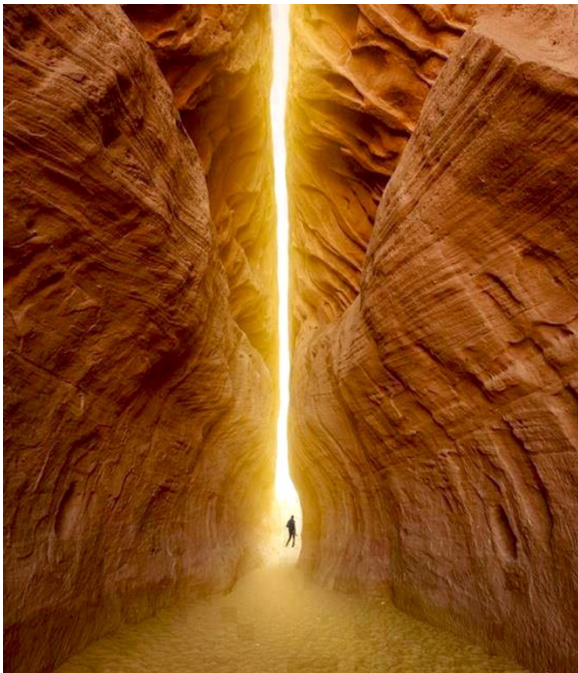


Photo courtesy of Golden Gate Centre for Spiritual Living

1. What was your favorite threshold time in your life? How are you honouring the joy and gift of that time in your life right now?
2. Were you a child that loved to visit dark attics and basements? Or were you the kid who would do anything to avoid it? How about today? Do the attics and basements of your life lure you or scare you?
3. Who taught you the most about leaping through and trusting thresholds?
4. What door are you keeping open that needs to be closed because what keeps coming through hasn't been good for your soul. What help do you need to finally close that door shut and lock it tight?
5. What door have you not opened for a while? What room in your life has grown dusty and needs a visit? What door have you not opened for a while? What is your next challenge in daring to be human?
6. What if thresholds are meant to rest in, not rush through?
7. How would someone be able to tell that you've made a journey through a spiritual threshold?
8. Is it time to turn from wishing you could have a new beginning to working on making a new ending?

Words For Inspiration

It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to.

- *Bilbo Baggins, in The Fellowship of the Ring by J.R.R. Tolkein*

And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.

- *Anais Nin essayist, novelist*

Our only security is our ability to change.

- *John Lilly - physician, neuroscientist, psychoanalyst*

If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.

- *Proverb, author unknown*

There comes a time when the pain of continuing exceeds the pain of stopping. At that moment, a threshold is crossed. What seemed unthinkable becomes thinkable. Slowly, the realization emerges that the choice to continue what you have been doing is the choice to live in discomfort, and the choice to stop what you have been doing is the choice to breathe deeply and freely again. Once that realization has emerged, you can either honour it or ignore it, but you cannot forget it. What has become known can not become unknown again.

- *Gary Zukav - writer and spiritual teacher*

Those who stand at the threshold of life always waiting for the right time to change are like the person who stands at the bank of a river waiting for the water to pass so they can cross on dry land.

- *Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin - Mormon leader and businessman*

I am still every age that I have been. Because I was once a child, I am always a child. Because I was once a searching adolescent, given to moods and ecstasies, these are still part of me, and always will be... This does not mean that I ought to be trapped or enclosed in any of these ages... but that they are in me to be drawn on... Far too many people think that forgetting what it is like to think and feel and touch and smell and taste and see and hear like a three-year-old or a thirteen-year-old or a twenty three-year-old means being grown up. When I'm with these people I feel that if this is what it means to be a grown-up, then I don't ever want to be one. Instead of which, if I can retain a child's awareness and joy, and be fifty-one, then I will really learn what it means to be grown up.

- *From A Circle of Quiet Madeleine L'Engle - author*



Photo by Joshua Sortino, courtesy of Unsplash

Much as we may wish to make a new beginning, some part of us resists doing so as though we were making the first step toward disaster... We resist transition not because we can't accept the change, but because we can't accept letting go of that piece of ourselves that we have to give up when and because the situation has changed.

- *William Bridges - author, speaker, organizational consultant*

There's a trick to the Graceful Exit, I suspect. It begins with the vision to recognize when a job, a life stage, a relationship is over and to let go. It means leaving what's over without denying its validity or its past importance in our lives... It's hard to learn that we don't leave the best parts of ourselves behind, back in the dugout or the Capital or the office. We own what we learned back there, the experience and the growth are grafted onto our lives. And when we exit, we can take ourselves along.

- *Ellen Goodman - journalist*

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

- *Maria Robinson - teacher, nurse, author*

A threshold is not a simple boundary; it is a frontier that divides two different territories, rhythms, and atmospheres. Indeed, it is a lovely testimony to the fullness and integrity of an experience of a stage of life that intensifies toward the end into a real frontier that cannot be crossed without the heart being passionately engaged and woken up. At this threshold, a great complexity of emotion comes alive: confusion, fear, excitement, sadness, hope.

- *John O'Donohue - poet, priest, Hegelian philosopher*

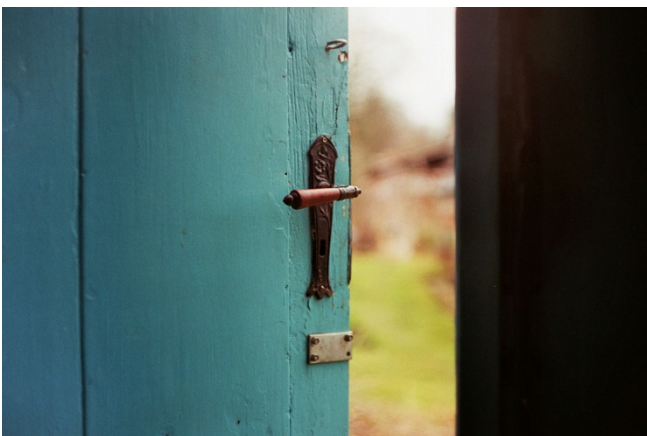


Photo by Jan Tinneberg, courtesy of Unsplash

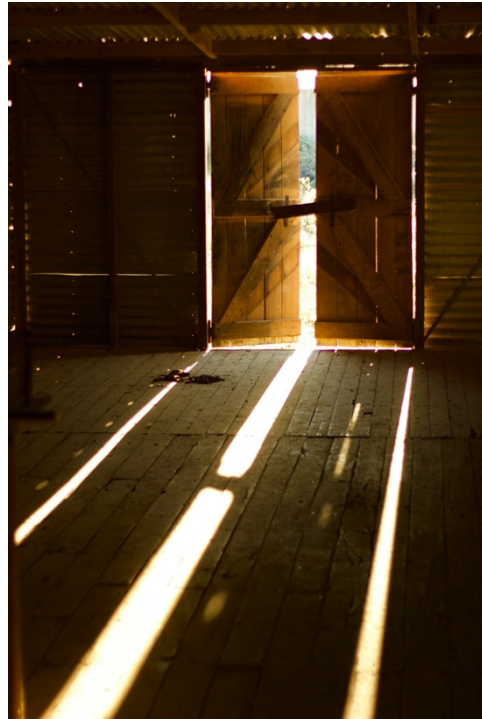


Photo by Christian Bass, courtesy of Unsplash

Psychic or spiritual thresholds are not known for their grand entrances... Spiritual thresholds are not even necessarily known by their size. They are known, I think, by their quality. It's almost as if the air is different. An electricity? An intensity? A vibration? Certainly, it's invisible to the naked eye, but it's there, the change, the shift, the entrance, ready to be sensed and engaged.

- *Rev. Karen K. Johnston*

There is in Celtic mythology the notion of 'thin places' in the universe where the visible and the invisible world come into their closest proximity... Mountains and rivers are particularly favored as thin places marking invariably as they do, the horizontal and perpendicular frontiers. But perhaps the ultimate of these thin places in the human condition are the experiences people are likely to have as they encounter suffering, joy, and mystery.

- *Rev. Peter J. Gomes - theologian, professor, chaplain*

Optional Spiritual Exercise

This selection of possible activities to do in your Journey Group provide ideas for entering into your own experience of thresholds in life. Choose one that draws your attention and follow the steps suggested to create an outcome that will be meaningful for you. You may choose to do more than one of the exercises, if you wish.

Option A: A Threshold Snapshot

One of the best ways to take ourselves back to the threshold moments of our lives is to revisit the pictures we took of them.

Find a picture of yourself after having gone through an important threshold or right in the middle of it! Likely, you will stumble on a number of other pictures of the same moment. Take your time going through them all. Try to notice the subtle differences, and what those subtle differences might be trying to tell you or may mean to you. Bring your “threshold picture” to your group and be prepared to share the story that goes with it.

What new things did you notice about yourself as you looked at the picture again? Who was with you at the time? How did they help you get through that threshold moment or celebrate it? How are you still the same person in the picture? How have you changed?

Option B: Find or Create a “Thin Place” of Your Own

When talking about thresholds in a religious context, inevitably the topic of “thin places” will come up. It’s a term that is used to draw our attention to those spaces and moments when “the veil” between the ordinary and the sacred grows porous and we encounter the world and ourselves in a new way, even a transformative way. This exercise is about having that encounter for ourselves.

Start with a bit of reading. Using the suggested articles below, spend some time this month learning about how others define and experience the thin places in their lives.

From there, figure out a way to find or create a thin place of your own. Many of us will likely remember a thin place experience from our past right away. Reconnecting with such memories is a gift in and of itself. But don’t stop there. The deeper gift lies in knowing that thin places are available in our daily living all the time.

So give yourself that gift, that encounter, this month. And come to your group meeting ready to share how it offered you a new experience of yourself and the world.

Suggested Reading on Thin Places

- [Thin Places](#)
- [This column will change your life: Where heaven and Earth collide](#)
- [Where Are the Thin Places?](#)

Option C: Find a “Threshold Call” in Our Recommended Resources

Our recommended resources are full of wisdom about what it means to be a people of and a person of thresholds. Engaging these resources and finding the one that especially speaks to you is a spiritual practice in and of itself.

So, if the above exercises call to you, engage the recommended resources section of this packet as your spiritual exercise for the month. Set aside some regular time throughout a week to go through them and meditate on them until you find the one that most expands or deepens your understanding of “a threshold experience.” After you’ve found it, consider printing it out and carrying it with you or pinning it up so you can continue to reflect on it throughout the weeks leading up to your group meeting. Come to your group ready to share where the journey led you.

Recommended Resources

If you want to do additional reading about thresholds and building a life of joy, we suggest the following:

- To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings, by John O'Donohue
- Thresholds: How to Thrive Through Life's Transitions to Live Fearlessly and Regret-Free, by Sherre Hirsch
- [Darkening the Doorways: Black Trailblazers and Missed Opportunities in Unitarian Universalism](#) – Article by Mark D. Morrison-Reed
- Healing The Heart Of Democracy, by Parker Palmer
- On the Threshold of Transformation: Daily Meditations for Men, by Richard Rohr
- Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End: On the thresholds of sickness and death, by Atul Gawande
- [The Journey of Transformation](#), article by Jim Marsden

The materials for September, 2025 were adapted from: Soul Matters Sharing Circle, Small Group Guide from May, 2020

Join Us

Join a Journey Group

Join a Journey Group. Journey Groups are a great way to go deeper with our monthly theme by sharing with a small group of people for a couple of hours each month. Groups meet online on Zoom and are scheduled at different times during the month.

For more information, [visit our website](#) or look for the link in First Light.

Registration for the 2025-26 congregational year opens September 12, 2025.

Upcoming Themes

October - Embracing Change | November - Learning from Ancestors

December - Communities of Care | January - Awakening Wonder | February - Discerning Truth

March - Seeking Wisdom | April - Nourishing Nature | May - Liberating Love

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