

Quest

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Crossing The Threshold

BY KAREN ANDERSEN, MINISTER, FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH IN NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

Perhaps you are familiar with the concept of The Hero’s Journey, made famous by Joseph Campbell. A Hero’s Journey is a story that is told in all mythologies and times and places, an archetype that reflects our own journey and draws humanity together. The Hero’s Journey story begins when the hero leaves the mundane world and ventures out of their comfort zone. On their way they are likely to be given supernatural aid in one form or another, given instruction from mentors, and as they travel they gather allies. But eventually it comes time to cross the threshold; it’s time for the biggest part of the journey to begin. This is when the hero leaves behind everything familiar and moves into a realm filled with mystery.

A great example of this happens early in Tolkien’s *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Frodo has been given the ring, instruction from Gandalf, a magical sword and chain mail, and has set off with his closest friend, Samwise Gamgee. After they have traveled a while, there comes a point where Samwise stops, and he says, “This is it. If I take one more step, this will be the farthest away from home I’ve ever been.” There’s great trepidation within Sam. He hesitates, and marks the moment when he crosses the threshold into what is truly unknown. Sam understands that it’s the point of no return, and if he takes even one step further, he will be committed to the adventure, and there will be no avoiding what’s to come.

Frodo tells him, “Remember what Bilbo used to say, ‘It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step out onto the road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.’” And Bilbo was right... anything can happen, and there’s no way out but through.

Gateways have power. When we pass through from one phase of life into another, it marks a time of great change, an unfolding into something new. We know what it means to come to a gateway, face the inevitable trials, and, finally, pass through...it happens in all sorts of ways. The most common gateways are the greatest rites of passage, which happen to all of us: birth and death. This is where we pass through from the unknown and then back into the unknown. This is where most philosophies and religions are able to really spread their wings and fly around in endless speculation. These are powerful gateways and they can invoke genuine awe in those who witness them, all religion and philosophy aside.

There are other gateways we go through of our own accord—those gateways we work and plan toward, like graduations, marriages and starting a family. These are thresholds we build ourselves that are of great importance, and will stick in the mind because the results are truly life-changing. One moment you’re single, then you arrive at a church, make your vows, get a ring, and BAM! You’re married! Yesterday you were a student, tomorrow, you’re officially a teacher, or a chemist, or an economist. One minute you’ve got a giant belly and you’re screaming in pain, the next, you’re a mother, holding your new baby, and crying with joy at finally seeing that face you’ve been wondering about. The gateway is crossed in a moment, but the work to get there was probably done over years.

Then there are the all the small transitions that take place over the course of a life; thousands of tiny, great moments that change us, bit by bit. Maybe it’s realizing we have a skill, encouraging words from a teacher, a terrific new job, a special day with a parent or child, making a wonderful new friend, or finally getting to kiss that person you’ve had a crush on. These might be small events, but they go far in shaping

The threshold
is the place
of expectation.

—Johann Wolfgang
von Goethe

A monthly for religious liberals

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who we are, creating a patchwork of experiences.

But every year, each of us crosses two thresholds that can be the impetus for change. One is our birthday, the way we each mark the turning of our own years. Maybe we dread it, maybe we celebrate it, maybe we do a little bit of each. One way or another, if we're lucky, another birthday comes around. The other threshold is the turning of a



New Year. Both birthdays and New Years are times when we stand at the start of something new, an opportunity to turn a page, make

a resolution to improve ourselves in large or small ways.

What is it about a new year, our own or everyone's, which makes it so ripe for change? Maybe it's because those times of turning tend to be points when we look behind and take stock of what we've done over the past year, and at the same time, look ahead at what's to come, wonder at where the journey might take us. Sort of like

The power that gateways contain, the potential for growth, comes from appreciating that every day is a new beginning, a new chance to change.

we're standing on a fulcrum, caught like Samwise Gamgee with one foot in the air, knowing that the next step we take will be the start of something new. One step in any direction will be a path that opens before us and anything can happen. I think we feel the power of that potential loud and clear when we stand at the threshold of a

new year, and it makes it easier to make resolutions. It's the challenges and trials to come that will test our resolve.

And we know that's where the gateway leads, right? No matter which direction you put your foot down on, no matter what path you take, there will be challenges and rewards ahead. There are no avoiding the pitfalls, though, and the pitfalls are what test those resolutions we make. Old habits die especially hard and comfort zones

are not easily broken out of. So, maybe the key to keeping a resolution is to find a way to re-new it. Find a way to make each day the beginning of something.

The old chestnut to "live every day like it's your last," I would think, would not help us keep resolutions like eating healthier or quitting smoking. It would be more like, "smoke 'em if you got 'em, hand me another beer, and cut me a big slice of that cake, please!"

No, I think the power that gateways contain, the potential for growth, comes from appreciating that every day is a new beginning, a new chance to change. Perhaps if we breathe deeply and manage to stay upright as we get swept away with every awakening, we may just be able to keep to our resolutions. It's so hard, isn't it, though, to find a way to make every day count, the start of a new year that begins again every day? We are easily distracted and distractible people. But here's a blessing: if we fail, we try again tomorrow. We are ever-renewed, and the journey begins over and over. ■



On the Threshold

BY AMY ZUCKER MORGENSTERN,



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Thresholds are sacred. Religions of all kinds, cultures of all times and places, have ways to mark the moments when we are on a threshold between one state of being and another.

As a culture, the United States is a bit lacking in rituals for such moments. We mark weddings, of course, and deaths, and births and graduations. But it's a little thin considering all the many, many thresholds that we cross in our lives.

On the other hand, we are a greatly diverse culture, weaving together many cultures with all their riches of millennia of human development. And so we can all learn from the very beautiful traditions that exist among us to mark thresholds, whether or not they are from the cultures in which we personally grew up. For example, some cultures, such as Korea and China, mark the 100th day of life. The Diné, the people of the Navajo nation, mark a baby's first laugh. Many cultures mark a time of coming of age: 12 or 13 years for a Bat or Bar Mitzvah to mark the taking on of adult responsibility in the Jewish world, 15 years to mark a girl's becoming a woman in much of Latin America, etc. Around the world, people have devised rituals as needed.

And yet sometimes we feel them to be necessary and don't have them available to us. When we don't have such rituals and know we are upon a threshold, we may seek them out or create them. Many feel the lack of a ritual to mark the end of a marriage. We have so many to mark its beginning, but nothing to mark its end. So some people crossing the threshold that is divorce have created "marriage

wakes” or other rituals to honor that momentous threshold, to honor the beauty of what is on both sides: the life shared and all the hopes of that marriage, and the new life that awaits on the other side. I think that part of the attraction of neo-Paganism for so many, including Unitarian Universalists, is that it pays attention to large and small thresholds and provides—creates—new rituals to recognize those moments.

And UU congregations do have our own threshold rituals. We have Coming of Age services, sharing of joys and sorrows, the welcome of new members, the dedication of children when they arrive, the memorial celebration of someone among us when they depart, the care that we give each other at times of sickness and birth and dying. Bringing a meal to someone who has just emerged from surgery or who has lost a loved one isn’t just a pragmatic matter meant to help out with a daily task that has become difficult. It is also a way of honoring the occasion and witnessing—being present for, and listening to—a time of transition. It is an offering and a celebration.

Physical thresholds, literal doorways, get a lot of attention around the world for the same reason that we need to have attention given to these figurative thresholds: they are symbolic of those great moments of in-between. The lintel of a Maori meeting house, for



example, is elaborately carved with holy images, because as one passes

below it, one is moving from one holy domain into another. The outer doors and gates of a Jewish home bear *mezuzot*, which hold excerpts from the holy Torah, to remind those who pass through of their most important commitments as they come and go—to point out Who is

with you as you cross every threshold of your life. In ancient Greece, each part of a doorway had its god: the lintel had a god, the posts had a god, the door, the hinges, the sill (the threshold itself). All of these practices of marking physical doorways, like the practices of marking the figurative doorways of our lives, are meant to say the same thing to us: *Pause here with awareness. Know that when you are in the space between, you are in a sacred space of your life.*

But why are thresholds sacred? I think there are two basic reasons. They are about identity: they are a place of acute awareness or questioning of who we are, what we are, to what community of people and land we belong. And they are about change: shedding one identity and taking up another. In other words, they are about being and becoming, that great balance of our lives.

The origin of the word is exactly what you might think from its sound: *threshold* comes from *thresh*, threshing being the removing of a grain from its inedible shell. And when we are upon a threshold, we are in the act of stepping out—like the grain that is losing its skin—stepping out of our old identity and stepping into a new one that is yet unknown.

So a question for us as a spiritual community is: what do we need at such moments? What can we provide for each other?

We need to honor what is on both sides of the doorway: to celebrate the whole of our lives, the self we are leaving behind as well as the self toward which we are going.

We need something—some words, some music, some ceremony—that will recognize the significance of this moment, not leave it unmarked as if it means nothing. And we need one another.

Thresholds can be particularly chal-

lenging when our culture—which might be our community, our family, our larger culture—doesn’t have a way to recognize the threshold. So I’d like to invite you to take a moment to pause and reflect silently on a time when you might have been at a threshold in your life (perhaps right now), and our culture offered no particular way to recognize it as such.

And before you take a moment of silence for that, I want to acknowledge that in some way it is, if not a trick question, then a tricky question, because to some extent it’s hard even to perceive a threshold when no one else is recognizing it. So here are some feelings and thoughts that might be a clue that we are crossing a threshold, that we are in that in-between land:

We might have an awareness of a first or last of something. We might have tears. There might be a sense of momentousness. Time might get strange: things slowing down or speeding up much too fast.

We might have a powerful sensation that there ought to be music for this moment—some kind of inner soundtrack.

We may have a strong desire to talk to other people about what is happening to us, or a desire to talk to ourselves about it—in a journal, or by the creation of some private ritual marking the moment.

Just take a moment to reflect on whether you have had such a moment.

It’s never too late to honor a threshold. If there is a threshold that made you think, “Mm, that never really got marked as such,” in some sense you are still there. And that’s fine. You might always be, in some way. But it is not too late for others to help you to honor it, to recognize that you are in a very sacred place.

Of course, the threshold isn’t always where and when we think it is. It’s not

always the spot that gets a highlight, even from our community.

And it's not only a moment. When is it that love arises, so that people know they wish to marry? Is it just one moment? It's certainly not *the* moment in which they say "I do." When does it die, and they decide to part? That also is not just one moment. Even with birth: a person is born in an instant of gasping for breath, but childbirth takes hours, and gestation takes months, and the preparation for parenthood and for new life takes lifetimes. A person dies, perhaps, in a discrete moment, when the last breath is drawn or the brain ceases its hum, but dying can be a journey of years. We may mark a single symbolic moment later, like an anniversary, birthday, or date of death, but when we are on the threshold, it is much wider than something we can cross in one moment. We feel ourselves in the in-between for long, long periods of time. And that can be very beautiful and sweet and good, and it can, at the same time, be excruciatingly painful.

This, perhaps, is when we need each other the most. This is when we need words and art, music and symbols, stories and the squeeze of a hand, to say: *Yes, this time is sacred. It is a time of becoming for you; it is a time of being for you. Time has slowed down and held us here, in mid-step, in the no-one's land between what we used to be and what we will be. Here we are, not knowing exactly what or who we are in this moment.*

So why are thresholds sacred? Because they teach us to live fully in that in-between and that unknowing.

And why is this so important? Because that's where we really live all the time. *All the time.* Honoring threshold times is a practice that helps us to live more fully in the in-between, uncertain, traveling place where we always, in some way, are.

Now, the arrivals are real too. Being a

wife is real, and being a widow is real. Being a child and being an adult. Being single and being married. Being a student, being a worker. Each of those states is real and we try to live there fully too. And also, in the deepest sense, we are always and at every moment poised between two states, between two times, between two selves.

To be here, fully present when we are neither inside the temple nor outside it, neither child nor adult, neither spouse nor widow, but right on the threshold, in that state of in-between and unknowing, is the hope of our lives. It is the only time that we ever really have.

There is a Jewish prayer that is heard at every holiday and every momentous occasion. The beginning is the standard for a short Jewish prayer of blessing: *Baruch atah adonai . . . Blessed are you, Lord, Ruler of the universe. This one closes, shehecheyanu—who has kept us alive—v'kiyimanu—and protected us—v'higianu l'azman hazeh—and brought us to this time. It is called the Shehecheyanu after its key word: who has kept us alive, or you might say, kept us in life, or more simply, enlivened-us. One says this prayer at beginnings: the first night of a long holiday such as Hanukah, the first time one eats matzah during Passover; also at the birth of a child, and upon moving into a new home. It is a threshold prayer, one that may be said at any moment that is a new experience or an infrequent experience, to mark it as a time of transition. And what is it that is being said on each such occasion? Shehecheyanu—"who has enlivened us." So that we might remember what has brought us life, so that we might remember: this is life. No matter what is happening, no matter how in-between we feel, and how in flux our lives are, we are alive and we are grateful for this very moment. ■*

Threshold

BY TED, CLF MEMBER
INCARCERATED IN TEXAS

Threshold is an interesting word. As a maintenance clerk I immediately thought of the thing at the bottom of a doorway. Being there requires a willingness to go beyond. And then there is the literary use, which one might find in a novel: "We stand at the threshold of a momentous occasion in a brave new world...." But how do we cross the threshold?

For me it has been by accident and trial and error—mostly error. I've reached my error threshold because the pain of being locked up begs for relief. Prison life definitely pushes the pain number up to about a seven or so. Prison is a crucible which brings about a state of desperation which leads to actively seeking the doorway to something better.

Oftentimes in here the doorways open into fundamental beliefs which are not inviting or healing for a liberal believer. I will forever be grateful to the Divine Universe for showing me the threshold belonging to Unitarian Universalism many years ago. The kind, welcoming people who have answered my knock from inside these walls have indeed allowed me to stand at the threshold of a momentous time in a loving community.

I've been back on a violation for four years, and much of the initial pain, sadness and loss have subsided. I feel excitement about the day in the future when I can step foot over the thing on the door that leads to the community that supports me while I am here. I definitely have the willingness to step over into the fellowship which supports a free and responsible search for meaning.

As I stand near the threshold, waiting for the parole answer in the near future, I want to close by saying thank you for being on the other side of the threshold. ■



In Between

BY KATE R. WALKER,
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In between, liminal, that space where
we wait.
Between moments; events, results,
action, no action.
To stand on the threshold, waiting for
something to end,
And something new to arrive, a pause
in the rumble of time.
Awareness claims us, alert, a shadow
of something different.
In between invitation and acceptance.
In between symptom and diagnosis.

In between send and receipt of inquiry
and question.
In between love given and love re-
ceived.
Liminality, a letting go, entering into
confusion, ambiguity and disorienta-
tion.
A ritual begun, pause ... look back at
what once was,
Look forward into what becomes.
Identity sheds a layer, reaches into
something uncomfortable to wear.
In between lighting of the match and
the kindling of oil.
In between choosing of text and the
reading of words.
In between voices and notes carried
through the air into ears to hear.

In between, creation thrusts ever for-
ward.
Social hierarchies may disassemble
and structures may fall.
Communities may revolt or tempt
trust.
Tradition may falter or creativity crash
forward.
Leaders may step down or take charge.
The people may choose or refuse.
In between, storm predicted, the hori-
zon beckons.
In between, theology of process re-
minds us to step back.
In between, where minutia and galax-
ies intermingle with microbes and
mysteries.
In between, liminal, that space where
we wait: Look, listen, feel, breathe. ■

Only in the Dual Realm

BY SCOTT, CLF MEMBER INCARCERATED IN CALIFORNIA

There is a passage from the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, by Rainer Maria Rilke, that has given me inspiration when confronted by the need to change:

*Though the reflection in the pool
Often swims before our eyes:
Know the image*

*Only in the dual realm
do voices become
eternal and mild*

I like to think of this as a formula for self-transformation. The verses are about the myth of Narcissus: the youth Narcissus, who cares only for himself, sees his reflection in a forest pool. He does not know it is his own image.

We are all like Narcissus in a way. We only know a part of ourselves, the collection of identities that is our answer to the question, “Who are you?” Yet, we are each so much more. There is an otherness within us all, facets disowned and unrecognized. Rilke counsels us to know the image, the face of the hidden other in our souls. It does swim before our eyes (though we usually ignore it), surfacing in subtle ways—odd thoughts from nowhere and behaviors, both good and bad, of which we never knew we were capable.

Narcissus fell in love with the face he saw. Without realizing it, he began to love his own otherness. This is where inner change occurs, at the surface of the pool—the threshold between our known and unknown selves. Rilke calls this the dual realm. If we have the courage to look into our own uncharted depths, we may just find something worthy of love—beautiful vulnerability, reservoirs of strength and other sunken treasure.

After Narcissus discovers he is the image he adores, the goddess Nemesis turns him into a flower. As a moral lesson, we can understand this as a curse for egotism, but on a deeper level it is a paradoxical blessing and a model to follow: we can pull up the others from our depths and let them transform us. The self and other can become one at the liminal boundary. Our identities anchor and fuse with the new otherness, just as a flower is rooted in fertile soil, constantly fed by new fresh water. The other of Narcissus was Echo, a nymph whose love he had refused. Yet in his flower state he could forever hear her voice, eternal and mild.

When we embrace our otherness, it becomes easier to embrace the otherness of people different from us. It gives us the perspective needed to change. Yet it only happens in the dual realm, the uncomfortable threshold. Albert Einstein said, “We never cease to stand like curious children before the great mystery into which we are born.” Many try to suppress this curiosity, but I believe Unitarian Universalism calls us to revel in it. Like Narcissus forever looking into the pool, may we forever plumb the otherness of ourselves and everyone else, letting it transform us into ever more beautiful beings, eternally listening to the voice of the other. ■



From Your Minister

BY MEG RILEY
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CHURCH OF THE
LARGER FELLOWSHIP

There are predictable thresholds in our lives, when we move from one life-stage to another—when beloved children begin school, when we downsize from a house to an apartment, when we begin a new career or class. Each of these thresholds is significant, and involves stages of anticipation, recommitment to a changed life and adjustment.

There are also unexpected thresholds where we feel more like we are standing in the door of an airplane looking out into vast space, being pushed out over the threshold between the solidity of a plane and the terror of freefall. Facing a new time of living without a loved one who has left us or died, getting fired from a job, dealing with a diagnosis or injury that radically reshapes our life.

And then there are thresholds we cross which are desired and yet still terrifying, chosen and yet still dreaded. Ending a relationship that is diminishing us, but still being terrified of who we are without it. Facing an addiction and



committing ourselves to living without it. Leaving a job we

hate to dare to try something new. Moving to a new place. Even though we have chosen it, we still may feel as if we are in that airplane doorway, looking out in terror at the groundlessness before us, trying to summon the strength to take the step we know we want to take over that threshold. Letting go of what has been and embracing a new life takes all of our spiritual strength.

One of the many chosen, but terrifying, thresholds in my life was the decision to adopt a baby. After I had spent a year gathering paperwork and proving that I was a fit parent, and four months gazing at a photo of a baby who became increasingly beloved to me, I finally went to China to bring the baby home.

“Imagine each moment of transition as a doorway to more love.”

It was complicated. I am a lesbian and China was becoming increasingly homophobic in their adoption process (though I was not forced to sign an affidavit of heterosexuality as later folks were). I was absolutely terrified that before I could bring my baby home, someone would say I was not allowed to. I knew that I had to undergo transition after transition while in China, similar to all of the hoops I'd jumped through in the US getting my paperwork together, and I feared that at any one of these transitional moments, someone might determine that I should not be a parent to this child.

I was so stressed out about it that at one point I thought I was having a heart attack, but it turned out to be pure panic. After I ascertained that my physical health was fine, I went to see my spiritual director to talk to her about how to manage my fear.

“Imagine each moment of transition as a doorway to more love,” she said. And I did that for the entire time in China, a time of daily and hourly meetings with officials; each moment taking me closer to when I could come home with my new baby.

I go back to this practice of imagining transitions as doorways to more love over and over again in times of terror. The truth is that when I'm afraid of something new, I begin to fill in the blanks with the worst possible out-

comes. I'm falling in love and suddenly I live in terror that my new beloved will drop dead of a heart attack. I'm going on a long-desired trip and I wonder if the plane will crash or I'll drive over a cliff. I remember when I was in junior high, finally getting my braces off, I was convinced that the orthodontist would accidentally pull out my front teeth because I couldn't let myself imagine that I could finally smile without stress or anxiety.

So what I try to remember to do, when I'm crossing a threshold to the unknown and find myself filling in the vast space with small terrors, is remind myself to fill it instead with love. In China the concrete love for the baby made it simple and clear. In other instances, I have to align myself with the longing that is suddenly turning into terror and assure myself that this longing is a positive thing. I'm in love? How amazing! I'm going on that trip? Look at photos and dream! And it's good to remember, all these years later, that the orthodontist managed to get my braces off while leaving my teeth intact.

The truth is that we often don't know what's right ahead of us—whether a day will bring agony, ecstasy or something in between. We can't control many, many factors. But we can practice drawing on love, rather than fear, as we face into the unknown. We can trust that our love and our longing, whether our hopes are realized or unre-



alized, is itself a blessing given to us. And we can surround others who are in fear with loving affirmation as they face their own times of

freefall, knowing that we would want them to do the same thing for us. ■



REsources for Living

BY LYNN UNGAR,
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LEARNING, CHURCH OF
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For babies, threshold moments come thick and fast. A first smile moves us into the world of reciprocal relationship. Learning to grasp an object turns you into someone who can—if only to limited extent—control your environment. A first word moves us into the world of communication. A first step opens up a whole world of independence and exploration.

The pace slows a bit as you move into childhood; still, threshold moments abound. Daycare or preschool invites you into your own social world, stepping from the parent-centered world of home and family into a community that belongs just to you. Each year the start of the new school year brings a threshold that is now ritually marked with pictures shared on Facebook. Reading a book out loud, tying your shoes, crossing the street alone, sleeping away from home, joining a sports team, earning a martial arts belt, riding a bike, playing an instrument...the list of new skills or possibilities is endless. And each one represents a step through a doorway into a life that is just a bit different than the life you left behind.

Of course, those of us who are parents tend to feel the “left behind” part a bit more keenly than the children who are stepping into new adventures. The pride you feel in realizing your child can read themselves to sleep at night might carry a tinge of sadness, knowing that you are losing the ritual of reading stories to your kid at bedtime. (Of course, it also might carry more than a tinge of relief at no longer being responsible for wading through interminable night-time routines.) A young adult child going off to college or to work is stepping into the world of adulthood, with all the excitement and

anxiety that goes along with that transition, and empty-nest parents have their own complex mix of emotions.

But whatever the emotion, any doorway you walk through into something new means the loss of who you used to be. A person who can read is no longer a person who sees the world purely in pictures. A person who enters a long-term relationship loses some of the freedom and independence of a single person. Any door you step through inevitably means you leave something else behind.

It calls to mind Robert Frost’s famous poem “The Road Not Taken,” in which a traveler contemplates two paths through the woods. People tend to assume that the poem is a celebration of choosing the road less traveled—of being independent or counter-cultural or going against the crowd. But I would argue the poem’s theme is quite different. It says:

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back*

In fact, what comes just before the famous line about it making all the difference to have taken the road less traveled says “I shall be telling this with a sigh....” Not with pride or celebration at a brave choice. A sigh. Because that’s how life works. Any path you take means giving up some other path, some other version of yourself. And sure, it’s not impossible that you might go back and study biology, having given it up for engineering decades back. But “way leads on to way,” and most of the time our branching paths don’t loop back around. Every transition is a loss as well as a gain.

Of course, every transition is also a point of growth, a point of possibility. But as we get older the path we will take tends to get more and more clearly marked. Do these things to move forward in your career. Acquire these

things to move up in social status or a sense of security. Do what you need to do to keep your head above water, your family clothed and fed. The places where our roads branch tend to be moments of crisis or loss—the end of a relationship, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job.

Stepping through those difficult doorways also leads to growth and new possibilities, although it rarely feels like it at the time. But perhaps those of us who are well-along in life can also keep an eye out for doorways we *do* choose, moments when we opt to try something new, when we challenge ourselves to shed an old skin and emerge as someone just a bit different than we were before. The doorways of crisis and loss will come. There’s simply no way to avoid it. But the more practice we have at continually re-imagining ourselves, if only in tiny ways, the better prepared we will be for the transitions we don’t choose.

A first smile at someone who seems foreign to us. A first grasp of a new object—juggling balls or a musical instrument or knitting needles. A first word in a language we haven’t spoken before. A first step on a brave journey. It turns out that there are still plenty of doorways to walk through. ■

Threshold Moments

There are threshold moments in each of our lives. Moments when the past that lies behind us seems present and real. Moments when the future that lies ahead of us seems apparent and hopeful. Such special threshold moments when past and future meet in a vivid awareness of Now are rare and holy. Times such as these remind us that our time together comes to us as a precious gift, a gift that comes with choices and responsibilities for how it is to be used. We recognize the importance of these choices in our lives.

—Author Unknown



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The Year as a House

BY JAN RICHARDSON, DIRECTOR, THE WELLSRING STUDIO, LLC, ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Think of the year
as a house:
door flung wide
in welcome,
threshold swept
and waiting,
a graced spaciousness
opening and offering itself
to you.

Let it be blessed in every room.
Let it be hallowed
in every corner.
Let every nook
be a refuge
and every object
set to holy use.

Let it be here
that safety will rest.
Let it be here
that health will make its home.
Let it be here
that peace will show its face.
Let it be here
that love will find its way.

Here
let the weary come
let the aching come
let the lost come
let the sorrowing come.

Here
let them find their rest
and let them find their soothing
and let them find their place
and let them find their delight.

And may it be
in this house of a year
that the seasons will spin in beauty,
and may it be
in these turning days
that time will spiral with joy.
And may it be
that its rooms will fill
with ordinary grace
and light spill from
every window
to welcome
the stranger home.