

## A People of Thresholds in the Time of Pandemic - USG - May 2020

### Introduction

This time of pandemic brings us all to a threshold unlike any we have ever experienced before. We know that the world we have known to date may never be the same and we do not know what the world to come will hold for us or our children. We wish we could just awaken and find that this is all a bad dream, but we know that is not to be. Nor can we sit on this threshold waiting for some magical solution to make everything alright again, we must live each day inching forward.

Yet, when encountering thresholds, we often talk as if our work is that of successfully "passing through" them. But what if the true invitation of a threshold is not to successfully move from here to there, but instead to just sit and pause? What if thresholds help us "become" by asking us to just "be" for a while? No moving. Just noticing and naming. Less traveling and more listening.

### Chalice Lighting

May the light of this chalice truly enlighten the spaces between us  
Let them be not distances but spaces, spaces filled with love, caring, respect and hope  
Spaces that will truly, not virtually, bind us until the days when we can be together again  
In the beautiful and real space of our beloved community *Gerry Whelan*

**Check-in** *Share your highs and lows since we last met focusing on what drains you and what lifts you up. We give each other the gift of listening without asking questions or offering advice to allow people the safety to share what's in their hearts.*

### Quotes for Inspiration/Readings

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. *Peter Gomes*

Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view, that stand upon the threshold of the new.  
*Edmund Waller*

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*

Whatever your threshold event is, whether it's developing a curative vaccine, entering into marriage, starting a new job, moving into a new home, becoming a parent, or becoming a UU minister, I hope you allow yourself the grace of a self-hug as well as the hugs of loved ones. May you be open to the grace that seeks to embrace us all on our journeys.

*Rev. Daniel Gregoire*

### Spiritual Exercises

#### 1. *The Threshold of a New World*

Our Jewish siblings who have had more than their share of thresholds to face have had an age old practice of hanging [mezuzahs](#) (watch this You Tube video for some explanation, click this link or search You Tube for Boundaries - Why I Hang the Mezuzah:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=EspYJ5NYHKE&list=LLup34DppxglUA4QmkdOV5Gg&index=720>)

at their doorways to call them to pause and make them think, "What do I want to bring with me and what do I want to leave behind (or keep out) as I cross over?" Today that is a very tangible question as we struggle with social distance, masks and gloves to keep us and our loved ones safe from a deadly virus. But might there be a deeper question as to what we want to bring forward from the lives we have known into the unknown new worlds we are entering?

What might be some of the practices, customs or values of your past life that might need to be left behind going forward? How would you change or replace them to regain the values and relationships that you would

need to carry on? Or might those values and relationships radically change? And how can we begin his process now, today, with compassion and kindness and not bide our time waiting for a miracle that would set the clocks back to the way we wish it was.

Think of one small or large thing that you could do starting right now or one value that you might be rethinking to see your way through this threshold. Come to your group ready to tell the story of what you did or what you rethought and how it makes a difference in your days.

## **2. The Wells We Draw From**

Thresholds may not only be passageways from one space to a next space but also between spaces where we may choose to go back and forth. Another threshold that we now find ourselves in is that between the well of fear and the well of hope. We can choose one or the other but most of us will find ourselves going back and forth. On the fear side of our threshold we find panic, senses of scarcity, 24 hour Breaking Bad News and finger pointing. On the hope side of our threshold we find compassion, sharing, reflection, meditation, prayer and reaching out. The power of hope may never completely negate the specter of fear but more importantly the specter of fear can never negate the power of hope! So, it is up to us to choose which thresholds we cross, which well we draw from and how often and for how long.

Are there dark places (cable news, apocryphal social media, others) where we may be spending too much time? And where can we find the power of hope in a way that is meaningful in our individual and communal lives? How can we balance the responsibility to be informed with the need for the peace and hope so essential to finding a way to move on to a future that works for all of us? Share with your group your thoughts on this quandary and how you are taking concrete steps to find the balance in your life.

**Questions** *Don't treat these questions like "homework" or try to answer them all. The goal is to figure out which question represents the call of your inner voice. Once you've figured that out, think about what that question is trying to get you to notice or acknowledge.*

1. Prior to now, what was the most challenging threshold you faced in your life? What did you learn from that that you might lean into now?
2. Who taught you the most about leaping through and trusting thresholds?
3. Looking back on the last major threshold you crossed, was there something you now wish you'd brought along? Or maybe something you wish you'd left back there?
4. Has the challenge of this pandemic threshold caused you to forget about other thresholds you were struggling with like racism, income disparity, immigration policy? Or has the current crisis shined a new light for you on these perennial challenges?
5. **What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. If the above questions don't include what life is asking from you right now, spend time listening to your days to hear it

**Sitting in Silence** *Take a few moments to sit quietly and reflect upon your thoughts.*

**Sharing/Deep Listening** *Respond with your thoughts and experiences with the topic. We create a safe space by listening deeply and not responding. When sharing, connect with what is true for you. When listening, give the speaker your full attention rather than thinking about what you will share.*

**Reflection and Gratitude** *This is a time to respond briefly to something another person said or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared. Consider lifting up one comment or experience for which you are particularly grateful.*

**Music** *Please listen to We Are the World 2020 / Together at Home*  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MWNW\\_a35oY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MWNW_a35oY)

**Extinguishing the Chalice** I find hope in the darkest of days, and focus in the brightest. I do not judge the universe. *Dalai Lama*