

Celebrating the Liminality of Young Adulthood

January 16, 2019

By: Meggie Exner

This week we talked about what it meant to be a young adult. We named liminality, or the state of being on a threshold, as a defining characteristic of young adulthood.

There are several common events that put young adults on the threshold of a new chapter: graduating from college, getting a first job, choosing a career, moving (perhaps several times), buying a first home, the beginning of new relationships, marriage, and children. In between these often more joyful thresholds are the sorrowful thresholds such as loss of loved ones and places — whether through death, changing locations or an emotional drifting away.

Our opening poem *Joining the Circus* by Mark Nepo included these lines:

You see, we all have to

juggle joy and sorrow. Not to do it

well – we always drop something – but

when the up and down of life are

leaving one hand and not yet landing

in the other, then we glow like

a mystical molecule hovering between

birth and death, ready to kiss anything.

The liminal space between joy and sorrow described here felt relevant to the ever-shifting lives of young adults. I was struck by the aliveness of this liminal space that the author portrayed in his final line with the phrase “ready to kiss anything.”

The life within liminal space connects to our discussion of God as the present moment. I want to define “God” here as the connection between one person and another and within communities, between people and the Earth, and between the past and the future. To be with this God of the present could mean living in the present and celebrating this liminal space that we’re in.

We talked, too, about what this would look like. To live in the present, we decided, didn’t mean blocking out the past or ignoring the future. Otherwise, we might end up running from reality in some kind of *Lion King*-type scenario. Rather, we need to define the present broadly enough to encompass both past and future. We can be present not only by appreciating our current circumstances, company, and surroundings, but also by acknowledging how the past is influencing our feelings about the present and reveling in our own anticipation for the future.

Though it’s easy to get caught up in fears about change, there is also an excitement about the possibilities that comes with entering liminal space. What could it mean to treat every day as a liminal space? What could it mean for Young Adult Group to treat each meeting as a threshold to a new, transformational relationship with each other?