

Liminality and Soul: clearing up some confusion.

Earlier this year Rev. Keith Howard led us into a process of “Liminality” – crossing a threshold—taking inspiration from Susan Beaumont’s course “How to Lead When you Don’t Know Where You’re Going”. She describes liminality as “A quality of ambiguity and disorientation that occurs in transitory situations and spaces, when a person or group of people is betwixt and between something that has ended, and a new situation not yet begun.”

As we look at the collapsing of “church” as we’ve known it during our lifetimes, it is clear that we are in a liminal era: an epochal change. So we looked at our past experience of church and some of the things we need to let go of: the separation stage of the liminal experience.

The second stage is the *liminal period*. This is where we are now. The goal is to become sensitive to the soul: to one’s own soul, to the souls of one another, and through that confluence to the *soul of the community*. This soul tending requires sharpening group discernment skills, deeper listening as collective yearning finds expression. This is not a “one and done” kind of thing. It is a continual process, as we develop our “listening muscle” to hear the yearning of each person contributing to the collective yearning. We are in the middle of this process of “Discerning the Soul” of the Fairfield United community.

As we continue to enrich and refine our sense of collective Soul, we need to sense it in the real context: of where we are in our own life’s journey, of our gifts and our needs, of our social milieu, our resources, our society’s needs, the restraints on our personal participation, the realistic potential and challenges of a new building and in all this, the call of the Divine.

The third stage is emergence as we move into our new situations, true to our own soul, and true to the Soul of the Fairfield United community.

As a “program” this Liminality process has three stages; in reality the stages overlap because there are so many aspects in this liminal era. The one essential throughout is the attunement to the soul: to one’s own, to each other’s, and to the collective Soul of the community.