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UU Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes
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Life happens in the in-between. Trust it.

Living in the In-Between

My conservative dad and my liberal mom had gone through life cheerfully "splitting our vote." Then—late in the year of 2000, a swift, relentless cancer took hold of Dad. Already a person of strong opinions and a fan of the first President Bush, he threw himself the Bush-Gore race, forwarding right-wing emails to all of us, all in for Bush.

I arrived the morning the election was called and was surprised to find Dad still in bed—usually he was up and dressed. He'd turned a corner. When I reported that Bush would be our new President, he didn't care! A stunning, sobering change to see. "It really doesn't matter," he said.

Life had lifted him beyond the small potatoes of politics to a new "in-between" reality. In this liminal space, where he hovered several weeks between life and death, gratitude was on his mind. He'd long lived by this value, having seen life's fragility and preciousness as a young boy when his mother died. Gratitude. During this passage, he said, "Thank you," over and over again.

As we live from one event to the next, our values guide us. Most of the time we live between events, in a place between the known and the unknown. Sure, there are days when we land on the solid, certain ground of an achievement or celebration...or of something momentous like a birth, a move, a new home or job. We know the hard stop, too, of endings—a loss or disappointment, an accident, bad news, a broken relationship.

But the rest of the time, which is most of the time, we live between the headlines of our lives, navigating uncertainty. Uncertainty can frustrate us when things don't go the way we planned. It can wear us down in times of conflict. Uncertainty unnerves us when we face health challenges or wait for the results of tests. It rattles us when we have a tough decision to make. It stresses us when we work hard, unsure of the outcome. And we all know the uncertainty of a big election!

While accomplishments and milestones inch us forward, we can feel stalled in the in-between, sometimes going in circles or losing our way. We have an idea that we need to make up lost ground. Have you seen timelines of life on earth where human civilization occupies the tiniest fraction of the continuum? With that perspective, deep in the weeds of the in-between, we might well wonder, "Am I getting anywhere? For that matter, is humanity getting anywhere?"

I believe we are—in large measure because of our values. Look at our country and the value of equality. After so very long, we are about to walk into a voting booth and see a woman's name at the top of the ballot—a headline! And after that day, no matter the winner, we'll be back in that familiar in-between territory of believing in that value—equality—and continuing to inch toward it—working, advocating, coming together in community and *living equality*.

What about here at UUFES? Are we getting anywhere? Yes! New friends appear every week, climbing our beautiful double staircase to see what this faith with a long name is all about. Unitarian Universalism: Unitarian—one mystery; Universalism—one love. A faith explicitly focused on living one's values.

As we navigate between big events and holidays and projects, we value connection. We hold each other during difficult times. Between services, the practical “in-between” work of the church values the common good. We're grateful to all who do that work. These days, as UUFES grows, we're navigating an in-between time of needing more space...and figuring out how to make that happen. A good, positive thing! The in-between is rich with possibility.

Life happens where we dream and grow. Where we try and try again. Where we find each other, work things out and make things happen. Where we make meaning.

“Sometimes the best thing to do is trust,” writes Poet Thomas Smith in his poem by that name, “Trust”:

Sometimes the best thing to do is trust
 The package left with the disreputable-looking^[SEP]
 clerk, the check gulped by the night deposit,
 the envelope passed by dozens of strangers—^[SEP]
 all show up at their intended destinations.^[SEP]

The theft that could have happened doesn't^[SEP]
 Wind finally gets where it was going^[SEP]
 through the snowy trees, and the river, even^[SEP]
 when frozen, arrives at the right place.^[SEP]

And sometimes you sense how faithfully your life^[SEP]
 is delivered, even though you can't read the address.”¹

So may it be.

¹ Thomas Smith, “Trust,” poem copyright 2003. Reprinted in *Waking before Dawn*, Red Dragonfly Press, 2007. Accessed 30 October 2016 at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/50109>.