



# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens

The Reverend Alison Wilbur Eskildsen, Parish Minister  
The Reverend Don Randall, Community Minister

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## “Making Connections”

Three reflections delivered on August 30, 2015

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### Centering Thoughts

*We are all so much together, but we are all dying of loneliness.* Albert Schweitzer

*A spiritual partnership is a partnership between equals for the purpose of spiritual growth. Spiritual partners use their delightful experiences together as well as their power struggles to learn about themselves and change themselves.* Gary Zukav

*The spiritual path is not a solo endeavor. In fact, the very notion of a self who is trying to free her/himself is a delusion. We are in it together and the company of spiritual friends helps us realize our interconnectedness.* Tara Brach

(Note: The first two presenters chose not to publish their reflections here.)

### Third Reflection by Rev. Alison W. Eskildsen

Annie Dillard wrote in a 1988 *Life Magazine* article and abridged in our hymnal, wrote:

“We are here to abet creation and to witness to it, to notice each other’s beautiful face and complex nature so that creation need not play to an empty house.”

“To notice each other’s beautiful face and complex nature...” When you come into this religious community, I believe you want to be noticed. Not in a show-off way, but you want your life to be affirmed, you want to know that your life matters. We do that by noticing one another. We do not want to live lives empty of meaning, as if we’re actors in a play no one is watching, so we willingly come together in community.

But we all know that when we enter into a new community it is easy to be overwhelmed by a feeling of strangeness, of being the stranger.

Because we may fear being left out or being the outsider, we don’t always make the effort to get to know someone new. And that means we sometimes don’t get noticed.

Although I wish that weren't true, and we encourage people to risk greeting someone you don't know, the Small Group Ministry program is one way we help people get past that strangeness. In small groups, everyone gets noticed.

Besides learning each other's names (and being named is a powerful way of being noticed by another), in small groups we listen to each other's stories. We learn what matters to each of us. We learn about each other. I think we love telling each other our stories as much as we fear meeting new people.

But being in intentional groups requires that we listen, truly listen to each other. And when we listen, our lives are affirmed. We know we matter. And as we learn about others, we're also learning about ourselves. In the give and take and sharing of ideas and stories we learn what matters to us.

When that happens, it means we've taken a step forward along our spiritual journey. And whether you say Amen, Hallelujah, or Way to Go!, I say Amen, Hallelujah, and Way to Go!

May it continue to be so.

### **Questions for Reflection or Discussion**

1. What helped you form your closest friendships – did you share time, interests, challenges, or something else? What was it that made you want to become friends?
2. Do you tend towards deep conversations or light chats with friends? What circumstances encourage you to have more meaningful 'ultimate' discussions?
3. What recent experience has been most helpful in understanding yourself better? Share.





