



# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens

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## “Committing to the Future”

© by the Reverend Alison W. Eskildsen

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At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens, GA

### Centering Thoughts

*We are made wise not by the recollection of the past but by the responsibility of the future.*

George Bernard Shaw

*The best way to predict the future is to design it.* Buckminster Fuller

*Look closely at the present you are constructing. It should look like the future you are dreaming.*

Alice Walker

### Reflection

For sixty years this Fellowship has demonstrated that, “There’s always room for one more.” In 1954 UUFA was founded by a few families who met in their own homes. When they became too numerous to fit in their homes, they bought first one house, then another just for use by their growing community.

When they outgrew that, they bought a small building on Prince Avenue previously owned by an Assembly of God church. When even that became too small, they purchased land here on Timothy Road and built this facility in 1992. The members and friends of this Fellowship have proved over and over again that they – YOU – are committed to making room for one more.

Three years ago we didn’t have room for one more, much less all of us. After many discussions we added a second service to ease parking, classroom and sanctuary crowding. We still have some crowding at 11 am because service attendance isn’t equally divided, but this change made it possible for those already attending to find a place – and it made room for more. Our membership has grown from barely 240 adults five years ago to almost 300 today. We defy the current cultural trend away from organized religious community.

We in this Fellowship made room through the years not because we think bigger is better. We made room because we knew (and still know) that participating in this community adds meaning and value to people’s lives. We made room for those already here and those yet to come because we knew this Fellowship transforms lives, including the lives of people who will never come through our doors. We made room because we knew people hunger for face-to-face

connection. We made room because we knew the world needs more of what we hold in common: a commitment to a more loving and just world—nothing less than the creation of the Beloved Community.

And we know here, today, we transform lives by closely living out our Principles seven days a week. Here, we celebrate growing deeper in our understanding of what it means to be human and alive. Here, we celebrate that we're not all alike, that we hold different beliefs, come from different places, speak different languages, and don't look the same. Here, we celebrate that we share common values like respect and equality, and share common concerns about life and death and the messiness that comes in between.

Every time we outgrow the status quo, whether it's a parking lot or a prejudiced cultural norm, and then act to change that status quo, we create ripple effects across our community and beyond. We create ripples when we stand against income inequality and poverty-level wages, when we stand against hate and fear, when we stand against unsustainable environmental policies, and when we stand against those who would turn their conservative religious beliefs into lawful discrimination.

We create ripples when we stand up for all black lives, when we stand up for immigrant lives, and when we stand up for gay, lesbian, transgender and queer lives. We create a tsunami of ripples when we lift up generous love as a guide for our lives.

Many of you know I'm about to become a grandmother. My son might call with news at any moment. Sadly, this world is not the world I'd like my grandson to inherit from me. I'd like him to grow up in a world where our very survival isn't in question. Where climate change is reversed. Where the political process is no longer polarized and people willingly compromise on solutions to issues. Where religious groups accept each other's truths. Where opportunity is available to all. Where happiness is everyone's pursuit, not just something reserved for the privileged few.

We can make the world I dream about real for my grandchild, for yours, and for generations to come. But making it real depends on what we do.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "The future depends on what we do in the present." And Alice Walker said, "Look closely at the present you are constructing. It should look like the future you are dreaming."

The future begins with the decisions we make each and every day. In the coming year we'll be making decisions over and over again about the future. Some decisions will be about our facilities, but most will be choices about how we live our lives.

May you and I remember that whatever decisions we make, whatever aspect of our lives they concern—here, at home, at school, or at work—know we build the future; every choice is a brick in its foundation.

May the present we are constructing, be the future we are dreaming.

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

1. What legacy do you wish to leave for this UU community and to the world?
2. Describe your level of optimism regarding our future. Will nations achieve peace? Will polarization be reduced? Will humanity save the planet for future generations to enjoy?
3. How might your UUFA involvement and support encourage a positive future for the world?