



## Worship Resources for *Steeple's* Ad Run – Fall 2008

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### Psalm 145:9

*The LORD is good to all, and God's compassion is over all that God has made.*

### Beyond the Beyond: Our Interfaith Faith

As a Latina who felt disenfranchised and “othered” by various faith traditions and as an individual who desired to find a place where God’s love extended to all, I was searching for a place to worship where I could feel comfortable in my own skin as a person of color. By grace, I discovered Mountain View United Church in Aurora, Colorado, during my time in seminary; and from that point forward, I knew I had a spiritual home and a loving community.

I did not know how far the realm of inclusion would extend, however, when I met my future husband Ali. Having just begun my first call at a liberal arts institution engaging in minority student ministry and seeking ordination in the coming year, I was afraid that the love that Ali and I began to possess for one another would not be welcomed, accepted or understood in the United of Church of Christ.

What was the issue? Ali is Muslim; and as many of us in the United States have come to understand, those who practice Islam in America have not been completely understood or embraced since the terrible tragedy of 9/11. I wondered how my in-care committee and, in particular, my congregation would react to the news that Ali and I were engaged to be married.

So as I continued through the ordination process and kept in close communication with my congregation, I made a special effort to inform all involved that my partner practiced Islam. I expected horrified faces and a barrage of theological questions about how I could be in a relationship with someone with such totally different beliefs (even though we actually had more in common theologically than many other Christians I knew). Instead, what I experienced from my friends and colleagues were smiles, hugs and congratulations. What a gift it was to not only feel that our loving relationship was blessed by God, but to also receive love from those within the church!

Throughout the Bible, there are passages that highlight God’s radical inclusion. In John 12:32, Jesus says, “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself.” His ministry included, but was not limited to: lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, women, Samaritans, Syro-Phoenicians, Greeks, Jews, the non-religious, and the anti-religious. I take great pride in belonging to a church that seeks to become increasingly Christ-like in thought and deed and that not only welcomes those of like faith, but also works to reach beyond an often unrecognized barrier among Protestant denominations to embrace those of other faiths or no faith.

When I was ordained last year at Mountain View, my husband Ali was welcomed with open arms in the church; and as I looked at him in the midst of the service, sitting at the front of the congregation, I was once again reminded that this faith that we possess is truly a faith that welcomes all, regardless of how individuals choose to practice their spirituality, worship, pray, eat, work, and live in the world. May our places and spaces of gathering and worship continually strive to be open and embracing to all people.