

Speaking of Faith, 2/23/18 (for publication the week of February 26)

Community!

The camera frames the circle of halfpipe finalists. In the moment everyone is waiting for, the last skier's time comes up on the screen, and the winners step forward, their beaming faces in crisp focus. Behind them, you can also see people passing close by, faces blurry but striking in their youthfulness and diversity. This image captures more than the inextricable Olympic mix of euphoria, achievement, disappointment and excitement. It also reflects community. Global community.

Such are the Olympics: a snapshot every four years of the world's most accomplished athletes. Especially in the grand circles of the opening and closing ceremonies, we experience them as one. A family of sorts, that represents us all. Not that the individual is not celebrated at the Olympics. Far from it, what with the media hype about the extraordinary measures some individuals take in order to win—traveling with full-time equipment staff or living in separate quarters away from the Village to take care of themselves and concentrate on their goals. Meanwhile, the team is the focus for others. The inseparable Norwegian Olympic team exemplifies community, exuberantly doing everything together....

We live in a culture that puts a premium on individuating—sometimes at the cost of community. I love the image of the multi-cultural backdrop to the halfpipe skiers. Surely this is the way life is meant to be: now we step forward into focus, now we step back and let someone else shine. All of us in it together.

We long for that “all of us in it together” feeling. A place I enjoy it is the airport! Our world expands when we talk with fellow travelers in the TSA line or walk to the gate, carried along in a river of ages and races and skin tones; we hear all around us different accents and languages. In this place, our differences fade away. Here, we're all travelers. All on the path—whether homeward bound, on the way to work, taking a vacation, or going to visit family. All of us in community.

The Unitarian Universalist fellowship I serve is celebrating “community” this year. Look for our rainbow sign! Locally, we strive to deepen connections with the arts community and people in need. Our building in Tamworth Village hosts holiday gatherings and the summer Farmers' Market. Within our congregation, we take being in community seriously. We know what hard, fulfilling work it is to lift up the worth and dignity of every person, to affirm everyone's individual quest for truth AND to build the common good.

For any of us who lives in this experiment called the United States, we know what a tall order it is to bloom and grow into our best selves AND to live in harmony, one nation under God. Could it be that growing into Beloved Community is indeed the reason we are all here?

Let us remember the Olympics. Remember the airport, too. And may we all hold in our hearts, always, the truth of our oneness.

Rev. Betsy Mead Tabor serves the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes (UUFES) in Tamworth, a congregation known for its warm welcome, diverse beliefs and quest for justice. Learn about UU values at <http://uufes.com/principles-sources/>

