

**CALL TO WORSHIP**  
**Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists**  
**February 17, 2008**  
**Rev. Preston Moore**

“Cookie’s Fortune” is a little film by Robert Altman that tells a story about a small Southern town. An elderly white woman is found shot to death. An African-American man who lives in the carriage house on her property has been her handyman and general helper for many years. After the homicide, the town’s white sheriff comes to him, mumbling an apology, and says he really has no choice but to take him to the local jail and hold him for questioning. He takes him to the jail, escorts him into the cell and, leaving the door open, sits down with him to do what these two men have regularly done many times in the sheriff’s office and elsewhere: play scrabble.

A homicide investigator from the nearest large city arrives to find the sheriff and his prisoner thus engaged. The sheriff jumps up to introduce himself. With eyebrows raised, the investigator asks, “is this the suspect?” Without batting an eye, the sheriff says “yes, technically, but he didn’t do it.” With eyebrows raised even higher, the inspector acidly inquires, “and how can you be so sure of that?” Again without batting an eye, the sheriff replies, “ ‘cause I’ve been fishin’ with him.” The fishing, of course, is a shorthand way of conveying a whole range of experiences over a long period of time – changing a flat tire, running errands, doing favors, pancake breakfasts, scrabble, catfish enchiladas for Easter dinner, and on and on.

As lives are woven together, there are countless small and large opportunities to see your neighbors as they truly are and be seen by them for what you truly are. But is this more revelation than we care for, beyond a small circle of carefully selected friends? Are the threads of this kind of weaving too restrictive for the storied individualism our country, our culture, and even our religious community? Come, let us live in the questions again today. Come, let us worship together.