

From other to friend

By [Adam J. Copeland](#)

September 15, 2010

Amy Frykholm [posted](#) yesterday about Muhammad Musri, the Muslim leader who met with Terry Jones and helped defuse last week's Qur'an-burning situation. If more Christians and Muslims knew one another personally, the whole furor may not have occurred in the first place.

It's a lot harder to adopt anti-Islam rhetoric when your family doctor is Muslim, or your daughter's college roommate is Muslim, or your congregation has worked with a mosque to build a Habitat for Humanity house. Many of the troubling statements I've read in recent weeks—and heard in my pastoral ministry—would never have been said if folks simply got to know their Muslim neighbors. Conversations about Islam could shift from a focus on the unknown other to one on knowing one another better.

Recently, I've heard of many Christian pastors participating in interfaith services, posting supportive statements regarding Islam to their Web sites and teaching Sunday School sessions on Islam. NPR recently ran a [great piece](#) on "bridging the Christian-Muslim divide." This is all positive and helpful, good steps on the journey from fear to understanding. But nothing beats personal relationships.

Have relationships or experiences with Muslims affected you personally? How can Christians promote positive relationships with our Muslim neighbors? How can churches help connect congregants to those of other faiths?