



A Christian Practice for Healing Social Division and Bearing Witness to the Gospel

The Challenges We Face Together

We are living through a period of profound disconnection—both spiritual and social. Among the many challenges confronting our churches and communities:

- The rise of Christian Nationalism, distorting the Gospel and threatening democracy
- Widespread social isolation and loneliness, which leave people vulnerable to fear and manipulation
- A breakdown in public trust, undermining our ability to live out the call to love our neighbor

These are not only political or cultural challenges—they are deeply theological ones. They speak to how we understand human dignity, belonging, and our role as the Body of Christ in the world.

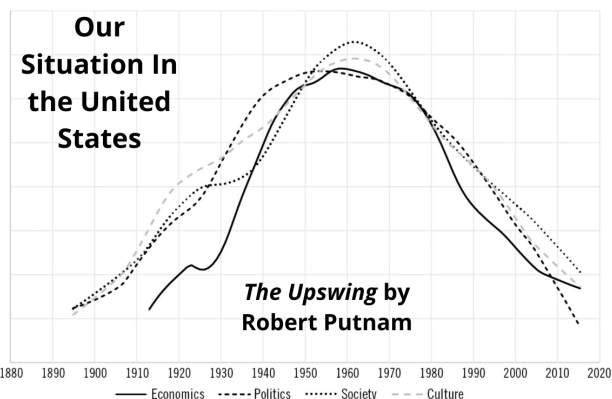
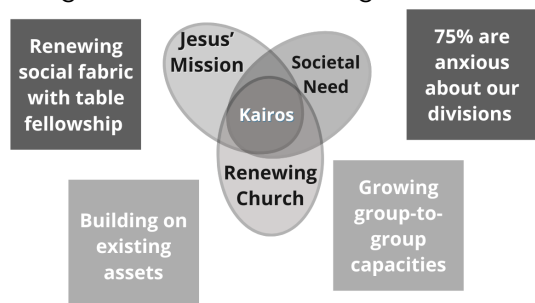
A Missional Opportunity Rooted in the Ministry of Jesus

Jesus' ministry often began with a simple act: a shared meal. Table fellowship was not incidental—it was strategic. Jesus brought together people across social boundaries: tax collectors, Pharisees, fishermen, women, foreigners, and the poor.

His critics said, *"He eats with sinners and tax collectors."* That was the point. Through shared meals, he revealed the presence of the Kingdom of God and invited people into lives of mutual care and transformation.

The Potluck Project follows in that tradition.

It invites churches—and the communities they serve—to open their doors, extend their tables, and build relationships across lines of difference. It's a strategy of neighbor love in a divided age.



Jonathan Haidt: Vibrant Democracies have Social capital | Strong institutions | Shared stories

A Christian Response to a Fragmented Society

Over the past 60 years, Americans have become increasingly disconnected—not only from the church, but from one another. Robert Putnam notes that by 2015, we were as divided and lonely as we had been since 1910.

This disconnection is a spiritual crisis. But it is also an opportunity to bear public witness to the Gospel by:

- Creating spaces of welcome and listening
- Offering a non-threatening first step toward community and belonging
- Modeling love of neighbor in a time of fear and scapegoating

The Potluck Project is not just about food. It's about forming organic, humanizing relationships across cultural, racial, and ideological lines—and inviting others to ask, *"Why are you spending time with them?"*

A Response that is Scalable

Our churches and wise leaders are in every neighborhood, town, and city in the nation. We may not be able to counter Christian Nationalists in media and social media, but we collectively have the power to gather people in every neighborhood in the nation. We believe that people grow at the pace of relationship and that face to face and group to group relationships are more powerful than social media.

What the Potluck Project Offers

In partnership with Seattle University's Center for Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement, we are building a national movement of **Christian-rooted, community-focused table fellowship** through:

- A free downloadable toolkit for congregations, ministries, and community partners
- A national tour, bringing potluck experiences to cities and towns across the U.S.

- A growing network of churches and organizations reclaiming table fellowship as public witness

This initiative complements interfaith work but goes beyond it—inviting partnerships not only between traditions but between faith communities and other civic, cultural, and service groups.

What We Are Asking of You

- **Lead within your denomination or network** to encourage table fellowship in every neighborhood
- **Connect us to churches** and ministries that could host or co-host a stop on the Potluck Project Tour
- **Share the toolkit** widely with congregations and partners in your sphere
- **Consider co-sponsoring the Project**, supporting its reach and witness
- **Help us coordinate local efforts** by connecting us with aligned organizations and initiatives

A Gospel Witness for This Moment

In a time of division, fear, and false gospels, table fellowship offers a powerful, faithful response. It is a practice of humility, welcome, and courage

Let us show our communities—and ourselves—that the Gospel is not a tool of domination, but a call to love.


Let us bear witness by gathering, listening, and building trust.

Table fellowship can reshape our churches, communities, and public life.

Thank you for your leadership—and for considering how we can do this work together.

About PTU:

Paths to Understanding is a 501c3 working for a world in which all belong and all can thrive. We do this work in partnership with local and regional organizations in Washington State and across the nation. Our partners include secular and religious bridge building organizations and networks.

	
Who can host a potluck?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals • Groups of Friends • Community Groups • Wisdom Communities or Interfaith Group
What do you need to get started?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 or more people ready to organize • A date and time for your potluck • A location to host your event • Courage to gather with others
What will you find in this toolkit?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample invitation • Pre-event press release template • Event agenda & considerations for planning an intercultural event • Post-event press release template
QUESTIONS? Contact us via email Together@PathsToUnderstanding.org	



The Rev. Terry Kylo, ELCA

Executive Director,

Paths to Understanding

360-770-2774

terry@pathstounderstanding.org

www.pathstounderstanding.org