



Loving Our Neighbors, Strengthening Our Communities, Protecting Our Freedoms

A Time of Disconnection and Division

Across the country, many Americans feel like strangers to each other. Fear, isolation, and mistrust are growing—even within our own neighborhoods. At the same time, the values we hold dear—faith, family, freedom—feel increasingly under strain.

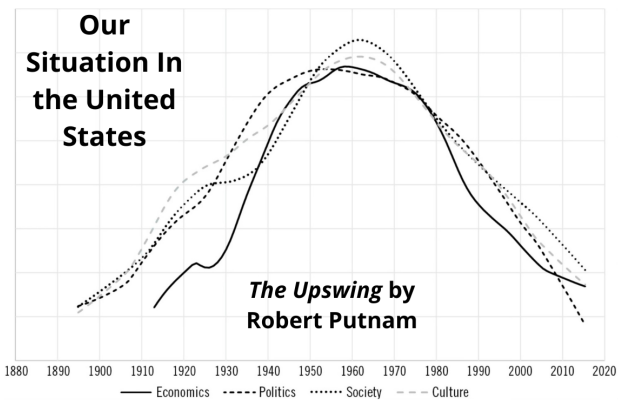
As followers of Jesus, and as citizens who care about our communities and our country, this moment calls us to respond with both courage and care.

The Challenges We Face Together

Across the United States, communities are facing a wave of division and disconnection that threatens both individual well-being and our shared civic health. Key challenges include:

- The rise of polarization that erodes democratic norms
- Widespread loneliness and isolation, made worse by social media and cultural fragmentation
- Increasing disparities in wealth, income, education, and human rights

These issues are deeply interconnected. Social isolation makes us more vulnerable to fear and manipulation. Polarization erodes our ability to collaborate across difference. According to the Rippel Foundation, **belonging and civic muscle are the foundation** of a society. Group-to-group and person-to-person relationships are not a nice to have, they create the possibility for everything else. The question is: how do we respond?



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

A Simple Way to Build Trust and Safety

The Potluck Project is a tool for churches and communities to bring people together around food and stories. No politics. No debates. Just neighbors gathering to listen, learn, and share life.

It's based on a simple truth: **we can't care for our neighbors if we don't know them.** And when people know each other, public safety improves, fear goes down, and communities grow stronger.

Rooted in Biblical Practice

In the Gospels, Jesus often began with a meal. He ate with tax collectors, Pharisees, the sick, the poor—people others ignored. It wasn't just food. It was **fellowship**. It was how He built trust and shared the Kingdom.

The Potluck Project follows that example:

- Welcoming the stranger
- Building bridges instead of walls
- Showing that God's love is wide enough to include everyone made in His image

As it says in Romans 12:13, "Practice hospitality."

Protecting Religious Liberty and the First Amendment

In a time when our freedoms are being challenged in many directions, it's vital to protect what makes this country unique:

- The right to worship freely
- The right to speak and gather
- The right to live according to our convictions

But these freedoms rely on something deeper: a society that can live together peacefully, even with our differences.

The Potluck Project is one way to support that peace—by reducing tension, building understanding, and

showing that Christians are a source of stability and hope in divided times.

What the Potluck Project Offers

- A **free, easy-to-use toolkit** to help your church or ministry host a meaningful potluck
- Simple story prompts that encourage connection, not conflict
- A way to reach out to others in the community—whether they attend church or not
- An opportunity to protect public safety by building real relationships across cultural lines

You don't need a special speaker. You don't need to change your theology. You just need a table, some food, and a willingness to listen.

What You Can Do

- Host a Potluck Project event at your church, school, or community center
- Use it as a first step in outreach or evangelism—building trust before sharing your deeper message
- Invite others in your town to join you in strengthening the fabric of your community
- Show your community that your church stands for peace, presence, and love of neighbor.

For Such a Time as This

This isn't about watering anything down.

It's about **living the Gospel in public.**

It's about showing that faith still matters—especially when times are tough.

Let's build trust before trouble comes.

Let's set the table for our neighbors.

Let's be known by our love.

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.

THE potluck PROJECT	
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	



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