



Paths to Understanding is grateful for our partnership with the Northwest Washington Synod!

We face both urgent and long-term challenges, including:

- The rise of Christian Nationalism and its role in shifting our nation toward illiberal democracy.
- Increasing loneliness and social isolation, amplified by social media.

A Strategy Rooted in Jesus' Mission

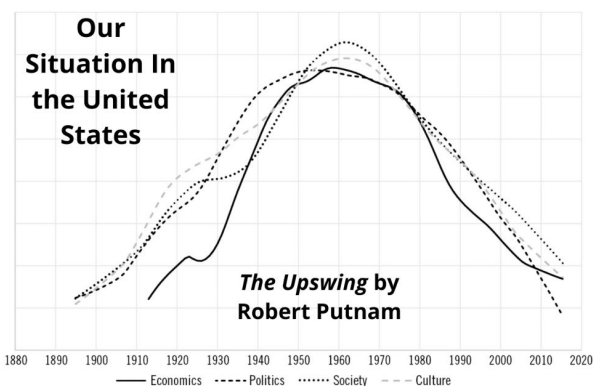
To respond effectively, we need a strategy that:

- Aligns with Jesus' mission.
- Addresses a deep and growing need in our society.
- Builds on existing strengths and expands our missional capacity.

Table Fellowship as a Response

In Jesus' time, social divisions were drawn along lines of culture, tradition, region, and honor status. One of Jesus' most powerful strategies was table fellowship—bringing diverse people together over shared meals. This practice embodied the ethics of one Creator and agape love for neighbors. It was so transformative that his detractors complained: *"He eats with sinners and tax collectors."* **Jesus understood that people change at the pace of relationships.**

Today, Americans are deeply disconnected. Robert Putnam notes that by 2015, Americans were as divided, lonely, and economically unequal as they had been since 1910. Social cohesion has steadily declined since 1965—long before social media inflamed division and COVID deepened our disconnection. Our society is more complex than ever, requiring courage and intentionality to build relationships across traditions, cultures, and identities.



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

Our Responsibility as Lutherans

Lutherans, along with our ecumenical partners, have a responsibility to respond to Christian Nationalism, the distortion of what love of neighbor means, and the erosion of social cohesion.

One of the key critiques of the Confessing Church in Germany was its failure to be in relationship with Jewish and other marginalized neighbors. We have an opportunity to learn from this mistake by fostering deeper connections across our communities.

A Strategy for a More United Society

Neighborhood-based table fellowship is a key strategy to counter Christian Nationalism. When

people share meals and stories, relationships form naturally, prompting others to ask, *“Why are you spending time with them?”*—creating opportunities for theological reflection we would otherwise not have and showing that religion is not all about division.

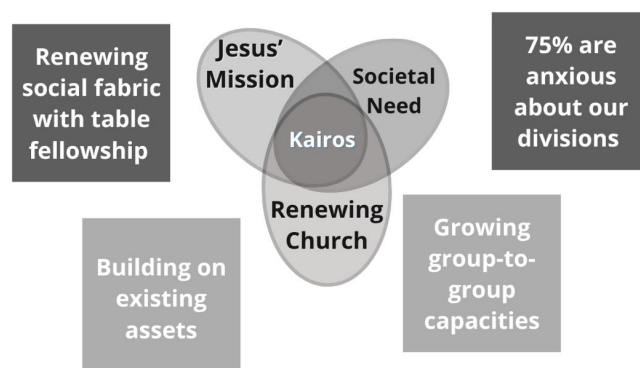
Likewise, table fellowship is crucial to rebuilding social cohesion. Given the massive societal shifts of the past 60 years, we have the power to:

- Create sustained, intentional opportunities for people to engage in group-to-group experiences.
- Equip people with the confidence and skills to have meaningful, experience-based conversations across differences.

A Practical Strategy for Our Churches

For the church, table fellowship is:

- A Strategic Response – Gathering people across cultures, traditions, economic situations, and identities.
- A Readily Available Resource – Churches, mosques, temples, nonprofits, and community groups already know how to host a potluck.
- A Path to Positive Outcomes – Building trust, fostering hope, developing skills, and creating organic connections between groups.



The Potluck Project: A National Movement

With **The Rev. Dr. Michael Trice** and our partners at **Seattle University’s Center for Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement**, we are fostering a national movement using table fellowship. Our contribution is **The Potluck Project**, which includes:

- A downloadable toolkit for congregations and communities.
- A national tour offering leaders—both positional and influential—an experience of a Potluck.

So far, we have brought **The Potluck Project** to **Louisville, KY, and San Antonio, TX, Kirkland, WA** with many more stops planned.

This Is More Than Interfaith Work

While interfaith dialogue is important, **The Potluck Project is a toolkit for broader group-to-group engagement.**

Americans are divided along many lines: culture, tradition, economic situation, life circumstances, identities, abilities, age, and geography (rural, suburban, and urban). **Interfaith work alone is not enough for this moment.** The Potluck Project encourages gathering across all these divisions—

including faith traditions—but is not limited to religious communities.

Traditional interfaith gatherings often focus on interreligious dialogue, which is valuable, but many Americans are **not ready for such discussions**, and many churches **are not equipped to facilitate them**. Instead, this toolkit invites people to gather through shared meals, simply sharing their own life experiences.

Given our collective loneliness, social isolation, and fear of one another, our approach is to create:

- A low-threshold first experience for people.
- A manageable event for churches to host.
- An expanding network of organic relationships, positive stories, and increasing social cohesion.

What We Are Asking of You

1. Lead within the ELCA, synods, and ecumenical/interreligious networks to **promote table fellowship in every neighborhood**. (This is the most important ask.)
2. **Hold a series of Potluck Project events** as a resource for congregations.
3. Consider co-sponsoring The Potluck Project to expand its reach.

Table fellowship has the power to reshape our communities and strengthen our shared future. Thank you for your leadership and for considering how we might work together to keep love of neighbor alive.

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	



The Rev. Terry Kylo, ELCA

Executive Director,

Paths to Understanding

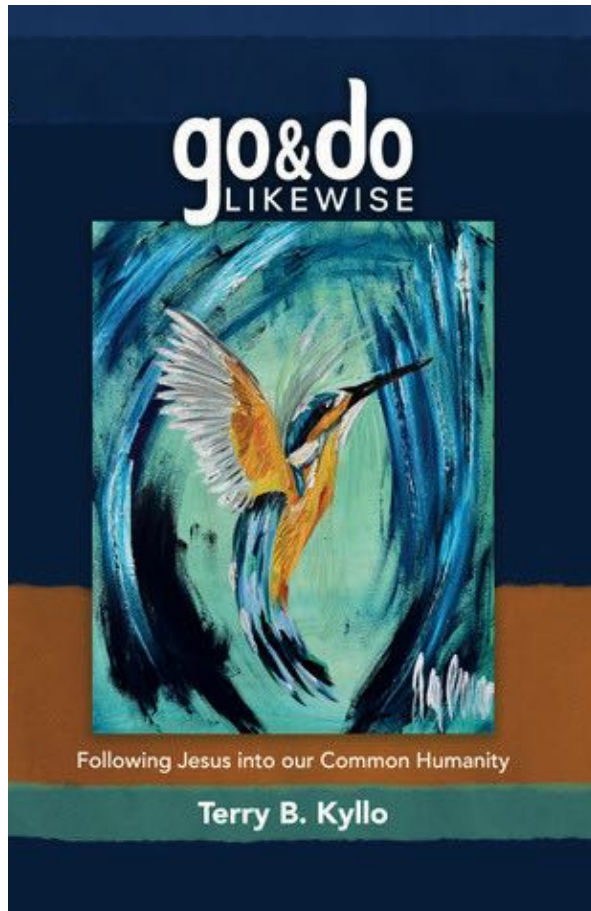
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Go and Do Likewise: Following Jesus Into Our Common Humanity

By Terry B. Kylo



We don't have to live divided!

We are living in a time of profound social divisions in the United States. Many of us feel deeply concerned and long for a better future for our families and our communities.

What can we do that will make a difference?

Public, respectful relationships between people of diverse traditions and cultures.

Christians are often held back by the idea that relating to people of other traditions is not faithful to Jesus. Through his work to counter the bias and bigotry of our time, Rev. Terry Kylo has been on a journey out of the culture of supremacy into the experience of our common humanity. He writes: *"I was born into White Christian Supremacy. But I was not born for it. You weren't either. The Creator has more beautiful ways for us to live and is restoring what was taken from us. Jesus invites his followers to take the long, painful, joyous, and healing journey of daily baptism to find our identity among all the Creator's children, all made in God's image."*

Go on your own journey out of division and follow Jesus into our common humanity with Go and Do Likewise.



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LIKewise

www.PathsToUnderstanding.org

BUILDING KINSHIP

Appreciating all Wisdom Communities

MEDIA

Inspiring stories from multi-faith activists on PTU's weekly TV show Challenge 2.0 and the PTU Podcast.

COUNTERING BIGOTRY

We often hear only the negative about others – without even knowing them. PTU workshops help your community begin to counter antisemitism, islamophobia, and anti-Indigenous bigotry.

GO AND DO LIKEWISE

PTU Director Rev. Kylo tells the story of his journey out of white Christian supremacy. The book and classes for Christian congregations respond to the question, "Is it faithful to Jesus to be in relationship with other religious traditions?"

PREPARING LOCAL LEADERS

Allyship is a Practice

AUTHENTIC ALLYSHIP

PTU prepares leaders and active members of Wisdom Communities to play a role in working for equal rights, dignity, and opportunity for everyone in their community.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT Starting Fall 2024!

Youth programs will focus on how to engage in healthy dialogue, leadership skills in multi-faith and multi-cultural settings, and encouraging a passion for action-oriented, justice-rooted service across communities.

CONNECTING NEIGHBORS & COMMUNITIES

The Courage to Grow from Us to Trust

POTLUCK PROJECT

This toolkit shows you how to gather diverse neighbors for a meal to get to know each other. Spark hope in your community by showing that we are not as divided as we feared.

LET'S GO TOGETHER

While many are experiencing division, it is possible to build trust in our communities. PTU supports your Wisdom Community to create a public partnership with neighbors of all cultures, faiths, identities, and socio-economic situations.

JOIN US!

6 ways you can get involved today



Have fun while building trust in your community! Host a potluck in your home or together with your wisdom community or other community group. Invite people of diverse cultures, traditions, and identities to share a meal and get to know each other. No politics or debates - just neighbors meeting neighbors. Contact us to receive a step-by-step guide and communication templates.



Take a class with us - on demand or live, online or in person - to learn more about countering bigotry, becoming an authentic ally, and advocating for our common humanity where you live. Ask us about workshops and classes tailored for your group!



Start a book study group in your congregation or with Christian friends to discuss how Christians can be faithful to Jesus while being in relationship with other religious traditions. Invite author Rev. Terry Kylo for a discussion or in-depth class on this topic!



Invite friends for a watch party of our weekly TV program! On MeTV and YouTube, Jeff Renner facilitates conversations between experts, activists and affected community members about religious and cultural bigotry and how we can build a more just society.

Contact us at Together@PathsToUnderstanding.org to learn more!



HOST A FUNDRAISER! Birthday or other special occasion coming up? Spread the love to the cause you care about and ask your guests to make a gift to PTU. Contact us for promotional materials that will help you tell your story about multi-faith peacemaking.

DONATE online (pathstounderstanding.org/donate-now) or contact us to set up your pledge, legacy gift, or matching donation. Email carla@pathstounderstanding.org

Checks can be made out to:

Paths to Understanding | PO Box 2010 | Lynnwood, WA 98036



HISTORY OF PATHS TO UNDERSTANDING



PTU's roots go back to 1960 when Rabbi Raphael Levine recognized the similarities between antisemitism and the anti-Catholic sentiment that grew during John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign. Levine set out to build multi-faith relationships to counter dehumanization. Together with Father William Treacy and Pastor Oscar Rollander, he created the groundbreaking TV show *Challenge* which for 17 years aired interfaith conversations at prime time on KOMO TV. Rabbi Levine and Father Treacy also founded Camp Brotherhood, a retreat center that brought over 250,000 people from different wisdom traditions together into interfaith experience until it was sold in 2016. Rabbi Levine and Father Treacy's courage, compassion and hope is the foundation of what Paths to Understanding is built upon.

In 2020, the Treacy Levine Center merged with Neighbors in Faith, a program started by PTU Executive Director, Reverend Terry Kylo in response to rising incidences of anti-Muslim hate speech and violence.

Together with Muslim faith leaders, Rev. Kylo organized townhall discussions, community meetings and leadership trainings that countered misinformation and created dialogue between American Muslims and their neighbors. Since 2015, Neighbors in Faith has reached the hearts and minds of more than 10,000 people. It continues to be a program of Paths to Understanding.

Today, Paths to Understanding works with people across religious, cultural, ethnic and social lines toward a shared vision for a just and equitable Washington State. We partner with many local and regional multi-faith organizations, such as the Faith Action Network, The Church Council of Greater Seattle, Holden Village, Seattle University, and The Shoulder-to-Shoulder Campaign, and with anti-racist and interfaith community groups.

Inspired by our shared values and shared humanity, PTU equips people to bridge bias, build unity and work together for the common good.