

“Uncomfortable Grace”

(published in the Faith and Reason section of the Daily Item, 8/29/2026)

Pastor Timothy Hogan-Palazzo

Saint Paul's @ The Farm UCC

Spuccfarm.org

It has been an amazing week of time away for this pastor. So many people stepped up to help with faith community obligations—something not unusual, but still hard to accept—and to help with family obligations, too, which was even harder to accept. It strikes me that we rarely like it when people help us. Any of us. Accepting help is not an easy thing to do.

Most of us have heard all our lives that we should be independent, able to do everything ourselves. It may be one of the most common lies our world tells us: that asking for help is a sign of weakness, that it takes resources from others, that it puts people out. We never want to be the ones "putting someone out." So, when members of my extended faith family stepped in to give me a time of respite, I could not have been more thankful—even as some part of me resisted it.

I spent part of this week sitting near the shoreline, listening to the waves, reading a story related to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Somewhere in that quiet, it struck me: accepting help from others isn't merely the right thing to do—it's Biblical. Paul makes this case in Galatians 6:2: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Allowing others to help us, to carry what we cannot carry alone, is part of what it means to live in community. It is part of what it means to love and be loved.

Like the travelers on the Emmaus road, we don't always recognize grace when it's walking right beside us. Sometimes it takes a companion—someone willing to sit with us in our weariness—before our eyes are opened to what's really happening. Help, offered and received, can be one of those moments of recognition.

I've had many conversations with people who bristle when others try to do something for them. "I can do it myself." "I don't need help." "I like being independent." I've even heard, "If they do something for me, then I'll owe them, and I don't like owing anyone." I understand the instinct. But here's the truth I keep coming back to: when we refuse help, we don't just protect our pride—we deny others the chance to share their gifts. We tell them, however unintentionally, that what they have to offer isn't needed. And are we really in a position to make that call, especially when we are the ones who stand to benefit?

Paul's letter to the Galatians makes clear that fulfilling the law of Christ is about living into community—about carrying and being carried. Isn't that what we're called to be? I've spent years talking, writing, and preaching about living into community. And yet when others offer to help me, my first instinct is often still to say no. That resistance isn't holiness. It isn't strength. It's ego getting in the way of the very kingdom we say we're building.

Jesus never intended for his followers to walk alone, carrying every burden in solitary silence. In fact I believe he intended the exact opposite. He gathered people. He sent them out two by two. He let others wash his feet, prepare meals, offer their homes. He modeled a life of mutual dependence long before Paul ever put it into words.

So I'll ask you what I've had to ask myself: How do you respond when someone offers to help you? Is your first word "no"? Do you assume you're supposed to manage it all alone? What might change—in you, and in your community—if the next time help is offered, you simply said, "Thank you. Yes"?

Perhaps that's where the kingdom begins: not in our capability, but in our willingness to be carried.