

“One: Building Community”

(published in the Faith and Reason section of the Daily Item, 10/3/2026)

Pastor Timothy Hogan-Palazzo

Saint Paul's @ The Farm UCC

Spuccfarm.org

In the autumn of 1933, in the depths of the Great Depression, a Presbyterian pastor in Pittsburgh had an idea that was as simple as it was audacious. Facing a nation battered by economic despair and deep isolation, he invited neighboring congregations across town to share communion on the exact same Sunday at the exact same hour. His goal wasn't to debate theology, compare church rosters, or argue doctrine. It was simply to offer a tangible sign of shared hope—a quiet declaration that no matter how difficult the days were, no one was truly walking alone.

That humble spark caught fire. The practice was quickly embraced denominationally, and by 1940, under the gathering clouds of World War II, the Federal Council of Churches promoted the observance worldwide. In a world fractured by rising nationalism and fear, World Communion Sunday became an intentional act of global solidarity—a sacred reminder that what unites humanity in the eyes of God is far deeper than any border, language, culture, or ocean that divides us.

This Sunday, October 4, churches of all traditions across the globe will gather to observe World Communion Sunday once again. Millions will break bread and share the cup, connected across continents and cultures.

It is a beautiful tradition, but as I've sat with this story this week, an essential question keeps pressing on my heart: *What does this mean for us today, right here in our own community?*

Communion was never intended to be merely a comforting ritual tucked safely inside church walls. At its core, the table is a living reminder of who Jesus is and how we are called to live. Jesus never spent his days building exclusive clubs or drawing lines to keep people out. He spent his life widening the circle—welcoming the forgotten, feeding the hungry, and showing a radical love that shook the world, even angering those in authority in government and church leaders.

When Jesus talked about what it looks like to truly follow him, he didn't offer an abstract checklist. In Matthew 25, he gave us a picture of love with its sleeves rolled up: feeding the hungry, offering drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing those in need, caring for the sick, and visiting the imprisoned. When his followers asked when they had ever seen him in such need, Jesus answered: *“Whenever you did it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.”*

That is where real unity lives. Unity is not uniformity. It doesn't mean we all look alike, vote alike, or think alike. True unity is found in shared compassion. It is the courageous decision to set aside our divisions and pick up a towel to serve one another.

Our world is loud, tired, and too often divided by anger. Yet deep down, every one of us longs for connection, kindness, and a place to belong. Healing that divide doesn't require a massive global initiative; it starts with something much closer to home.

Can you imagine what would happen if each of us simply decided to care for the person right in front of us? The neighbor quietly struggling with grief. The coworker carrying an invisible burden. The family worried about making ends meet. The stranger whose life looks completely different from our own.

As tables are set this Sunday around the world, may we be reminded that love is always an action. You don't have to change the entire world all at once to make a difference. It begins when we choose to be one: one act

of kindness, one meal shared, one listening ear offered without judgment, and one hand extended across a divide.

When we care for the one right in front of us, we discover the sacred truth that we are never truly alone—and that hope is alive and well.