“A Sign of the Times”
(published in the Faith and Reason section of the Daily Item, 11/7/2026)

Pastor Timothy Hogan-Palazzo
Saint Paul’s @ The Farm UCC
Spuccfarm.org

In January 2020, custom woodworker Eric Miller and his partner, Tina Thomas, grew deeply weary of the constant political divisiveness and relentless negativity in the news. Looking for a quiet antidote to the cynicism around them, they painted two simple words onto a piece of scrap wood and bolted it to a utility pole at the corner of Bond and Green streets in Westminster, Maryland.

The sign read simply: “BE KIND.”

What began as a localized effort to push back against hostility soon sparked an unexpected movement. That single piece of scrap wood crossed state lines into Pennsylvania and rippled across our own Susquehanna Valley. Over the last few years, thousands of signs, bumper stickers, school projects, and community “Kindness Weeks” have sprung up across our towns. Residents have eagerly nominated teachers, healthcare workers, coworkers, and quiet heroes who go out of their way to lift others up.

It is inspiring to see how a humble wooden sign can capture our collective longing for peace. But as we catch our breath following another exhausting election cycle—one marked by bitter rhetoric, sharp divisions, and billions of dollars spent on advertising while so many families quietly battle hunger, rising costs, and housing insecurity—we are reminded that signs alone do not fix our world.

Our real impact does not originate in national headlines or political campaigns. Our true power has always lived right here at home: in our neighborhoods, around our kitchen tables, and in how we choose to treat one another every single day.

“Be kind.” It sounds disarmingly simple, doesn’t it? It reminds me a bit of the 1989 “WWJD” movement, when a youth leader in Michigan created simple woven bracelets to help teenagers ask: What would Jesus do? It quickly turned into a worldwide trend. But whether it is a cloth wristband or a painted yard sign, the message only matters if it reaches our hands and our feet. A slogan is just decoration until it translates into how we live.

In our own faith community, a sign hangs directly above the door as you exit our sanctuary: “Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Corinthians 16:14). It was placed there for the exact same reason as those scrap-wood signs and woven wristbands—to remind us that words without action are empty. As the Apostle Paul cautioned in 1 Corinthians 13:1, even eloquent speech or passionate religious talk without love is merely a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

As Christians, we look to a sign over two thousand years old: the cross. It proclaims to every weary heart, You are seen. You are loved. You are forgiven. Even more, it calls our daily actions to mirror the radical, self-giving grace of Jesus. Love and kindness were never just pleasant ideas to him; they were the concrete actions of how he lived, taught and healed, leaving an impression that still transforms lives today.

Eric Miller and Tina Thomas gave us a reminder that is now six years old; that Michigan youth leader offered one more than thirty years ago. Can you imagine what kind of lasting impact we could make in our own Susquehanna Valley if we practiced that same love and kindness through our everyday actions?

We cannot control the tenor of national politics, nor can we undo the harsh words that fill our screens. But we can decide what kind of community we are going to build right here at home. We can choose to listen without contempt, feed a neighbor who is struggling, encourage a tired teacher, and offer patience when anger feels easier.

Let kindness not merely be a sign we post in our front yards—let it be the way we love every single neighbor, without exception.