SETTING THE TABLE · WEEK 2 OF 6

The Neighbor's Table

We will build relationships before we need them. One invitation, one shared dish, one new name you'll remember.

On August 29, 2026, two hundred religious leaders met in New York for *One World: One Humanity*. They ended the day with a Call to Action of five commitments, and they asked everyone to carry those commitments home. Last week we started at our own kitchen table. This week the table gets a little wider.

The second table is for someone who lives or works near you but whom you don't really know yet: the neighbor across the hall, the parent you nod to at school pickup, the colleague two desks over.

Why build it now

At the summit, leaders told a simple story. In one city, people from different communities met every month just to talk about their families. Nothing was on the agenda. Years later, when a crisis came, they already had each other's phone numbers, and they were able to act within hours. Elsewhere, a network of neighbors built in calm times was ready the day a local school received a threat.

You can't exchange phone numbers in the middle of an emergency. Trust has to be in place before it's needed. It's also hard to fear, or hate, someone whose kids you know by name.

How to set the table

1. **Choose one person.** Pick a neighbor, colleague or school parent you've seen many times but never really talked to. One person is enough.
2. **Keep it small and easy.** A potluck dinner, a coffee on the porch, a walk with takeout, or a lunch at work all count. Shorter is fine. An hour is plenty.
3. **Send the invitation.** Use the template below or say it in person. Mention why you're asking so it doesn't feel odd.
4. **Ask everyone to bring one dish that means something.** It could be a family recipe, a holiday food or a favorite snack. The dish is the first conversation starter.
5. **Ask, then listen.** Use two or three of the prompts below. Let them talk about their family, their work and where they're from.
6. **Exchange numbers before you leave.** This is the whole point. Say, "If you ever need anything, call me."
7. **Tell us what you did.** Let us know who you invited, what you ate and what you learned.

A simple potluck plan

- **Who:** you, plus one to three new people. Bring a friend if it helps you feel at ease.
- **Where:** your home, a building lobby, a park bench, a break room or a café.
- **What to bring:** you provide drinks and plates, and each guest brings one dish with a story behind it.
- **Be thoughtful:** ask about food needs ahead of time and keep at least one dish that everyone can eat.
- **Before guests leave:** trade phone numbers and pick a date to see each other again.

Conversation prompts

- How long have you lived or worked here, and what brought you?
- What's the story behind the dish you brought?
- What did a good neighbor look like where you grew up?
- Who in your life would you call first if something went wrong?
- What's one thing about this neighborhood you wish more people knew?
- What holiday or tradition is coming up for your family?
- What could we do together that would make this place a little better?

An invitation you can send

> *Hi [name], I realized we've been neighbors for [time] and I don't really know you, which feels wrong. I'm hosting a small potluck on [day] at [time] and I'd love for you to come. Just bring one dish that means something to you. It's part of a project called Setting the Table, where people are inviting someone new to eat with them before Thanksgiving. No pressure at all, but I'd really like to get to know you.*

A reading for the table

Read this aloud before you eat. It's the commitment at the center of this week.

> *"We will build relationships before we need them."*

For congregations, classrooms and groups

A congregation can invite its next-door neighbors, the businesses on its block, or another congregation nearby to a shared meal. A school can host a family potluck where every family sits with one they don't know. A workplace can pair teams that never cross paths for lunch. The goal stays the same: new names, new numbers and a reason to meet again.

Tell us what you did

The Call to Action ends with a simple request: "Tell us what you intend to do. Then tell us what you did." Share your table at **wcorl.org/setting-the-table/commit**. Tell us who you invited, what was on the table and what you learned. With your permission, we'll share some of the stories.

Next week, Week 3: The Table Across Difference. We'll sit down with someone who sees the world differently.

Show up. Stand up. Speak up.

The World Council of Religious Leaders · wcorl.org · info@wcorl.org
Read the full Call to Action at wcorl.org/owoh-call-to-action