

Battle of the Sundays: Pulpit Freedom vs. World Communion

By [David Henson](#)

October 4, 2012

A curious thing is happening this Sunday in churches across America.

For some, this curious thing is Pulpit Freedom Sunday. The day, promoted by the conservative group Alliance Defending Freedom for the fourth year, urges pastors to speak out in favor of candidates they support, defying IRS restrictions that forbid such political speech in religious nonprofits.

It's generally a bad idea, and [even most conservatives Christian pastors disagree with the ADF on this one](#). [Yet there are still about 1,000 pastors who signed up for the ADF's initiative, and, of course, Fox News personality Mike Huckabee has pledged his own support.](#)

Meanwhile, in many mainline churches, the curious thing this Oct. 7 will not be Pulpit Freedom Sunday, but [World Communion Sunday](#). In these churches, the day's worship will not be centered on one man (because it is almost always a man who enjoy freedom to speak in a pulpit in most churches) at the podium, but on the body of Christ around the world feasting at a communal table.

The difference in how this Sunday will be marked seems instructive, symbolic even. In one, the focus rests on the importance of freedom and of an individual speaking out, fist pounding with righteous fury about a fleeting moment in one country's political history. In the other, the focus will be on men, women, children, rich, poor, gays, lesbians, Africans, Asians, Australians, Europeans, and Americans, coming to a shared table with thanksgiving and solidarity, palms outstretched receiving a piece of bread, a sip of wine, eternal life.

One reduces Sunday to a politically engineered farce that celebrates American nationalism and elevates the individual above all else. The other expands Sunday to include a global village that transcends partisan politics, celebrates a global community of God and elevates the host,* not the individual.

It is a sobering reminder as the country enters the homestretch of the presidential campaign and prepares to watch its two candidates debate for the first time. It is not to say that the debates and the election are not important or that people of faith shouldn't be involved in the political process as activists motivated by their religious convictions. We should! Rather, World Communion Day, at least when juxtaposed against the competing Pulpit Freedom Sunday, reminds us that at the end of the day, the reign of God isn't coming with a president or a political party or a pulpit pronouncement.

Instead, it's already here.

Within us.

Us.

Even in those celebrating Pulpit Freedom Sunday.

** I know, I know. Not all of us elevate the host. See: Reformation. But it was too good of a rhetorical flourish to edit out, and every now and then, it's true, my Anglicanism shows.*

Originally posted at [Henson's blog](#)