

# time & heart

by Jayne Davis, Associate Pastor of Discipleship, First, Wilmington

What heals a hurting world? Love Does!

“We’re taught to pray, not ‘Lord, get me to heaven as fast as you can,’ but, ‘Lord, may your kingdom come on earth – right here in Wilmington – as it is in heaven,’” said Matt Cook, Pastor of First, Wilmington.

Have you ever wondered what that would look like? If God’s kingdom were to come right where you are? Have you ever seen it?

As a church, we have an opportunity to put that prayer into action in our lives – with our time, with our energy, and especially with our love. We can go into the broken places in our community and be the hands and feet of Christ, to let his heart be expressed in what we do. That’s what Love Does.

In May 2016, First, Wilmington, embarked on an adventure called **Love Does**, a two-year, church-wide missional journey to discover how God wants to use the best of who we are, as individuals and as a church, to meet the deep needs in our community and in our world.

For the past year, we’ve been on a mission trip in our own community. We’ve called it KOG2ILM. That’s short for the “Kingdom of God to Wilmington,” an idea we adopted from our friends at First, Richmond. KOG2ILM is a call to follow Jesus out of our church, out of our routines, out of our comfort zones, and into five different “places” of brokenness: Education,

Hunger, Refugees, Homelessness, and Incarceration. We’ve taken a month or two at each “stop” along the way and focused our attention there as a congregation. From prayer prompts to blog posts and from sermons to stories, we’ve tried to understand the issues and see the people involved through God’s eyes. For each area of emphasis, we have identified one or two mission partners in our community and asked them two simple questions: “**What do you need?**” and “**How can we help?**” Their answers have taken us to places that we might never have imagined on our own.

While we envisioned collecting school supplies, Alderman Elementary School said, “We need 30 people to commit to meeting weekly with a child as a mentor and a reading buddy.”

While we imagined helping Karen refugee students with their homework, Interfaith Refugee Ministry said, “We need teams to walk alongside a family after they arrive in Wilmington and help them to adjust to a new life in a new country.”

At the Tuesday Night Dinner Ministry, Gary Harris said, “We have plenty of people to cook and to serve food. What we need is people who are willing to come every week, sit at the same table, and build relationships with the people around them.”

There was a common theme in all of these requests: **Build relationships and you will find your mission.**

Each of the five areas of emphasis in KOG2ILM offered three ways to be involved:

- **Low involvement** - a mission opportunity that everyone can participate in, like collecting school supplies or canned food for the local food pantry.

- **Medium involvement** - a mission opportunity with a time commitment and deeper participation, like being a prayer partner for a teacher or getting an apartment ready with furniture and supplies for an arriving refugee family.

- The **High involvement** mission opportunity was an “all in” commitment to build relationships through a deeper time investment, like walking alongside a person when they are released from prison or meeting weekly to read with a kindergarten student.

While the whole congregation was invited to be engaged at each “stop” along the way, every person at our church was encouraged to “go deep” by picking one of the five areas of brokenness and make a significant investment of both time and heart.

For Peyton Earey and her Vineyard Sunday School class, that has meant spending time in some of Wilmington’s most challenging neighborhoods through monthly involvement with Boots on the Ground. In addition to serving up thousands of hot dogs, Peyton says, “It has pushed us out of our respective geographic and social bubbles to meet, serve, and develop relationships with people in Creekwood, Hillcrest, and other communities that don’t necessarily look like the folks sitting in the pews with us on Sunday morning.”

Our hope is that every person at First, Wilmington, will bravely and eagerly search out opportunities to “expand their own bubble,” that God’s Kingdom may come and God’s will be done, right here in our community just as it is in heaven.

For more information on Love Does, visit [www.BecauseLoveDoes.org](http://www.BecauseLoveDoes.org).

