

Tables of Mercy began as an idea that emerged in response to dwindling attendance for Wednesday night dinners and programs at Temple, Durham.

We realized our approach to Wednesday night programming had a very inward focus to it, even though the dinner table is a great place to get to know people. We decided to try having one meal a month where our sole purpose was to invite our community to come join around the dinner table. There would be no other programming or activity – the focus would be on encouraging people to get to know one another.

We make it our goal to provide as many of these meals at no cost to those attending as possible. We try to partner with local restaurants to cater the meals, and have found several business owners who appreciate what we are trying to do and work with us on the price. We get word out using signage in front of the church, invitations on doors of surrounding homes, invitations on *Nextdoor.com*, and one neighborhood-wide mailout.

So far, we have hosted 10 of these meals, and they have become something both our church and our community look forward to. Between 80 and 110 people have attended each month, and over half of that number are individuals or families not connected to our church. We are learning more about our neighbors and how we can partner with them to bring God's peace and healing to our community.

Many of our dreams center around being an intergenerational church that lives and serves in peace and joy. Every Tables of Mercy dinner has embodied that dream. If you try this ministry, finances will probably not be the hardest part. The hardest part will be overcoming our tendency to sit with the same people and risk sitting across from a stranger, getting to know them, and letting them get to know you.

If you are willing to take that risk, you will find joy!

Mark Mofield,
Pastor, Temple, Durham

Temple, Raleigh, has a feeding ministry called Temple's Table.

We do this on the first and third Sunday of each month. The ministry primarily focuses on those who receive Meals on Wheels during the week but do not get services on the weekends. We also serve meals to the homeless at Moore's Square in downtown Raleigh and also to The Church in the Woods, a homeless ministry in the city. Temple's Table serves more than 400 meals each weekend we serve.

The ministry began when Bo Bodenstein came to Temple looking for a place to do a feeding ministry. It needs to be noted that Bo is not Baptist, but Catholic. We had a commercial kitchen that was not being used that often, so we joined in a partnership with Bo. The ministry of Temple's Table began as a ministry where we invited homeless persons to come into the building to eat. Now, the ministry brings meals to the people and places in need.

How has this impacted us? It gives us a window into our community.

Both people from our congregation and North Raleigh Community Church, the group that shares space with us, go into our community's housing complexes. We carry a meal, but we provide even more. We offer to pray with those that we serve and to aid them in areas where they may have need. Our people are touched each time they deliver meals. They experience being a blessing to others and also know they are being blessed by the relationships they are building.

Mike Parnell, Pastor, Temple, Raleigh



“What life-giving, innovative practices are giving life to your congregation?”

by Rick Jordan, CBFNC Church Resources Coordinator

We partner with other churches and communities of faith.

Last fall, our congregation was invited to celebrate Purim with the Jewish congregation in town. In turn, they celebrated our Sunrise Service on Easter with us. By forming a partnership with the Jewish congregation, we're not only celebrating our shared heritage, but helping one community of faith learn about another. This allows us to have better, more loving conversations surrounding our similarities and differences.

We have planned more events with not only our Jewish neighbors, but also our neighbors of different denominations. We worship together a couple of times a year as an inter-denominational community. This practice reminds our congregations that our faith tradition is older than the Baptist church or even the Christian church. We're reminded that just because worship looks or sounds different than ours doesn't make it wrong or bad. It gives us something to celebrate. I think it also gives us permission to try new things within a worship service or try a new kind of worship that we may not have previously considered.

Stephanie Bohannon, Associate Minister, First, Fayetteville