

## THE TABLE @ The Hills Church

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[a meal shared amongst neighbors]

Sharing a meal is simultaneously simple and profound. A meal is simple because we all have to eat. A meal is profound because we all have to eat. Meals are a powerful of expression of welcome and friendship in every culture. This is why Jesus' meals are so significant – they embody God's grace and enact God's mission.

We started The Table because are committed to seeing our neighborhood prosper. We want to help our neighbors get to know each other. Living in Park Hill we have found that people take pride in the neighborhood and want to know their neighbors. However, there are limited natural social gathering spaces in Park Hill. This is even more pronounced in the northern half of the neighborhood since it was designed without sidewalks. All are welcome at The Table whether you claim to follow Jesus or not, whether you agree with our theology or not, whether you've been in the neighborhood three weeks or thirty years.

We do this because sharing a meal reveals our common humanity. Because eating is a basic human need, when we eat there is no "us & them" but only us. There is no superiority or inferiority at the table. We sit at the same level around the table as friends regardless of our background.

We do this because Jesus said, "Love your neighbors." While Jesus' definition of neighbor surely means more than are actual neighbors it does not mean less than are actual neighbors.

We do this because food reminds us of our dependence on other people. We are tied into a network of farmers, drivers, technicians, store owners, stockers, cashiers...You get the point. We are not independent creatures. Above all we are dependent on God. We are finite beings who need sustenance to sustain us.

We do this because food reminds us God's generosity towards us. Food provides much more than sustenance. Think of all your favorite foods. Why do they taste so good? It didn't have to be this way – bread would have sufficed to sustain our lives. But God is ridiculously lavish in his creativity and generosity. God's first act after creating humanity was to present us with a menu: the fruit of all the trees in the garden. Every meal is an opportunity to receive God's good gifts with thankfulness – perhaps we need to refresh the practice of saying 'grace' before meals as an expression of our dependence and God's generosity – and food is an opportunity for human creativity and generosity in the image of the Creator.

We do this because food reminds us of God's story of redemption. Food is central to who we are, how we relate to God and to the story of salvation. Jesus ate food often with friends and frenemies – religious and nonreligious – saints and sinners. Jesus broke the social norms to eat with "sinners." In fact, those on the margins of society felt at home with Jesus. New Testament scholar Robert Karris says, "In Luke's Gospel Jesus is either going to a meal, at a meal, or coming from a meal." Jesus' followers and his enemies expected him to come with a bang, defeating God's enemies and vindicating his people. Instead he shares a meal.