

PARISH HOUSE

Newmarket Church of Christ



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THE TABLE

Nathan Pickard

For as long as I can remember the table has been a place of welcome. When I was a child my parent's kitchen table was a place of welcome. We welcomed the neighbourhood children who were often playing in the backyard or in the field we called "the lowlands". The kids across the street were often welcomed to the table just as the kids living across town often found a seat at the table.

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WELCOME TO THE TABLE, SUSAN

There was a message on the church machine, "Hi Nathan. Can you call me. It's Susan." I don't know a Susan. I call Susan back and discover that Susan & Gary want to get married and they are wondering if I would perform their wedding ceremony.

Shortly thereafter I walk across the street to visit Susan & Gary. As I am greeted at the door I can smell fresh made bread. I enter into the kitchen and see that Susan has been busy baking and cooking. I cannot help but wish I would be invited to dinner. Susan tells me that the bread is for Fred & Jean, the homemade soup is for the neighbour down the street, and the casserole is for her and Gary's dinner. Gary, without missing a beat simply says, "Yes, we feed the neighbourhood."

A few months later Susan calls and asks if I could come over and pick up some butter tarts and take them to Janice who is in the hospital. I pick up the butter tarts to take to Janice. I see all the butter tarts and think to myself that Janice doesn't need all the butter tarts—so I say, "You mind if one or two of these go missing?" Susan laughs and says, "Enjoy."

Every month when we gather to share a neighbourhood meal, Susan is present. Susan always brings food to share. I asked Susan why sharing a meal with the church and the neighbourhood is important and her response was, "It builds community." Susan is absolutely right. Sharing food builds us into a community because walls of separation are able to be broken down, the outcast is given a place of welcome, and, with those who have eyes to see, we begin to see the risen Jesus at the Table with us.

Susan, for your gift of sharing food we give thanks. We give thanks for your generous attitude towards the neighbour. Through the sharing of the table may together we discover the risen Jesus who sits at the Table with us.

Welcome to the Table.



*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.
Matthew 25:35*

Beef Stew with Carrots & Potatoes

Ingredients:

3 pounds of boneless beef chuck (cut up)
2 teaspoons of salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
olive oil for searing the meat
2 medium yellow onions (cut up into chunks)
garlic (peeled and smashed)
2 tablespoons of balsamic vinegar
1.5 tablespoons tomato paste
1/4 cup of flour
2 cups dry red wine
2 cups of beef broth
2 cups of water
1 bay leaf
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
1.5 teaspoons sugar
4 large carrots (peeled and cuted)
1 lb of Yukon potatoes (cut in half)
chopped parsley, for serving

Directions:

Preheat oven to 325 Degrees Fahrenheit
Season the meat with salt and pepper
Heat up olive olive oil and sear the meat on each side (approximately 5 minutes per side)
Set meat aside and let rest
In Dutch oven or heavy soup pan, add onions, garlic, balsamic vinegar and stir for about five minutes (use a wooden spoon)
Add tomato paste and cook for a minute
Add beef and sprinkle with flour. Stir until flour is dissolved.
Add wine, beef broth, water, bay leaf, thyme and sugar. Stir and bring to a boil.
Cover the pot and braise for 2 hours in oven.
After 2 hours, add carrots and potatoes and cook for an additional hour or until vegetables are cooked and meat is tender.

Invite some friends and neighbours over for dinner. Serve warm and enjoy. This is Susan's favorite recipe.

Recipe adapted from Once Upon A Chef with
Jenn Segal

The Table, cont'd

I remember one day Josh, who was sitting at our kitchen table, threw some butter against the wall. Until my mother redecorated the kitchen we always had a grease stain on our wall to remind us of Josh sharing a meal with the family. Later in life I vividly remember my parent's kitchen table being a place for Charlie, Pauline and Richard, among many others.

The community of Christian faith I grew up in also shared a table—not just a table of bread and wine—but a shared feast. Many of these people were farmers and so there was no shortage of homemade apple pies, an assortment of casseroles, and usually all the butter tarts one could wish for.

When I start reading the stories of Jesus it doesn't take long to discover Jesus sitting at a table with people. Jesus ate and drank with those who professed and confessed a faith in God and those who did not profess a faith in God. Jesus ate and drank with those who followed local customs and traditions and those who didn't. Jesus often was found at the table with the elite of society and those who lived on the margins; those who were well fed and those who wondered where their next meal would come from; those whose bodies were healthy and those whose bodies were deformed and broken in a variety of ways. Reading the multiple stories of Jesus at the table, it occurs to me that the table is the place where people are able to experience God's love, mercy, forgiveness, and healing. At the table with Jesus people are able to discover the nearness of God's kingdom.

One of the stories I often tell to those who have ears to listen is the story of Nicki and Claes. These two are simply known as the Church's chefs. Whenever there is a shared meal Nicki & Claes are seen in the kitchen preparing a feast and acting as the host. Nicki & Claes became a part of us when Nicki's mother passed away in September 2017. At the funeral Nicki asked if her and Claes could prepare a Thanksgiving feast to say thank you for hosting the funeral of her mother. Having learned to trust that co-workers (Luke 10:1-12) are sometimes those who show up unexpectedly in our life, we quickly opened the doors of our kitchen and watched their culinary gifts go to work. For nearly 18 months Claes & Nicki have prepared a neighbourhood feast where all are welcomed to the table.

A friend asked me one day why I think it's important to sit at the neighbourhood meal. I've had to think about it, but here is my answer: There is no other moment in the church's life where a self-professing atheist or people of faith, outsiders or insiders, young or old, male or female, rich or impoverished are able to sit down together and grow deeper into friendship in the name of Jesus.

I have a hunch—it might only be a hunch—but I think that whenever the church is able to learn how to share a feast together, that is where the church will learn how to live deeper into the life of God. Maybe, just maybe this is why I long to hear those words every Sunday morning, “Welcome to the Table.” But not just on Sunday morning, those moments when Claes & Nicki finish putting their culinary skills to work and say to us, “Welcome to the Table.”

What Is A Parish House?

Simply: a house in the neighbourhood that will be an extension of the church’s ministry. As we have been sent out, and in our sending, have discovered people of peace (Luke 10:1-12), we are now exploring what it might mean to invite a family to live in the neighbourhood. This family will build upon the work of God that has been on-going for over a decade.



As we seek to live into the vision of a Parish House, there are three areas we can partner together:

- Pray for us. Pray that we might have wisdom to engage such a vision
- Consider how your gifts might help us live into this vision: prayer partner, volunteer, trusted voice of guidance
- Consider on a congregational and an individual level to become a financial partner for a three year commitment

"To be most effective in bringing about change in a community or a neighborhood, it helps if you live there."

Larry James, *The Wealth of the poor*

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God through friendship
with the neighbourhood

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