

PULL UP A CHAIR AND HELP CHANGE A LIFE

By David Burch, Church Engagement Strategist

DO YOU EVER hear tragic stories of families or children from hard places in your community and wonder what you can do to make a difference? Often there are hurting people in your church and in your community, but helping them can seem overwhelming and complicated.

We know that when Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, His initial response was probably what the disciples expected. Jesus instructed us to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, but then He added something. Jesus then shared that we are to love our neighbor as our self and that this commandment is like the first.

Learning how to effectively love and minister to our neighbor is a key to effective discipleship, but the issues we see in our world can be complex. We have people in our churches and in our communities, neighbors, who have suffered the trauma of various kinds of abuse, failures in work and relationships, families facing financial failures, marriages about to dissolve, and so many other hurtful and discouraging life situations.

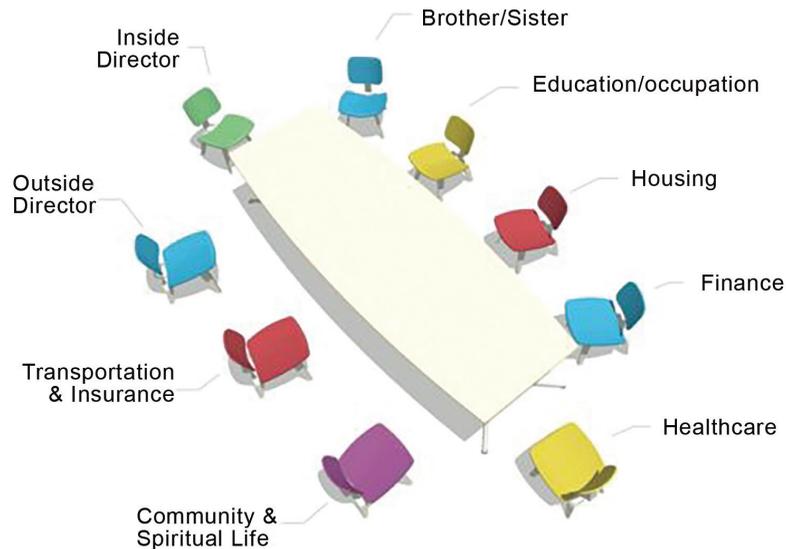
It is easy to begin to think that you don't have the skills or knowledge to know how to help. How did loving our neighbor become so challenging? Somehow we need a way to equip people to have the confidence they need to love their neighbors well and to develop relationships with hurting people in our churches and communities. We know that relationships can be transformational, but where do we start?

IN 2020, MBCH will be asking churches to engage with us and seek out people who are willing to learn to love their neighbor well. We are excited to be piloting a new ministry opportunity known simply as Open Table™.

With this new ministry, MBCH staff will partner with the church to assist in recruiting and equipping lay people in the church to minister directly to people in need right in your community. As the church recruits groups of people to form a "table" or perhaps multiple tables, the people serving will have opportunity to be trained and equipped to effectively engage in ministry with those in need in their community.

A table may serve a survivor of human trafficking, a youth aging out of foster care, a family trying to reunite with their child, or someone within your church who is facing some big life challenges such as a single mom, a widow or a spouse of a deployed soldier. The opportunities are really limitless. As tables form, they will be equipped to develop relationships and effectively serve those in need.

The Open Table Model – Individual Table



ARE YOU WILLING to pull up a chair and help change a life? You could bring your life skills, education, experience and networked connections to the table and partner with a team to make a difference. The idea is not complex. Each table is composed of a group of 6 to 12 volunteers who make a year-long commitment to act as a networked team of life specialists, encouragers, and advocates for the people being helped. You do not need to be a professional in any of these areas. Volunteers just need "common sense/personal experience" knowledge and a heart for ministry.

As a table serves a brother, sister, or family, they establish goals, accountability and develop an overall life plan. Table members then use their connections, skills and life experience to support the plan. The relationships formed allow church members to serve as the hands and feet of Jesus, loving the most vulnerable in their community. The relationships that form around the table, will not only transform the life of the brother, sister, or family being served, but they will have a forever impact on all those who serve as well.

So, are you ready to pull up a chair? If your church is interested in engaging with MBCH in this ministry, please contact David Burch, Church Engagement Strategist at david.burch@mbch.org or 417-380-1082.

*An anonymous participant said,
"I learned to problem solve. Relationships – good relationships – gave me a new world view. I loved all the members of my table. They helped me with balance in my life. They surrounded me with love."*