



# Manna Matters

## ALL TOGETHER NOW

### Six rural churches set the bar for Christian unity and compassion



Rural Stewart County, TN, is home to a collection of people who perfectly demonstrate what happens when the body of Christ comes together to carry out the gospel. Once every quarter, five or six small churches pool their money to hold a Mobile Pantry (a one-day event during which 300 families receive a grocery cart full of food worth roughly \$150). In a culture where competition and jealousy can cripple teamwork even in the church, these leaders are a rare and beautiful example of how we are all meant to work together for the greater good.



One day several years ago, Pastor Ricky Parker and Ron Hindman of The Potter's Hand were discussing the possibility of carrying out a Mobile Pantry when Ron wondered aloud if other local Christian leaders might want to get involved. The response was immediate and positive as others eagerly

jumped on board. Says Ricky, "Everybody we've reached out to has gotten involved. Some have dropped off for various reasons, but the six of us here today have sponsored the last three or four." To date, roughly a dozen Mobile Pantries have occurred in The Potter's Hand parking lot.

"But it's not about The Potter's Hand," Ricky explains. "This is just the venue. It's about the body of Christ."

Youth Pastor Mitchell Givens of New Hope Church of God agrees: "We're not in competition with each other; we are partners in ministry."



From L to R: Michelle Wallace, wife of Pastor Gary Wallace (The Sanctuary); Pastor Dave Whitehead (Big Rock Baptist Church); Pastor Charlie Mathis (Faith and Grace); Pastor Sean Daley (The Tabernacle, Indian Mound); Pastor Ricky Parker (The Potter's Hand); Youth Pastor Mitchell Givens (New Hope Church of God); and Kenny York (Manna Cafe).

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## All Together Now, continued



Photos: Denise Fitzhugh Parker

Why did they choose to feed the poor versus some other act of kindness? "It's what Jesus did," says Charlie Mathis, pastor of Faith and Grace. "When Jesus broke the fish and the bread, He did it not only to teach the people, but to equip them to go out on the mission field. Every time He fed people, it gave them strength, and they realized that Christ was their provider, so they went out and shared the good news of the Kingdom."

Ricky adds, "It's an awesome thing to do. I love feeding people, but my heart and passion is to get the body together. We've got Independents, Baptists, and Assemblies of God here, and we've had other denominations involved too. I get so excited about seeing my brothers and sisters, loving on them and cutting up with them. The world needs to see that we can come together—that we're on the same team."

*Together, the Stewart County team raises \$3000, which provides approximately 300 families with an abundance of groceries. Several times, the number of clients served has reached 325. Find out how your church, organization, or workplace can host a Mobile Pantry by emailing [Sara@MannaCafeMinistries.com](mailto:Sara@MannaCafeMinistries.com).*



As Manna Cafe's writer and editor, I love to hear from *Manna Matters* readers. Do you have questions? Comments? Ideas? Contact me at [Vicki@MannaCafeMinistries.com](mailto:Vicki@MannaCafeMinistries.com).

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Manna Café Ministries serves people in need in Clarksville/Montgomery County through a soup kitchen on wheels, food box distribution, and other vital resources. Propelled chiefly by volunteers, Manna Café strives to restore hope, dignity, self-reliance, community, and the love of God through Jesus Christ.



## FEATURED CLIENT/VOLUNTEER

Several years ago, Karen endured some difficulties that left her struggling financially. "Some life situations buried me totally, and it's been very hard to get out," she explains. "I've been on the verge of homeless for the past eight years." In spite of her circumstances, Karen radiates joy and gratitude: "God's been so good to me. When I've needed a miracle, He has sent one."

One way that God has provided for Karen is through Manna Café's Food Distribution program. "I've been able to



take the money that I would have used for food to buy gas to go to work," she explains. "That has helped me stay employed and kept me from being buried even further."

Karen expresses her thankfulness through action as a diehard Mobile Pantry volunteer. "The reason I'm so passionately involved by both serving and being served is because I know that the money that comes in to Manna Café goes out to the people who need it, and I like the fact that there's nothing wasted. Manna Café is very well-organized, very efficient. They're doing an incredible job of keeping people who are 'going under' from being buried."

Karen is eager to encourage others to give in whatever way they can. "Even if it's just a little, God can do a lot with a little. He can multiply it. Doesn't He do that all the time?"

## Grits & Gravy 2019

*This year's Grits & Gravy, Manna Café's annual fundraiser and birthday celebration, was held at The Belle Hollow. More than 150 attendees enjoyed a breakfast-for-dinner meal, updates from host Pastor Carlo Serrano, words of encouragement and inspiration*

*from Mayor Joe Pitts and First Lady Cynthia Pitts, and acoustic entertainment from Chris Crow. Our sincerest thanks to everyone who made it an evening to remember!*



**For a full list of weekly events, log on to [www.MannaCafeMinistries.com](http://www.MannaCafeMinistries.com).**

# A WORD FROM KENNY

## Now Serving: Soul Food

Several months have come and gone since our last newsletter. One of the most important things that happened during that time was Grits & Gravy, a celebration of the 9th anniversary of our first meal in Clarksville. Of course, a key reason for the event was to raise money for day-to-day operations, but as I watched our guests arrive, it dawned on me that they weren't just donors but partners. There were former and current board



members, core volunteers, and staff members. As I reminisced about all the faithful partners we've had over the years, I saw in my mind's eye the faces of some volunteers who weren't in attendance but who helped serve our very first meal, back when we literally had no warehouse to work from. I saw board members who helped make decisions we'd never made before, and donors

whose checks kept the lights and other utilities on.

I could go on and on about the hundreds of people and businesses who have helped make sure we accomplished the mission at hand. If you're reading this, chances are you're in those ranks. Thank you so much for believing in and sowing into the vision!

We've come a long way in nine years. God has provided miracle after miracle, from various financial partners to the Manna trucks on the road. Some said that what we're doing (and how we're doing it) couldn't be done. We're living proof that through our Lord Jesus, all things are possible and that God's dreams are a lot bigger than ours.

We've learned to provide physical food very well, showing the love of Jesus through service. But as we move forward, I'm very excited about shifting into a season where we'll be *sharing* the gospel as well as *doing* it.

What I mean is that, when the Refuge Community Center is complete in a few weeks, we'll start being very intentional about feeding the soul as well as the body. Worship, prayer, and the Word of God will be as much a part of Manna Café's identity as hot meals and food boxes. Hopefully in the next



*Preaching in Tent City in the early days, when Manna Cafe was still in its infancy.*

newsletter we'll be able to announce the official launch date of The Tribe, our weekly worship gathering. The Tribe is "a community of uncivilized followers of Jesus," where all are welcome: poor, rich, black, white, those who are sober and not so sober, those with roofs over their heads and those who are homeless. In preparation, Clarksville House of Prayer is meeting at The Manna Village several times each week, praying for the Providence neighborhood, our city, and our county. The Tribe gatherings will happen on Saturday nights so that those without cars can use the bus system.

I'd love for you to be part of this next adventure. As my pastor Scott MacLeod often says, *Get ready, get ready!*

**Manna Cafe is doing a new thing!**

Peace out.

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Instagram: manncafe1