



St. Andrew's  
Episcopal  
Church  
Omaha

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2023 Bishop Clarkson Grant Application  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church Omaha  
925 S. 84<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha NE 68114  
Fr. Keith Winton, Rector  
402-953-8443

**Grant Request: Funding for “Table Life” parish discussion, training, facilitation, and follow-up.**

**Overview**

Dr. Greg Mamula, Executive Pastor for the American Baptist Churches of Nebraska, attends All Saints in Omaha and his wife and children are members there. In 2021 Dr. Mamula published *Table Life: An Invitation to Everyday Discipleship*. Dr. Mamula does consulting with parishes and larger church organizations around the country to facilitate the understanding and adoption of this deeply prayerful and engaging way to increase engagement and discipleship and welcome new member. This grant will be used in 2023 to fund the program at St. Andrew's. Below is a brief summary.

**We Feel Disconnected from Ourselves and the World**

Our present culture of intense multitasking, information overload, and social turmoil often leaves us torn and disconnected from ourselves, our communities, and our faith. We are designed for connection with God and with others and yet find ourselves pulled farther apart by the grind of everyday life. We long for meaningful relationships, personal balance, and connection with something bigger than ourselves. The answer, it turns out, might be found in something as simple and common as eating together. Table Life presents a holistic approach to Christian table fellowship as a spiritual discipline for the entire church.

**Table Life Connects the Holy with the Ordinary**

Gathering around the table is a sacred event; it creates space for the Spirit to move. Meals create an environment where conversations happen. The table creates and deepens relationships. The table is where fundamental human events take place. Table Life actively seeks, welcomes, and celebrates the presence of Christ within those events.

**Table Life is a Holistic Approach to Discipleship in a Modern World**

Many table fellowship resources begin and end at the table, and many spiritual discipline resources limit the theological significance of the table to the Eucharist, led by clergy. Table Life is an intentional and interactive process of reflection and action, meals and mission, listening and storytelling, scripture and perspective, community and neighboring. These disciplines connect the individual with Christ, their local church, their neighborhood, and their community contexts.

### **Table Life Fosters Community**

We are hard-wired to flourish within the context of community. Table life is a holistic approach to faith and life. It creates space for us to recognize Christ at our tables, in our communities, and in our everyday lives. It give us a way to easily and meaningfully invite others by saying, “Join me at the table.”

Like all churches, St. Andrew’s is seeking ways to restore and revitalize community, fellowship, discipleship, and connectedness after the months of COVID isolation. There is a past history of success with similar, less directed, small fellowship groups at St. Andrew’s, and we believe that the time is ripe to find renewed spirit and energy in kind of fellowship and discipleship again.

The money for this grant will be used to engage Dr. Mamula in training and leadership sessions with church leaders and with the whole church, to purchase the Table Life book for any who might need financial assistance, and for group gatherings and community meals to kick-start the endeavor and to drive it forward.

Measuring success will be straightforward:

- How many of our new and long-term members participate?
- What is the “retention rate” of the small fellowship groups following up each year for three years?
- What new internal and external discipleship efforts arise specifically because they were conceived and launched by various Table Life groups
- How many new visitors come over the next two years because they were invited by a Table Life group? How many become new members?

A recommendation from our Vestry and a cost breakdown is attached.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Fr. Keith Winton

## **Vestry Recommendation for Table Life**

In my business world, the best two ways get to know associates and clients are to play golf or eat dinner together in a small group. Several years ago, we sponsored two newcomers' buffets at our golf club. All new members of the church were invited after church to join us and other vestry members for lunch. Everyone introduced themselves and said a little about themselves. While fun, it did not really produce a connection that I saw or nor a great experienced for the newcomers—especially those who didn't come because they don't golf!

Then, we tried organizing small groups that would get together at someone's home for dinner. It turned out to be joyful. Friendships and faith life were deepened as we got to know each other better than we could in any other way and were able to share our questions and our faith together.

What the concept of "Table Life" means to me is that our small groups need to be revitalized and renewed.

Why do we need a kick start? My wife was reluctant to be an usher until we ushered for a month or so. Now, we usher or greet people at the door. Nancy was reluctant to greet people until she started to feel a connection with people who came back to church again. Now—essentially because of *practice*, Nancy is really good at meeting new people and making them feel welcome. An "expert" leading us, teaching us, giving us practice and tools for being welcoming and sharing literal and spiritual food will be a fundamental step into deeper faith and community and sharing one's faith in Jesus.

Charley Pugsley  
Senior Warden, St. Andrew's

"Greg Mamula invites us to pull up a chair to discover a platform for Scripture, story, friendship, and covenant. Mamula's book connects the house table to the church communion table, showing us how to turn our furniture into an altar of love, sacrifice, and devotion for a lonely world. Mamula provides practical, personal tools that the church can use in a post-COVID world no matter how large or small the congregation. Greg provides a biblical foundation to help us take a new journey down the Emmaus road and invite Jesus to walk with us along the Way. By using the practical tools, churches and homes can engage their communities and restore relationships with one another." —William D. Shiell, PhD, President and Professor of Pastoral Theology and Preaching, Northern Seminary

**Cost Breakdown for Table Life Implementation**

Vestry & Church Leadership Training Sessions	\$1000
Kickoff Celebration Meal for 120	\$1200
Book Scholarships (\$18 x 25)	\$450
Table Life Dinner Facilitation Visits by Dr. Mamula (20 X \$50)	\$1000
Midpoint Celebration / Discussion (meal main dish + speaker fee)	\$500
Total:	\$4150

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