

January 1, 2017

## To Whom It May Concern:

For over 22 years, the Vineyard Church has been involved in hosting and working with The Lord's Table, a ministry out of the Catholic Church here in Red Bluff. Thousands upon thousands of meals have been provided to *anyone* who desired a free meal and we're very thankful for how we have been able to partner with such a great group of people, especially Lee Vidare, the Lord's Table director.

Over the past six months we've spent a significant amount of time discussing our participation with The Lord's Table and whether we wanted to continue hosting the program. This has led to numerous discussions with our great city's civil servants, neighbors, business owners, and just about anyone who was willing to help us discern the answer to one very important question: *Is the feeding program helping alleviate poverty or is the feeding program causing more harm than good? Has providing meals solved a challenge faced by homelessness or has it, by and large, simply continued and enabled the cycles that bind people to poverty?*

We've concluded that the answer to these questions is far more complex than "yes" or "no." Yet we've found that Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert's *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* makes a powerful observation when it states:

"One of the biggest mistakes that North American churches make— by far— is in applying relief in situations in which rehabilitation or development is the appropriate intervention."

As we've considered the multi-faceted challenges related to serving the poor and homeless, as well as addressing poverty in the city we love, we want to better steward our resources (time, energy and activities, and finances) toward *rehabilitation* and *development*. We're excited that there are numerous other organizations and individuals whom also appear to have moved or are moving in this direction and we plan on partnering with them as opportunities become more readily available.

In light of these commitments, we will no longer be hosting The Lord's Table beginning February 1<sup>st</sup>. This is *not* because we no longer care for the poor, are unwilling to invest our resources toward the homeless, or are meany-heads, grinchers, or inward focused. *We care deeply about all people and want to extend God's love in practical ways.* We simply want to ensure that our acts of compassion provide *long-term* and *sustainable* help and avoid doing more harm than good. We thank The Lord's Table for all that they have done and sacrificed over the years and bless them as they continue to serve the needy in our community.

We would *love* to participate in ongoing conversations about how we can best work together and work toward the goal of ending homelessness, hunger, substance abuse, and outright poverty. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

In grace,

Pastor Luke Geraty on behalf of the Vineyard Church.

