



**Top right:** Kathie Stoess chats with patrons Lisa and Davion Colbert. **Bottom right:** A veggie po'boy and sweet potato fries



## A Place for All

*Pastor Larry Stoess and his wife, Kathie, create community one meal at a time*

**LARRY:** We've lived in Portland, a neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky, since 1999. The neighborhood has beautiful architecture and deep heritage. But it has experienced many of the challenges faced by a lot of urban neighborhoods: disinvestment, the interstate cutting us off from the river, migration to the suburbs.

**KATHIE:** We didn't have a single sit-down restaurant that was not food, and our neighbors wanted one.

**LARRY:** I had been working at a United Methodist community center; in 2012 we planted a church in an old warehouse building. And that building is where we opened the restaurant, the Table, in 2015. It's a nonprofit that's separate from our

church, but a lot of our members have been involved. The prices on the menu are just suggestions. You pay what you can, or you can pay by volunteering. Or you can pay extra, to help someone else afford a meal.

**KATHIE:** We're primarily run by volunteers. Our cofounder, John Howard, has been with this effort from the very beginning. He's a volunteer. He and our chef, Laura Rountree, have created a menu that's tasty and uses food from urban gardens right here in Portland.

**LARRY:** I love the Parmesan fries. I remember saying once, "I could eat these Parm fries every day." And then I said, "Oh, I *do* eat them every day."

**KATHIE:** Then I said, "You have to quit eating those fries every day."

**LARRY:** There's a lot of diversity among our clientele. When you see someone eating here, you don't know whether this person is from downtown or from under the bridge. People from all walks of life are enjoying meals together. There's a lot of dignity in that. —As told to Mark Ray

*Larry Stoess, 60, is the pastor of Louisville's Church of the Promise UMC, where Kathie Stoess, 61, serves as the volunteer coordinator.*