

Nathan Montgomery – Bio 2023

Nathan Montgomery is co-founder and Executive Director of Salt & Light in Champaign-Urbana, IL.

Salt & Light opened its doors in 2004 as a food pantry and clothing closet and quickly grew into the largest emergency food program in the area. After reading *When Helping Hurts* and experiencing the failure of one-way giving models like theirs to affect lasting change, Nathan led the organization through the process of developing a unique and innovative approach to meeting basic needs.

In Salt & Light's social-entrepreneurial model participants volunteer at one of their two locations, earning store credit at minimum wage, and use this credit to acquire the resources their family needs. This model is designed to affirm the dignity of individuals by acknowledging their capacity, and further equip and empower them for lasting change. The stores are also open to the public, with the dollars spent helping to fund Salt & Light's programs and services—including the store credit participants earn.

From 2004 to 2014, Salt & Light grew from a staff of one with an operating budget of about \$125K that was 100% reliant on donations to six full and part-time employees and an annual budget of \$385K.

With their model change, from 2014 to 2023, and the addition of a second much larger location, Salt & Light has grown to 52 full and part-time employees with an annual budget of \$3.5M that is 85% self-funded through their retail operations. The remaining 15% is funded with donations from individuals, churches, and businesses.

Salt & Light continues to be a community leader in poverty-alleviation efforts and has hosted organizations, churches, and community leaders from all over the country who want to learn from their model and explore replicating it in their communities.