

Learning What It Takes to Launch a Sustainable Model

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BERTH: Birthing Elevation, Reclamation, Thriving & Healing – Chicago, IL

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*In September, the NBA Incubate Initiative welcomed its largest SENT Seminar cohort yet! The annual four-day training opportunity equips Disciples social entrepreneurs of faith for leadership and change as they nurture emerging health and social service ministries. This project, **BERTH**, intends to serve and advocate for people experiencing domestic and intimate partner violence (DV/IPV), and to bring the church into conversation around the effects of DV/IPV and proper ways to respond.*



The social service vision that has been given to me for ministry is for a subversive community. Addressing domestic and intimate partner violence is not a part of the mainstream conversation. In fact, the conversation inside the church around this social justice issue is almost non-existent. When I share my vision with others, I am met with support, quite often people confess their own experience with intimate partner violence in the moment. Those are private, one-on-one conversations where space is created for radical honesty. I understand that there is still shame, stigma and silence (3-S's) deeply embedded around individuals and communities that are affected. The three S's impact the mainstream receptivity to advocacy, awareness, and transformation.

It is my deepest hope that, BERTH, A Safe Harbor for

Healing, will start a conversation that invites victims, survivors, faith leaders, faith communities to radically dismantle the three S's. BERTH stands for Birthing Elevation, Reclamation, Thriving & Healing. The name of the organization represents what victors and survivors need to restore their wholeness and catapult them to a vibrant experience of life after trauma.

We make this possible through a plan called E.A.R.T.H., which stands for:

- **Education** (Providing workshops and training to educate and prepare communities and faith leaders for compassionate radical response through appropriate pastoral care models)
- **Advocacy** (Identifying ways in which the faith community can be active and in communication, communally and individually to support and be a healing presence to impacted individuals, with knowledge of a plethora of resources for their community)

- **Restoration** (Connecting victims to themselves and God is a key aspect of connecting them to safety and healing, restoring their awareness of wholeness and divine love, informs and inspires individuals to take crucial next steps)
- **Transformation** (Individuals who participate in the programs will be enlivened to reclaim their voice, their agency and amplify their sense of wholeness which may eventually lead to community activism, participation and a wellspring of opportunities to impact the common good, but most importantly, to begin to break the cycle of violence in their families and their lives)
- **Healing** (1-Create inclusive healing services, where individuals can bring their brokenness and pain into a loving and receptive space to be encouraged and accepted without judgement. Offering theological reflection, contemplative practices, spoken word, music, movement, and meal fellowship. 2-Create workshop programs that include personal empowerment, creating healthy boundaries, re-storying our lives, mantras for survival, God in our midst, self-esteem for teens, and teen and adult dating 101)

We live in a culture that normalizes domestic and intimate partner violence. Comedians make light of it in stand-up routines, many of our early soul singers experienced it, the contemporary artists that experience it sing about it, film and TV have portrayed it, and we do not take the conversation further. The time has come to shift the culture from silent acceptance to active resistance.

At SENT Seminar I gained valuable insight to the necessary components of launching a sustainable model. The tracks that I found most helpful were the nuances of legalities for non-profits, fundraising, marketing and social media. The self-care module was informative and necessary. The takeaways that I carry with me are many, but the importance of staying true and consistent to the mission, values and vision help to drive BERTH forward.

The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at nbacares.org/incubate.