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Rev. Amie Vanderford leads the trauma-informed LabOratory Church in Indianapolis, IN (pg. 1)



NBA welcomes two new staff members, including Dr. Tene Davis. (pg. 3)

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Called to Care

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Summer Newsletter · 2023



Youth from the LabOratory Church's Project LEAST work in the community garden.

Trauma-Informed Church Offers Ministry Like Jesus Would

When Rev. Amie Vanderford and Thaddeus Shelton Jr., MFT, CSAYC, spent most of 2019 crafting a plan to bring a new trauma-informed church to Indianapolis, Indiana, they had no idea that by the time it launched in 2020, a global pandemic would force them to pivot.

"I always say that God has quite a sense of humor. From calling me into ministry to

having us be inspired to create a trauma-informed church before a massive global trauma," Vanderford says. "So, we had two in-person meetings, then in March of 2020, we immediately went online."

Despite the unexpected shift, Vanderford and Shelton were committed to bringing relational healing to their community, so they continued their church

model, and The LabOratory Church was born. Three years later, their ministry has grown into a community garden, a mentorship space for children and young adults, and a spiritual community for people of faith seeking healing.

The LabOratory Church was founded as a place where people can gather and experience rela-

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**INSIDE: More
Stories of
Compassion,
Healing, and
Justice**



tional healing through compassion, grace, accountability, and restorative justice. As founders, Vanderford and Shelton both acknowledge that not every religious space has served as a place of healing and community, thus their church model is designed with this in mind.

“We realized the church has the biggest opportunity to provide brave spaces where folks can be authentic, build trust with others, and do relational healing without feeling condemned,” Vanderford explains. “We like to think of our work as a robust way of doing church because our church is taken to the person instead of people having to come to the church,” Shelton says. “When it comes to being trauma-informed, our focus is on creating safety first and addressing human needs, just like Jesus did. We went back to basics.”

Founded in 2018, Project

LEAST (Love Everyone As Self Training) was created as a mentoring program to teach prosocial skills to youth in underserved communities. The program, founded by Shelton, has a vision that is focused on addressing the negative effects of systemic racism and economic disparities. The ministry serves young people aged 10–24 and addresses these barriers by helping them get reoriented with healthy relationships in their community.

In addition to its mentorship ministry, The Laboratory has two ways their Marion County neighbors can get access to fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, The Garden Lab and 4KEEPS Mobile Food Pantry.

After five years in ministry through The LabOratory Church, Vanderford and Shelton are encouraged by the virtual and in-person community they’ve built and served. When



Rev. Amie Vanderford and Thaddeus Shelton (right) with a local artist.

asked what is next for their ministry, they shared their dream of owning a farm and brave community space for their city.

“Our bold vision for the future is a farm. We want at least five acres of land, where we can heal the soil, grow food, have tiny homes for people, and so much more.” Vanderford muses.

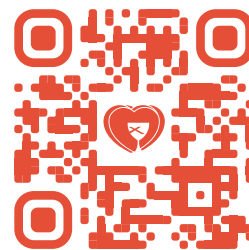
**There's more to this story!
Read the full piece online at
NBacares.org/Stories.**

Celebrating the Leadership of Jackie Compton Bunch



NBA President and CEO, Mark D. Anderson with Jackie Compton Bunch.

Over the years, Jackie Compton Bunch has been a champion for the NBA in so many ways! Jackie served as a Trustee and as chair of our Board of Trustees, a generous supporter of NBA ministries, and an advocate of NBA's mission and vision.” Created in partnership with the Christian Church Foundation, the NBA Jackie Compton Bunch Fund supports Disciples-affiliated health and social service ministries. Celebrate Jackie with us during a special **reception at General Assembly on Sunday, July 30 at 3:45 p.m. ET**. RSVP online at NBacares.org/Events. Can't make it to the reception? **Donate online at NBacares.org/Jackie-Bunch.**



Scan to donate to the NBA Jackie Compton Bunch Fund

Last year, NBA received over \$200,000 in gifts from Disciples Mission Fund! The contributions from Disciples churches and individuals make NBA's vision to “create communities of compassion and care” possible. **Thank you!**

NBA Welcomes New Programs and Staff Members

NBA is excited to announce an expansion of our work with young adults! For the last 40 years, our work with young adults has provided leadership development, vocational discernment, community engagement, and intentional community mostly in the form of residency programs and internship opportunities. Our new Young Adult Leadership Development (YALD) program area will continue to provide these opportunities and build upon them.

The first offerings of this new program area will be unveiled this summer. NBA is

actively laying the groundwork for special granting opportunities to support leadership development and project exploration, a new young adult peer group, and a leadership experience for young Black women.

NBA welcomes Dr. Tene Davis as our new Director of the Young Adult Leadership Development (YALD) program. Davis comes to the NBA with more than a decade of experience as an educator working with children and adolescents. In her most recent role, she served as the Associate Director of the Early College Summer Enrichment Program at Georgia State University.



Dr. Tene Davis (left) and Jerell DeCaille (right).

NBA also welcomes Jerell DeCaille as our new Health and Social Service (HSS) Partner Program Coordinator. In this newly created part-time role, DeCaille will coordinate organizational and leadership development programming for NBA, provide support for NBA's grants programs, and help amplify the stories of our partners.

Get to know Tene and Jerell at NBACares.org/Staff.

Upcoming Events from the NBA

The theme for the **2023 NBA SENT Seminar** is 'Changing the Narrative,' and will focus on storytelling. Our dynamic speakers will share the stories of how they brought their social enterprises to life via marketing, fundraising, and other opportunities. Join us live on **Thursdays, Sept. 7–28, 2023 at 7 p.m. ET** for keynote presentations and virtual fellowship. **Register online at NBACares.org/SENT.**

The NBA Mental Health Professionals Conference will be a 2-day educational experience in



The NBA Social Entrepreneurship team of Revs. Ashley Mayham (left) and Darnell Fennell (right) will host SENT Seminar in September.

San Antonio, Texas, on **October 6–7, 2023**. This in-person gathering (with virtual options) will bring together expert speakers and professionals focused on decreasing the stigma of mental illness in the church, improving



NBA's Director of Mental Health & Wellness, Joselyn Spence, will host the Mental Health Professionals Conference in October.

access to care, and strengthening our community of mental health professionals. NBA will cover travel expenses for a limited number of applicants. **Applications are available online at NBACares.org/MHProsConf.**