



Jumping with God

Rev. Jonathan Hall, First Christian Church, Ventura, CA

2015 Hope Partnership Leadership Academy Participant,

NBA Incubate Social Entrepreneur Cohort



Our story is one of experimenting, discerning, and jumping.

Over the last two years, First Christian Church, Ventura, California, has been experimenting with various ways to engage with our community. Ventura is located close to the beautiful wine tasting area that surrounds Paso Robles. In Ventura, there is a budding wine industry. We wondered what it would look like if God was inviting us to jump into deeper relationship with our community.

In November 2013, we launched our first Aerator gathering in a wine tasting room. An aerator is used to push fresh air into wine to bring out the best flavors! Aerator, the community, is an emergent-style gathering where we share cheese, wine, coffee, everyday music, and conversation. It is communal in its sermon style and experiential in its ethos. We gather to feel God's breath (in Hebrew, *ruach*) in hopes of bringing out the best flavors in ourselves and our community.

We have discerned God's calling for our congregation to sell our property to better engage with our community where many people do not feel safe in a sanctuary, which, ironically, means a safe place. We are preparing to jump into a community place where people can gather around locally made products, community events, organic fair-trade teas and coffees, and wine. We are preparing to partner with a family-owned, award-winning winery on the central coast to make wines. We chose this winery since they focus on making blends because we believe that we are made to work with one another.



Our mission is to bring out the best flavors possible in our community through the sale of products, by connecting people to causes in our community, and forming a faith community where all feel safe—even the “nones” and “dones.” Our experiment has been generative. Our discernment has been a faith-filled journey. Thanks to the NBA, we are ready to jump with God!

Please like us on Facebook at “Aerator.” You can follow us on Twitter and Instagram at #aerator805 and #spiritualityfortherestofus!

*This blog is part of a series of reflections highlighting the ministries of the **NBA Incubate Initiative**. 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 or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at awatkins@nbacares.org.*