

The SENT Seminar Confirmed That I'm on the Right Path

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Although the SENT Seminar was online for the first time this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was still a great experience in helping me understand how social entrepreneurship both aligns with and diverges from ministry in a church context. It was also great to see how people from across the United States and Canada are actively addressing the problems, needs, gifts, and solutions of their communities.

[The intro sessions](#) were invigorating and encouraging.

[Rev. Terri Hord Owens](#) reminded us that we are to love as

Jesus loved us, not just how we love ourselves, she explained how much more comprehensive the love is under Jesus' model. Under His model, truth and action embodies this love, where no sibling in the world is left uncared for. God loves and cares for us all, an indiscriminate and action-filled love.

[Bishop Flunder](#) confirmed our mission on being intentional about being relational and flexible through her discussion about how monuments are easily destroyed until we retrofit them to mimic living things. Trees sway in the storm, and if they don't flex, they will break; similarly, if institutions cannot flex, they, too, will crumble. We are with her in seeing that oppressive systems are crumbling under the change of relational movements based on liberation, love, and justice.

[Rev. Dr. Patrick Duggan](#) described how wealth comes at a price, and those who have been accumulating the wealth in this country did not pay the price for it, and now younger and future generations are being handed their bill. The thing he reminded me of was that truly all of the earth and everyone in it are God, and thus all economy is truly God's as well. In [God's economy](#), it should be on earth as it is in heaven. We are to live on earth together reflecting the justice and abundance of heaven. We are

to end poverty, our co-mission from Jesus, and bring justice and abundance for all. This is why we do social enterprise, to live into God's economy. To all of that we say, "amen!"

The first two sessions that stood out for me included the discussion around the difference between social justice and social service with Rev. Taj Smith. It was helpful in clarifying which actions and activities fit within each category, while not diminishing the importance of either. The Fundraising 201 session led by Carla Leon served as a useful analysis of different revenue streams and business models that may be available to complement the missional work of a church and/or social entrepreneurship organization.

As we are in the early planning stages of our non-profit, the Design Thinking session with Victoria Sun Esparza, was inspiring because she discussed the concept of human-centered design. She said shaping an organization in this way is key because if we were to design a program to equip the needs of people without a clear understanding of their perspective or their gifts, it would serve little to no purpose. Victoria suggested going to people experiencing the 'problem' your social enterprise is looking to solve and see them as the expert in finding a solution. By valuing the people themselves, along with recognizing their expertise in their situation, they become co-creators and inspirers in innovating solutions to the problems they face. This concept then tied well into the session, Developing a Pitch with Linda Kay Klein. Through developing a pitch, we as an organization can drill down the problem, the solution, and the gaps in services that already exist to fix this problem. Developing a pitch also provides an opportunity to understand how our unique community can come together to address those gaps.

As we delve into the year-long cohort and find our way with our new social enterprise, Project LEAST, I hope to continue learnings both on how to get our own non-profit up and running, but also on the best practices from those doing this type of work. Because of the inspiration and helpful information provided by the SENT Seminar, we feel confirmation and encouragement for this path upon which we are embarking!

Rev. Amie Vanderford is the lead pastor and co-founder of The LabOratory Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. Their mission is to experiment together to build beloved community and creative worship spaces in order to encourage healing from interpersonal and spiritual trauma. Learn more at www.TheLabOratoryChurch.org.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.