

Incubate Partnerships

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Mission Behind Bars and Beyond
NBA Incubate Initiative Affiliate Ministry
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The NBA Incubate Initiative strives to encourage and support the development of new and innovative health and social service ministries and organizations by Disciples. These ministries, in turn, inform and inspire fellow Disciples throughout our communities and across the life of the church. Together, we expand the church's understanding of and capacity for

health and social service ministry as part of Christ's work in the world. Rev. Dean Bucalos, the author of this blog post, is the Executive Director of Mission Behind Bars and Beyond, one of our Incubate Partners. It is a non-profit faith-based organization providing community-based mentoring programs for those released from prison and returning to communities in Kentucky.

Home Alone. My wife Anne and I watched this movie again after many, many years. The concept of being a kid left on his own with no parents, free to do what you want, eat what you want, go where you want, and wear whatever you want is enticing, until the loneliness and the fears of going it alone begin to settle in. Going it alone has a nice ring to it, but after a while the tolling of that bell can bring despair.

It reminds me of starting our new ministry and program, Mission Behind Bars and Beyond (MB3). It was great to have a new concept with new energy and an open window of possibilities. Everything was new! New ideas. New concepts. New board members. New donors. It was all so fresh and exciting.

But as the ministry grew, the boundaries expanded, and the challenges increased, going it alone began to get burdensome and tiresome. In the world of non-profit organizations, there is always the sense that you are in a constant battle for limited funding and increased exposure. There is a sense that everything is a competition

and that every dollar another agency or program latches onto, is a dollar that could have been added to your coffers. There is a belief that there is just so much to go around. So living in a world of scarcity requires you to hoard, save, and be protective of what you have and who you court for more dollars.

I am reminded of the words from Steven Covey's book, [The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#), which I first read when I was in seminary. He wrote,

"Most people are deeply scripted in what I call the Scarcity Mentality. They see life as having only so much, as though there were only one pie out there. And if someone were to get a big piece of the pie, it would mean less for everybody else. The Scarcity Mentality is the zero-sum paradigm of life. People with a Scarcity Mentality have a very difficult time-sharing recognition and credit, power or profit - even with those who help in the production. They also have a very hard time being genuinely happy for the success of other people."

He goes on,

"The Abundance Mentality, on the other hand, flows out of a deep inner sense of personal worth and security. It is the paradigm that there is plenty out there and enough to spare for everybody. It results in sharing of prestige, of recognition, of profits, of decision making. It opens possibilities, options, alternatives, and creativity."

We discovered going it alone doesn't work in the long-run. It ignores the fact that there is truly more to go around than one imagines. That God has created a world where there is enough for everyone. That sharing, caring, and working with others leads to abundant bounty, more possibilities, and increased effectiveness.

It took MB3 a while to buy into this belief of abundant living. Like so many young non-profits, we thought we had to fend for ourselves and if we worked with others, that only meant that our slice of the pie was going to be that much smaller. Yet we found that the previous challenges, the demands for our services, and the requests for assistance were beyond our capability. Others were more suited to carry on the tasks that were beyond our capabilities. So, we reached out.

And things just got better. We found that we could do what we do better, and that having partners to refer clients to meant those we were serving got higher quality and more efficient services and resources. We discovered we didn't have to do

everything. And consequently, we thrived in what we do well. And referrals began coming our way.

As Covey noted, we discovered that there were a lot of pies to be sliced and shared. Sharing the hard work that we do with others who are committed to creating positive outcomes for those who have been incarcerated has not only relieved the burden of going it alone, but it also has led to some amazing collaborative efforts. For that, we give God thanks and all the glory.

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.