

**“This is Us:  
The Face of Our Beloved Disciples Family”  
Rev. Dr. Ben Bohren, Mission Specialist, NBA XPLOR**

I am in love with the television program *This is Us*, which is a raw, deep dive into the lives of an extended and complicated family. Often, I wipe away tears while watching the show.



Recently, I was privileged to present the NBA XPLOR program in a meeting of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). As I spoke, I held up the most recent XPLOR poster, which has introductory information about the program and photos of the 2018-19 cohort of XPLOR Residents. What an awesome visual! I expressed with this gathering of Disciples leaders from across the church, “This is us. Yes, this is the current and future leadership of our denomination, our local churches, and communities.”

Then, I introduced them to just a few XPLOR Residents, those currently in the program and those who completed the program over the last five years. Their stories, commitments, advocacy, and leadership impress and inspire.

...Elsie, a Puerto Rican Hispanic Disciple from Ohio, who has spent time working with and caring for domestic abuse survivors and their children, as well as people with disabilities;

...Sarah and CJ, both Anglo Disciples from small towns; Sarah, from Louisiana, with a college degree and several years of teaching, and CJ, from Oregon, with more limited time in college, who met in XPLOR and are now married; Sarah now directs a student community engagement program at Hiram College - one of our historic Disciples affiliated schools - and CJ is fully engaged in his undergraduate studies and work there;

...Eula, a Filipina-American Disciple who hails from the heart of Los Angeles, now studying for her Master of Divinity in seminary and providing pastoral leadership at First Progressive Church, a community committed to welcoming all;

...Jemima, whose family comes from Nigeria, who has spent the past few years completing both undergraduate and master’s degrees in the U.S. and now, with anticipation, plans to attend seminary as a Disciple;

...Neo, a proud Tongan-American Disciple from Utah, whose artistic talents include traditional Tongan dance, an expertise in harmonized singing, and theatrical performance through mime, who is listening deeply to God's call for the next steps in her life;

...Tim, an Anglo Canadian Disciple, openly part of the LGBTQ+ community, who has started their own communications consulting business and serves on a national Disciples ministry board;

...Cristian, a Mexican Disciple from southeast Los Angeles, who entered XPLOR with little college background and is now a third-year student at Eureka College, another historically related Disciples school, attending on full scholarship with the goal of becoming a member of the U.S. Congress; he too serves on a national Disciples ministry board;

...Tia, an African American Disciple from Missouri, openly part of the LGBTQ+ community, who is working to complete their undergraduate degree and has joined a local Disciples church;

...Cara, an Anglo Disciple from Ohio, who, after XPLOR, spent several years working with indigenous youth and families in Ecuador and Mexico through Global Ministries and now seeks to further her training with a Master's in Public Health...

Wouldn't you love to meet and talk with each of them? There are so many more amazing life stories of XPLOR young adults. THIS IS US...the face of our beloved Disciples family - today and into the future.

THANK YOU to all of you who donated to the *Rev. Dr. Ben Bohren NBA Leadership Fund*, which is now a little over \$51,000, and with annual earnings that directly support NBA XPLOR. I am so thankful that this fund exists, which will offer a legacy of financial and spiritual support for young adults seeking to hear God's call to them into lives of leadership and service. Honestly, as I talk with them and see the beautiful changes in their lives, as a result of the NBA XPLOR experience, I often need to wipe away tears of thanksgiving and hope!

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***NBA XPLOR*** is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. **Learn more and apply at [nbacares.org/xplor](http://nbacares.org/xplor).**