

## **NBA + OGMP On the Road: Connecting Communities of Compassion and Care**

From March 12-18, 2018, the National Benevolent Association (NBA) and the Office of the General Minister and President (OGMP) went on the road "connecting communities of compassion and care!" With stops in Texas, Ohio, and California, we traveled with GMP Rev. Terri Hord Owens for a variety of partner visits, special events, and conversations about Disciples health and social service ministries across the life of the church.

Read on for daily highlights from the trip, including links to the many ministry partners who participated with us throughout this journey. You can find photo album recaps on Facebook, as well as other highlights on Twitter and Instagram. And stay tuned for videos and more reflections from the road coming soon!

### **Days 1-2: Dallas, TX**



On Monday, we began the week-long delegation trip at NBA Connect Partner Juliette Fowler Communities, which provides housing and serves as a community engagement site with NBA XPLOR Dallas. Over lunch, current and former XPLOR Residents and members of the host team congregations shared their stories and XPLOR experiences over the past three years in Dallas and beyond.

Next, we heard from Disciples-related health and social service ministries in the Southwest Region, including NBA Incubate Partner Reach Beyond Mission (Austin, TX); NBA Connect Partner SHARE (Sharing Hands, a Respite Experience - Midland, TX); and NBA Incubate Participant Lilies of the Valley (San Benito/Los Fresnos, TX).

After these partner presentations, staff from Juliette Fowler Communities took the group on a tour of the campus and hosted an afternoon tea with Disciples residents living on-site. Rev. Terri Hord Owens and Southwest Regional Minister Rev. Dr. Andy Mangum shared greetings and thanks for the hospitable afternoon. Owens also had the opportunity to meet with participants of NBA's Executive Leaders Peer Group, including Sabrina Porter, President and CEO of Juliette Fowler Communities; Mark Palmer, Executive Director of Woodhaven (Columbia, MO); and Rev. Elaine Sanford, Executive Director of HER Faith Ministries (Memphis, TN).

On Tuesday, we gathered with local Disciples over brunch, hosted at Northway Christian Church in Dallas. North Texas Area Minister Rev. Dr. Larry Ross brought greetings, and presentations featured NBA Mission and Ministry Grantees First Christian Church in Midland, TX (Projects: RISE and SHINE) and First Christian Church in Burkburnett, TX (Project: Disciples Personal Care Pantry). After good conversation about the NBA Mental Health Initiative's growing work across the church, Rev. Owens took the floor to talk and engage with Dallas-area Disciples. Then, onward to Ohio!

### **Day 3: Cleveland, Hiram, and Mantua, OH**

Wednesday began with another Disciples brunch in Cleveland, with greetings from Ohio Regional Minister Rev. John Richardson. Presentations featured a wide range of Disciples health and social services, including NBA Prison and Jail Ministries; NBA Incubate Partner Mission Behind Bars and Beyond (Louisville, KY); NBA Connect Partner Cleveland Christian Home (Cleveland, OH); and three NBA Mission and Ministry Grantees: Heights Christian Church (The "Bet" Away (Better Way) Group - Shaker Heights, OH); Disciples Christian Church (The Gathering Space - Cleveland Heights, OH); and Good Shepherd Christian Church (Expanded Kitchen for Shared Meals at the Dinner Table - Macedonia, OH). Brunch concluded with Rev. Owen's presentation and Q&A, followed by a small group meeting with the Council of Health and Human Service Ministries, our sister organization in the United Church of Christ.



Next, the NBA-OGMP travelers made their way to Hiram and Mantua for a series of afternoon visits, including NBA Connect Partner Hiram Farm; Hiram College, an NBA XPLOR community engagement site and historic Disciples institution; and the Hiram-Mantua XPLOR house (complete with tea and homemade cookies!) Mantua Center Christian Church graciously hosted dinner, joined by their fellow host congregations and current and former XPLOR Residents who shared about the impact of their experiences in Hiram-Mantua and beyond over the past four years.

### **Days 5-7: San Jose and Oakland, CA**

On Thursday, the group traveled to California, ready to continue with partner visits and presentations on Friday. The day began at NBA Incubate Partner Recovery Café San Jose, including a tour of their recently renovated space, latte hour, and lunch

with Café members. Next, the group spent the afternoon at NBA Incubate Partner Oakland Peace Center for conversation with several of the peace partners who collaborate and share space there. Additional presentations included a fellow NBA Incubate Partner, UrbanMission Community Partners (Pomona, CA); Disciples Mission Center All Peoples Community Center (Los Angeles, CA); and NBA Connect Partner Christian Church Homes (Oakland, CA), which also featured a tour of Westlake Christian Terrace, a nearby CCH community.

The evening concluded with dinner, highlighting NBA XPLOR Golden Gate in its final year as a host site. Northern California-Nevada Regional Minister Rev. Dr. LaTaunya Bynum brought greetings, and several members of the host team, congregations, and community engagement sites, and current and former XPLOR Residents, reflected on their experiences over the past three years in the Bay Area and beyond.



On Saturday morning, we gathered with local Disciples for brunch at Mills Grove Christian Church in Oakland for further dialogue with NBA Incubate Partners Recovery Café San Jose and UrbanMission Community Partners; an overview of NBA's deepening engagement in advocacy and activism; and a closing word from Rev. Owens. At all three gatherings in Dallas, Cleveland, and Oakland, Owens' message emphasized the importance of connections: connection to Christ, to one another as Christians, and to and across the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination.

On Sunday morning, the NBA-OGMP delegation's travels concluded with Rev. Owens preaching at Lafayette Christian Church in Oakland. Throughout the trip, our GMP reflected on being "filled up" and "full" of so much learning, enthusiasm, and transformative ministry across the life of the church. "It was an amazing time, and a real gift to me to be able to meet and learn from so many NBA partners, the XPLOR Residents, our congregations, and the NBA staff!" Owens said. "I appreciate this impactful ministry through partnerships, support, and development, and I am grateful for such wonderful, talented, and committed colleagues!"

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*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.nbaca.org](http://www.nbaca.org).*