



## This Is Church

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Last night I went to church, but not in a church. In an old elementary school converted into Washington Christian Center, 90 teens were in the gym, 20 kids danced upstairs, while a group ranging from 60 to 10 years of age played board games in the basement. Earlier preschool kids filled the halls with giggles. Sunday we danced to rockabilly and gospel music; Friday the Humane Society presented a musical. I used to think church meant doing religious stuff, but as I listened to the bustle of activity from every direction I realized, “This is church.”

At Hope Partnership’s Leadership Academy, I spent a week with people who are caring for the homeless; providing safety, homes, and jobs for immigrants and refugees; feeding the hungry; caring for the sick; healing victims of domestic violence; and helping prisoners re-enter society. That’s the church. Together, we were given new to grow all of our ministries to the next level. As Rev. Greg Turk said, “Let’s do something great, and make it easy!”

Almost four years ago, First Christian Church of Vincennes purchased the old Washington Elementary School and renamed it the Washington Christian Center. It was intended to be a busy community center, providing education and recreation and other wholesome activities for the city of Vincennes, especially for children. We provide a variety of programming and resources, including a preschool, summer day camp, a drop-in center, youth group activities, community event space, computer lab, toy and school supply drives, and more.

I am more convinced than ever that in the 21st Century, the church will either be spending most of her time healing the sick, caring for the poor, feeding the hungry, providing haven for homeless and refugee and prisoner, fulfilling the commands of Matthew 25—or we will not be at all. There is no longer room in our society for a religion that is merely theoretical.

For all that we do, our building still sits empty far too often. Leadership Academy has convinced me that we fail most often because our dreams are too small for God. I am convinced that we can find the funding, the partners, and the tools to be the church all day, every day, in dozens of ways we would never have thought possible.

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*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](http://nbacares.org/incubate) or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at [awatkins@nbacares.org](mailto:awatkins@nbacares.org).*