

From the Driver's Seat

Rev. Dani Loving Cartwright, NBA VP of Operations

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I had the privilege to serve last month as the driver for one of the team vans that traveled on the NBA + OGMP On the Road tour, as we shared with Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, and the variety of ministries with whom the National Benevolent Association partners.

What fascinated me the most is that, not only did we share a LOT of introductions and information with Terri, it was my own eyes that were opened again. Once more I was reminded that the Church (big C) is alive and well in the world! It's just not always at the brick-and-mortar place that we built 50-100 years ago where pipe organs have heaved their last breath several years ago, or that place that we have confined by words like "can't" and "won't" and "always done it" and "no, not here," as if those words can confine God's spirit into that small worship space (however big it is) and prevent God's goodness and imagination and care for all of God's children to be locked in as we turn the key on Sunday afternoon right after "church" (little c) is over.

I saw as we drove through our week of adventure that God is busy among God's people! We met chaplains from colleges and chaplains serving seniors; devoted volunteers who welcome those who have been sober 24-hours to come and feast at the table and be part of the community; energetic farmers whose produce and product bring income and a confidence for living that no one else is able to provide; folks who want to have conversations about how racism is rampant in us and through us, and has impacted our incarceration rates and our attitudes and our being church in the world; and folks who want to engage mental health stigmas that have limited our abilities and imaginations. We ate at tables full of bread and cup, soup and crackers, pie and cookies. Everywhere we visited felt like we were feasting again and again at a table of love and openness – stretching where tables anchored to church floors cannot reach.

And it is ministry. And it is church. And it is beautiful.

(over)

One of the privileges of being the driver is that you get to look both in the rearview mirror and into the windshield at the same time. If you haven't looked lately into the windshield of where God is calling, I know that NBA and many of the general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) would invite you to take a peek into what is coming down the road. I know many of your regional ministries are working in that view as well, because I can see them holding hearts and hands of those who are holding on to the rearview mirror way of being, encouraging them to take a new look, start a new adventure, journey into the future to which God calls.

God is calling us to a future that we have not yet fully imagined, but there are some folks who have already gotten started...and we got to see a few of them on this tour.

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Prayer:

God of love and life, God of beginnings and endings, God of this moment and the one that is yet to come, God-with-us and God within us... call us to the future that only You can see, and help us to let go of that which holds us back from opening our hearts and hands to You.

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.nbacaes.org.