



NBA Incubate Retreat 2015

Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins,
Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative

“Your name is moving higher and higher in my speed dial.” It was a phrase heard more than once at NBA’s recent Incubate Retreat—a testament to the connections Disciple social entrepreneurs were making with each other as similarities, gifts, and know-how emerged during the course of the gathering. This year marked the NBA Incubate Initiative’s first such retreat—designed to serve the 2014-15 participants in the new program. The purpose of the retreat was to create intentional space for rest, renewal, and equipping for the ministry of social entrepreneurship.

You have permission to rest. You are not responsible for fixing everything that is broken. You do not have to try and make everyone happy. For now, take time for you. It’s time to replenish.

For a few days in early October, about 12 of us gathered at the Franciscan Renewal Center—a retreat space in Scottsdale, AZ. Time was allotted for group spiritual practice, taking the form of a prayer wall, silence, and the practice of the [Four-Stranded Garland](#)¹ (similar to *lectio divina*). There was space for individual and peer learning via an optional grantwriting workshop by Rev. Nora Jacob, as well as roundtable gatherings where Incubate entrepreneurs helped address each other’s questions about the nuts and bolts of running a nonprofit. And of course there

was time for rest and play. Retreat participants enjoyed long walks around the desert property, lounging in the retreat center’s pool, a trip to the artsy “Old Town” neighborhood in Scottsdale, and—of course—much needed sleep.

Participant Rev. Milele Hobbs of Gomer’s House called her time there “extraordinary,” saying she experienced “wonderful connections, reflections, and renewal.” Workshop facilitator Rev. Nora Jacob of Urban Mission/Another Chance Ministries witnessed participants concluding the grantwriting workshop with “new energy for collaboration and for greater reliance on one another for spiritual and more practical collaborative energy.”

NBA’s hope in planning this retreat was, indeed, not only that we would be able to build entrepreneurial capacity among our participants but also to help reveal how much of a gift each of our partners can be to the others. The project leaders who have

¹ *Protestant Spiritual Exercises: Theology, History, and Practice*; by Joseph D. Driskill; Morehouse Publishing, 1999, p. 92.

come through Incubate in the past year have been so amazingly gifted, courageous, and inspiring to us at NBA...it seemed only right that they have every possible opportunity to experience that with each other.

The Incubate Retreat closed this year with ideas and visions of how we could continue to gather in the future, layering this experience with all that new Incubate participants will bring. It was an experience of renewed wholeness, and we at NBA look forward to continued opportunities to create spaces for more of the same with our Incubate partners...even as they create such spaces in their own communities.

The NBA Incubate Initiative strives to encourage and support Disciples developing new and innovative health and social service ministries. For more information and/or to inquire about participating in this initiative, visit: www.nbacares.org/incubate.