

"About to Do Something Brand New"

Larry J. Morris, III

Program Associate, NBA Incubate Initiative



I've been on staff with the National Benevolent Association since August 2016, working part-time as the Program Associate with the NBA Incubate Initiative. The Incubate Initiative "strives to encourage and support the development of new and innovative health and social service ministries and organizations by Disciples. These ministries, in turn, inform, and inspire fellow Disciples throughout our communities and across the life of the church. Together, we expand the church's understanding of and capacity for health and social service ministry as part of Christ's work in the world."

For as long as I can remember, I have been attracted to the "new things" God is doing. I believe that God always desires to do something new. Something new in individuals. Something new in communities. Something new in organizations. Something new in churches. Something new in health and social service ministries...And I am committed to embracing the new things and supporting others who have been called into the new. My work with the Incubate Initiative allows me the privilege of walking alongside Disciples who are discerning the new health and social service ministries God is calling them into.

The Incubate Initiative supports Disciples with emerging health and social service ministries in a variety of ways: through the annual SENT Seminar and Incubate Retreat, through webinars and the Social Enterprise Resource Bank, and by connecting individuals with others working on similar projects. We realize we can't fully support every project that comes our way, but we hope, and work towards supporting each project in some way.



There's much talk about the Church dying due to congregations closing. I don't think the Church is dying; I think God is doing something new and calling Disciples to meet people where they are: in the streets, in communities, in jails and prisons, in senior living facilities, in their homes. God is stirring the imaginations of God's people and giving them visions of communities that reflect the compassion, care, and justice of God.

The words of Isaiah 43:18-19 echo for us afresh today:



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*"Forget about what's happened;
don't keep going over old history.
Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand new.
It's bursting out! Don't you see it?
There it is! I'm making a road through the desert,
rivers in the badlands."*

The Disciples I come across through the Incubate Initiative are "alert and present" in their communities and are actively looking for the new thing God is doing now. Many of our Incubate Partners are helping to shape their communities into the spaces which reflect God's unconditional love and concern for all.

There's an NBA core value that speaks to this continued newness I believe God is always up to: "forward leaning." "We commit to learning and adapting as we move into the future. We understand that during times of change and new directions, the path forward often involves uncertainty and challenges. Through our shared efforts of advocacy, education, pastoral response, and professional care and services, we move towards the health and well-being of all."

It is an honor and privilege to work with other Disciples who are committed to leaning forward into the new things of God - creating communities of compassion and care.

*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***