



**From the Clay: Linking Economics and Spirituality**  
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NBA Incubate Social Entrepreneur Cohort



Nearly 100 years old, Glen Oak Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is in the midst of missional transformation. Historically an outreach-centered congregation, Glen Oak currently operates several community-focused ministries. To build on the concept of community need for fellowship, food, and a future, key church leaders and I are exploring, through a 2016 sabbatical grant, an opportunity to develop a cottage industry on Peoria's East Bluff—a small pottery business that could help provide jobs and life-skills training for community residents.

Our plan includes me learning pottery as part of my sabbatical. My Lilly Grant will purchase a kiln, slab roller, wheel and 800 pounds of clay to get us started. We are still raising operating funds to cover incidentals like retrofitting a space at the church for a ceramic studio.

Rev. Greg Turk's work at All Peoples Community Center in Los Angeles, CA, will be a dynamic model for us. His being so instrumental in the NBA's Social Entrepreneur Cohort at Hope Partnership's Leadership Academy was more than fortuitous. He is sharing his 16-week training course with us. Where his team made and sold soap, we expect to use pottery. It will be our prototype, from which we hope to develop other businesses. Geetha Sant, also a Leadership Academy instructor, relieved a lot of our anxiety about how to organize this ministry without jeopardizing the church's nonprofit status.

There are various things we are still exploring, and the congregation will need more opportunity to own this ministry. While I am gone, they will be reading *Joshua*. It is a book my pottery teacher insisted I read. In it, the hero teaches two boys upholstery, from which they build a business that changes their economic and spiritual futures and those of their neighborhood.

Pottery also seems a natural way to link economics and spirituality—for when the clay is marred, it can be reformed and remade.

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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).*