



Needing Help

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NBA Incubate Social Entrepreneur Cohort



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Before I attended the Leadership Academy, I did not really know what to expect. Though I am a newly commissioned pastor in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), I have had plenty of experience with church conferences and trainings. Still, I really didn't know what all was in store for me as I boarded the plane bound for Indianapolis.

However, I did know this: *I needed help.*

For the past few years of my ministry life, my wife, my team, and my colleagues have heard me talk about my desire for further development as a leader. After planting a new church and helping see it through the roller-coaster ride that is new church ministry, I had been longing for some helpful ideas, fresh insight, and practical leadership guidance. This desire for development continued to intensify as God began to expand our church's vision for Christ-centered community development here in North Portland, Oregon.

The working name for our project is The Foundry Project, a combined effort of St. Johns Community Church and University Park United Methodist Church to transform our existing church property into a vibrant, multi-faceted, ministry hub. This project includes the building of 24 affordable housing units on the church property—an urgent need in Portland right now—and the renovation of our current church building into a multi-purpose “third space” community site. The vision for this project comes from our commitment as churches to the call of Micah 6:8 to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Thank God for Leadership Academy—particularly the faith-based social entrepreneur track!

In addition to discovering that I wasn't the only one there who needed help (imagine that), I also quickly realized that this event was actually going to live up to its billing as a place to be encouraged, inspired, and equipped to do the work that God has called us all to do. The time we spent in our cohort groups was especially valuable, as I found myself taking copious amounts of notes and asking all sorts of questions about fundraising, legal issues, leadership strategies, and the overall vision for our project.

I came home from Leadership Academy with a renewed sense of energy and anticipation about all God is going to do in the work that is ahead of us, and with some helpful perspective and practices when it comes to being a leader and developing other leaders around me.

In short: *I got a lot of help.* And what's more, I look forward to even more help to come as I continue the relationships that have been forged and fostered by my time at the Leadership Academy.

*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 Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at nbacares.org/incubate or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at awatkins@nbacares.org.*