

# GB-2212

**Name of ministry:**

National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

**Minister name:**

Mr. Mark D. Anderson

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

**Minister email:**

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**In what ways is your  
region/ministry  
thriving?**

NBA accompanies and collaborates with Disciples-affiliated health and social service organizations to cultivate and strengthen communities. We have partnered with a wide variety of ministries of care, from new start-up projects with just one staff member through to established organizations with years of operational experience.

## SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In 2021, the NBA Social Entrepreneurship program launched the new annual Social Entrepreneurship Cohort, a group of 10 new faith-rooted social entrepreneurs in the formation stages of their projects. The Cohort met virtually throughout the year to grow and nourish their fledgling organizations. As a result of their efforts, three of the Cohort organizations qualified for and received NBA Mission & Ministry Grants to continue their work with older adults and youth and young adult education. Also in 2021, the Social Entrepreneurship program again offered the annual SENT Seminar, a multi-day program of education for both new and established entrepreneurs. For the second year, SENT Seminar was conducted virtually, which has enabled us to increase the number of attendees. The 2021 registration numbers were almost double that of the prior year, thus showing our efforts in

Organizational Development are thriving.

#### MISSION & MINISTRY GRANTS

The NBA Mission & Ministry Grants program offers funding to Disciples health & social service projects serving older adults and/or youth and young adult education. In 2021, NBA provided 35 grants granting a total of \$185,000. Of the 35 selected projects, 16 are focused on at-risk children and youth; 11 are focused on older adults; and eight are intergenerational, serving both communities. As the NBA deepens its internal equity work and also remains committed to the Disciples' Anti-racism and Reconciliation Initiative, we are focused on being radically inclusive of the diverse Disciples congregations and organizations in the denomination. We recognize that in communities of color, systemic health and social service needs are often greater. In 2021, more than half of our grants went to projects that will benefit Black, Asian, and Hispanic communities. The grantee projects are working to provide care in ethnic communities, including places where English is not the first language.

#### MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

The challenges of these recent years have brought additional attention to the mental health and wellness needs of us all. The NBA Mental Health & Wellness Initiative has been called to partner with many groups, from the OGMP, to General Ministries, Regions, and more, to offer healing from trauma, depression, grief, and burnout many are feeling during the multiple pandemics of health and racial injustice. Our new Director of Mental Health & Wellness, Joselyn Spence, has offered her wisdom, training, and compassionate ministry for those who are feeling the burdens of stress and sadness. Throughout 2021, we have offered webinars, stories, video quick tips, group counseling, and additional resources to Disciples in need of a space for healing and wellness.

#### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At the beginning of the year, we launched our Community Engagement Program. The program consists of three emphasis areas: Leadership Development, Advocacy & Activism, and Collaborative Partnerships. Each of these emphasis areas allow NBA to address the vastness of accompanying congregations, health and social service ministries, and local organizers as they engage in justice work. Through Community Engagement—and across all our programs—we seek to bring light to the ways communities of color are disproportionately affected by systemic oppression as well as create space for education, healing, and compassion for those doing the difficult work of combating the root causes of discrimination, injustice, and inequality. In 2021, we welcomed Rev. Alexis Vaughan as Justice Coordinator; she serves alongside Rev. Héctor J. Hernández Marcial, Director of Community Engagement.

#### PEER LEARNING & WELLNESS GROUPS

NBA offers education, companionship, inspiration, and resources to strengthen Disciples leaders including clergy, chaplains, social entrepreneurs, community organizers, nonprofit administrators, and young adults committed to justice work. We support the growth of and care for leaders by offering Peer Learning & Wellness Groups, continuing education, mental health and wellness tools, and more. In 2021, we offered a combined seven different Peer Learning & Wellness Groups. The group members are Disciples leaders working in areas as diverse as nonprofit executives and administrators at partner organizations, Spanish-speaking clergy leading multicultural communities, and activists and advocates organizing around social justice issues—especially related to health and social services. For the first time, we are responding to the needs of young adults with specific peer groups for mentoring and learning within the cultural context of Hispanic/LatinX, African-American women, and an Asian-American/Pacific Island cohort.

#### YOUNG ADULT EDUCATION

In the coming year, NBA is committing deep focus and intentionality towards a return of the XPLORES residential program, should our continuing assessment and re-visioning process lead us to this decision. Additionally, we continue to envision new programmatic opportunities that build upon the foundational values and essence of the original program, such as the creation of NBA Peer Learning & Wellness Groups focused on young leaders. Over this time of pause, we continue to ask, “how do we support young adults? And how can we reach new communities of young adults in meaningful ways?” One such way involves a six-month vision, research, and design process for a new Black Women’s Leadership Experience for young adults. In 2021, we welcomed Rev. Rae Karim as Interim Young Adult Leadership Development Coordinator to lead our efforts in developing these opportunities.

**What are the biggest challenges facing your region/ministry this year?**

We know the work that health and social service ministries do each day is complex and challenging. The ongoing health and social justice pandemics continue to have impact on the lives of individuals and communities that we are called to support. NBA is committed to compassion, healing, and justice as intentional ways of accompanying the ministries and leaders who we work alongside in our various programs. We invite the active support and partnership of the whole Church in knowing the stories of the 38 Disciples ministry partners and the diverse leaders who lead these ministries, who are called daily to transformational change and service.

**What is something you hope to accomplish in the next year?**

In 2022, NBA will be expanding the Mission & Ministry Grants program to offer two application periods, in the spring and fall. This expansion enables us to offer an additional \$200,000 in grant funding to Disciples health and social service projects that serve older adults and/or youth and young adult education. Additionally, we continue to strive towards infusing our grants process with equity values in order to live even more fully into our

mission as we serve the church.

Also this year, we anticipate the possibilities of returning to in-person gatherings while including a variety of virtual events. Our plans include a Peer Learning & Wellness Group retreat, a one-day mental health practitioners conference, the annual SENT Seminar, and the continuation of our hour-long educational webinars. We look forward to attending regional gatherings as well as the It's Real 2022 conference in Fort Worth, where we will offer several workshops.

**What is something you would like the General Board to know about your region/ministry?**

As we prepare for 2022, the NBA is excited to continue the work of strengthening leaders and health and social service ministries for outreach and care .  
<https://www.NBAcares.org/partners/> If you are interested in partnering with NBA, reach out to us at [NBA@NBAcares.org](mailto:NBA@NBAcares.org) or online at <https://www.nbacares.org/contact-us/>.

**How can we pray for your region/ministry?**

We give thanks for the prayers, partnership, and generous support especially through the Disciples Mission Fund that we, as NBA, receive throughout the year. In the spirit of Jesus' commandment to "Love Thy Neighbor," we invite all to know the stories of the leaders and ministries whom NBA accompanies. Follow NBA on our social media accounts, ensure you receive our e-newsletter and updates, and commit to actively knowing the hopes, concerns, and needs of the amazing leaders and ministries whom we work alongside in our vision of "creating communities of compassion and care."