

NBA at GA: "I Feel Right at Home"

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Until I joined the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) last year, I had never met a Disciple, and until I attended General Assembly, I hadn't met another Disciple beyond my home congregation. General Assembly was a way for me to gain perspective on who was a part of my new community. I knew there would be people at the Convention Center who didn't go to open and affirming churches like mine, so I was unsure of how to engage with those who shared my faith, but approached it differently. How would I fit in, and if I didn't, what would that mean for my upcoming year in NBA XPLOR?

Eventually GA came, and my schedule was so packed that I didn't have time to dwell on these questions. My first full day in Indianapolis, I participated in the Disciples Rally for Family Justice, where various ministry leaders spoke in support of refugees and against gun violence. As I stood on the State Capitol's steps, Rev. Dr. William Barber took to the mic. I had watched his speech at the DNC online, and I couldn't believe how close he was. He spoke of racism—how he attended a segregated elementary school, how it had transformed into voter suppression. His voice became louder, and the crowd did too. A lump grew in my throat. I didn't expect to be so moved again.



Then I heard Rev. Jose Morales Jr. preach at opening worship, and that lump came right back. He reminded us of the safe unity our Church had engaged in, how it had excluded Indigenous peoples, African Americans, women, and those who identify as LGBTQIA. He called on us to practice a radical unity. I knew as I sat in my chair, surrounded by so many people I didn't know, that I was in the right place.

But it wasn't just the powerful preachers in this Church that made me feel this way. It was the NBA staff, who lead lectures on immigration and mental health. It was the clergy members who attended these lectures and asked questions so that they could help their congregations. It was the ushers and other volunteers who shared my passion for social justice. All of these people helped me to see that there is so much potential for the Church to affect social change. They are part of the community that I had been looking for, and I feel right at home.

NBA XPLOR is a 10-month service residency opportunity for young adults ages 21-30, with the purpose of empowering young adults to discern and develop a "heart for care" as they live together in simple community, engage in direct service and justice work, engage in leadership development, and discern their vocational calls to honor the various communities they are called to serve. **Learn more and apply at nbacares.org/xplor.**