

ON THE LEVEL

VOL. 21 ISSUE 4 | WINTER 2020-21 | DVULI.ORG

Breakthrough:

Denise Fase Gets
Grilled by God for
Trying to Fit In

*2020, a Year of Indisputable
Hindsight for Urban Leaders*



John Park



Dimas Salaberrios



Valerie Wimms



Tommy Carrington



Brian Dye

PROFILE: Gilbert Hernandez
Empowers Youth from
Hardship to the Pulpit

OPINION: Jeremy Del Rio Offers
a Stocking Stuffer for
a Nation Divided

GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES?

It is always a scratching-my-head moment when I hear motivational speakers inspire their listeners with clichés like, “Keep your eyes on the prize, never look back, focus forward, forget about the past.”

I happen to believe the practice of looking both backward and forward offers high value for leaders. It’s the reflective thinking (looking back) that informs how a leader should refocus (look forward) and cast vision, determine goals, and fulfill the mission.

No matter the point of view from which you lead, today’s leaders have entered a space where knowing which direction is best comes with little room for error. This new generation of followers can easily transition from one movement or cause to the next, so it is critical to keep our leadership focus in high definition.

Denise Fase (Grand Rapids 1998), Gilbert Hernandez (San Antonio 2001), John Park (Los Angeles 2010), Valerie Wimms (Pittsburgh 2012), and other featured DVULI alumni have a good handle on learning from the past to ensure it enriches the future of their programs and constituency.

While experience has taught them well, putting in the work to develop skills, increase knowledge, and exercise best practices spur their drive to stay focused from every angle.

Certainly, there are myriad clichés to quench a leader’s thirst for inspiration should they need it. However, focusing on the prize alone is not how Denise, Gilbert, John, Valerie, and others have recognized blind spots, pointed out smudges, and avoided optical illusions along their leadership journey.

With all due respect for those who inspire audiences with catchy one-liners and hype, having a perspective with a panoramic view is more likely to garner the trust of followers, see mission fulfilled, and greatly minimize error. This begs the question: Through what lens are you leading?

Trust the process...

Gerald Bell, Editor (Kansas City 2003)

On The Level is a quarterly publication of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative (DVULI). All content is property of the DVULI and may not be republished or reproduced without permission. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the DVULI staff, RDV Corporation, or the DeVos Family Foundations.

Contact:
DVULI
P.O. Box 230257
Grand Rapids, MI 49523
616-643-4848
staff@dvuli.org

The DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative is a 501c3, founded in 1998 and made possible by the generous support of the DeVos Family Foundations. © 2020

WELCOME Benita Hopkins

By Gerald Bell (Kansas City 2003)

Please join DVULI in welcoming Benita Hopkins (Oakland/San Francisco Bay 2015) to our team of liaisons. Benita has been assigned to alumni relations and local follow-up efforts in Fresno and the Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area.



Benita Hopkins

For more than 20 years, Benita has served in urban ministry addressing causes such as youth education, human trafficking, poverty, and social justice. She currently serves as the director of education with Generations United, an agency in Redwood City, California, that empowers underserved children and families to reach their full potential. She is the former director of community education and engagement with Love Never Fails, a nonprofit committed to the trafficked population.

“I was so jazzed when I was offered the liaison position. I was, of course, on a call and had to control my emotions,” Benita reflects. “I was elated to know I was being entrusted with the task of connecting more people to the cause of Christ and the programs of DVULI.”

As an alumna, Benita served on the selection panel for the current Oakland/San Francisco Bay cohort. She has been active in local follow-up coordination and a contributor to our quarterly newsletter, *On The Level*. One of her responsibilities as a liaison is to coach incoming cohorts as they go through the DVULI training. This enables her to support the participants’ learning experience and further privileges her to re-engage the curriculum and training process.

“I love everything DVULI stands for,” says Benita. “The training and lasting support alongside urban youth workers are exceptional. More and more programs of strong Christian accountability are needed around our country for those on the front lines of this important community work.”

Alumni from both Fresno and Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area have already embraced Benita and expressed their support for her in this new role. She is excited to see the outcomes of follow-up and continued training and development of the urban youth worker networks in these communities.

“A lot needs to be accomplished in both areas. The Fresno cohorts are eager to work together on a project they have been contemplating. The Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area is still working on meeting more regularly and will be brainstorming the plan for next year soon,” reports Benita. “There are a lot of people in and between the two areas, meaning there is always more to accomplish.”

In 2015, Benita received the Modern-Day Abolitionist Award for Education by the San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking and now serves as board co-chair for the organization.

You can congratulate Benita on her new role at benitah@dvuli.org.



All I Want for Christmas, Is You?

Half the country disagrees
with you... strongly.

Opinion by **Jeremy Del Rio** (*New York 2010*)

The year 2020 brought into sharp focus the viral ferocity that divides the US on an assortment of life and death subjects. Systemic racism, pandemic mask-wearing, presidential politics, and prolonged uncertainty around the election results are just a few of the most obvious.

The social media echo chamber reinforced our convictions and demonized those who disagreed with us. Whatever beliefs we fashioned could be justified and were justified by pundits, pollsters, prophets, and profits.

In our Christian tradition, preachers on the left and right contorted Scripture with "Thus saith the Lord" proclamations in unwavering defense of their political preferences. Sermons were preached, books published, intercessions made, sacred assemblies convened, and laments cried. Viral YouTube prophesies both attacked and defended whatever your point of view. Perhaps as a youth worker, your tweets, comments, or captions contributed to the chaos?

Now, just weeks after the most divisive election in our collective memory, we prepare to commemorate Christ's birth at family tables that could include—COVID permitting—otherwise beloved relatives who passionately believe the polar opposite of us. We will likely share the Eucharist with divided congregations and certainly with a divided body of Christ.

Political disagreements are not new. Even Christ's birth was met with genocide from an egomaniacal king who felt politically threatened by the baby born in a Bethlehem barn.

The genius of America is a governmental system designed to function despite political factions. But the present level of disagreement has mired our government in an embarrassing state of dysfunction. Some leaders have devolved into partisan hacks who demonstrate only how to scream past each other while fomenting rage among their base. Worse, they have wedged brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, donkeys against elephants, red against blue.

People are dying from the stalemate. Literally—over 300,000 from COVID-19 alone—and figuratively as Jesus condemned in the Sermon on the Mount:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. [...] Whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. 5:21-22 NKJV).

In the midst of all this, what might Christmas offer that can help us manifest, "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men"? Even though right now, there are instances where people can't stomach those who voted differently than us (let alone embrace joyfully), remember that our youth are still watching. What might the Prince of Peace say about our current Christmas calamities?

First, stop. Stop demonizing, condemning, and confusing as enemies those who disagree with your politics. Even if you have actual enemies, stop striving to defeat them. Try this instead: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44 NKJV).

Second, listen. Listen to the people with whom you disagree politically. Listen, not as a tactic to ultimately win the argument or to feign agreement, but because you want to rediscover their humanity and to relearn how to empathize despite disagreement.

Even Christ's birth
was met with
genocide from an
egomaniacal king
who felt politically
threatened by the
baby born in a
Bethlehem barn.

Third, repent. Repent even if you didn't mean any harm. Repent even when you had no idea that your ignorance might hurt someone. Repent on behalf of social sins you may not have directly caused but from which you directly or indirectly benefit.

Fourth, release. Release the need to be right all of the time. Release the power that holds you tightly. Release whatever privilege you guard so fiercely.

Finally, forgive. Forgive those whose demagoguery offends you. Forgive those whose arrogance caused you harm. And forgive yourself for resorting to your own basest human instincts in attempts to win political arguments.

If this sounds idealistic, meditate on Paul's Christmas reflections:

"Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross" (Phil. 2:1-8 NLT).

Humility goes a long way in Christ's kingdom economy. It's the antidote to the hubris that fuels disconnection. It's the "same attitude" mandate Christ requires of us, especially at times like these when our youth are looking to us to help make sense out of nonsense. It's the key to fostering fellowship, cultivating tenderness and compassion, finding agreement, and working together. It inoculates against selfishness and prefers the interests of others. It relinquishes privilege and serves without expectation.

Humility just might be the Christmas vaccine our viral dysfunctions demand.

LeaderAlert



Jeremy Del Rio
(New York 2010)

is leading a collaboration with DVULI alumni in Oakland and Dallas in a Thrive Collective collaboration lead a youth antiviolence initiative in Harlem.

Breakthrough COACH, CONNECT, AND GET OUT OF THE WAY!

Denise Fase Gets Grilled by God for Trying to Fit In

By **Kimberlee Mitchell**, Staff Writer

For years, Denise Fase (Grand Rapids 1998) was faithfully living out what she believed was God's purpose for her life. Like many in ministry, she was comfortable burning the candle at both ends for the sake of the youth she ministered to and for a community that was underserved and in desperate need of help.

Raised in a small farm community with high standards and work ethics, Fase was conditioned to busy herself in "doing." The Dutch farmer work model she was exposed to was closely tied to the plague of pleasing people. So much so, working hard was how emotions were managed in her family.

"You work your way through feelings, meaning, you don't ever deal with your feelings, you just work and you avoid," explained Fase, the oldest (and only girl) of four children. "Working 60 to 80 hours [a week] was a moment of pride. You had value if you did that."

It's no surprise that Fase carried the values from her upbringing over to working with youth and doing urban ministry. A camp administrator for 17 years and a public school alternative education teacher, Fase was good at almost everything, except saying "no."

"I felt like a lone ranger, like I had to save the world—my white-savior-need-to-fix-things mentality," Fase admits. This crisis in identity had her heading toward burnout as she struggled to balance working in isolation due to insecurities and being everyone's "Ms. Fix It."

Participating in the inaugural DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative cohort in 1998, Fase describes how "God totally reworked my story. He realigned my priorities and my identity, which was not to be a hero, a savior, or even a



Denise Fase

youth worker. It was far simpler. I am God's child, and my role is to open doors for my brothers and sisters."

As the DVULI training experience offered deep dives into self-assessment, more personal revelations would uncover her struggles with perfectionism and trust issues. Fase realized her propensity as a leader was to take everything on herself. This not only caused her and her team balance issues, but she admits it actually "stole an opportunity from someone else who was better equipped."

"I was scared that I was beginning to expect everybody to operate the same way as me," Fase reflects. "I was holding unfair expectations, which then began to change how I saw other people and how I even led other people."

This self-awareness journey uncovered that God created each of His children with unique and complementing gifts. Therefore, she began to see how she was a part of a larger community that embraced teamwork,

transformation, and sustainability. Once she understood herself more, it empowered her to live within her giftedness and help others get there too.

"We really need each other!" offers Fase. "I learned I was part of something bigger than myself. I didn't have to do it alone. I realized that I could trust other people and do life together and just how much better it is that way."

Setting aside her own agenda and shifting to a collaborative team mindset has freed Fase to experience what it feels like doing urban youth work (and life) for the long haul. She has fully embraced her role of coming alongside other leaders, making the right connections, and then getting out of the way!



Ingenium (Character Building), and Partners for a Racism-Free Community. In 2015, Fase was contacted by DVULI alumni in Seattle/Tacoma looking to access support for offering training and collaboration opportunities in their cities. GRIL has become a model and a source of direction that has helped steer and erect leadership initiatives in Washington, Chicago, and Indianapolis. Fase says, "The leadership in these organizations share a deep trust and a shared vision which is integral to the [collaboration] process."

"The hope is to help those alumni develop an organization within their city for a larger-scale impact," says Fase. "We teach them everything we've learned. We provide the structure and curriculum and are their fiduciary. We coach their city coordinator, train their workshop facilitators, offer options to lead a teen version like our GRIL U program, and help create a shared vision if needed."

As the director of GRIL, Fase believes that when there is "alignment with a larger city, change, shared vision, and focus, [the GRIL model] can be implemented anywhere."

"He dared to tell me that He didn't need me. He chooses to use me, but He doesn't need me."

The secret sauce that paves the way for this successful replication, Fase shared, is that "the model inspires trust and ownership, focusing more on heart transformation than specific skill development." She continues, "Being with others who get it and see the same thing is key."

Fase has spent significant time in deep prayer for how to embrace and initiate the necessary changes and leadership transition GRIL will one day face. She is currently working on a two-year exit strategy from her role as executive director. As this chapter nears completion, Fase will be able to invest more time assisting DVULI alumni in launching GRIL-like programs in other cities.

"As a white female, I should not be leading a nonprofit in Grand Rapids, let alone a nonprofit with the mission and vision of what we're doing," Fase insists.

When asked what advice she would give to herself 20 years ago, the veteran youth worker replied, "Know your mission and stay true to it. Operate in wisdom and boldness, meaning, ask for God's wisdom but then be able to do what He asks you to do. He dared to tell me that He didn't need me. He chooses to use me, but He doesn't need me." Fase concluded, "Focus on relationships. Those are the things that, if I look back, are important in doing life and especially important in youth ministry."

★ 100% ★
RECOMMENDED
RESOURCE



Have you tasted a DVULI virtual refresher?

From the five core values to systems thinking, the learning experience that has shaped so many urban leaders across the nation is available in a new platform.

DVULI virtual refreshers are now online at www.dvuli.org/refresher.

For anyone in leadership, learning never ends even in a pandemic or uncertain times. DVULI virtual refreshers are presented with cultural and current conditions in mind.

Here's what alumni are posting during and after refreshers:

"That's so good!" —Jose Gonzalez (Miami 2013)

🔥 Presentation! I really needed this! Thank you!"
—Sheryl Richard (Detroit 2004)

"I will always remember you teaching me that!"
—Monique Johnson (Washington DC 2013)

"Are these being recorded and put up?" —Kristin Marie (Los Angeles 2019)

What community-wide impact are you leading?
Let us know at dvuli.org/alert

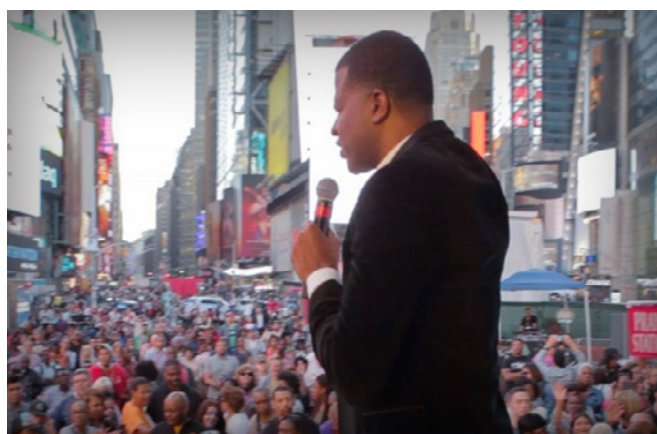
Leader Alert



James Quincy

(New York 2009)

led a peaceful protest for equality through the streets of Chagrin Falls, Ohio.



Pastor Dimas Salaberrios

(NY 2010)

leads prayer in Time Square.

ALUMNI PROFILE



Gilbert Hernandez

Gilbert Hernandez

(San Antonio 2002)

ORGANIZATION:

San Antonio Youth for Christ

CURRENT POSITION:

Chief Executive Officer/President

By **Dionne Peeples-Jones** (Portland 2003)

You became a youth pastor at the age of 18. How did you know you were called to youth ministry?

I was going to be an attorney. I saw my parents suffer and sacrifice [in ministry], and I didn't want that. I argued with God. I said, "I will make money and support my parents." I was in my bedroom when I surrendered to Christ—crying and feeling His calling while arguing that I didn't want to give up what I thought was going to be a great life as an attorney. In my heart, I remember God said, "I don't want your money. I want you." I said, "Okay! My heart, my life, my career, whatever you want me to do, I'm yours." At that moment, with Jesus, my life was forever changed. My father was a pastor, and he asked me if I would help with the youth. I remember going into the church one day and saying, "Lord, you have to give me a love for these kids because I don't want to do it." He did. Here I am, 20 years later, with that same love.

Your father had you work in the fields as a boy. What did that experience do for you?

One summer, my father said, "You're going to go with your uncle in the fields. You're a smart kid, and one day you'll lead people. But you need to know what it is like to come home with your hands hurting." I worked all day as a migrant. We'd get up at 4:30 in the morning

and sharpen a hoe. We hoed out sugar beet fields. We picked tomatoes and cucumbers and cleared fields. This taught me the value of a hard day's work. The children we are serving are migrant children too. I remember how people treated us. It changed how I love and serve people.

What is your mission for youth, and how are you fulfilling it?

Our mission is to bring young people who are far away from the Lord into a relationship with Jesus Christ and become lifelong followers of Him. We work in public schools. Prior to COVID-19, we were engaging 1,300 kids a week in the schools with Christian mentors. God has given us a unique place in San Antonio to mobilize the church in engaging lost students with the gospel in public schools. Across San Antonio, we are engaging 8,000 kids a year in 13 public schools. It's a great partnership!

How have you managed to reach students through the COVID-19 challenges?

We moved programming online and got creative. We did an online campus club and a weekly TV show. I've got to give it to my team. They love children well. We did Zoom and Google Hangouts. By mid-summer, youth were tired of Zoom, so we

pivoted back to in-person programming. We're meeting in churches, homes, and offices that are being retrofitted.

You've said, "Relationships move at the speed of trust." How has that philosophy helped to leverage relationships and partnerships?

Some churches want to get into schools, and we leverage that relationship. We're that sinew—not pretty or fancy. We bring people together, and lives are changed. The body (of believers) can move forward. We work with UTSA (University of Texas at San Antonio) and the public health department. We want to be the best youth nonprofit in the city, not the best Christian youth nonprofit. We pushed in. We are the only faith organization in those partnerships. We also have relationships with the city of San Antonio and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. When we first started, no one knew who we were. Now, if anything is happening with youth in our city, we are called to be a key voice of faith. We've leveraged all those relationships to advance the kingdom of God in places where the church is not usually active or vocal. Even as our mayoral leadership has changed, we've leveraged that to stay in leadership.

(Continued next page)

(Continued from previous page)

How has the core value of empowerment played a role in your organization?

We started discipling youth through our one-year program called Leaders in Training. Youth grow in Jesus, and they have a place where they belong. We help them connect to a local church and teach them how to be leaders. Less than two years ago, we had 37 kids who came to know Jesus and are now being disciplined and launched into service. Over the last three years, four youth pastors have come from that group. We're seeing God do amazing work as we create a leadership pipeline. Even in middle school, we are empowering students through a program called Student Staff at Middle School. At first, you see the kids and wonder if they are going to make it. Then you see them sharing the gospel. It's been a beautiful journey. Too many young people are given a bad rap for being lazy, but if they are given the right mission, they can change the world.

What has the program accomplished that makes you most grateful?

We have developed and prepared leaders for the next generation of youth ministry. Two years ago, they didn't know Jesus. They were drinking, cutting themselves, and sleeping around. Now, they are leaders and sharing the gospel. I am grateful to the Lord that I have been a part of that process.

As you move forward, how can your DVULI family be praying for you?

Pray that the Lord would send more laborers to the harvest. We're raising money and discipling kids, but it never feels like we have enough people. God spoke to my heart, saying, "You're not going to hire your way; you're going to disciple your way." That's my heart's cry.

I Can See Clearly Now

What Hindsight "2020" Revealed to Urban Leaders

by **Will Cumby** (Houston 2010)

Five, four, three, two, one! On January 1, the new year bell rang, and the year 2020 came out swinging! This year has thrown hard pandemic gut punches, social injustice jabs, budget-stealing blows, and quarantining uppercuts, all of which hurt deeply. Even when we thought we had mustered the strength to fight again, the deaths of powerful leaders and personal friends weakened our knees.

Like any good fight, it isn't over unless contenders throw in the towel or the final bell rings. Strong fighters roll with the punches anticipating better rounds and future bouts.

I heard it said that 2020 would be the year of vision, but it has been a year of revision for many in urban ministry. For the cause of Christ and their communities, urban leaders have adapted ministry strategies and methods to ensure their efforts don't just survive but thrive.

At the end of a chaotic year, true leaders reflect, assess, and reset for more of the unexpected. This approach is prescriptive for DVULI alumni across the nation who are armed with lessons learned, new strategies, and contingencies for the future. Among them, Brian Dye (Chicago 2007), Tommy Carrington (Miami 2008), John Park (Los Angeles 2010), Dimas Salaberrios (New York 2010), and Valerie Wimms (Pittsburgh 2012) offer their perspectives and best practices for doing urban ministry in unpredictable conditions.

Brian Dye (Chicago 2007),
Director, Legacy legacydisciple.org



My greatest leadership strength is building bridges and equipping leaders, which is what 2020 has forced me to return to doing. Who would have imagined our schedules, strategies, and annual plans being tossed in the trash?

God is doing something that none of us planned for. He is shaking up our norms to create ministries that are more intentional and effective. I can't help but believe that God doesn't want us to return to what we had in 2019. Everything needs to be re-evaluated.

How can we practice more interdependence with other ministries and churches? Ministries that will be most effective moving forward are ones that are laser-focused on a simple mission. Cut the excess. Don't be pressured to believe you need to meet every need. God has uniquely

wired each of us for a special mission. Do what you do well and collaborate with other organizations and ministries that meet other needs. When God provides a mission, He will always provide a means. Don't wait for normalcy to return; create a new and better normal.

Tommy Carrington (Miami 2008),
Founder and President,
Impact 922 Ministries impact922.org



So many of us have had to "pivot," a word I never thought would become so common as we learned to navigate this new world. This year reinforced the significance of having deep and meaningful relationships. We need each other, and it is imperative that we allow others to shine in their areas of giftedness. A ministry is more than its leaders, and I cannot accomplish my mission alone. Intentionally drawing on the skills and abilities of those around me has supplemented my weak areas.

I recommend that other urban leaders do some reflection and perhaps re-envisioning of their gifts, talents, mission, and calling to see how God might be uniquely positioning them to meet the unique needs presented in our world right now. I often reflect on the quote by Frederick Buechner that we learned in a local workshop: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

John Park (Los Angeles 2010),
Director of Resources and Programs,
UYWI uywi.org



During disconnection or major change, it is important to care for your own soul. What attitudes and actions are you just carrying into different spaces or places? What are you freeing yourself from so you can live a healthier and less cluttered life? Mental clarity is impactful to our relationship with Christ and our responsibilities as leaders.

This year pushed my personal growth and sanctification as a leader. I recommend urban leaders look at ways to develop healthy

rhythms that are life-giving. Intentionally focus on goals and visions that are far into the future by putting effort, prayer, and grace into pressing toward your convictions. Allow for honest reflection and make space for the Holy Spirit's prompting. Typically, I've accomplished this through reading and studying Scripture, journaling, and practicing solitude.

Dimas Salaberrios (New York 2010),
Pastor, The Dynamic Life thedynamiclifeministry.com



New York City had zero cases of the coronavirus until the outbreak in New Rochelle with a super-spreader that reached all of New York. I quickly realized that ministry had to shift to a new approach in this COVID-19 atmosphere. I believe we must have faith through the challenge, plan big, and adjust when necessary. During quarantine, I focused on book and screenplay writing and ministering through Zoom, while still preaching, praying, and partnering with other ministries. I am preparing for the best and using scenario planning tools. I had to design several teams and recruit strategic people to keep moving forward. We shifted our outreach strategy to include Facebook Live events with celebrity guests.

Eventually, I got off Zoom calls and out into the streets. I did gatherings all around Manhattan. If protesters could hit the streets with no fear, so could we. We led looters to Christ and saw great success. Youth for Christ taught me to be anchored to the Rock but move with the times. I will keep shifting and adjusting to the obstacles that Jesus allows me to confront. Believers must have hope in their hearts and faith in Christ. God did not say we will perish from a plague. Don't give up on your plans, but find ways to improvise, adapt, and overcome.

Valerie Wimms (Pittsburgh 2012),
Minister of Youth and Young Adults,
South Euclid United Church of Christ southeucliducc.org



This pandemic has affected families in various ways. Food insecurities, lack of adequate technology, and mental health issues among other challenges have greatly inhibited quality of life. I was forced to come to terms with my needs and how I divided my time. During the shutdown, I discovered the imbalance and found hidden time that provided priceless moments with God. I also had to take a different approach in leading our youth ministry.

To remain connected with our families, we incorporated digital media platforms and capitalized on the strengths of our amazing leadership team. Community leaders want everyone in their proximity to feel seen and not forgotten. Instead of assuming what we offer is enough, it is more important to learn the individual needs of our families. Circumstances and priorities will change instantly, and there is always a plan B, C, or D that can be put in place. We just have to be open to thinking outside of the box and willing to try new things. This season has proved that, with God, all things are possible!

ALUMNI UPDATES



Dr. Sheila Johnson
(Pittsburgh 2017) has accepted the position as the first female president of the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Pittsburgh and Vicinity.

Jack Redmond

(New York City 2010) has written a new book titled *50 & Fit: Build muscle. Burn fat. Eat right. Repeat...*



Joel Sanabria

(New York 2011) is now director of ministry and operations for the Salvation Army Life Center in Pontiac, Illinois.

Frank Reynoso

(Orlando 2010) has been promoted to the position of metro ministry advancement by Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) of the North East.



Virginia Ward

(Boston 1998) accepted two positions at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. She is now the dean of the Boston campus and the executive director of the Northeast region.

Jamie Caldwell

(Dallas 2019) married Eric Duran on August 26, 2020.

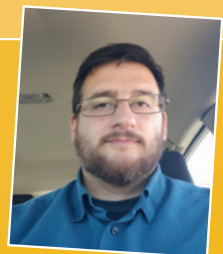


Jenna Mata

(Phoenix 2016) and her husband, Jacob, welcomed their first child, Camila Mata, into the world on August 14, 2020.

B.J. Ramon

(Houston 2018) has recently accepted two new counseling positions at the Houston Center for Christian Counseling and at Amy Wine Counseling.



Alvin Sanders

(Cincinnati 2014) has written a new book titled *Uncommon Church: Community Transformation for the Common Good*.

EJ Frain

(Newark 2021) married Alexis Jegede on August 1, 2020.



FOR MORE, VISIT

 facebook.com/dvuli

 instagram.com/dvuli