

People of Color Fundraising Team Biographies

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**Larissa
Kwong-Abazia**

Larissa is an ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Director of Church Relations at Princeton Theological Seminary. She earned her undergraduate degree at Rutgers University and M.Div. at Princeton Theological Seminary. Larissa’s ministry started with a pastoral residency program at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, PA. It was there that she learned and practiced the importance of active listening and reflection during moments of trauma and transition. She then moved to Chicago to serve a congregation three blocks from Wrigley Field. Her main responsibilities included overseeing a Friday evening program for at risk LGBTQ youth and the young adult ministries of the church. Larissa has since served congregations in New Jersey and Queens, NY.

Throughout her life and career, Larissa has been dedicated to racial and gender justice. She is interested in the ways that the intersections of all parts of one’s identity can be embraced as strengths. This work brought her to denominational leadership, including serving as the Vice-Moderator to the 221st General Assembly, where she was able to challenge the current structures and assumptions of life together. Larissa is a regular speaker and preacher throughout the denomination.



**Aimée
Laramore**

Aimée is a sought-after consultant, trainer and speaker whose areas of expertise include: Diversity in Development; The Implications of Donor Demographics in Faith-based Giving; Creating a Culture of Generosity; Expanding the Understanding of Philanthropy; and The Spirituality of Fundraising. She is a passionate teacher, trainer, consultant, and coach with more than two decades of experience.

Owner/Lead Consultant for ALLyd Image Solutions, a boutique consulting firm dedicated to building organizational capacity and effective development practices, Aimee has also served successfully in leadership roles throughout a variety of mission driven agencies across the country, in the health, human services and community development fields. She has presented at well over 75 congregations, seminaries, development conferences, and leadership training events in the last many years through her posts as Associate Director of Lake Institute on Faith & Giving and as Director of Seminary Advancement for Christian Theological Seminary.

Specializing in facilitation, strategic planning and outcomes-based measurement, her work can be seen through more than 90 non-profit agencies within the Midwest region. She currently dedicates her time as Philanthropic Strategist for the first PhD in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric, led by Dr. Frank A. Thomas.



**Derrick
McQueen**

Derrick earned his B.A. in Theater Arts from Drew University, an M.Div. in Theology and the Arts, and his Ph. D. in Homiletics and New Testament, the latter both from Union Theological Seminary. Derrick is currently serving as the interim pastor of the historic St. James Presbyterian church in Harlem. He also serves as the Associate Director of Community Partnerships for a new center at Columbia University, the Center On African American Religion and Sexual Politics (CARSS). CARSS is a project that advances research, education, and public engagement at the nexus of religion, race and sexuality, in general, but with a particular focus on black communities, both in the United States and the wider African Diaspora. He has been with the project since its inception as it tries to navigate and promote conversations around sexuality with a focus on historic black churches.

During his time at Union, Derrick has been integrally involved in the community and worship life. As a middler, he earned the Hudnut Award, which is awarded to a middler who has made the best preparation for the preaching ministry. Upon graduation received the Maxwell Fellowship from Auburn Seminary, awarded to the graduating senior who shows the most promise of excellence for future service in parish ministry.

Derrick's interests include practical theology; integrating current academic theologies and empire-critical biblical studies into congregational and community life; classical dramatic structures and their influence on Christianity; and early Christian community models of social justice and their modern applications on issues such as poverty, sexuality, race and gender. Derrick has worked as a community activist and social worker, and is currently a Poverty Scholar with Union's Poverty Initiative. Derrick is also a spiritual multi-media artist and for over a decade has toured a one man production on the life of Paul Robeson for the East Lynne Theater Company.



**Mieke
Vandersall**

With over 15 years of executive leadership experience in the religious nonprofit arena, Mieke guides people and institutions to remove barriers in order to live into their calling. She is a detail-oriented project manager and brings extensive development, fundraising, administrative, and supervisory knowledge, having successfully begun multiple programs and organizations. She is a consultant with religious and non-religious organizations and congregations.

Mieke's work with clients is comprised of the implementation of major donor programs, online crowdsourcing campaigns, grantwriting and grantmaking procedures, website writing and development, communication strategies, board development, event planning, worship planning, and organizational capacity-building. In addition, Mieke encourages nonprofits, congregations and religious leaders as they work to fund their ministries; this work comes out of a deep knowledge of the particular exhilaration and stress of working for long-term structural change and beginning and sustaining programs.

Mieke teaches classes on fundraising at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. She has also consulted with organizations and congregations discerning the possibility of beginning new worshipping communities or services of worship.

In addition to consulting, she is currently the Founding Pastor of Not So Churchy, a progressive, arts-based community. Mieke provides pastoral care, organization, and vision for this community. Prior to her consulting work she was the Executive Director of Parity, where she founded a program for LGBTQ Future Pastors. This post spanned from 2003-2014. Mieke and the Future Pastors Program is a feature of the documentary film, *Out of Order*.

Mieke attended Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, where she was the recipient of the Hudnut Award for Excellent Preaching Preparation.



**Erin
Weber-Johnson**

Erin Weber-Johnson is the Senior Program Director of Strategic Resources at the the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF). She began at ECF as a capital campaign consultant in 2009. In her current capacity she works with Episcopal leaders to faithfully answer the following questions, “What is God calling this organization to be/do?” and “How do we respond?” In answering these questions, Erin provides financial, strategic, and leadership resources through a broad range of services. She has facilitated national and diocesan workshops, vestry retreats and live webinars on annual giving, volunteer engagement, generational giving characteristics, and debt retirement.

Utilizing a year-round stewardship model, Erin works with parishes on annual giving, planned giving and has successfully completed capital campaigns widely ranging in size. In 2015, she led a creative team to develop a diagnostic assessment tool for congregations in determining where to strategically begin utilizing resources in the area of leadership, finance, and vision/planning. This tool will be used to create individualized plans for providing support while parishes seek to live into their calling.

Erin spends a great deal of time thinking about what keeps faith communities healthy and sustainable. Erin worked as a grants officer at Trinity Wall Street in New York City from 2009-2013. Prior to joining ECF, she worked at the General Theological Seminary. Erin also previously served as missionary of the Episcopal Church and holds a Master’s degree in Public Administration from New York University. She is a member of St. John the Evangelist Church in St. Paul, MN.