

Tabitha Isner, a Disciples minister, runs for a seat in the U.S. House

Pastoral care is at the heart of a representative's job, says Isner, who is campaigning in Alabama's second congressional district.

by [Emily Martin](#) in the [December 20, 2017](#) issue



Tabitha Isner. Photo by Stephen Poff.

For Tabitha Isner, launching a congressional campaign was a logical next step in her ministry.

“I hope to show that there is more than one kind of Christian politician, and that it is possible to find common cause on many issues with unexpected allies,” said Isner,

an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

She is [running for office as a Democrat in Alabama's second congressional district](#), which includes most of the Montgomery metropolitan area. Rep. Martha Roby, a Republican, has held the seat since 2010 and is running again. The primary election is in June.

Isner was inspired to run, in part, by the ideas expressed in the identity statement of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which describes itself as “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world” and has roots in the Restoration tradition seeking Christian unity.

“Nowhere is the notion of ‘a fragmented world’ more evident than in the halls of Congress,” she said. “We need more leaders who are willing and able to work across the aisle, to be the ‘movement for wholeness’ our country so desperately needs.”

In her faith formation, she said, she learned to see feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, and welcoming the immigrant as “commands meant to be carried out both on the personal level and through social institutions and structures.”

Isner, who currently works on early childhood policy, sees her ministerial training as good preparation for serving in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“So much of a representative’s job is really about pastoral care—actively listening to constituents and validating the underlying anxieties and fears that motivate them,” she said. “At a time when so many in society are feeling unheard, we need representatives that are able to demonstrate empathy and resist the drive toward tribalism.”

Bipartisanship is a large part of her platform, she said, as well as increasing participation in the political process.

“It’s especially important for people of deep faith to be involved because we have spent a lot of time thinking about the kind of community that God intended and the kind of efforts it will take to build such a community.” —Disciples News Service; with added information

FOLLOWING UP (Updated November 8, 2018): Isner lost her bid for a congressional seat, pulling in 38.5 percent of votes in a district covering much of southeast Alabama, including most of Montgomery.

A version of this article, which was edited on December 19, appears in the December 20 print edition under the title “People: Tabitha Isner.”