

# PUBLICATION

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## Common Ground: Finding Unity Through Shared Journeys

Authors: Destiney Parker-Thompson  
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Our "Common Ground" series this year has highlighted the unexpected similarities between colleagues from different backgrounds, fostering a unique connection across diverse experiences and perspectives. Through conversations on perseverance, belonging, and resilience, we've learned that shared values and supportive communities often bridge the gap between colleagues in different stages of their careers, in various offices, and with distinct personal histories.

As we wrap up another year of meaningful connections, this edition takes a reflective turn. Rather than share a story from co-authors, we have a heartfelt solo reflection from associate Destiney Parker-Thompson on stepping out of comfort zones, finding joy in small victories, and embracing the warmth of community – both within Baker Donelson and at home with family. May these reflections inspire us all to lean into the unfamiliar with the support of the team around us.

*"A comfort zone is a beautiful place, but nothing grows there."* – Unknown

This year, I've questioned my career decisions and ability to perform as an attorney more than ever before. Thoughts like "I can't do this;" "Maybe I'm not who I thought I was;" and "Is it too late to switch careers?" took hold in my mind. These intrusive thoughts first crept in as I moved my family across three states to work as an associate with the Baker Donelson team in Raleigh, North Carolina; again, as I spent countless hours studying for the Delaware bar; and again, as I transitioned from a junior associate to a more senior role within the Firm. Despite these loud and intrusive thoughts living "rent-free" in my mind, I conquered each challenge. My transition to Raleigh has been far from smooth, but it's been enjoyable. I passed the Delaware bar exam, and I've had the chance to work on several complex matters, all of which resulted in favorable outcomes for the clients, and invaluable learning experiences with incredible attorneys and support staff at the Firm.

I did not do this alone. Through reflection and the support of a spectacular team, guidance from colleagues and champions in the management and leadership at the Firm – including Jill Walters, Mark Baugh, Matt Wolfe, and Mark Duedall – I'm succeeding. I confess this type of success isn't the kind I imagined when I was younger, but it's the best kind because the reward is intangible – it feels good. This year has taught me that my comfort zone is a beautiful place, but if I want to learn, grow, and become an expert in my field, I cannot stay there. Practicing law is hard, but the best (and perhaps only) way to succeed is to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Currently, I am quite uncomfortable, yet I find comfort in knowing that the best part of me is the team that surrounds me.

As we head into the holiday season, I'm especially excited about my family tradition of "Thompson's 25 Days of Christmas." Christmas is my favorite holiday, and my family endures my overly enthusiastic Christmas spirit. I started the Thompson's 25 Days of Christmas about three years ago to quench my ongoing thirst for winter and Christmas festivities. Being a Louisiana native, my family and I cook a Louisiana or Cajun dish every day in December. The menu includes crawfish etouffee, Natchitoches meat pies, and crab cakes and we even buy a King Cake from one of my favorite online vendors. On Christmas Eve, we cook a huge pot of seafood gumbo, have a cookie decorating contest, and play board games until we cannot keep our eyes open. My

husband is the reigning champion of the cookie decorating contest, but my crown as the "Board Game Queen" remains unscathed.

This will be my first holiday season at Baker Donelson. One of the best gifts I have received is the small role I play in being a part of the Baker Donelson team. I am excited to decorate my office with every shade of red and green and hang the biggest Christmas/holiday wreath that I can find on my office door. Blessings and joy to everyone this holiday season!