

Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program



Forty-one people participated in the Journey program in 2020-2021, including 17 participants and 17 mentors in the North American program, and six participants and one mentor in the Journey Southeast Asia program. Three participants and one mentor are from Central District Conference: **Charles Baraka** (Madison Mennonite) and mentor **Lavon Welty** (Eighth St. Mennonite); **Steve Mares** (Community Mennonite, Markham), and **Jan Croyle** (First Mennonite-Wadsworth).

Participants gathered via Zoom for the fall Weekend Learning Event. Despite the change to a virtual format, the weekend successfully served to connect and resource participants. Dan Schrock, AMBS adjunct professor and long-time spiritual director and pastor, led sessions on developing and deepening our spiritual practices. In separate sessions, cohort groups met to work on their personal timelines, take personality inventories, and explore spiritual direction. Mentors participated in a mentoring workshop and mentors and mentees met together to work on and update their learning covenants.

Following the fall gathering, participants joined online classes developed by David B. Miller, Teaching Associate of the AMBS Church Leadership Center, and taught by Roland Kuhl, Journey Instructor. As part of these studies, they also carried out a wide variety of ministry assignments in their congregations and communities. Throughout the session they also met with their mentors, typically bi-weekly, to discuss their classes and ministry experiences.

The winter Weekend Learning Event was also held virtually. The theme for the weekend was “Leadership for God’s Reconciling Mission,” with David Miller. One of the unique features of this online weekend was the inclusion of extended time for conversation with David in interactive sessions. Several sessions also featured mentor-mentee breakout room conversations.

Worship at both the fall and winter gatherings was planned and led by Eleanor Kreider and Julia Schmidt. Mentees in their final term of the program, including Jan Croyle, shared reflections and received blessings. This winter, for the first time, Journey alumni were invited to “come back” to join the Saturday evening worship session, followed by an alumni reunion breakout.

Following the winter Weekend Learning Event, participants again joined online classes and continued to meet bi-weekly in mentor-mentee pairs, typically in virtual formats during this time.

The Journey Board plays a vital role in helping to oversee and shape the program and is made up of representatives of Journey’s three sponsoring conferences. Many thanks to **Lois Kaufmann**, board chair; **Doug Luginbill**, conference minister; and **Gayle Gerber Koontz**, CDC Ministerial Committee representative, for their service to the board. Sincere thanks also to **Nina Lanctot** (previous chair) and **Ardean Friesen** (previous Ministerial Committee representative), who completed their time on the board in 2020. Last year we were excited to welcome Ohio Conference as a new sponsoring conference for the program, also with representation on the board. They join CDC and Indiana-Michigan Conference, who collaborated with AMBS to launch the program in 2003.

Journey participants and alumni frequently tell us that Journey is a tremendous learning opportunity for lay leaders, pastors, church planters, and other emerging leaders! If someone you know wants to develop or deepen ministry gifts or is exploring a call to ministry, please encourage them to speak to Doug Luginbill about whether the Journey program might be the right next step.

Respectfully submitted,

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, AMBS Dean of Lifelong Learning