

Journey: A Conference-based Leadership Development Program **A program for leaders of local Mennonite churches**

Central Mission

The mission of Journey is to develop leaders for local churches who are centered on Jesus Christ.

Foundational Strategies

This mission is accomplished by following several foundational strategies:

1. *The program operates out of an Anabaptist/Mennonite theological base.* It offers an Anabaptist Christian perspective, based on Jesus Christ, and interpreted by the work of the Holy Spirit through scripture and the Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective.
2. *The program works in cooperation with Mennonite Church institutions that currently engage in pastoral leadership education and training.* It supports and encourages the pursuit of college and seminary training. Within the framework of its stated mission and core values, it utilizes programs and resources from Mennonite colleges and seminaries. It targets programs toward leaders for local churches who would not typically be trained at academic institutions.
3. The program helps participants to identify and develop competencies in specific “transformation areas.” They are:
 - Spiritual disciplines – studies focus on prayer and nurture of the inner spirit.
 - Theological and biblical studies - studies focus on developing familiarity with Anabaptist theology and approaches to Bible study.
 - Character development – studies explore courage, consistency, love, self-discipline, etc.
 - Mentoring and community – studies provide students with strong mentors and help them learn to mentor others, and to pay attention to what it means to live in Christian community.
 - Gift development – studies challenge participants to identify and develop their own spiritual gifts and work at developing the call and passion of every congregational member.
 - Leadership skills – studies strengthen areas in preaching, teaching, worship leading, worship planning, etc.
4. *The program offers a certificate to those who reach “transformation goals.”*

Core Values

The program is designed to be:

1. *Collaborative.* This effort draws on the vision, energies, commitments and resources of Indiana-Michigan Conference, Central District Conference, the AMBS Church Leadership Center, and local congregations. Within that context we share resources and materials freely.
2. *Multi-layered.* The program is accessible by different people at different places or levels of involvement, i.e. it has a variety of entry points.
3. *Excellent.* The program has high quality instruction and resources.
4. *Affordable.* We keep costs low by working as a training cooperative and by using member facilities where possible.
5. *Innovative.* The program embraces innovation in educational methods, the use of technology, and in methods of ministry.
6. *Anti-racist/Anti-Classist.* The program embraces cross-cultural and international connections and a commitment to intentionally work against racism in its various forms.
7. *Relevant.* The program meets deep needs of Christian leaders.
8. *Experiential.* Studies incorporate and value inclusion of practical ministry experiences.
9. *Missional.* We develop pastors and other church leaders toward effective leadership of missional churches.

Program Description

Journey provides non-credit theological education to two groups: 1) pastors and those actively considering a formal ministry role; and 2) lay leaders interested in theological education for the work of the church. The program is built around a three-year cycle involving overnight events combined with ongoing study and mentoring conversations, as outlined below.

Annual components:

1. July/August¹—assessment meetings
 2. August—choose a mentor
 3. August—complete personality assessment tools
 4. Early September—Event A: Spiritual disciplines and gift identification and development work
 5. September-March—Study at home; bi-weekly study and check-in with mentor
 6. March—Event B: Spiritual disciplines and topic related to Mennonite/Anabaptist theological concerns
 7. March-June—Study at home; bi-weekly study and check-in with mentor
 8. July-August—free to either continue studies or take a summer break
- This cycle repeats each year, with topics changing.

A more detailed description of each component follows.

YEAR 1

1. Assessment

Students meet individually with a conference minister for initial assessment. The “initial assessment checklist,” based on the six transformation areas, takes into account life experience and prior education to determine whether or not this program is the appropriate “next step” for the student and how this program will be adapted to fit their needs.

2. Choosing mentors

The student, in consultation with the conference minister, chooses a mentor who has had significant pastoral experience in a Mennonite church setting.²

3. Personality assessment tools

In preparation for the September retreat, student complete a tool for personality assessment. This may be the DISC, the LPI or some other assessment tool.

4. Event A: - September

Spiritual disciplines are modeled, taught and practiced. Gift identification and development work; mentor training. All students and mentors gather at one site for a two-day event. In plenary sessions they identify students’ strengths and gifts. In break-out sessions, students.

¹ The normal entry point into this program is August. However, another entry point can be January or February depending upon availability, interest, and needs of the enrollee.

² In some cases, two or three students share one mentor and together form a mentoring group. This mentoring group meets together bi-weekly for study and check-in, rather than each student meeting individually with the mentor.

develop personal mission statements. Material from Lancaster Conference's "Discovery" process and the "Refocusing" project are incorporated.

5. Study at home; bi-weekly study and check-in with mentor³
Foundational curriculum for the program is the Leading God's People materials from AMBS.⁴ Students study the textbook, read articles, answer questions and do projects as outlined. The mentor leads the student in thinking about his or her work and offers additional perspectives.

Students begin with Unit 1: *Church and Ministry*, to be completed by the end of December. In January students begin Unit 2: *The Biblical Story* to be completed by the end of May.

Also during these bi-weekly meetings mentors check in with students regarding a wide range of aspects of ministry. These check-in times provide accountability, structure and opportunity for character development.

6. Event B: - February
Spiritual disciplines are modeled, taught and practiced. Input also centers on a topic related to leadership from a Mennonite/Anabaptist perspective.

Plenary sessions provide the opportunity for mentors and students to hear together input on a topic of importance to the developing church leader. Break-out sessions allow students to explore themes unique to each group and to network with each other.

7. Study at home; bi-weekly study and check-in with mentor
These times continue until work on Unit 2: *The Biblical Story* is complete.
8. Summer break takes place June-August.

YEAR 2

9. In early September of the following year, the cycle above is repeated, with the exception of the Assessment, Choosing Mentors, and Personality Assessment Tools. Events add break-out sessions for second-year students and mentors. Event A continues to focus on Gift Development, and Event B in March features a new set of topics related to leadership in a Mennonite/Anabaptist perspective. At-home study involves two more units – Unit 3: *Anabaptist History & Theology* and Unit 4: *Salt & Light*.

³ This study is designed as non-credit programming. However, if students seek college credit for work, they can enroll simultaneously in the distance program through AMBS. This option would provide feedback from an instructor as well as the designated mentor, and would require submission of written materials and payment of tuition.

⁴ Substitutions can be made in conversation with program staff. Examples of legitimate substitutions include, but are not limited to: parallel Spanish materials from IBAPE or IBA; Preaching Institute for Unit 4; AMBS's graduate-level "Anabaptist History and Thought" class for Unit 4. In the event substitutions are used or the sequence of the units is altered, a plan should be outlined for how the student and mentor will process the material over the course of the designated months.

YEAR 3

10. The third year follows a similar pattern and students complete Unit 5: *Tending God's Flock*. The final unit of study is an elective chosen by the student and mentor, with some opportunity and focus on "being a mentor to others."
11. Upon completion of the various components of the three-year cycle, the student receives a certificate of completion issued by either conference, in cooperation with AMBS.

Sponsorship

The AMBS Church Leadership Center, Indiana-Michigan Conference and Central District Conference jointly sponsor the program. One representative from each organization serves as part of a three-member implementation group charged with running the program.

Program Cost

The program costs \$750 per year per team of two—one mentor and one mentee. The cost for each additional mentee is \$375 each per year, with a limit of three mentees for one mentor. Congregations are encouraged to cover or contribute to the costs of the team's participation. Scholarship funds may be available through the conference office.

Oversight

The certificate program operates under the oversight of an advisory board made up of 10-12 stakeholders, including representatives of the three sponsoring institutions: AMBS, Indiana-Michigan Conference and Central District Conference; and additional stakeholders including pastors from local Mennonite churches and representatives from groups whose programming is offered in the certificate program.

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