

## **Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program Overview of Curriculum**

The *Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program* curriculum consists of a combination of online study, face-to-face gatherings, and regular meetings with a mentor.

### **A. Online curriculum**

Online curriculum has been developed by David Miller, AMBS Associate Professor of Missional Leadership Development. Online study is guided by proctors appointed by AMBS. The online curriculum includes the following five units:

- *Unit 1: The Mission of God and the Witness of the Church*

God has been seeking to redeem and reconcile human beings, to God's own self, with one another, and with the whole of creation. However, repeatedly God's call has been taken to mean privilege and preference and over time, those who have understood themselves as called have used power to dominate and control others, rather than to love, to serve and seek reconciliation. The church in north America is undergoing a significant change from its position of relative privilege - with this change comes the possibility of re-learning lessons from the vulnerable and precarious existence of the early church to be called back to the mission in the way of the Messiah.

- *Unit 2: The Biblical Story*

Stories shape the way people understand who they are and for what purpose they exist. The books of the Bible tell an unfolding story of God's purpose and human response. In its pages we encounter the God who from the beginning is identified as the One who is good and whose "steadfast love endures forever." However, the story of God's action and human response is one that has and continues to both include faith and faithlessness, hope and despair, courage and cowardice, self-sacrificial love and violent selfishness. How does this ancient story, this Word that ultimately becomes "flesh and lives among us" guide, shape, convict, convert, and empower humans toward an incarnational witness that seeks first the reign of God - a reign of justice, righteousness and peace. We will encounter the Bible as both an ancient text and a testimony to the living Word.

- *Unit 3: Anabaptism: Foundations and Future – A Way of Being Church*

The sixteenth century was a time of religious, political, and societal upheaval - particularly on the European continent. During this time of grasping for power and searching for what might hold society together there emerged a movement who looked back to the example of the early church discerning that the power of God demonstrated in Christ was the power of reconciling love that made possible community, nonviolence, sharing with those in need, and witness to a different mode of power - the power, not to dominate, but to make new. What began as a movement on the European continent is today most flourishing in the 2/3's world - not from the seats of power, but a witness from the bottom up. What does the church in the west stand to learn and re-learn from the church emerging in the 2/3's world?

- *Unit 4: The Ministry of Reconciliation: Leadership for Communal Formation, Process and Witness*

Many models of leadership focus on the power and influence of the leader to exert their will and purpose. However, the model that has been given to the church is a mode of leadership that is grounded in transformation, service, and reconciliation. The priorities of such

leadership are the love of God, neighbor, self and, yes, even enemy. The skills that accompany such a mode of leadership include learning to lead a discerning community that prizes mutuality and the inherent worth of each member as made in the image of God, the releasing and stewarding of the gifts that God has given through the Spirit to enable witness that reflects the character and priorities of its source.

- *Unit 5: Announcement and Celebration: Proclamation and Worship that Participate in the Mission of God*

In our final unit, we focus on the skills of bringing this Good News of the Mission of God in Christ to speech guiding the church in its worship. We begin by remembering that it is by speech that God creates, that covenant is made, that the dead are raised, and that hope is re-born. Being formed by a living Word, we now seek to offer our mouths as instruments to declare this good news. Proclamation does not only happen through sermons, but in worship where the church declares its allegiance to the reconciling God "who so loved the world." The forgiving God who hears our confession and cleanses us, and invites us to the table of reconciliation and offers in bread and cup a new covenant - who feeds us for new life; and we learn to offer thanksgiving and praise - around the table where there is finally hope that all things are made new.

## **B. Face-to-face gatherings**

Weekend Learning Events (WLEs) are gatherings of mentees, mentors, conference and seminary faculty and other teachers. They are times set apart for learning, worship, reflection and friendship, planned by seminary and conference staff and held at Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Michigan, and on the AMBS campus. Please note attendance requirements below:

- A fall gathering is required for all participants and mentors
- A winter gathering is also required for participants and mentors from Central District and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite conferences. All others are welcome to attend.
- While the winter gathering is not required for those outside of Central District and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conferences, viewing and responding to videos of specific sessions from winter gatherings is required.

### *Fall gatherings*

We gather to worship, learn, and build relationships with each other. All participants work with their mentors to create a **Journey learning covenant**. Other topics addressed during the weekend include **character development**, **spiritual disciplines**, an introduction to **personality inventories**, an introduction to **spiritual direction** and an introduction to the meaning and responsibilities of **baptism**. Fall gatherings are required for all participants and mentors.

### *Winter gatherings\**

We gather again to worship, learn, and build relationships with each other. Participants and pastoral mentors review progress on the **Learning Covenant**. Other topics are also addressed.

\*Attendance is required for participants and mentors from sponsoring conferences. Attendance is **optional** for all others. Videos of specific sessions are required viewing for those not attending.

### **C. Mentors**

All participants are required to have a pastoral mentor. One mentor can serve up to three participants simultaneously. Mentors can be assigned by conference or denominational leaders or nominated by applicants and approved by conference or denominational leaders. In cases where the applicant is not part of a denomination, approval from another suitable official may be arranged.

#### *Identifying a pastoral mentor*

Applicants are asked to identify and approach a qualified potential mentor (see qualifications below). Sponsoring conferences assist in finding mentors for participants from their conferences. Other conference and denominational leaders may also be a resource in identifying suitable mentors. If you would like assistance in identifying a mentor, please contact [churchleadership@ambs.edu](mailto:churchleadership@ambs.edu).

#### *Qualifications of a pastoral mentor*

- Experience as a pastor, church planter, missionary or other relevant role
- Ideally, a seminary degree
- Ready to support applicants through bi-weekly conversations, regular reading of the participant's learning journal, and participation in required annual gatherings. Ability and willingness to read materials online is a plus.
- Recommendation from a conference or denominational official. On your application, you will be asked to provide contact information so that we can solicit a recommendation.
- Ideally, lives in a community within easy driving distance of the participant. Where distance is prohibitive, mentoring conversations can happen by videoconference or phone.

#### *Guidelines for interaction*

On a biweekly basis, the mentor is available to discuss lesson topics, readings, and assignments with the participant. The mentor pays attention to and supports the participant's development as a ministering person. The *Journey Mentoring Handbook* provides additional information and guidance.