



Journey: A Missional Leadership Development Program

This year's Journey program includes 17 participants and 16 mentors in our North American program and 21 participants and eight mentors in our Southeast Asia program. Two participants are from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference: **Rebeca Benavides** (Goshen, Piedra Viva); and **Mariela Sanchez** (Goshen, Piedra Viva). **Deborah Byler** (Goshen, Piedra Viva) serves as mentor to both Rebeca and Mariela.

All Journey students and mentors gathered at Amigo Centre in Sturgis, Michigan, for the fall Weekend Learning Event. Worship times, led by Conference Minister **Joanne Gallardo**, laid the foundation for our time together and took place four times throughout the weekend. Learning sessions focused on spiritual disciplines and character formation for ministry; developing personal timelines, including significant points of spiritual and vocational growth; personality inventories; and exploring spiritual direction. Mentors participated in a mentoring workshop and mentors and mentees met together to develop and update their learning covenants, which help to guide them through the program.

Following the fall gathering, in mid-September, participants joined online missional leadership development classes. 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. In February, participants joined new online classes and continued to meet bi-weekly in mentor-mentee pairs.

The winter Weekend Learning Event was held on the AMBS campus January 26-28, 2024, around the theme, Leadership for God's Reconciling Mission. The weekend included worship sessions, mentor and mentee workshops, and work on learning covenants. During the Sunday morning worship time, mentees in their final year of the program shared a reflection and their conference minister or mentor provided a blessing and prayer.

Twice a year, mentees submit short reflection papers describing their learnings from the previous online class, and mentors submit reflections describing their observations of their mentees' learning and growth. These reflection papers are shared with conference ministers to help conference ministers stay informed of mentees' growth and development in the program.

The Journey Board plays a vital role in shaping and guiding the program. Many thanks to **Joanne Gallardo** for serving on the Journey Board.

Journey participants and alumni frequently tell us that Journey is a tremendous learning opportunity for pastors, lay leaders, church planters, and other emerging leaders! If you want to develop or deepen your ministry gifts or explore a call to ministry, please speak to Joanne Gallardo about whether the Journey program might be the right next step.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jewel Gingerich Longenecker".

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker
Dean of Lifelong Learning