

The *inVocation* Project

Hope College

Hub Activity

In the first half of 2021, we worked with our cohort one congregations to ensure they finished their final programming and activities, which had been delayed during the height of the pandemic. We held small meetings to de-brief on learnings. Some of the participants have continued to sustain their work, and in one case, expand.

Pastor Denise Kingdom-Grier is committed to not only continuing the *Vocation of a Freedom Fighter* program for middle school girls but expanding to other local congregations and a non-profit organization. This summer Pastor Denise organized field trips and cultural immersion experiences to help participants contextualize their reading and discussions.

In the second half of 2021, we focused on recruiting the second cohort of congregations. This effort ebbed and flowed between virtual and in-person meetings, depending on the virus' transmission rates. As churches navigated how to engage calling in light of the pandemic's peaks and valleys, it was challenging at times to secure commitments to participate. Thankfully, we have five solid congregational teams in our third cohort. In 2020, we developed an online, asynchronous learning training program for the second cohort, which we deployed again. Cohort three applications are currently being reviewed, and funding will be issued by year-end.

Point of Discernment

Over the last three and a half years, we have learned a lot by working directly with congregations in our region and empowering them to explore and innovate. We are sensing an opportunity for The *inVocation* Project to partner with our churches to create and offer a program targeting recent college graduates (0-5 years). This year-long program would support calling during this pivotal transition from the university setting to young professional adult.

Report on Congregation Activities

In the summer of 2019, we had the opportunity to meet Pastor Artie and worship at his church, Tabernacle Community, located in Alger Heights, a transitional neighborhood in southeast Grand Rapids. He has faithfully led this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural congregation for more than 30 years. In addition to introducing Tabernacle congregants to embracing God's calling in all areas of their lives, Pastor Artie desires to see other local congregations do the same.

For many years now, Tabernacle has incorporated calling into all aspects of their congregational life, from preaching, teaching, and worship to discipleship. Joining The *inVocation* Project presented a unique opportunity for their congregational team. The big question they were asking was, "What's next?" Through prayer and discussion, they discerned the need to create an opportunity to harness congregants' callings for the common good.

Pastor Andrew Kirschner, Tabernacle's staff liaison for the team, describes what they wrestled with as a team and as their project idea took shape:

We believe we are called to tell the Gospel story through social enterprise. How does a church take their community through a broken and unjust area of society and mobilize them to be redemptive agents through enterprise? How do we see the Fall in present social reality and respond with Christ-like empathy and action? We desire to see God's work of redemption through our obedience to his call to work for redemption and justice.

We landed on the idea of creating a beekeeping social enterprise. The keeping of bees plays an important role in God's creation, provides economic opportunity for marginalized persons, and supports the development of products that are good for humans.

In 2021, Tabernacle launched Good Honey in partnership with The Grand Rapids Nehemiah Projects social entrepreneurship's business program. To date, they have purchased ten hives and have extracted honey from them for the season. The honey is bottled and available for purchase in the community. Here is a [short video](#) to tell the story of Good Honey: Good People, Good Work, Good Earth!