



Certificate in Congregational Spiritual Direction

Forming leaders to nurture thriving, spiritually grounded small congregations.

Program Overview

The Certificate in Congregational Spiritual Direction, offered in partnership with Seminary of the Southwest, is a first-of-its-kind certificate program designed to prepare leaders for the ministry of spiritual direction for congregations. Rooted in seminary-level formation and accessible through Zoom-based learning, this program brings rigorous training to small-church leaders and all who feel called to cultivate spiritual depth in their communities.

Why This Program?

Small congregations are vital centers of faith across the Episcopal Church. Yet many are stretched thin — balancing liturgical excellence, community service, and institutional maintenance with dwindling time, energy, and resources.

The Certificate in Congregational Spiritual Direction offers training in spiritual leadership for groups and congregations. Building on the learnings of our Thriving in Bi-Vocational Congregations (TBVC) initiative, this program equips leaders to embed spiritual direction practices at the heart of congregational life. Participants will learn adaptable tools and practices that turn ordinary decision-making into opportunities for discernment, reflection, and renewal.

A Three-Semester Sequence

Foundations in Spiritual Direction (Zoom-based, 2 semesters)

Offered in conjunction with Seminary of the Southwest's M.A. in Spiritual Direction, this sequence grounds students in the skills of deep listening, embodied hospitality, and the practical aspects of offering spiritual direction.

- Once a week for 90 minutes on Zoom (usually Monday or Wednesday) at 4:00 or 5:45 CST.
- Zoom-based
- Taught by SSW faculty
- Iona and SSW students will take these classes together
- About 2 hours of prep work each week for class
- Written assignments

Summer Intensive at Camp Allen (In-person, 5 days)

A hands-on workshop where students practice tools designed for adaptive, life-giving congregational discernment and spiritual reflection with churches.

- 4-5 days, in person at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas
- Teaching focuses on our toolkit
- Led by Iona staff and spiritual direction team



Congregational Fieldwork Practicum (Zoom-based, 1 semester)

Real-world application in a church or diocesan setting, supported by supervision from a trained congregational spiritual director.

- Iona students only
- Iona students start work with a church in person
- Meet weekly for 1-hour Zoom sessions with Iona peers for peer supervision and coaching
- Practicum is supervised by Iona spiritual directors

Who is eligible to apply and who will get priority?

Priests, deacons, lay leaders, and diocesan canons who work with congregations are all eligible to apply for this certificate program. This program is, ultimately, to help congregations thrive and grow in spiritual vitality. Strong applicants will demonstrate that they are embedded or work directly with bi-vocational congregations.

- Is the applicant from an Iona member diocese?
- Is the applicant embedded in a bi-vocational church? Or do they work with bivocational churches?
- Can the applicant demonstrate that the church or the diocese will allow them to function as a spiritual director for congregations after graduation? This will come in the form of a letter of support from the priest, the vestry or the diocese, depending on the circumstances.

***Note: ** If the slots are not filled with bivocational people from Iona dioceses, we will review applications from everyone else.*

How much will this cost?

The cost for this program is \$2,500. However, because it is grant funded, applicants will be eligible to apply for full or partial scholarships.

People eligible for a full scholarship:

- Lay leaders in bivocational churches in Iona dioceses
- Bivocational priests in Iona dioceses
- Deacons working in bi-vocational churches in Iona dioceses
- Diocesan canons/staff who works with bivocational churches in Iona dioceses

Application Process

- Attend a Q & A Session in October or November 2025 or watch a recording
 - Recording will be posted after November 6, 2025
- Applications open February 2, 2026
- Attend optional Office Hours with Iona staff to assist with application questions (dates TBD)
- Applications due March 12, 2026
- Applicant interviews scheduled for April 2026 (after Easter)
- Applicants will be notified on May 15, 2026