



# 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 the 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.

Eligibility: This program is currently available to participants from dioceses that are members of the Iona Collaborative.

## 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 Bivocational 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)

These courses ground students in the skills of deep listening, embodied hospitality, and the practical aspects of offering spiritual direction.

- Participants can expect a weekly 90-minute Zoom session.
- About 3 hours of prep work each week for class
- Written assignments

### Summer Intensive at Camp Allen (In-person, 4 days)

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

- 4 days, in person at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas
- Teaching focuses on our toolkit
- Led by the Iona staff and the 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.

- Start work with a church in person.
- Meet weekly for 1-hour Zoom sessions with Iona peers for peer supervision and coaching.
- Iona's spiritual director team supervises the practicum.

### **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 intended to help congregations thrive and grow in spiritual vitality. Strong applicants will demonstrate that they are embedded or work directly with bivocational congregations.

- Is the applicant from an Iona member diocese?
- Is the applicant embedded in a bivocational 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? We recognize that every ministry setting is different. In most cases, support is demonstrated through a letter from your priest, vestry, or diocesan leadership, as appropriate to your 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?**

This program is generously supported, in part, by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. The full cost of participation is \$2,500. Full and partial scholarships are available. Additional information about program costs, scholarships, and financial assistance will be discussed during the Q&A session.

### **Application Process**

- Attend a Q&A session in October or November 2026 or watch a recording
  - Recording will be posted after November 5, 2026
- Applications open February 1, 2027
- Applications due April 2, 2027
- Applicant interviews scheduled for the last week of April 2027
- Applicants will be notified on May 14, 2027

Questions? Email Aneya Elbert, Program Manager, at [aneyaelbert@ssw.edu](mailto:aneyaelbert@ssw.edu).