



Iona Collaborative

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.

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.

Who is eligible to apply and who will get priority?

Priests, deacons, lay leaders, diocesan canons, and others who work with congregations are welcome to apply, including people outside The Episcopal Church.

Priority will be given to applicants from Iona Collaborative member dioceses who are embedded in or work directly with bivocational congregations. Applicants should also be able to show that a congregation or diocese will support them in serving as a congregational spiritual director after completing the certificate.

Applicants from other dioceses and denominations are encouraged to apply. If places remain after priority applicants are considered, their applications will be reviewed. Iona dioceses get the preference.

Cost and Scholarships

This program costs \$1500. Full and partial scholarships are available.

Participants from Iona Member Dioceses: You will receive full scholarships.

[Click here](#) to see if your diocese is a member.

Participants from Non-Iona Member Dioceses or other Denominations: You are eligible for a \$1000 scholarship.

Full scholarships available on a case by case basis.



What the Program Involves

Foundations in Spiritual Direction (Zoom-based, 2 semesters) through the Seminary of the Southwest

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

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

- A three-day in-person intensive at Camp Allen in June 2028.
- Teaching focuses on our toolkit
- Led by the Iona staff and the spiritual direction team

Congregational Fieldwork Practicum (Zoom-based, 1 semester in August 2028)

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.

Application Process

- Attend a required Q&A session on Thursday, October 22, at 4:00 p.m. Central Time, or on Thursday, November 5, at 6:30 p.m. Central Time to learn about the certificate and application process.
 - The recording will be posted after November 5, 2026
- Applications open February 1, 2027
- Applications due April 2, 2027
- Applicant interviews are scheduled for the last week of April 2027
- Applicants will be notified on May 14, 2027

Questions? Email Aneya Elbert, Program Manager, at aneya.elbert@ssw.edu.