ADVANCING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP  
CENTER FOR CLERGY EXCELLENCE, TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Advancing Pastoral Leadership is a ministry of the Texas Annual Conference through its Center for Clergy Excellence designed to develop the capacity for strategic congregational leadership by United Methodist pastors. Created out of a deep concern for the mission of the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, the goal of the program is to assist emerging clergy leaders in developing their capacity for fruitful leadership. Over the course of five years, program participants will:

• engage in quarterly retreats for the first two years, followed by semi-annual gatherings for three years;
• complete a variety of assessments that will help provide a robust portrait of individual leadership gifts and challenges;
• study the tasks of leadership and build capacity for strategic and intentional leadership;
• with the help of the congregation, assess and improve their skills for preaching, cultivation of congregational generosity and engagement with the public square;
• enjoy the counsel and support of an executive coach, as appropriate;
• connect with clergy mentors who have a proven record of faithfulness and fruitfulness in ministry;
• cultivate strong peer relationships;
• develop a clear plan for ongoing learning and growth;
• and reflect theologically on the nature of personal and congregational leadership.

With this program, clergy who have 30 years of potential remaining service to the church have the opportunity to develop their capacity for leadership. No where else in the country do United Methodist clergy have an equivalent opportunity both to serve important missional appointments and be guided in an intentional, long-term process of leadership formation and development.

Expectations for Participation  
Thanks to the generous support of Lilly Endowment, Inc., selected applicants will participate in the full program at a substantially reduced cost. Tuition costs cover program materials, accommodations and coaching fees. All instructional costs and program administration are paid through grant funds. Tuition for the program is $2,000 per year plus all travel expenses. Participants from the Texas Annual Conference will receive a 70% scholarship, reducing total tuition to $3,000 plus travel expenses to be paid over the final three years of the program ($1,000 per year for the final three years). Congregational and conference support for these expenses is encouraged and financial assistance will be available in cases of significant need. Because the program makes significant financial and other resource investment in its participants, it is necessary for attendees to make the following commitments:

• pledge to attend all sessions in their entirety for the full length of the program (five years);
• complete all assessments, reading and writing assignments, and coaching and mentoring conversations between sessions;
• maintain an openness to learning and feedback on leadership, preaching and the arts of ministry;
• engage their congregations in their learning and development;
• at the direction of the bishop, serve a missional placement in the annual conference that enhances the opportunity for development;
• and cover their responsibilities at home and to the congregation during program sessions.
Admissions Criteria
The Advancing Pastoral Leadership program is open to all United Methodist clergy who are elders in the South Central Jurisdiction, who have demonstrated excellence and fruitfulness in their ministry, and have at least 30 years of potential remaining service to the church. Cohorts of 15 – 20 leaders will begin the program each year and continue together throughout the five years of the program.

Schedule
The next class of the Advancing Pastoral Excellence program will begin in March of 2021. Retreats for the first two years of the program will be held at Camp Allen Retreat Center in Navasota, Texas. The following retreat dates and topics outline the first two years of Cohort 10 instruction.

March 1-4, 2021      Session I: Embracing God’s Call to Leadership: Understanding Yourself as a Leader
May 17-20, 2021     Session II: Leading Strategically: Guiding a Congregation through Mission and Vision
July 19-22, 2021     Session III: When the Old Ways Don’t Work Anymore: Creativity, Innovation and Leading Change
January 31-February 3, 2022  Session V: Becoming Gospel Storytellers: Preaching that Reaches
May 16-20, 2022      Session VI: Weaving Our Narrative: Preaching and Worship for all God’s People
August 29-Sept 1, 2022  Session VII: Engaging the Mission Field: Ministry in the Public Square
November 14-17, 2022  Session VIII: Money Matters: Stewardship and Growing a Culture of Generosity
Jan 2023 – Aug 2026  Semi-annual Retreat (Dates, Location and topics to be determined by the group during its second year)

To Apply
Potential participants must complete the attached application by October 15, 2020. Following review by an admissions committee, select applicants will be invited to an in-person interview in Houston. Where travel distances are significant, video conference interviews will be considered.

Program Leadership
Participants in Advancing Pastoral Leadership will have the opportunity to learn from a variety of leading pastors and community leaders. Reverend Janice Virtue, leadership consultant and educator, will serve as the program guide. Janice has 15 years of experience designing programs for learning and development for the church’s clergy. A United Methodist elder, Janice is wholly committed to providing willing learners in this program with a variety of experiences designed to foster courageous leadership and wise management within a Christ-centered mission.

For More Information
Contact program assistant Lauren Burnham, at lburnham@txcumc.org.