


Join a 12-month journey to grow as a faithful and effective lay leader


As increasing numbers of congregations become lay-led by choice or necessity, we need leaders equipped to respond to God's call in new and faithful ways. Perhaps you're feeling called to take on more leadership in your congregation, but aren't sure where to start. Maybe you're already leading, but want to deepen your theological foundation and practical skills. That's why we created the School for Lay Ministry—a twelve-month journey where you'll join peers and mentors to learn:

- ✓ How to craft and deliver impactful sermons from biblical interpretation to delivery
 - ✓ Ways to provide effective pastoral care with healthy boundaries
 - ✓ Methods for managing congregational leadership and administration
 - ✓ Practices for deepening your spiritual life and connection with God
- ✓ Skills for engaging Scripture in preaching and teaching
 - ✓ How church history continues to impact the church's present
 - ✓ Tools for managing congregational finances and councils
 - ✓ Ways to navigate spirituality in a digital age


A carefully crafted curriculum
that provides a strong theological foundation for lay leadership




Monthly three-hour calls
with a trained pastor and instructor



Full access to the Faith+Lead membership
while you're in the program



A supportive learning Cohort



Session Schedule

These sessions punctuate each month of on-demand coursework and real-world application, providing a sustaining heartbeat of community and reflection throughout your learning journey. You'll join your cohort and facilitator for three hours each month; and by collaborating and soaking in your new knowledge and skills together, you'll be even more fully equipped to bring them to life in your context!

Session 1: Welcome Get oriented to the school, experience and pray with the community; make spiritual connections, and begin the work for the course. May 17, 2025	Session 6: Provide Care and Practice Boundaries Deepen your trust in how Jesus provides us with care and comfort so that we may provide caring visits, support, and prayer for those in our congregation. By the end of this module you will have a customized spiritual visit guidebook to take with you to hospital calls, home visits, and more. Students will also come away with training around boundaries for ministry. October 11, 2025	Session 10: The Bible Comes Alive Not only will this unit give you a solid theological grounding in what the Bible is, but you will also get insight into the Gospels to assist you further with preaching and teaching in your community. By the end of this unit, your appreciation for the Bible will deepen and further enrich your spiritual life. February 21, 2026
Session 2: You Can Preach! Gain the tools and skills you need to preach faithful sermons. In this unit, you'll discover spiritually nourishing ways to prepare and deliver sermons that will connect and uplift your community. June 21, 2025	Session 7: The Church and God's Mission Dive into how the church is a part of God's mission in the world and how we are all called to join in. From theological basics to strategies for using your building, you'll gain new perspectives and tools to strengthen any community you are a part of. November 15, 2025	Session 11: Journey Through Scripture Equipped and oriented to the Bible from the previous unit, you'll dive into Scripture with a special emphasis on the Gospels and how to connect the Bible to your life today. March 21, 2026
Session 3: Your Spiritual Life Sustains Your Ministry Take the mystery and overwhelm out of how to connect with God and grow in your faith. You'll come away with fresh practices and be renewed in ways that will sustain you for life and leadership in the church and world. July 19, 2026	Session 8: Empowered to Manage Ministry From the challenges of financial management to working with others on councils, lay leaders are called upon to complete all kinds of daily work, weekly, monthly, and even annual work to aid in the running of the church. Discover again or for the very first time how this is holy work and be renewed to serve in the vital day-to-day ministry of the church. December 13, 2025	Session 12: Our Historical Roots Learn about the people in Christian history who risked it all and changed the world! You'll hear stories of how some of the most unexpected of leaders emerged and gain a strong foundation in how Christianity has grown over the years. April 18, 2026
Session 4: Your Gifts Are Needed Stop questioning whether you have spiritual gifts! This unit gives you the biblical basis for spiritual gifts, skills in how to recognize and encourage others in their gifts, and tools to help you use your gifts to serve God and others. August 16, 2025	Session 9: Hope and Encouragement for Small Churches and Rural Ministry Both small congregations and rural settings have been foundational to God's work in the world from the ancient church to now. Yet, smaller communities can struggle without fresh hope and encouragement. Get a new appreciation for your community and use these skills to spread that joy to others. January 17, 2026	Session 13: Faithful Innovation End the School for Lay Ministry on a strong and hopeful note as you are equipped to faithfully innovate and come away with a doable spiritual practice to use in your congregation.The School for Lay Ministry combines online learning, spiritual practices, and supportive community to help you grow as a leader. Each gathering weaves together theological reflection, skill development, and practical application. May 16, 2026
Session 5: You Can Plan Worship—Together By the end of this module, you will be able to build worship services and work with your community to lead them. Use the worship service builder tool to evaluate your services and create new ones. September 13, 2025		

Is This Right For You?

The School for Lay Ministry is for people who sense God calling them into deeper leadership in their congregations.

This journey might be your next faithful step if you:

- ✓ Are taking on increased leadership responsibilities in your congregation
- ✓ Want to deepen your theological understanding while staying practical
- ✓ Feel called to explore new forms of ministry leadership
- ✓ Long to connect with others who are growing as lay leaders

What's Included ?

Dive in to an immersive rhythm of asynchronous learning, life-giving gatherings, and real-world application.

Learn at Your Pace with On-Demand Lessons

- ✓ **Monthly lessons are available on-demand so that you can fit them into your schedule**
 - Access our on-demand lessons at your convenience.
 - Each month, explore the course materials. You'll be engaged by our interactive activities and videos from trusted guides. Each unit includes spiritual practices and ideas you can start using in your community right away.

Embrace Growth as You Serve

- ✓ **Put what you're learning into practice and get support from your cohort**
 - Apply your newfound knowledge to your ministry context.
 - Receive unwavering support from your cohort throughout the year, fostering growth in faith, confidence, and leadership.

Monthly Cohort Meetings

- ✓ **Calls are on Saturdays from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Central Time**
 - Join live monthly meetings to collaborate with your cohort and our experienced facilitator to process online learning and apply insights.
 - Can't make a meeting? No worries! We record each session for later viewing.

Receive a Faith+Lead Certificate

- ✓ **At the conclusion of the School for Lay Ministry, you may receive a Faith+Lead Certificate in Lay Ministry.**

If you are seeking certification, in addition to participating in the program, you will track your learning hours, report on your learning outcomes, and complete a final reflection project.



The Rev. Marianne Ell
Canon of Strategic Mission

Meet Your Instructor

The Rev. Marianne Ell has spent all of her almost 35 years in ministry serving in small and rural congregations, as well as in Chaplaincy positions in both a hospital and a retirement community. Her passion is in developing leaders and equipping them for the ministries to which God is calling them. Rev. Ell enjoys helping communities discover opportunities for mission and exploring possibilities for vitality.

Currently, she serves as the Canon of Strategic Mission. She received her Master of Divinity Degree from The Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, TX, and completed a Masters in Organizational Leadership. Marianne and her husband live on a farm in Wittman, Maryland and have two sons and a daughter. She enjoys the outdoors and living near the water, grilling out with family and friends, traveling, exercising, and mowing grass (because she can see the lines).

Enroll now

at faithlead.org/school-for-lay

Enroll now

Apply for scholarship

This transformative, twelve-month experience is just \$600, paid upfront or in installments!

We hope you'll join us as we respond to God's call in exciting and faithful ways: lead with confidence, with the tools you need and in community.

