



Thriving Bi-Vocational Congregations

A Program of the
Iona Center,
funded by the Lilly
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IONA CENTER

AT SEMINARY OF THE SOUTHWEST

The Iona Center at Seminary of the Southwest promotes *spiritual formation for everyone*. We deliver high-quality theological education to form priests, deacons, lay leaders, and disciples in their local settings. Our resources equip people for service in congregations, workplaces, and all settings where ministry takes place.

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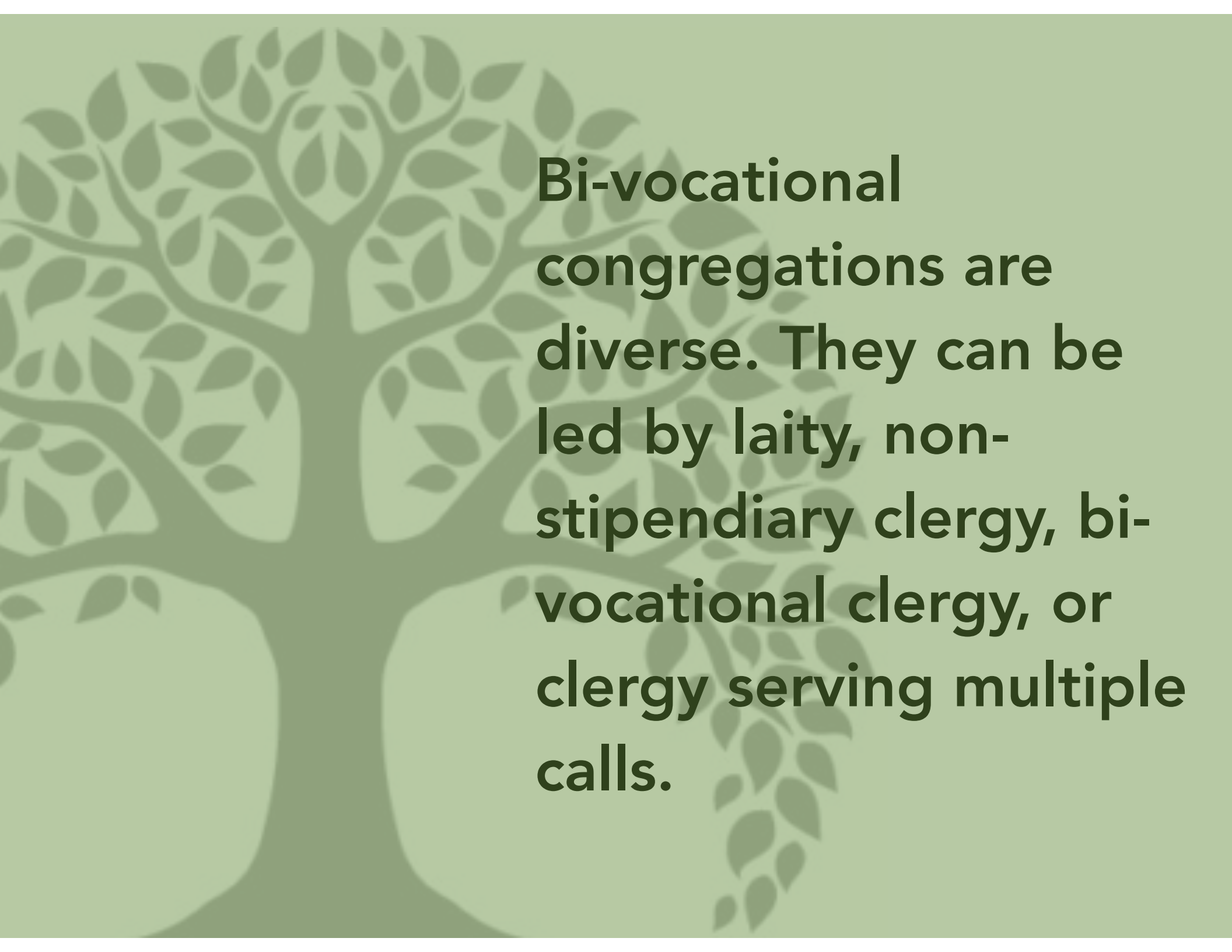
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Bi-vocational congregations are diverse. They can be led by laity, non-stipendiary clergy, bi-vocational clergy, or clergy serving multiple calls.



Bi-vocational congregations are one of the fastest growing segments of the Church (nearly 35% of Episcopal Churches as of 2014).



Our Vision

To resource congregations for models of bi-vocational ministry that serve as prophetic examples to the larger church of active discipleship and ministry as the work of the whole faith community



Learning Module 1

Ekklesia



This module starts at the very beginning, with the earliest Christian understandings of “the assembly” or what we have come to call the “church.” We will explore the rich biblical and theological meanings attached to ekklesia before turning toward our main focus: the enormous potential of today’s bi-vocational churches to faithfully embody early church practices. This latter part of our work together will draw inspiration from Mark Edington’s book, *Bi-vocational: Returning to the Roots of Ministry*. All participants will receive a copy of the book upon admission to the program.

Module 1 includes one homework assignment. Write or create your church’s spiritual autobiography. How did you come to be “bi-vocational?”

Schedule for this Module

June 19, 2021: An afternoon for orientation, to meet your cohort, and to launch the Ekklesia Module.

Late August, 2021: 2 hour Cohort Meeting for Spiritual Autobiography presentations and reflections

Optional Teaching Webinar, date TBD: 1.5 hours of presentation and Q&A. Webinars are optional and open to your entire congregation.





Learning Module 2

Discerning Core Vocations



Every congregation has core vocations or particular ways that God calls it to be channels of grace in its local setting. This module is a set of exercises that will help your congregation discern how God might be calling it to be a vehicle of transformation for both members of the church and for the wider community.

Schedule for this Module

Late September 2021: 2 hour Cohort Meeting

Check-in Meetings as needed (individually, not as a cohort)

Early December 2021: 2-hour Cohort Meeting to conclude the module

Optional Teaching Webinar, date TBD, 1.5 hours of presentation and Q&A. Webinars are optional and open to your entire congregation.





Learning Module 3

Communal Spiritual Practices

Spiritual practices are what help us grow in wisdom and Christian maturity. Additionally, they are tools for the continuing work of discerning our vocations. Thriving congregations need to reflect regularly on scripture together in order to grow in Christlikeness, both individually and as a congregation. This module will teach two small group practices that your church can use with pre-existing groups (like the vestry) or at times when you already gather (like Sunday mornings or Wednesday evenings).

Schedule for this Module

Early February 2022: 2-hour Cohort Meeting to learn the first practice


Check-in Meetings as needed (individually, not as a cohort)

Early May 2022: 2-hour Cohort Meeting to learn the second practice

Check-in Meetings as needed (individually, not as a cohort)


Optional Teaching Webinar: date TBD, 1.5 hours of presentation and Q&A. Webinars are optional and open to your entire congregation.





Learning Module 4

Called to Transformation



After discerning your core vocations and doing the spiritual work of discernment through small group spiritual practices, it is natural for Thriving Congregations to look outward into the community to see where God is at work and join the movement. This last module involves learning some core practices through Called to Transformation, the Episcopal Church's way of teaching Asset Based Community Development. Your church will choose a project to undertake together. This module might include a site visit as well as regular check-in meetings.

Schedule for this Module (TBD)

- An in-person gathering in Fall 2022
- 7-9 months of congregation work with check-in meetings
- 1-2 cohort meetings
- Optional Webinar



The title is centered and flanked by stylized green leaves. On the left, there are three leaves of varying sizes. On the right, there are two larger leaves, one above the other, partially overlapping the text.

TBVC Learning Communities

- 9-12 churches divided into 3 cohorts
- Diocesan reps in their own cohort
- Workshop-focused Zoom sessions on four learning modules
- 1-on-1 mentoring for each church



Engaging with
the Community

Discernment

Life-Giving
Spiritual
Practices

A decorative graphic of several green leaves in various shades, positioned around the top and left sides of the slide. One large leaf is on the right, and a cluster of three smaller leaves is on the left.

Next Steps

- Apply by April 16
- View the application on our website:
<http://iona.ssw.edu/thriving-bi-vocational-congregations/>
- Involve your congregation in the process as much as possible
- Feel free to reach out with questions