

Certificate in Lifelong Christian Formation



**PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT
& DIOCESAN PILOT
IMPACT REPORT**





The Certificate in Lifelong Christian Formation is a program of Forma and Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS)

The Certificate in Lifelong Christian Formation strengthens the skills, confidence, and impact of formation professionals in the Episcopal Church through a comprehensive learning experience designed to help leaders flourish. The program equips participants to understand and support Christian formation across the entire lifespan — attending to the spiritual, educational, and developmental needs of children, youth, adults, and elders — and treats formation as the holistic shaping of Christian identity, practice, and vocation through Scripture, worship, community, learning, and service.

Participants engage material that is academically rigorous and immediately applicable, with the flexibility to tailor their learning to their own goals, gifts, and areas for growth. Each participant's ministry context — whether a parish, school, camp, diocesan office, or community-based setting — becomes the grounding place for their work in the program. By exploring the unique culture, needs, resources, and opportunities of their environment, participants develop practical, relevant strategies that serve the communities they lead and that deepen the formation work they do every day.

The certificate is completed over the course of an academic year and is taught by both VTS faculty and seasoned practitioners from the field. Because learning is best done in community, the program combines monthly online synchronous gatherings, self-paced asynchronous coursework, and a five-day onsite residency at VTS — a blend designed to support a sustainable rhythm of study while honoring the realities of ministry life. Throughout the year, participants are accompanied by a program facilitator, a mentor in the field of formation, and a spiritual director, and they integrate their learning through a Ministry Context Project and a culminating Capstone Project addressing a real challenge in their ministry.

2025 COHORT OVERVIEW

Ten participants from seven dioceses spanning the United States and one Anglican diocese in Canada, drawn predominantly from lay formation leaders, with a wide spread of age, experience, and parish size. The pool is unusually shaped by career-changers and bivocational practitioners: nearly half are first-time formation leaders, several are stepping into formation work after long careers in education, business, or recovery, and a smaller group of veterans with 19–27 years of experience is seeking renewal after long tenures in a single context.



Emerging Themes from the Participants Personal Statements

Reading across the personal statements, several patterns surface in how applicants describe Christian formation, why they are seeking the Certificate now, and what they hope it will give them.

Formation as a lifelong, daily, relational practice

Eight of ten participants explicitly frame formation as a lifelong, ongoing, or never-finished journey. The dominant emphasis is relational and embodied rather than curricular: formation happens "daily," "through faithful living," "in community," in "simple moments over a cup of coffee," in homes, in worship, and in service. Several participants explicitly draw a distinction between conversion as a one-time event and formation as an open-ended journey, and intergenerational language recurs throughout (eight of ten list intergenerational ministry as part of their portfolio).

A cohort shaped by career-changers and second-career practitioners

Five of ten participants are stepping into formation ministry from substantial careers in other fields: 20+ years in early childhood education, 27 years as a public-school teacher, decades in business and organizational development, 12 years of recovery work, and a long classroom teaching tenure now opening into ministry leadership. Four participants identify the current role as their first formation context. Several explicitly describe "surrendering" to a call after years of resisting it, or being raised up internally by a clergy mentor who saw the gift before they did.

Personal transformation as the bedrock of vocational call

Where the 2024 cohort tended to frame call professionally, this pool roots vocation more often in named, biographical transformation. Statements include 12 years of continuous recovery as the spiritual foundation for lay preaching; a pilgrimage to Iona that "forever changed" one applicant's sense of the Holy Spirit; a former agnostic who describes surrendering her mind to her heart; the death of a dyslexic-friendly congregation as a lesson in watching for the marginalized; and a multi-generational lineage of Lutheran faith inherited from a grandmother. Personal story is treated as both credential and curriculum.

Lay leaders building volunteer management and leadership confidence

Eight of ten participants are lay, and several name a specific gap between content expertise and the practical leadership of adult and teen volunteers. Others name leading committees, recruiting volunteers, empowering rather than ruling, and building sustainable systems as growth edges. One participant in this cohort raises the parallel concern, wanting to learn adult learning styles, having been formed primarily in pastoral and youth contexts.

Bilingual, multicultural, and underserved-community ministry

Two participants serve in primarily Spanish-speaking congregations with recent-immigrant populations and identify culturally relevant discipleship as a core growth need. A third participant in Anglican Canada names intercultural ministry as an explicit area of growth. A fourth participant's parish is a five-year-old church plant in a rural, largely unchurched community. Together, these four applicants represent ministry contexts that fall outside the standard suburban-program-parish model and bring distinctive needs into the cohort.

Veterans seeking refresh after long tenure

Three participants bring many years of formation ministry leadership. Their statements share a common note: a hunger for new perspectives, new wisdom, and new content after long tenure in a single congregation or vocational context. One veteran of 19 years at the same parish frames the program as a refresh that "might feed the congregation for the next 20 years."

Specific parish realities driving the application

Participants name very particular contextual challenges: building formation in a brand-new rural church plant; serving a bilingual congregation of recent immigrants; expanding a small Anglican Canadian parish into intercultural ministry; growing young families in a Gulf Coast parish where the children's pipeline is thin; building intellectual depth into youth confirmation; transitioning from classroom teacher to volunteer manager; and refreshing formation leadership. The Certificate is being treated as a way to close specific, named gaps rather than as a generic credential.

ALICE ANN FERGUSON



Children and Families' Minister

St. Christopher Episcopal Church, Pensacola, Florida

Ministry Context & Vocation

Alice Ann is in her inaugural year as Children and Families' Minister in Pensacola, Florida, following a 27-year career as a public school teacher. She brings that long experience with children directly into her parish's Godly Play program, which has grown from roughly 10 to 25 children under her leadership. She has stepped into this role at a tender moment for her congregation: the parish is in what she describes as a season of "active grief," having lost both its Associate Rector and Head Rector in close succession and now in the midst of a search for new clergy leadership. Her ministry theme this year, "BE KIND", reflects her conviction that children's formation begins with the simplest, most durable truths.

Bridging the Gap: Forming a Transitional Faith Community for 5th–7th Grade Students

Alice Ann's capstone proposes "The Bridgers" (also called Jr. EYC), a hybrid Sunday-school-and-youth-group ministry designed for the often-overlooked transition years between children's and youth ministry. The model would gather monthly, plus quarterly fellowship events, weaving together belonging, Scripture and story (drawing on Godly Play and StoryMakers), guided discussion, and contemplative prayer practices such as Lectio Divina, Compline, and prayer stations. Her implementation plan moves through phases of visioning, development, launch, an immersive overnight gathering in its second year (potentially at Camp Beckwith), and ongoing evaluation grounded in the theology of baptismal identity and the Book of Common Prayer's call to "continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship." Alongside the capstone, Alice Ann is also building a volunteer training packet for her parish and organizing a diocese-wide gathering for children's, youth, and family ministry leaders — a network her diocese currently lacks.

DIANA TURNER



Canon for Intergenerational Ministry ***Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Reno, Nevada***

Ministry Context & Vocation

Diana recently arrived at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Reno, Nevada, as Canon and Vicar for Intergenerational Ministry, where she now oversees Sunday School and a growing constellation of new ministry groups — including a journaling group, a veterans' group, an estranged-family support group, and a grief group. She has stepped into a complex environment: the cathedral's four worship services function largely as four separate communities, and as a newcomer she is learning to navigate parishioners who sometimes test whether long-settled decisions of the Dean might be revisited through her. For Diana, this call represents something like a homecoming — a journey that has brought her, as she puts it, "full circle" back into the Episcopal Church she first knew.

Seeing the Bible Through a Child's Eyes

Diana's capstone proposes a series of monthly intergenerational workshops in which children and youth, trained in Godly Play-style storytelling and "wondering questions", lead the whole cathedral community, across all four of its separate worship services, in shared encounters with Scripture. Her strategy includes hosting these intergenerational "Scripture-Wondering" events, deliberately empowering children as leaders rather than passive recipients, recruiting "Intergenerational Ministry Champions" from each service to help carry the vision forward, and building in checkpoints to evaluate and adapt as the work unfolds. At its heart, the project is Diana's answer to the disconnection she observed on arrival: an invitation for Trinity's four communities to discover, through the eyes of its youngest members, that they are in fact one body.

JENA BALDRIDGE



Director of Family Ministries

St. Nicholas Hill Country Episcopal Church, Bulverde, Texas

Ministry Context & Vocation

Jena serves as Director of Family Ministries at St. Nicholas Hill Country Episcopal Church, a five-and-a-half-year-old church plant — founded, fittingly, in a former bar and grill — that has recently been recognized as a Mission. She moved from volunteer to one of the congregation's two full-time staff members, a transition that has required her to learn new skills in equipping and empowering other volunteers rather than doing everything herself (a lesson she illustrates with a story about sharing a single popsicle with a volunteer in the park). Under her leadership, the parish's Vacation Bible School has grown from 55 to 97 children.

The Liturgy Library

Jena's capstone documents the creation of a "Liturgy Library" — a curated worship-space wall, built together with her husband Scott — that addresses a real challenge in her congregation's life: its Pray-Ground area was being treated as a playground rather than a place of worship, in a community where roughly 40 percent of attendees are unchurched and lack models for what worshipful engagement looks like, especially after the disruptions of the pandemic. The Liturgy Library brings together cloths marking the liturgical seasons, electric candles, a linear liturgical calendar, and an array of sensory and inclusion tools — earmuffs, fidget items, labyrinths, bubble timers — alongside a mirror that reads "Beloved Child of God." The project drew on cohort modules in liturgy, learning theory, disability awareness, and team-building, and was inspired in part by a social-media post from fellow Forma member Jenna Caldwell Campbell. Jena is now seeing more worshipful engagement in that space, is writing an article to help families understand the "why" behind it, and — with Scott's help again — is planning to build a replica baptismal font for the area. She is grateful to her rector, Beth Wyndham, for approving the project.

JOHN GRIFFING



Licensed Lay Worship Leader & Preacher
St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church, Gulf Breeze, Florida

Ministry Context & Vocation

John serves as a Licensed Lay Worship Leader and Preacher at St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church in Gulf Breeze, Florida — a small congregation (about 70 in average attendance, with an average age over 70) on a fixed income — and also as President of his diocese's Standing Committee. He preaches roughly once a month and has delivered some 70 sermons since being licensed, all without ever accepting the customary stipend. For twelve years he has co-led his parish's Lenten Taizé services with his wife, Cathy. He calls himself "a deacon without the collar," a phrase that reflects both his sense of vocation and a personal history that includes witnessing racial injustice as a nine-year-old in Jackson, Mississippi, and finding his way back to faith through the second and third steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. He names his ongoing challenge plainly: how does a preacher speak prophetically, in a deeply polarized moment, without alienating the very people he is called to shepherd?

The Path Ahead: Spirituality and Purpose in Later Life

John's capstone proposes a coalition between St. Francis, the Gulf Breeze Senior Center (an organization of more than 850 members founded by Kim Girylyuk, LCSW), and Pensacola Mental Health Services to offer specialized spiritual direction for senior adults. John will complete facilitator training through the Seabury Resources for Aging program — a partnership with the Diocese of Washington — in October 2026, with Kim Girylyuk serving as his supervisor and mentor, and plans to launch a six-session "Path Ahead" program in spring 2027. The project has not yet begun in earnest, but John has already mapped out a full timeline and is drawing on a lifetime of reading — Merton, Rohr, C. S. Lewis, and others — and on his own decades of walking alongside people in recovery, to shape a ministry that helps older adults find renewed purpose and spiritual grounding in life's later chapters.

JOSIE NUNEZ



Youth and Children's Formation Minister
San Romero Episcopal Church, Houston, Texas

Ministry Context & Vocation

Josie serves as Youth and Children's Formation Minister at San Romero Episcopal Church, a Spanish-speaking congregation of about 194 members in Houston, founded in 2017 by the Rev. Uriel Lopez. She brings a deeply personal perspective to this work: the daughter of Mexican immigrants, she grew up translating documents for her parents by age nine and did not learn English until the fifth grade, and she found her own way into the Episcopal Church not through any program built for her, but because someone noticed her and made room. That conviction, that the church must intentionally make space for young people living between two languages and two worlds, now shapes everything she does with San Romero's youth, who speak Spanish at home and English at school, often more comfortably than their parents speak English.

Noche Juvenil: A Contextual Model for Latino Youth Formation

Josie's capstone documents the creation of Noche Juvenil ("Youth Night"), a monthly gathering held the last Friday of every month, designed "not about delivering a program but about creating a home." Rotating through three formats — creative nights, community-and-service nights, and guided conversations on topics — the gatherings have drawn youth back month after month and, more strikingly, have led them to invite their friends without being asked: this year twelve young people are attending summer camp, seven returning and five new. Josie recalls one young person telling her quietly, "I did not know the church cared about things like this," and another asking to pray for a peer — small moments she sees as evidence that "formation had moved outward." The ministry also welcomed 25 children to its second annual Vacation Bible School, with deeper engagement from parents than in its first year. Looking ahead, Josie hopes to expand communication with families in Spanish and grow the circle of adult volunteers, so the ministry's future depends on more than just one person.

KELLY BAETZ



Incumbent (Rector) & Archdeacon for Muskoka ***All Saints Anglican Church, Huntsville, Ontario***

Ministry Context & Vocation

Kelly is the Incumbent of All Saints Anglican Church in Huntsville, Ontario, the only Anglican parish in its small "cottage country" town, and also serves as Archdeacon for Muskoka. Now in her sixth year at All Saints and nineteenth year of ordained ministry, she has watched her parish weather real financial strain: as of July 1, 2025, her own paid ministry hours were reduced from full-time to 60 percent, and the parish office is now staffed only three hours a week. And yet, she says, the congregation continues to show real signs of life, a place quietly raising up new ministry and leadership even amid decline.

Increasing the Number and Types of Bible Study Groups in the Parish

Kelly's capstone tackles a question she sees as central to her parish's future: how can a congregation sustain, and even grow, its discipleship life when it is "staffed for decline rather than for flourishing"? Believing that small-group Bible study is essential to forming faithful, resilient communities, she gathered five parishioners for a series of three discernment sessions she called the "Think TAnk" (with the capital A standing for "action"). Together grounded in prayer, listening, and Scripture, the group crafted a shared "desired outcome statement": to grow "a number of discipleship-based groups... that are vibrant, resourced, and spiritually healthy, so that, as we grow in the knowledge of God's love, we will be better equipped to share God's love." Since sharing that vision with the wider parish, three new people have stepped forward to join a group, two members of the original team have offered to be trained as group leaders, and one has already launched a new monthly discussion group for teenagers. Kelly expects the number of active groups at All Saints to double by fall.

LORENA LUNA



Confirmation Teacher

St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Pasadena, Texas

Ministry Context & Vocation

Lorena serves on the confirmation teaching team at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Pasadena, Texas, a predominantly Hispanic congregation where she herself grew up. After stepping away from the church for over a decade, she returned to her "mother church" and now teaches roughly 25 youth between the ages of 12 and 18 — mostly in English, even though many of their families worship primarily in Spanish. As a 31-year-old without children, she also recognizes a gap in her own life: like many young adults at St. Peter's, she has sometimes struggled to find her place among the congregation's adults, a tension she connects to the cultural distance between generations raised in different countries. That lived experience, on both sides of the generational divide, shapes how she approaches her ministry with young people.

Building a Youth and Young Adult Ministry at St. Peter's

Lorena's capstone names a gap she has observed firsthand: once young people complete confirmation, St. Peter's has no structured space to keep forming them in faith, and many simply drift away. Her project envisions establishing both a sustained post-confirmation youth group and a young adults' group — bridged by mentorship between the two — offering ongoing Bible study, honest conversation, retreats, service projects, and peer-led events. She points to a recent youth outing to a local arcade, and to a regional Youth Worship Night the group attended in October 2025, as evidence of how much young people respond when they are given real ownership of their experiences. Her plan calls for building a small leadership team, starting with a monthly youth night, and continually checking in with the youth themselves to ask, "What is God inviting us to do here?" She has not yet formally launched the ministry; her next step is to bring the vision to her rector and church council.

WENDY DRAKE-SCHNEIDER



Lay Leader

Diocese of Newark, New Jersey

Ministry Context & Vocation

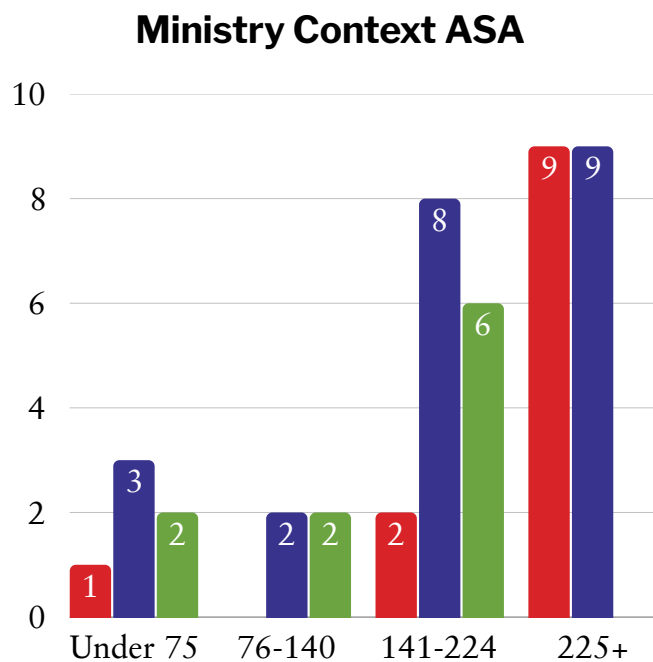
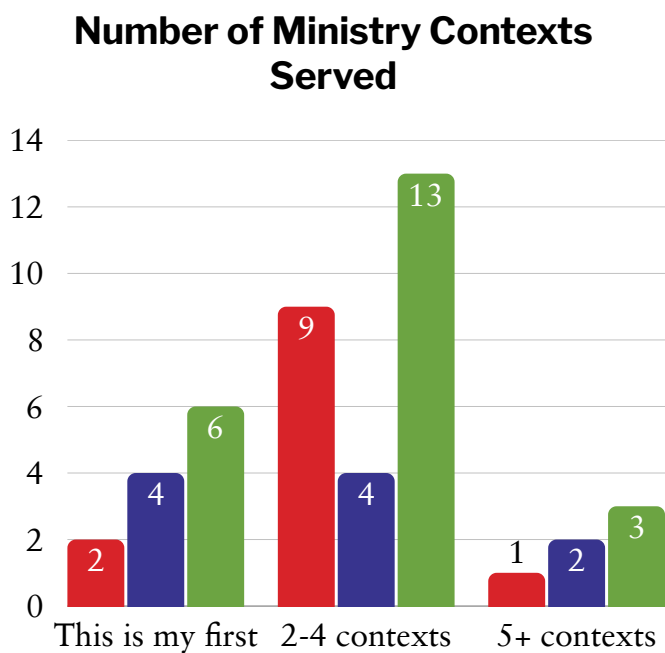
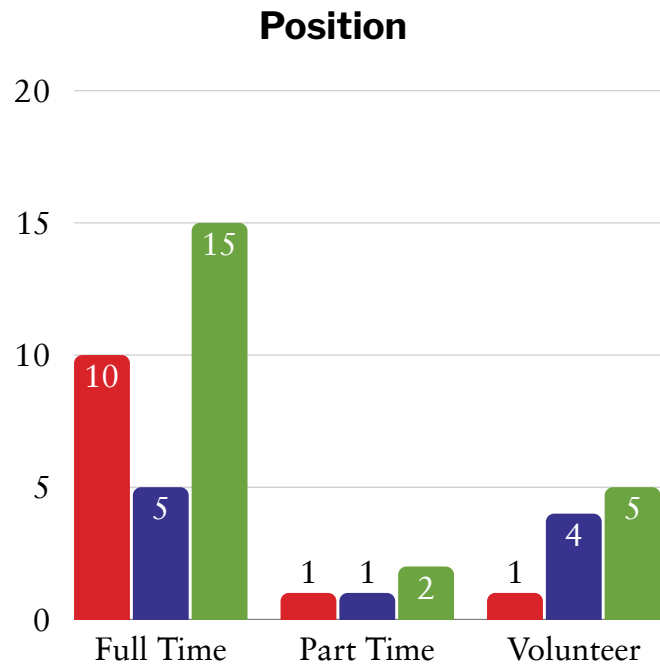
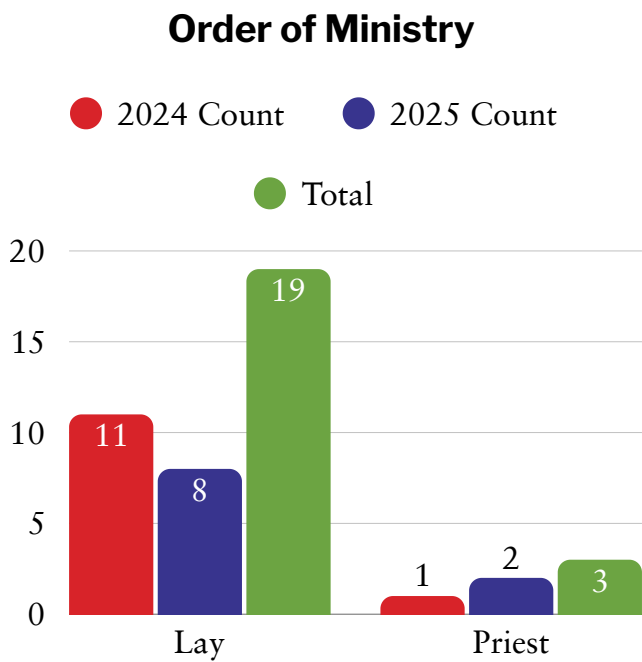
Wendy has served as a lay leader in the Diocese of Newark for more than 25 years, currently dividing her time between St. Luke's Church in Montclair and St. Agnes Church in Little Falls. That in-between place is itself part of her calling: she is in active discernment about where God is asking her to put down roots, and she has come to see her gifts not as tied to a single parish but as portable — a conviction she grounds in Paul's image of the body in Romans 12:4–8, where every member's gifts serve the whole. A central part of her growth in this season has been learning to say "no," recognizing that protecting her capacity for the work God has given her is itself a faithful act.

A Lunchtime Bible Study on the New Testament's Lesser-Read Books

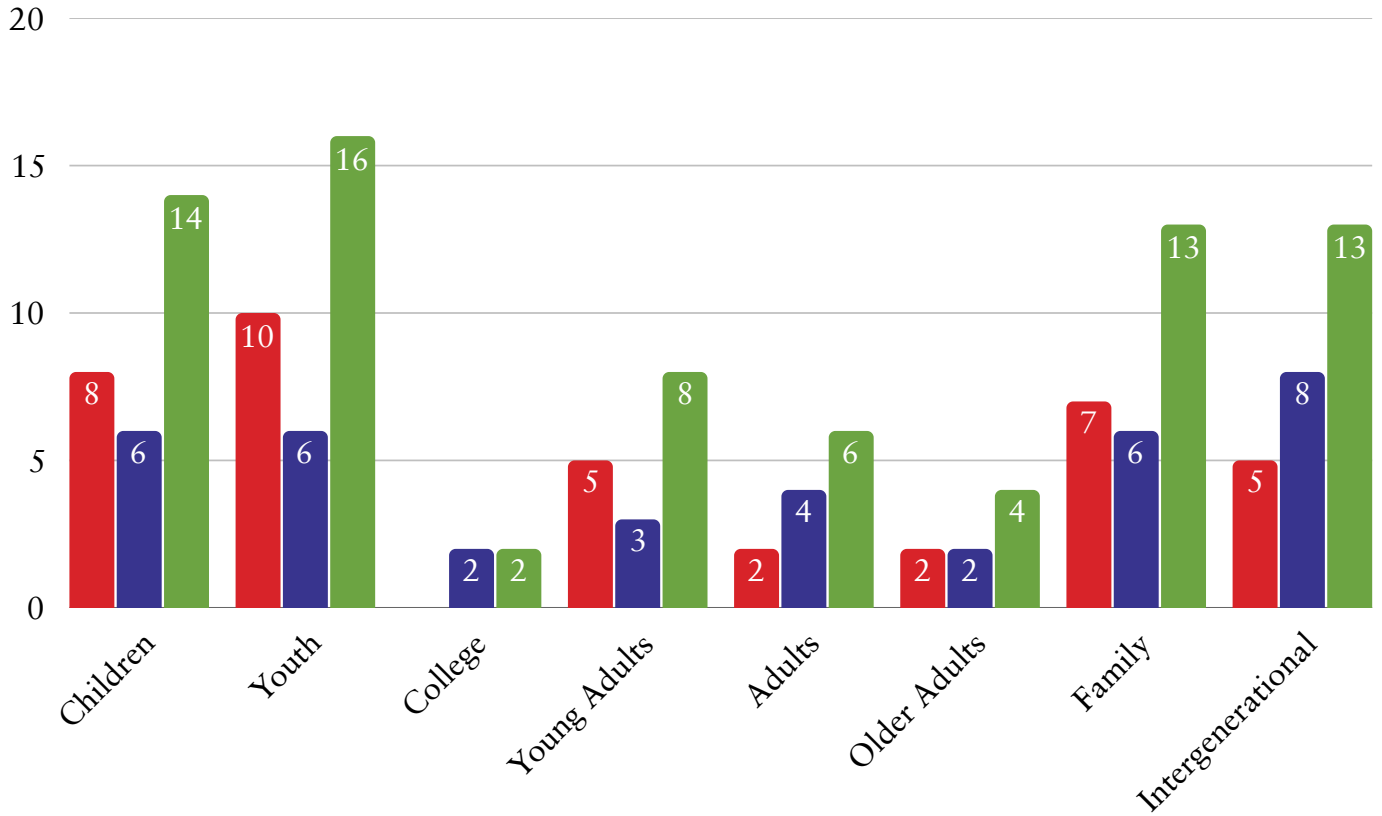
Wendy's capstone proposes a seven-week lunchtime Bible study pairing the practice of Noontday Prayer with the study of often-overlooked New Testament books — James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Jude. Designed initially with Generation X in mind, a generation she sees as underserved by typical parish programming, the study is built to be flexible and intergenerational. She has explored offering it at the Newark diocesan cathedral, currently without settled clergy but rich in weekday foot traffic. Though not yet formally launched, Wendy has had encouraging conversations with clergy and lay leaders, and has learned — partly by noticing stronger attendance at diocesan studies offered over Zoom — that flexibility and hybrid formats may matter as much as content. Her next step is to begin informally, with friends who have already expressed interest, trusting in God's timing and in Scripture's promise of being "living and active."

COHORT DEMOGRAPHICS

We began our pilot program with 10 participants in the cohort. By the completion of the program year we granted certificates to 8 cohort members. Two of the cohort members who began the program with us withdrew from the program before completion, both due to competing demands in their work life.

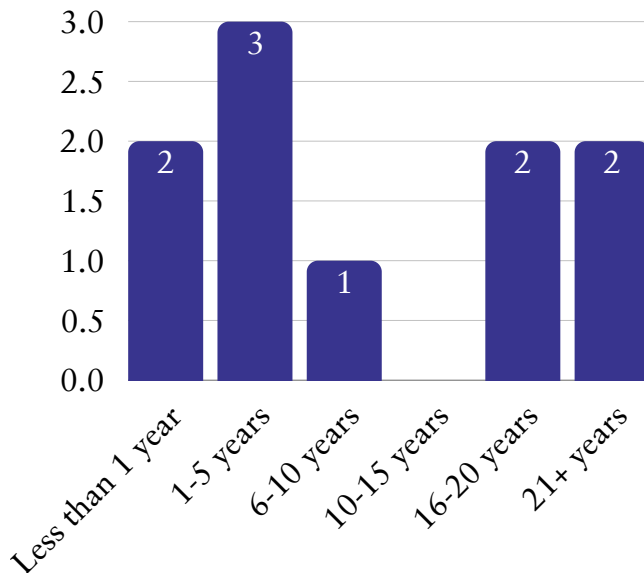


Area of Ministry Responsibility

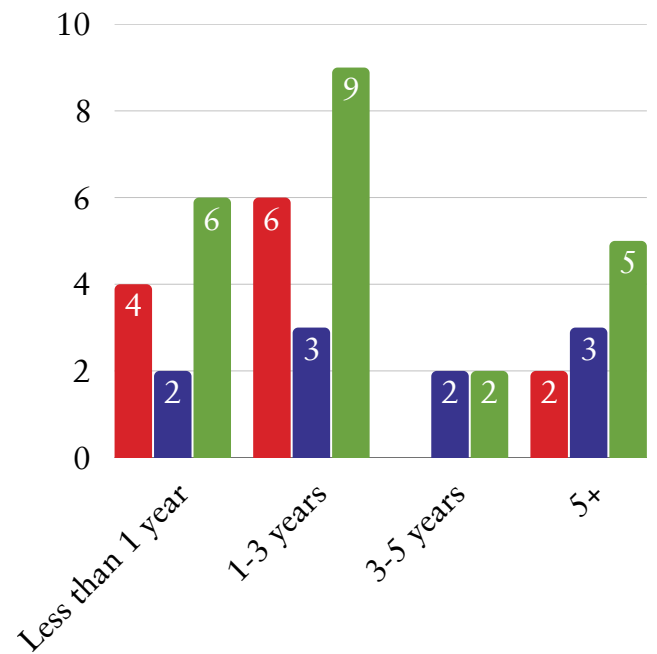


Total years of ministry leadership experience

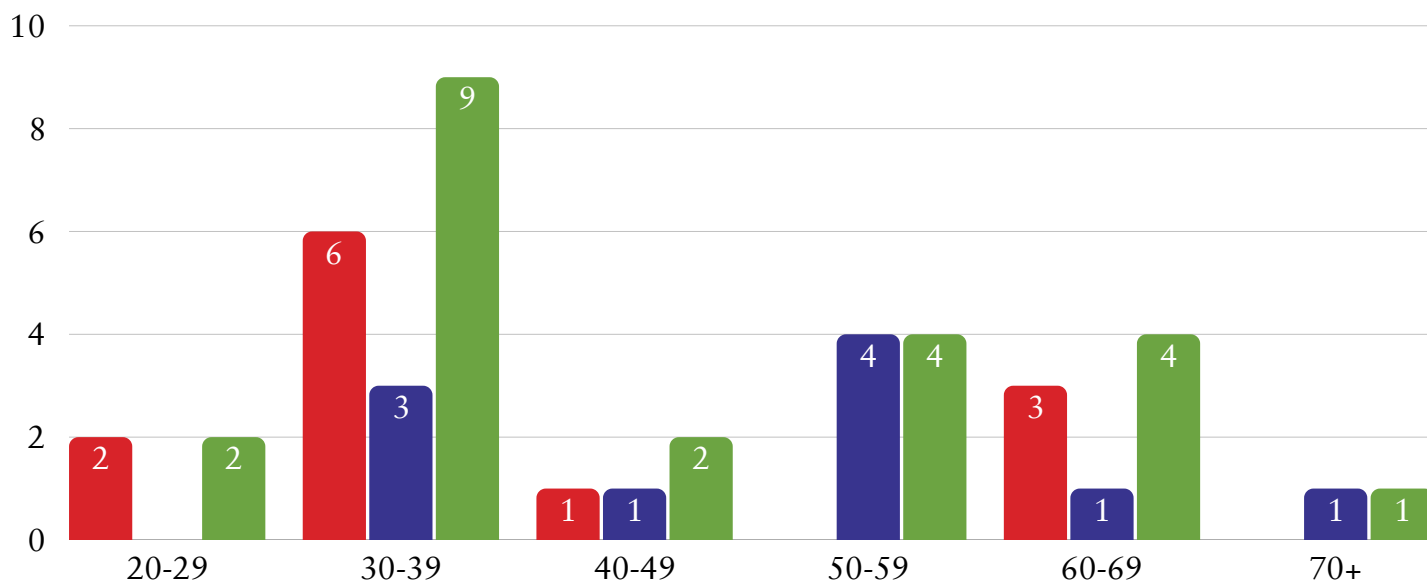
2024 form did not collect this field, so no comparison is possible.



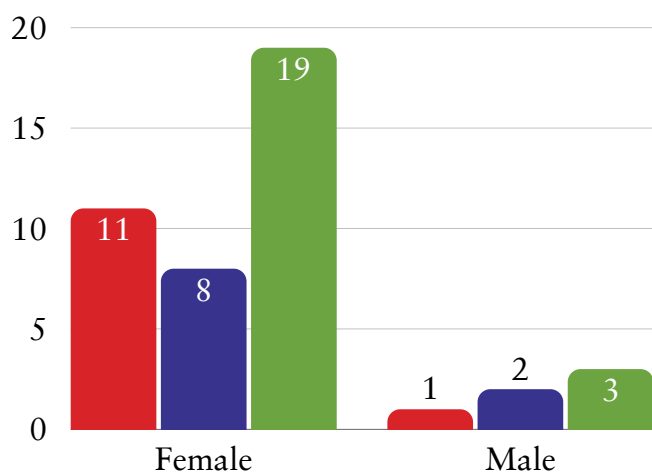
Years in current ministry position



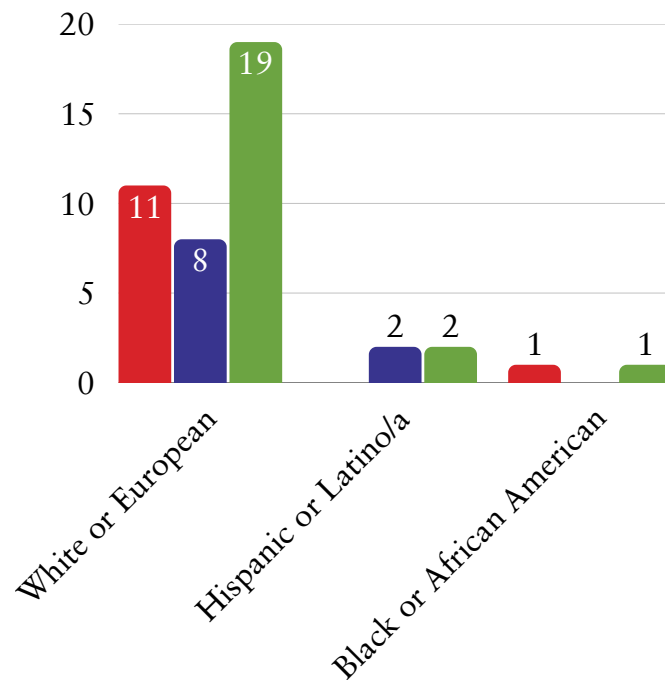
Age



Gender



Race



Dioceses Represented

2024 Cohort

East Tennessee
Los Angeles
New York
North Carolina
South Carolina

Upper South Carolina
Virgin Islands
Virginia
Washington (DC)
Connecticut

2025 Cohort

West Texas
Texas
Algoma (Anglican Canada)
Central Gulf Coast
Nevada

Newark
Texas
Central Gulf Coast
East Tennessee
Alabama

DIOCESAN MODEL DEVELOPMENT & OTHER INITIATIVES

Over the past year, Forma has been developing and piloting a regional facilitation model that enables dioceses and other regional groups to license the Certificate in Lifelong Christian Formation curriculum for implementation at the local level. In our first pilot, the Diocese of Atlanta partnered with Forma to test this model and contribute to framework development, running the program through their diocesan office with facilitation led independently by the diocese. In 2026, the Diocese of Texas is undertaking a similar pilot, operating through their school for ministry and integrating the Certificate with their lay licensing program. The Diocese of Texas pilot is also opening a conversation about the possibility of developing a Spanish-language iteration of the curriculum, an expansion that could significantly broaden the reach and accessibility of the program.

This year, Forma is formalizing the infrastructure necessary to expand this model more broadly — including licensing and fee structures, a diocesan facilitator's guide, implementation timelines, and operational support resources.

Looking ahead, we anticipate opening the regional licensing model for adoption by additional dioceses beginning in 2027. Our aim is to increase accessibility for those serving in part-time or volunteer formation ministry roles and for contexts with limited continuing education funding, while catalyzing strong, sustainable formation ministry within regions and dioceses across the church.



AREAS OF STRENGTH & GROWTH FOR CONTINUED PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The required post-residency modules (Intercultural Competency, Ministry with LGBTQ Folks, Disability 101) were the lowest-rated component of the program for both learning and applicability. Several issues surfaced: one respondent didn't realize they were required until close to the deadline; another felt the tone was didactic toward people with lived experience; a third suggested the set of modules could be expanded.

Participants want more connection between the synchronous touchpoints, not just within them. This was the most frequently repeated piece of developmental feedback, appearing in some form from at least four respondents. Suggestions included optional "round table" sessions, regional in-person gatherings, more check-ins between monthly meetings, and a longer (or twice-held) residency.

Clarity and sequencing of the Ministry Context Project needs strengthening at the front end. Multiple respondents reported confusion about what was expected and how the project related to the required modules. Suggested fixes included a written template, earlier guidance, and more structured opportunities to share work-in-progress with peers rather than only at the end.

Some content felt oriented toward a narrower slice of the cohort than the group actually represented. A lay, non-salaried respondent noted that residency discussions skewed toward paid youth/family ministry staff and found these discussions interesting, but not useful, while requesting more content applicable to volunteer and lay leadership roles.

Mentor matching could benefit from more participant input. While most mentor relationships were rated highly, two respondents flagged friction: one struggled to connect due to scheduling conflicts on both sides, and another suggested asking the cohort what qualities they'd value in a mentor before assignments are made.

Format preferences for asynchronous content vary and could be better accommodated. A recurring, smaller note: some participants are stronger readers than listeners and found certain audio/video modules challenging, suggesting that offering transcripts or written alternatives alongside recorded content could broaden accessibility.

Setting accurate expectations from the start. One respondent noted a gap between the program description encountered during the application process and the lived experience once the program began, worth a look to ensure marketing and onboarding materials stay aligned with the current program design.

NAMED AREAS OF STRENGTH GATHERED PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Community and peer relationships were the defining strength of the program. This theme dominated the open-ended responses more than any other. Respondents repeatedly named the cohort itself, not any single module, as the most valuable part of their experience: "the greatest gift of this program has been the learning community," "meeting and talking with the others in my cohort group... so encouraging," "knowing I am not alone." The on-site residency scored among the highest-rated components.

The Ministry Context Project and Capstone Project were standout culminating experiences. Both rated 4.29/5 for meaningfulness, and respondents described them as the place where theological learning, personal context, and ministry practice came together. One respondent wrote that the Ministry Context Project "helped me recognize and name things God has already been doing in my ministry context," and another that the Capstone "brought everything together."

One-on-one formational relationships (mentors, spiritual directors, and facilitator advisors) landed as deeply valuable for most participants. Spiritual direction was the highest-rated of the three, with one respondent calling their director "a saint" who gently opened them to a practice they'd resisted. Mentor relationships and facilitator advising drew similarly warm comments — "I gained a big sister in ministry," "honesty and insight that I didn't have."

Monthly Zoom sessions and program content were consistently well-received across every session from August through May. December's "Sustaining Leadership & Preventing Burnout" session was singled out by name as especially valuable — "compassionate, practical guidance... it gave me language and tools to think about leading in ways that feel healthy and sustainable."

Overall satisfaction was strong. The elective modules were the single highest-rated component of the entire program for relevance to ministry context. The orientation and pre-residency asynchronous content were also well received, setting a welcoming tone — "any feelings of intimidation/nervousness melted pretty quickly."

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS

All quotes are from the 2025–26 program evaluation survey.

On Overall Program Value

"This program helped me recognize and name things God has already been doing in my ministry context. I leave this program feeling more encouraged, more confident, and more connected to the wider Church."

"It has been a wonderful experience, challenging, but I have grown so much over the past year because of this program!"

"This program offers a thoughtful and supportive place to grow in ministry. The learning is meaningful, but just as important is the sense of community that forms along the way. You're encouraged, challenged, and accompanied by both faculty and peers, and you come away with tools and confidence you can bring directly into your congregation."

On Community and Belonging

"For me, the greatest gift of this program has been the learning community. Being formed with other leaders — listening, sharing, and supporting one another — has deeply influenced my ministry. It's been a beautiful reminder that leadership is something we practice in relationship, not on our own."

"The most valuable part of this program has been learning how to connect theology with real-life ministry contexts... The relationships, conversations, and reflections throughout the program also reminded me that ministry is not meant to be done alone."

On the On-Site Residency

"What I appreciated most about the on-site residency was the sense of community and connection it created. After engaging online for so long, being able to gather in person with people from different ministry contexts was incredibly meaningful and energizing."

"In the beginning I couldn't see how we were going to mesh together, we all come from such different backgrounds and contexts! But being together was such a rich experience."

"Being side by side — learning together, sharing meals, and getting to know one another in a deeper way — was incredibly special. Those days helped us build a sense of connection that will stay with me long after the program."

On the Ministry Context Project

"The project helped me connect the different modules together in a way that felt meaningful and applicable... It encouraged me to pay closer attention to where God is already moving within the community instead of feeling pressure to create something entirely new."

"Having a structured way to reflect on my community — its strengths, its needs, and the places where God is already at work — was incredibly helpful. The project encouraged me to step back, listen more deeply, and see my ministry with fresh eyes."

On the Capstone Project

"The Capstone Project is a culmination of the program's learning experience."

"The process felt thoughtful and supportive, and it helped me grow in confidence about the ministry I'm called to do."

On Mentor Relationships

"One of the greatest gifts of this program was my mentor relationship... Through this experience, I truly feel like I gained a big sister in ministry. Her guidance, kindness, and belief in me gave me confidence during moments when I doubted myself."

"Honesty and insight that I didn't have."

On Spiritual Direction

"This component along with the Mentor requirement were two of the most valuable for me."

On Contextual and Multicultural Ministry

"The program consistently reminded me that formation is not one-size-fits-all and that culture, language, community, and lived experiences matter. As someone serving in a Latino ministry context, that affirmation was incredibly meaningful."

"The program creates space for people to bring their full selves, their culture, their questions, and their ministry realities into the conversation."

2025 Design Team

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With Gratitude

We would like to extend a special thank you to all of the Virginia Theological Seminary faculty and staff who helped in developing our program content and contributed to our residency on-site at VTS. We are also deeply grateful for the formation ministry practitioners who created content for the learning modules and served as mentors to the cohort as well as the spiritual directors who walked alongside the participants. We are indebted to the support of Lifelong Learning and the Forma Leadership Council for their vision and support throughout the development of our program. Altogether, it took a whole host of dedicated individuals to make the Certificate in Lifelong Christian Formation possible.



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