A seasonal Circle of Trust retreat program based on the work of Parker J. Palmer and designed for clergy of the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church

The soul is generous: it takes in the needs of the world. The soul is wise: it suffers without shutting down. The soul is hopeful: it engages the world in ways that keep opening our hearts. The soul is creative: it finds its way between realities that might defeat us and fantasies that are mere escapes. All we need to do is bring down the wall that separates us from our souls and deprives the world of the soul’s regenerative powers.


Over the past decade under the guidance of Parker J. Palmer, highly skilled facilitators across the country have created a unique retreat-based approach to renewing personal identity, professional integrity and vocational vitality. This approach is now being offered to clergy in the Florida Conference.

You are invited to apply to participate in a series of four Courage to Lead retreats at the Life Enrichment Center Leesburg and the Bethany Center in Lutz, Florida.

February 2-4, 2016 (LEC) – Beginning Again: The Journey to True Self
April 19-21, 2016 (Bethany Center) – Standing in the Gaps: Moving Between Here and There
July 26-28, 2016 (Bethany Center) – Leading with Abundant Courage
October 11-13, 2016 (Bethany Center) – Building Real Community

Why a Courage to Lead program for clergy leaders?

Courage to Lead has been carefully designed to invite clergy and leaders to move beyond the “what” and “how” questions of leadership to the “who” questions. It is rooted in the belief that effective service and leadership flow from the identity and integrity of the person, and focuses on how we listen to ourselves, and to each other, in communal spaces that invite the voice of the soul to be heard. Courage to Lead work is framed by such questions as, “How can I maintain a strong connection between who I am and what I do?” “What practices will help me align my soul and my role?” “When pulled in so many directions that I feel dis-membered, how can I re-member myself and stay connected to the heart of my vocation?”
Courage to Lead retreat program

Each Courage to Lead retreat program consists of a cohort of up to 25 clergy leaders who gather for four quarterly retreats of three-days each over a period of one year. In large-group, small-group and solitary settings, we will share our inner journeys via personal story-telling, poetry and teaching tales from various wisdom traditions. Guided by skilled facilitators, participants will be invited to speak honestly about their lives and work and to listen and respond to each other—and to themselves—with encouragement and compassion.

Courage to Lead retreats support spiritual formation by providing opportunity for:

- renewing heart, mind, and spirit by exploring the inner landscape of the leader’s life;
- reconnecting personal identity and professional integrity, honoring gifts and acknowledging the power of limits;
- creating a community of mutual respect and caring that welcomes the soul and honors diversity;
- participating in the Clearness Committee discernment process and deepening skills to ask open and honest questions;
- developing trustworthy space for inner exploration among diverse theological perspectives; and
- exploring connections between the leader’s inner life and the renewal of congregational life.

Who participates in Courage to Lead retreats?

Clergy leaders from across the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church are encouraged to participate in the Courage to Lead retreats. Clergy selected to participate in the Courage to Lead program will represent the diversity of the Florida Conference. The Courage to Lead program grows from personal and professional renewal work within and across the fields of education, philanthropy, law, health, nonprofit and civic endeavors. Participation will not only energize and inform leadership in congregations; it will help to rekindle and sustain authentic work and service in the world. Because the program involves a substantial investment of time, money, and energy, we look for people who are ready and willing to participate in all five seasonal retreats.

RETREAT LEADERSHIP

Janice Virtue is a leadership educator, coach and consultant working with a variety of United Methodist clergy and conferences. For most of the last two decades, Janice has focused her ministry on creating leadership development and pastoral excellence programs that encourage the church’s clergy to offer their best talent to the church. An ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, Janice is most in tune with God’s call when teaching, supporting and challenging church leaders to live more fully into their own callings. During an 11 year tenure at Duke Divinity School, she oversaw the creation and development of a wide array of educational programs including the Royce & Jane Reynolds Program in Church Leadership, the Duke Youth Academy for Christian Formation, the Institute of Preaching and Courage to Serve. Prior to her tenure at Duke, she was Director of Perkins Relations at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University and served pastorates in North Texas. When she isn’t working, Janice likes to read good books, hike good trails, laugh with good friends and travel with her husband.
David Dodge serves as the Assistant to the Bishop in the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church. David first participated in an invitational Courage to Lead Retreat in 2007 that was led by Parker Palmer. It was during this experience that the vision was born of what similar retreats could do for clergy in the Florida Conference. That led to the first series being offered in 2009-2010, which David coordinated. David has served churches in the Alabama-West Florida and Florida Conferences and is an ordained United Methodist deacon.

LOCATION AND COST

The program venues are the Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, a retreat facility of the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, and the Bethany Center, a retreat facility of the Catholic Diocese of St. Petersburg and located in Lutz, Florida. (www.BethanyCenterFL.org)

Space is limited to 25 participants and programs typically fill well before deadline.

The participant fee is $375 per retreat, for a total of $1,500 payable over the cycle of the program. All rooms are single occupancy.

The Ministerial Education Fund and the Office of Clergy Excellence program budget also provides financial subsidy for the series.

Note: Acceptance to the program requires a commitment to attend all four retreats.

Registration deadline is October 1, 2015
To assure participation, please apply early. All applications are to be sent to:
  Rev. David Dodge  
  Florida Conference United Methodist Center  
  450 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue  
  Lakeland, FL 33815

Or emailed to ddodge@flumc.org.

The Center for Courage & Renewal is an educational nonprofit organization dedicated to working with teachers, leaders, and other serving professionals to establish circles of trust that support personal wholeness, professional integrity, and vocational vitality. For more information, see www.couragerenewal.org/programs/clergy-congregational-leaders.