What will the program look like?

The educational experience will take place in groups of students called cohorts. The first experience for each cohort will be a weekend spiritual retreat, which will focus on discerning a call to ministry. There will be a scripture-based study of call – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, the disciples. There will be opportunities to practice deep listening and to engage in Circles of Trust (ala Parker Palmer), a version of a Quaker clearness committee.

Courses in the first year will likely include Basic Bible – origins, meaning, the Canon, interpretation – Hebrew scriptures in the winter/spring session and New Testament in the fall session. These courses will be offered online through an accredited university. A summer intensive experience will likely include a week-long, in-depth study of a particular book of the Bible such as Ezekiel, the Gospel of John, the Psalms.

We want the intensive courses to be open to everyone – clergy and laity – led by some of the most gifted seminary professors today. During the summer week, there will be additional opportunities for the School's first cohort to continue deepening their spiritual growth.

The cohort will journey through the three-year process together as they take classes online in the spring and fall, gather for the intensive classes each summer and have the support of a mentor, a spiritual director, and a life coach. Collegiality and community are two of the strong features of the program.

Through these experiences, the School will help congregations in need of leadership development, including rural and small churches as well as those with diverse racial-ethnic make ups. The educational program will emphasize cultivating leaders from within our congregations and recognizing the gifts of the laity.

The School will emphasize pro-reconciling, anti-racist approaches, seeking to understand our place in God's diverse creation. We have a robust, 20-year history of providing anti-racism training in our Region. That tradition continues.