

THE CALLED INITIATIVE

Mentoring, Discipling, and Equipping

Women for Christian Ministry

2026 Oregon Cohort

Syllabus

Note: This syllabus is a working draft and is provided to give you an overview of the cohort structure and expectations.

Instructor & Program Contact Information

Program Director:

Dr. Melisa Ortiz Berry, PhD

Email: connect@cldm.online

For questions about the program, schedule, or assignments, please email or text (phone number provided in class). I will typically respond within 24 hours, Monday–Friday.

About Crown of Life Discipleship Ministries (CLDM)

The Called Initiative is a ministry of **Crown of Life Discipleship Ministries (CLDM)**, a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to discipling Christians for faithful, thoughtful, and courageous service to Christ. Since the early 2000s, CLDM has mentored women who have gone on to serve as chaplains, counselors, educators, artists, and church leaders. The Called Initiative continues this legacy by providing a structured, biblically grounded mentoring and leadership program for women called into Christian ministry.

Program Description

The Called Initiative is a **10-month leadership and theological training cohort** for evangelical Christian women who sense God calling them into deeper ministry. The program combines:

- Monthly sessions
- Structured mentor–mentee relationships
- Guided learning activities between meetings
- A February in-person workshop
- A September 2-day in-person workshop retreat, which includes professional headshots and a speaking video
- A capstone ministry project and personal ministry webpage

The focus of this cohort is **leadership development** and **biblical/theological training** for women serving in the Church, parachurch ministries, nonprofits, education, and other ministry settings.

Program Outcomes

By the end of The Called Initiative, participants will be able to:

1. Articulate key doctrines related to Scripture:

Demonstrate understanding of the Doctrine of Revelation (“Who wrote the Bible?”) and Hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) through the creation of a personal Statement of Faith.

2. Communicate a biblical and historical view of women’s leadership:

Craft a clear elevator statement explaining why they hold their particular belief about women leaders in Christian ministry.

(Note: Participants are not required to hold the same view as one another or as CLDM; the goal is clarity, not conformity.)

3. Develop a personal theology of leadership:

Create a Leadership Vision Statement describing who they are and who they hope to become as a Christian leader.

4. Articulate their calling and ministry focus through coached communication practice:

Grow in clarity and confidence as they develop and present their calling in both written and spoken forms (e.g., speaking video, ministry webpage, personal writing).

5. Engage in reflective formation practices:

Participate in prayer, fasting, and authentic personal sharing within the cohort community to support spiritual growth and relational trust.

6. Design and launch a capstone ministry project:

Develop a personal ministry webpage and launch a new digital ministry initiative (e.g., blog, podcast, social media ministry).

Required Textbooks & Resources

Textbooks:

A finalized list of required texts will be provided prior to the start of the program. All required books will be supplied by CLDM. Participants may choose to purchase optional or supplemental books at their own discretion.

Additional Resources:

- Selected articles and excerpts (PDFs provided)
- Podcasts, sermons, and video lectures (links provided in monthly guides)

Program Structure

- **Length:** 10 months (February–November 2026)
- **Cohort Size:** 12 women
- **Meetings:**
 - Monthly 2-hour Zoom sessions
 - One February on-site workshop
 - One September workshop retreat (2 days)
 - Mentor–mentee meetings scheduled between sessions

Time Commitment

- Monthly meetings (Zoom or in-person): 2–8 hours, depending on format

- Weekly Learning Activities: approximately **1–2 hours per week**, including
 - Assigned reading
 - Listening to podcasts or lectures
 - Short written reflections or journaling
 - Practicing leadership skills, preparing for presentations, and capstone work

Weekly Learning Activities

Rather than graded assignments, this program uses **Weekly Learning Activities** to support your growth as a leader. These may include:

- Reading selected Scripture passages and articles
- Listening to a podcast, lecture, or sermon
- Responding with a brief written reflection or personal application
- Preparing discussion questions or insights to share in the next session
- Taking action steps related to your ministry context or capstone project

Learning Activities are designed to **reinforce leadership content, deepen biblical and theological understanding, and support your vocational clarity**.

Program Components

1. Monthly Cohort Sessions

- Focus on biblical/theological content and leadership concepts
- Include teaching, discussion, and practical exercises
- Occasionally feature a guest speaker

2. Mentor–Mentee Meetings

- Regular one-on-one meetings (monthly) with an assigned mentor
- Focused on personal calling, ministry questions, and leadership development

3. Workshop Retreat (September)

- In-person two-day retreat at Camp Harlow

- Includes teaching, mentor gatherings, professional headshots, and recording a short speaking video

4. **Capstone Ministry Project**

- A culminating project designed and implemented by each participant
- Includes a **personal ministry webpage** as a public expression of calling, story, and ministry focus
- Details and milestones will be provided mid-program

2026 Program Schedule & Topics

Month 1 –

February 2 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Onboarding and Introductions

February 21 (Camp Harlow, 9:00am–5:00pm)

Theme: Scripture & Canon

Session Topic: *Divine Revelation: How God Speaks and How We Listen*

Format: In-person workshop

Guest Speaker: TBA

Month 2 – March 3 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Scripture & Canon

Session Topic: *Interpreting Scripture: A Practical Approach to Hermeneutics*

Format: Online session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Month 3 – April 7 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Scripture & Canon

Session Topic: *Owning Your Approach to Scripture: Understanding How You Read and Why It Matters*

Format: Online session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Formation Activity: Personal Statement of Faith emailed to Dr. Berry before Zoom and available to share within the cohort at your own discretion.

Month 4 – May 5 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Women in the Bible & Christian History

Session Topic: *1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians Are Not a Problem*

Format: Online session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Month 5 – June 2 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Women in the Bible & Christian History

Session Topic: *Retrieving Women's Story in the Early Church*

Format: Online session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Month 6 – July 7 (Camp Harlow, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Women in the Bible & Christian History

Session Topic: *The American Church and Your Ministry Story*

Format: In-person evening session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Formation Activity: Email your Elevator Speech to Dr. Berry before our Zoom and be prepared to share in the cohort.

Month 7 – August 4 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Calling & Discernment

Session Topic: *Clarifying Your Call: Discerning Your Voice, Gifts, and Direction*

Format: Online session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Month 8 – September 25–26 (Camp Harlow)

Theme: Leadership Identity & Public Voice

Session Topic: *Leading From Conviction: Owning Your Theology and Identity*

Format: Two-day workshop retreat

Components: Teaching, mentor gatherings, professional headshots, speaking video

Guest Speaker(s): TBA

Formation Activity: Arrive with a 5-7 minute teaching to be practiced and filmed.

Month 9 – October 6 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Leadership in Context

Session Topic: *Leading Through Resistance: Navigating Systems, Power, and Pushback*

Format: Online session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Month 10 – November 3 (Zoom, 7:00–9:00pm)

Theme: Leadership & Sustainability

Session Topic: *Leading With Resilience: Building Strength, Boundaries, and Sustainability*

Format: Online session

Guest Speaker: TBA

Formation Activity: Email your Leadership Vision Statement to Dr. Berry before our Zoom and be prepared to share in the cohort.

Completion & Expectations

To be recognized as an alumna of The Called Initiative, participants are expected to:

1. Attend all scheduled sessions and the workshop retreat (barring illness/emergency).
2. Complete Weekly Learning Activities (reading, listening, reflections, practice).
3. Meet regularly with their assigned mentor.
4. Participate actively in discussions and cohort life.
5. Complete and present a capstone ministry project by the end of the program.

Because this is a **grant-funded scholarship** program, full participation is an important part of good stewardship.

Formation Activities

Personal Statement of Faith

As part of your theological formation, you will write a **Personal Statement of Faith** that reflects your own understanding of core Christian doctrines and your emerging ministry identity.

You are welcome to begin with an existing framework—such as the **National Association of Evangelicals Statement of Faith** or the doctrinal statement of your own church or denomination—and adapt it to represent your personal convictions. Your final statement should be written in your own words and reflect what *you* believe.

In addition to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, please include a brief section explaining **your current view on women in Christian ministry**. This is not about adopting a particular position, but about articulating your belief with clarity and biblical/theological grounding. Thoughtful disagreement is welcome, and you are free to hold views that differ from others in the cohort or from CLDM.

Your completed Statement of Faith will serve as a foundational document for your leadership, your ministry webpage, and your developing theological voice.

Elevator Statement on Women in Christian Ministry

As part of clarifying your theological and ministry identity, you will craft a concise **elevator statement** summarizing your current belief about women in Christian ministry. This is a brief, 2–3 sentence statement that you could confidently share if someone asked, “What is your view on women in ministry?”

Your elevator statement should reflect:

- What you have learned about **what Scripture does—and does not—say** about women in Christian leadership
- Key insights from **women in church history** and their contributions to ministry
- Your personal theological conviction, expressed with clarity and charity

You are not expected to agree with others in the cohort or with CLDM; the goal is to articulate your belief with honesty, biblical grounding, and confidence. Your statement should be written in your own words and accessible enough for use in everyday conversations.

This brief expression of your view will support your developing leadership voice and prepare you to respond thoughtfully when questions arise in ministry contexts.

Leadership Vision Statement

As part of developing a personal theology of leadership, you will create a **Leadership Vision Statement** that articulates who you are—and who you aspire to become—as a Christian leader. This statement should integrate your gifts, values, ministry experiences, theological convictions, and emerging sense of call.

Your Leadership Vision Statement should:

- Describe your current understanding of yourself as a leader
- Identify the biblical and theological principles that guide your leadership
- Name the qualities, character traits, and practices you hope to cultivate
- Reflect how you sense God shaping your future ministry

Write your statement in a clear, accessible way (approximately one well-developed paragraph, or 4–6 sentences). This Vision Statement will serve as a guiding document for your capstone project, your ministry webpage, and future leadership decisions.

The goal of this assignment is not perfection but clarity—helping you articulate the leader God is forming you to be.

5–7 Minute Teaching Presentation

As part of developing your communication and teaching skills, you will prepare a **5–7 minute teaching** on a biblical or theological topic of your choice. You will create a **simple teaching binder**, which is a three-prong report folder containing your printed teaching notes, arranged exactly as you will use them when presenting. Your binder should be fully prepared, organized, and ready to teach from.

You will bring this teaching binder to the **September retreat**, where you will practice your teaching and participate in a filmed presentation session. The recorded video will later be used on your personal ministry webpage as part of your ministry portfolio.

The purpose of this assignment is to help you practice clarity, confidence, and presence while teaching in a supportive environment.

Personal Ministry Webpage & Digital Ministry Launch

As part of your capstone work, you will create a **personal ministry webpage** that introduces your calling, leadership vision, and ministry focus. This webpage will serve as a public-facing portfolio that reflects the work you have completed throughout the cohort.

Your webpage **must include**:

- Your professional headshot (from the September retreat)
- Your filmed 5–7 minute teaching video

Your webpage **may also include**:

- Your Statement of Faith
- Your Leader Vision Statement
- Your elevator statement
- A brief written introduction to your ministry story

In addition, your webpage must **launch a new digital ministry initiative**, such as:

- A blog
- A devotional writing series
- A podcast
- A social media ministry
- A creative ministry project

Your webpage must be **live and accessible online by our final meeting in November**.

This project is designed to help you develop a professional digital presence that supports your ministry calling and provides a practical platform from which you can share your gifts and leadership beyond the cohort.

Statement of Belief (Program Summary)

The Called Initiative is a ministry of Crown of Life Discipleship Ministries, a 501(c)(3) organization. We affirm the **Statement of Faith of the National Association of Evangelicals** as the foundation of our theology and teaching.

We affirm the full participation of women in all areas of Christian ministry, including ordination. We recognize that women serve Christ faithfully in a wide range of evangelical traditions, and we welcome participants from both egalitarian and complementarian contexts. We encourage women to think carefully about what Scripture does—and does not—say about women's

ministry callings, while allowing them to hold their own convictions regarding church practice and family structure.