Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice "out there" calling me to be something I am not. It comes from a voice "in here" calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.

— Thomas Merton
How will your vocation grow?

Growth—spiritual, intellectual, and vocational—is the goal of the Doctor of Ministry program at Austin Seminary. As a DMin student, you will couple stronger abilities in biblical and theological reflection with greater competence in ministerial practice. Along the way, you will develop new skills and acquire new resources for ministry.

Austin Seminary’s faculty includes nationally acclaimed professors who are both committed to the church and enthusiastic about the DMin program. They create an atmosphere of collegial learning that draws deeply on the experiences and insights that pastors bring to the classroom.

Austin Seminary’s DMin graduates report that the program challenged them to the kind of growth that meets their ministry needs. Graduates also share that they developed relationships in a learning community with ministers of diverse backgrounds from around the country—relationships that often outlast the degree program itself—and they note frequently that the faculty and staff met them throughout the process of completing their studies with warm, personal, and engaging support.

Doctor of Ministry courses take place in residence on the Seminary’s campus in January and June. Each term lasts two weeks, and you may enroll in one course per term. After completing coursework, you will have up to two years to complete the design, execution, and analysis of a final doctoral project in your chosen concentration.

Program overview

Phase I: Elective Courses (four terms, two years)
As an entering student, you will select a concentration in which to develop ministry competence. Phase I consists of four elective courses, at least three of which must be taken within the chosen area. (See next panel for a description of the concentrations.)

Phase II: Methods Seminars (two terms, one year)
You will take two of three seminars that prepare you with research theories and methods appropriate to your concentration. Skills acquired in these seminars are directly applicable in the final project. Skill sets include contextual analysis and qualitative research methods, as well as biblical and theological hermeneutics.

Phase III: Final Project (two years)
In Phase III you will select an aspect of ministry—a problem or concern in your ministry context or an issue or question of interest and importance to that context—and develop a project that addresses it. You will integrate contextual analysis and theological and methodological reflection as you design your project. Your report will contain an evaluation of the project’s results and consider directions for future research. A faculty mentor will guide your research and review all your work. At the project’s conclusion, you and your faculty mentor will conduct an oral evaluation. Projects are opportunities to make significant contributions to the understanding and practice of ministry. We view DMin projects as gifts to the church, and copies are added to the collection of the Stitt Library.

Concentrations

The Bible & the Practice of Ministry
Central to Christian ministry, this concentration emphasizes the theological, literary, social, and historical world of the Bible. It will help you develop a critical understanding of the various ways in which the biblical text is and has been interpreted in a range of ministry contexts.

Christian Spirituality & the Practice of Ministry
This concentration brings together classical disciplines of spiritual formation and theological reflection with matters that confront people of faith in daily life. Through selected coursework you will explore the spiritual significance of work, the relationship of money and spiritual well-being, and classical and contemporary practices of prayer and worship. This concentration also offers opportunities to consider theologically various issues in the field of spiritual direction.

The Church’s Life & the Practice of Ministry
This concentration focuses on the church’s shared life, including the various ways the Christian community is called to embody its faith in practice. You will reflect on the church’s normative practices of education and formation, care and counseling, mission and evangelism.

Theology & the Practice of Ministry
In this concentration you will focus on theological or ethical questions that arise in communities of faith and human society, examine the interplay between contemporary questions and classical doctrines, explore challenges and opportunities in Christian ministry in a religiously plural context, and probe the history of Christian traditions with an eye to the church’s future.

Proclamation & Worship
This concentration allows you to study the history, theology, and ritual actions of worship. Students also examine a wide range of aspects of proclamation and will reflect on the interdisciplinary nature of proclamation by engaging current practices and trends.

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