IMN 46TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
October 27, 28, 29, 2026

CALLED TO FAITHFULNESS
FINDING AND LIVING OUR WHY

Navigating transitions in faith communities poses challenges for leaders who must balance authority and faithfulness. Supporting these leaders requires fostering resilience, managing expectations, and reflecting on core values. While some confront authority amid fear, others seek community. Key questions include: Why do we do what we do? and How do we live into our why?

PROGRAM GUIDE

Tuesday, October 27, 2026

October 27, 2026 – 11:30 AM to 12:15 PM Eastern

Meet The IMN Community

Kick off the conference by connecting with the people who make IMN a vibrant and supportive professional community. This opening session offers an opportunity to meet IMN members, friends, Board of Directors, faculty, and staff while building relationships with colleagues from across denominations and ministry settings. Join us as we gather to welcome one another, renew connections, share experiences, and begin our conference journey together.

October 27, 2026 – 12:30 to 1:00 PM Eastern

Conference Opening: Welcome, Reflection & Connection

Begin the conference with a warm welcome as we gather as a community of transitional leaders, learners, and colleagues. Together, we'll explore what lies ahead over the next three days while creating space to pause, reflect, and reconnect with the deeper purpose of our work.

Through a time of spiritual grounding, shared reflection, and community connection, we will center ourselves in the ministry of transition, honoring the wisdom, experiences, and diverse traditions that enrich the IMN network. Renew old friendships, meet new colleagues, and prepare your heart and mind for the learning, conversations, and inspiration that await as we move into our first conference session.

October 27, 2026 – 1:00 to 4:00 PM Eastern

Keynote Presentation

Trauma-Integrating Somatic Leadership: The Intersection of Traumatology and Spiritual Direction in Times of Transition

The Rev. Dr. Shannon Michael Pater, Psy.D.

Transformational transitional ministry (our "what") is relational work across multiple generations of congregational/organizational life. The leader is simultaneously interacting with the immediacy of a community, the recent and long-term past that create relational patterns, and attempting to positively

influence the ever-emerging future and next leadership partnership. It's complex and requires skill-full support!

Hopefully, what happens in a successful interim period does not stay in the interim (our "why"). With a bit of luck, a lot of work, and surprises that only Spirit can provide, even after a significant relational disruption, the congregation can grow and integrate into a mutual, long-term relationship with their new leader.

"Trauma-Integrating Somatic Leadership" is a ministry model that merges relational insights of traumatology and spiritual direction into a scope of practice at the intersection of our "what" (relational work) and our "why" (relational transformation) during and after a transitional period. The flow of the Keynote will include a 90-minute presentation of the core concepts and 60-minutes of "applied theory." The Workshop following the Keynote is an opportunity for "questions, comments, clarifications, and rebuttals" and a few pre-submitted case consultations.

October 27, 2026 – 4:25 to 5:40 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Diving Deeper in Trauma-Integrating Somatic Leadership in Practice

The Rev. Dr. Shannon Michael Pater, Psy.D.

Following Rev. Dr. Shannon Michael Pater's keynote, this interactive workshop will explore the practical application of Trauma-Integrating Somatic Leadership in transitional ministry. Bring your questions, insights, and experiences, and consider submitting a ministry case in advance for consultation and discussion. Together, we'll move from theory to practice, discovering new ways to foster healing, resilience, and transformation during times of change.



Shannon Michael Pater is a trauma-integrating somatic spiritual director whose work blends modern psychological insights with ancient wisdom traditions. Drawing on disciplines such as traumatology, Applied Polyvagal Theory, Applied Attachment Theory, and Internal Family Systems, Shannon offers a holistic approach to healing and spiritual growth.

At the heart of Shannon's practice is the belief that spiritual direction nurtures our connection to Inner Wisdom—whether by establishing, cultivating, or restoring it. This work emphasizes the importance of embodied (somatic) relationships with oneself, others, Spirit, and the natural world. With a trauma-informed perspective, Shannon creates a safe and courageous space for individuals to explore and heal the effects of trauma while moving toward greater wholeness.

Through an online platform, written work, and curated resources, Shannon supports others on their personal and spiritual journeys, inviting deeper awareness, integration, and transformation. For more information on his research and private practice, please visit: *NoticeTheJourney.com*.

October 27, 2026 – 4:25 to 5:40 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Do You See What I See?

Rev. Dr. Jenny Stephens

As leaders, we can be surprised when our intentions about what we say and do/don't have the impact we expected or hoped for. Using the model of the JoHari Window, along with skills associated with Emotional Intelligence, we will explore how to grow in our self-understanding through seeing ourselves through the eyes of others. A key skill for an effective, emotionally intelligent, transitional leader is assessing the impact of our behavior. How might we seek and integrate feedback, direct or otherwise, from others?



Rev. Dr. Jenny Stephens retired from the General Council of The United Church of Canada in May 2022, where she led the design and implementation of a denominational Office of Vocation as part of the broader denominational transition. Raised in the Methodist Church of Great Britain, Jenny has lived in Canada since 1982 (currently in Cambridge, Ontario) and worked within The United Church of Canada serving in both team and solo ministry in multi-point pastoral charges as well as 16 years as the Personnel Minister in Hamilton Conference (middle judicatory). Committed to developing leadership of faith communities, Jenny was a trainer with the Emotional Intelligence-Human Relations Skills Center and convenes the Community of Practice of EQHR trainers, within IMN. She is a past President of IMN.

October 27, 2026 – 4:25 to 5:40 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

More Than Filling a Position: What is Discernment?

Rev. Shuji Moriichi

In local congregations, discernment typically involves "town hall meetings" and "needs surveys" to reach the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Engaging in discernment as a spiritual exercise, on the other hand, we seek the gifts of greater spiritual maturity and intimacy with God in the process; practical decisions are the fruits of those gifts. Drawing on insights from Thomas Green's works on the Ignatian practice of discernment, the presenter will propose key perspectives and ideas to help the congregation engage in times of transition. With ample examples and stories that resonate widely, the presenter will explore with the audience practical questions such as What elements are necessary for fruitful communal discernment? What roles do individual members play? How to negotiate immediate and long-term goals while assessing the health of the corporate spiritual body? How to work with the Gatekeepers and the Bystanders in the congregation in the discernment period?



Rev. Shuji Moriichi, M.A., M.Div., BCC (APC) is the director of the pastoral care department, Mercy Medical Center, Cedar Rapids, IA, and ordained in the Mennonite Church USA. His ecumenical ministry experience includes clinical chaplaincy, interim pastorate, and research and writing for popular, church and academic periodicals.

October 27, 2026 – 4:25 to 5:40 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Grief That Has No Funeral

Rev. Frank Walton

Congregational transitions often uncover grief that is real but rarely acknowledged. Churches may grieve for changes in leadership, identity, influence, traditions, relationships, or expectations, yet these losses frequently go unnamed because there has been no formal ending or public ritual of mourning. When grief remains unrecognized, it can shape resistance, anxiety, conflict, and leadership challenges within the congregation.

This interactive workshop explores how transitional leaders can recognize and respond to the emotional and spiritual realities beneath congregational behavior. Participants will reflect on the connection between grief and transition, examine practices that create space for listening and healing, and discuss how faithful leadership can help congregations move toward resilience, discernment, and renewed purpose during seasons of change.



Rev. Frank Walton is an intentional interim ministry leader, pastor, consultant, trainer, and organizational strategist with extensive experience guiding congregations and nonprofit organizations through seasons of transition, discernment, and renewal. His ministry and leadership background includes pastoral leadership, denominational service, church administration, media and broadcasting, nonprofit governance, and organizational development. He also serves as an authorized training consultant, helping faith communities strengthen leadership systems, operational effectiveness, and organizational clarity during times of change.

The work of intentional interim ministry has significantly shaped Rev. Walton's current focus on developing meaningful resources to support leaders and congregations during seasons of transition. He is currently developing the manuscript God, Why Now? Becomingness In A Season of Transition and has written Bible study and devotional resources, including Known by God, which highlights lesser-known individuals in scripture whose faithfulness, obedience, discernment, and quiet service helped shape God's greater story. These resources also encourage congregations to recognize and value the often-unseen individuals within today's ministries whose steady faithfulness continues to strengthen and sustain the life of the church.

October 27, 2026 – 4:25 to 5:40 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

The Emerging Effects of AI & Tech on the Church

Rev. Kimberly Secrist Ashby

Our society is in a huge time of transformation and upheaval, including with many companies sidelining human workers in favor of AI and technology. This workshop will explore the emerging effects of this movement on the church. How will AI and technology affect people inside the church in their ability to cooperate and respectfully disagree? Can AI be trained towards human relational skills? Will AI cause an erosion of trust and loss of hope? We will explore possible avenues leaders can take to encourage positive relational skills within the church and position themselves to be leaders in the community. We'll consider ways to build trust, vision, and hope. We'll touch on key skills leaders will need to have in

order to weather this transition and help their congregations coalesce around common goals and values.



Rev. Kimberly Secrist Ashby is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for more than 25 years, residing in Michigan with her two daughters. She is a teacher and facilitator in areas of emotional intelligence, conflict management, and mediation, and has both her Masters of Divinity and Masters of Education. She is passionate about community engagement and is currently engaged in leading her congregation in implementing the strategic plan they just built over the last few years. (She has written curriculum for a new module for IMN on Emotional Intelligence and Group Dynamics…)

October 27, 2026 – 4:25 to 5:40 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

BOOK TALK: Seven And Half Lesson About The Brain, By Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett
Leader: Rev. Dr. Ruth Shaver

Have you ever wondered why you have a brain? Let renowned neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barrett demystify that big gray blob between your ears. In seven short essays (plus a bite-sized story about how brains evolved), this slim and accessible collection reveals mind-expanding lessons from the front lines of neuroscience research. You'll learn where brains came from, how they're structured (and why it matters), and how yours works in tandem with other brains to create everything you experience. Along the way, you'll also learn to dismiss popular myths such as the idea of a "lizard brain" and the alleged battle between thoughts and emotions, or even between nature and nurture, to determine your behavior. Sure to intrigue casual readers and scientific veterans alike, Seven and a Half Lessons About the Brain is full of surprises, humor, and important implications for human nature. **Buy book here.**



Rev. Dr. Ruth Shaver is the Area Conference Minister of the Southeast Region of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. She also serves on faculty of the Interim Ministry Network. She previously served six churches as an Intentional Interim Pastor and as the Academic Dean of PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc., a Regional Theological Education Program of the UCC. She holds a BA and an M.Div. from Boston University and a D.Min. from Lancaster Theological Seminary. She also sings and plays handbells. She resides in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

October 27, 2026 – 6:30 to 7:30 PM Eastern
Social Time

Coaches' Corner – With Rev. Neil Parker

We will establish a "conversation pit" designed to facilitate engagement between participants and seasoned professionals in transitional leadership. Attendees will have the opportunity to interact, pose specific questions, and gain insights as coaches showcase their areas of experience. Subsequently, participants will be invited into designated conversation (breakout) rooms to explore emerging topics in greater depth.

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

October 28, 2026 – 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM Eastern

Open Conversations

Start your day with an open and meaningful conversation led by Mary Ellen Dolan. This informal, unstructured session is designed to create space for authentic dialogue, reflection, and connection. Participants are invited to share what is on their hearts, discuss the perspectives and experiences they bring to the table, and engage with one another in a spirit of openness and trust.

Whether you choose to speak, listen, or simply reflect, this conversation offers an opportunity to build relationships, gain insights, and begin the day grounded in community and shared purpose.

October 28, 2026 – 12:15 to 12:30 PM Eastern

Opening and Spiritual Sending

Begin Day Two by reconnecting with your fellow participants as we gather for a morning of announcements, important updates, and any schedule changes. Following these brief remarks, we will transition into a time of spiritual gathering and reflection, creating space to center ourselves for the day ahead.

This opening session offers an opportunity to pause, connect with one another, and embrace the shared purpose that brings us together. Through prayer, reflection, and community, we will prepare our hearts and minds for the experiences, learning, and conversations that await throughout the day.

October 28, 2026 – 12:30 to 2:45 PM Eastern

Keynote Presentation

From Transition to Transformation: Building Sustainable Faith Communities

The Rev. Dr. Eric H. F. Law



Holy Currencies is a holistic framework for faith communities to explore and assess their sustainability and missional capacity. A leader, in time of transition, can utilized this framework to guide a community to discern the truth of their internal and external community wellness; through maximizing and developing their relationship networks, they can connect and share and receive resources (time/place/money) from the neighborhood in missional ways resulting in becoming a more diverse and sustainable faith community. Participants in this workshop will gain an overview of this framework focusing on the gracious leadership skills needed to empower transitioning communities to discern truth and build relationships, setting the Cycle of Blessings in motion.

October 28, 2026 – 3:00 to 4:15 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Blessings in Disguise: Uncovering Hidden Assets in Times of Transition

The Rev. Dr. Eric H. F. Law

Participants of this workshop will have the opportunity to submit case studies – real faith-community-in-transition stories – to be analyzed with the Rev. Dr. Eric H. F. Law using the Holy Currency framework, hopefully resulting in deeper discernment of the issues and concrete suggestions on how to holistically approach and transform the concerns into opportunities for growth and wellness.



The Rev. Dr. Eric H. F. Law is the founder of the Kaleidoscope Institute (www.kscopeinstitute.org), which provides resources to equip leaders to create diverse and sustainable communities. He has been a consultant and trainer for over 30 years working with the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, United Methodist, Presbyterian, American Baptist, Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ and Lutheran Churches in the United States, Canada, Asia, Australia and Europe. He is the author of over 10 books including; *Fear Not: Living Grace and Truth in a Frightened World, Holy Currencies, Holy Currencies Exchange, Drawing on Holy Currencies, The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb and Inclusion: Making Room for Grace*. He is an Episcopal priest, a composer of church music, and a recording and visual artist (www.interartions.com)

October 28, 2026 – 3:00 to 4:15 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Lessons and Stories of Transition

The Rev. Dr. Keith Copeland

Using the 5 process tasks of entry through exit, this workshop will explore key lessons related to each task in the journey through a congregation or faith-based organization. There will be opportunity in the workshop for participants to share their stories and experiences related to the lessons shared by the presenter. It will be an opportunity. to take a quick tour into through the process tasks and reflect on and share hard fought lessons of what went well and what did not as well as ideas for the future.



The Rev. Dr. Keith Copeland is a Transitional Pastor, Consultant and Coach who assists congregations and leaders in moving toward the new future God is preparing for them. Ordained in 1992, he has served as a settled pastor in three congregations including one Presbyterian Church. After receiving training in the PCUSA he has served 17 congregations as intentional transitional pastor in 3 denominations (Lutheran, Presbyterian and Moravian) and two different states. He received his D Min from Hood Theological Seminary with special focus on church renewal. Currently he serves as chair of the Interim Ministry Association of the ELCA and is on the faculty with the Interim Ministry Network as well as serving on the Board. He is married to Cheris Copeland and has one son, The Rev. Joshua Lewis Copeland (Emily) and a new grandbaby (Alice Elizabeth). Dr. Copeland lives in New London, NC. You can check out more on his website at www.TheGoldenMoment.org.

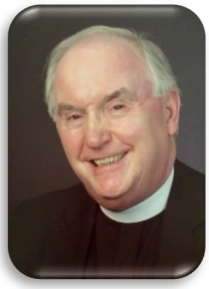
October 28, 2026 – 3:00 to 4:15 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

From Calling to Clarity: Keeping your Compass when Challenged by your Clock

Finding a tool that is true to your tradition that builds a congregational compass

The Rev. Dr. William Carl Thomas

From Calling to Clarity: Keeping your Compass when Challenged by your Clock is a 75-minute workshop that explores how my practice as a transitional leader promotes health when grounded in the values and relationships found in my Compass while challenged by the events and things that float through my Clock that will help you find a tool that is true to your tradition that builds a congregational compass. The workshop explores a balcony perspective method through evolving graphics and unfolding prayers that will help you deepen your understanding and integration of your own governing values / guiding principles. I demonstrate this method using the spiritual language of my life as priest of the Episcopal Church. You will engage a reflective practice that strengthens clarity, coherence, and confidence in your leadership. The graphic found at the Workshop October 28 dropdown on WCTcoach.com is the most recent rendering of what helps me keep a balcony perspective while living on the dance floor.



The Rev. Dr. William Carl Thomas is a sort of retired Episcopal Priest living in New Bern NC who concluded in December 2025 an eight month away-from-home time as the Interim Rector of Christ Episcopal Church, Elizabeth City NC. Since he sort of retired in 2018, Bill has also served as long term Sunday supply while parishes cover for a priest on sabbatical or are simply waiting for resources to unfold. Bill is a former member of the IMN Faculty. He offers 37 plus years of ordained experience in both settled and churches in transition. Explore his skills at Bill's website WCTcoach.com.

October 28, 2026 – 3:00 to 4:15 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

The EI Blueprint: Mapping, Pursuing, and Sustaining Your "Why"

Judy Joseph Mc Sween & Rev. Dr. David Shelor

The EI Blueprint: Mapping, Pursuing, and Sustaining Your 'Why'" - This workshop uses the Emotional and Social Competencies model to transform your core purpose into a sustainable ministry roadmap. Discover the emotional blueprints to identify your true "Why," master the crucial interpersonal skills to pursue it through structural change, and unlock the systemic tools—like empathy and teamwork—needed to prevent burnout and faithfully sustain your calling.



Judy Joseph Mc Sween is a Certified Coach, specializing in the areas of Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, Conversational Intelligence® and the Frameworks Coaching Process. She is a trained Organization Development Consultant and holds an MBA in Export Management and International Business and a BSc in Industrial Chemistry. Her theoretical background, 30 years of practical experience at executive level in the corporate sector and her highly intuitive skills, provide an exciting diverse resource as she engages her corporate and faith-based clients in transformational experiences.

She is a Board Member and Trainer with the US based Center for Emotional Intelligence and Human Relations (EQHR) for faith-based organizations and a Trainer and former board member at the NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science USA.



Rev. Dr. David Shelor (MDiv, MSOD, DMin) is a native of the mountains of Western North Carolina, USA, He has been a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) for over 25 years. In that time, he has served the Church in Ghana, West Africa, Georgia and Florida. He currently serves as the pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Dunedin on Florida's central Gulf Coast. In addition to degrees from Columbia (Decatur, Georgia) and McCormick (Chicago) Theological Seminaries, David earned a Master of Science in Positive Organizational Development from the Weatherhead School of Management at Case-Western University (Cleveland) and holds certifications in Nonprofit Management (University of South Florida), Executive Coaching (Case-Western), Appreciative Inquiry (Case-Western) and as a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator facilitator. David began his journey with the EQHR Center, first as a participant in the HR Workshop in 2012, served as a board member, and delights in every opportunity to nurture his own growth and learning as a trainer.

David is married to Dr. Merry Lynn Morris, a dance professor at the University of South Florida. He has two children, Graham, a recent college graduate, and Lillie, a college senior.

October 28, 2026 – 3:00 to 4:15 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Spiritual Balance in Transitions: Core Practices to Resist Restlessness and Anxiety in the Congregational Community

Rev. Dr. John Throop

Congregational transition is a time of crisis. There is hope and opportunity, but there are anxiety power shifts. Spiritual depth and leadership - or lack of it - presents pastors to offer spiritual formation and/or re-formation. Even in healthy situations, the pastors, spiritual balance, and health is tested. There are five essential practices that help the pastor, practice, spiritual presence and peace that also can contribute greatly to a congregation's health. This workshop will explore those five practices for the participant to implement in a specific setting.



Rev. Dr. John Throop has 45 years of ordained ministry experience in the Episcopal Church, John currently serves as the Bridge Pastor at St. Luke's Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. His ability to cross denominational boundaries has created a spiritual laboratory, allowing him to adapt spiritual formation across various traditions. As a member of IMN and a webinar participant, John draws from his experiences in several interim and transitional ministry settings, many of which have proven to be spiritually challenging.

October 28, 2026 – 3:00 to 4:15 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop
BOOK TALK: ***Supercommunicators: How to Unlock the Secret Language of Connection*** **by Charles Duhigg**
Leader: Rev. Margret O'Neall
The skills of effective communication are crucial to the practice of ministry in transitional times. In Supercommunicators, Charles Duhigg combines stories, studies and guidance to show how we can all learn to identify and leverage the hidden layers that lurk beneath every conversation. Communication is a superpower and the best communicators understand that whenever we speak, we're actually participating in one of three conversations: practical (What's this really about?), emotional (How do we feel?), and social (Who are we?). The workshop will include a brief summary of key concepts and opportunities to share your experiences and uses of communication in your organizational settings.
Buy book here.



The Rev. Dr. Margret A. O'Neall is a Unitarian Universalist transitional minister. Her call to transitional ministry followed a 35-year career supporting innovation and change in a variety of public and private sector organizations. Since ordination, she has served transitional and contract ministries in Sarasota, FL, Buffalo, NY, Schenectady, NY, Phoenix, AZ, Cherry Hill, NJ and Kingston, NY. Margret now focuses on education, coaching and consulting to support congregational vitality in leadership, governance and relationship. She has been a member of IMN since 2007, an IMN faculty member since 2015, and is a UUA Accredited Interim Minister.

October 28, 2026 – 3:00 to 4:15 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop
Judicatory, Called to Faithfulness - Finding and Living Our Why
Rev. Dr. Ruth Shaver
This interactive workshop aims to promote meaningful dialogue and peer learning among judicatory leaders, focusing on the theme **Called to Faithfulness: Finding and Living Our Why**.

Key elements include:

- Introduction to judicatories' roles during transitions
- Exploration of challenges and opportunities in faith communities
- Reflection on personal call and leadership practices
- Discussion on balancing authority and faithfulness
- Sharing experiences and strategies among diverse colleagues
- Strategies for building resilience and managing expectations
- Emphasis on core values to guide decision-making

The workshop concludes with a collaborative discussion on practical next steps, providing participants with renewed clarity and actionable ideas for supporting leaders during transitions.



Rev. Dr. Ruth Shaver is the Area Conference Minister of the Southeast Region of the Southern New England Conference of the United Church of Christ. She also serves on faculty of the Interim Ministry Network. She previously served six churches as an Intentional Interim Pastor and as the Academic Dean of PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc., a Regional Theological Education Program of the UCC. She holds a BA and an M.Div. from Boston University and a D.Min. from Lancaster Theological Seminary. She also sings and plays handbells. She resides in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

October 28, 2026 – 4:30 PM Eastern

Denominational Gatherings

Attention all denominations! We invite you to gather your respective groups to discuss the transitional and interim activities within your community. The IMN will provide a dedicated Zoom link to facilitate sharing with colleagues, whether they are attending the conference or not.

October 28, 2026 – 6:00 to 7:00 PM Eastern

Social Time

BINGO!

Get ready to dab those cards, because we're diving into five thrilling rounds of bingo—time permitting, of course! We'll be using the magic of myfreebingocards.com to keep things spicy. Each round's champion will snag a fabulous IMN prize! Let the bingo bonanza begin!

Thursday, October 29, 2026

October 29, 2026 – 11:00 to 12:00 PM Eastern

Open Conversations

Start your day with an open and meaningful conversation led by Mary Ellen Dolan. This informal, unstructured session is designed to create space for authentic dialogue, reflection, and connection. Participants are invited to share what is on their hearts, discuss the perspectives and experiences they bring to the table, and engage with one another in a spirit of openness and trust. Whether you choose to speak, listen, or simply reflect, this conversation offers an opportunity to build relationships, gain insights, and begin the day grounded in community and shared purpose.

October 29, 2026 – 12:15 to 12:30 PM Eastern

Opening and Spiritual Sending

On the final day of our conference, we celebrate the relationships, insights, and experiences shared. Day Three is a chance to reflect on our journey as a community and how to apply our learnings in our ministries and daily lives. We will start with announcements and updates, followed by a spiritual gathering for prayer and reflection. This session encourages us to embrace our renewed energy and commitment as we prepare to carry these lessons into our communities.

October 29, 2026 – 12:45 to 2:00 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Self-Awareness: The Doorway to Conscious Living

Rev. Candace Henry

Self-awareness involves observing ourselves honestly, free from judgment and shame, to understand our true selves. Many live based on unexamined beliefs and fears that influence their decisions. By reflecting on our beliefs, emotions, and responses, we can regain the ability to make conscious choices.

The workshop aims to create a space for:
Honest self-reflection
Healing
Forgiveness
Conscious decision-making

Participants will gain peace, clarity, harmony, and alignment, focusing on awareness rather than perfection, leading to more intentional choices.



Rev. Candace Henry is a Transition Specialist and Interim Ministry Consultant with Unity Worldwide Ministries. A graduate of the Unity Urban Ministerial School, she is passionate about communication, mediation, congregational healing, and addressing unconscious bias through compassionate dialogue and spiritual understanding. Rev. Candace brings a diverse background in ministry, leadership development, and facilitation, helping communities move through transition with clarity, accountability, and vision. Her work centers on creating environments where individuals and organizations can heal, reconnect, and move forward together with purpose. She is also the founder of Empower American Children and creator of the Dream Builders Program, encouraging people of all ages to recognize the power of imagination, faith, and possibility.

October 29, 2026 – 12:45 to 2:00 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Faithfulness in the In-Between

Rev. Frank Walton

Transitions in faith communities often uncover grief, uncertainty, competing expectations, and questions of identity beneath the visible work of leadership. Transitional leaders are called to do more than maintain systems; they are called to lead faithfully while helping congregations discern who God is calling them to become.

This interactive workshop explores how leaders can navigate the "in-between" seasons of ministry with discernment, resilience, and clarity. Participants will examine the difference between technical solutions and adaptive challenges, reflect on the emotional and spiritual realities beneath resistance, and explore practices that strengthen faithful leadership during uncertainty. Through discussion, reflection, and practical application, attendees will gain insights for leading with courage, humility, and purpose while helping congregations live more fully into their "why."



Rev. Frank Walton is an intentional interim ministry leader, pastor, consultant, trainer, and organizational strategist with extensive experience guiding congregations and nonprofit organizations through seasons of transition, discernment, and renewal. His ministry and leadership background includes pastoral leadership, denominational service, church administration, media and broadcasting, nonprofit governance, and organizational development. He also serves as an authorized training consultant, helping faith communities strengthen leadership systems, operational effectiveness, and organizational clarity during times of change.

The work of intentional interim ministry has significantly shaped Rev. Walton's current focus on developing meaningful resources to support leaders and congregations during seasons of transition. He is currently developing the manuscript God, Why Now? Becomingness In A Season of Transition and has written Bible study and devotional resources, including Known by God, which highlights lesser-known individuals in scripture whose faithfulness, obedience, discernment, and quiet service helped shape God's greater story. These resources also encourage congregations to recognize and value the often-unseen individuals within today's ministries whose steady faithfulness continues to strengthen and sustain the life of the church.

October 29, 2026 – 12:45 to 2:00 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Today's Virtual-only and Hybrid Ministry

Rev. Patrice K. Curtis

During COVID, congregations and ministers were pushed into virtual ministry. Today, many congregations find themselves without the ministerial leadership they would prefer, yet are not comfortable choosing ministers who would serve largely virtually or with regular virtual/onsite plan. How can transitional ministers create virtual-only or hybrid ministry that feels relational and rich for congregants?



Rev. Patrice K. Curtis is UUA's Transformational Interim Ministries Director. Patrice collaborates with and supports interim ministers in amplifying and practicing diversity, equity, and inclusion within congregations, and in disrupting unhealthy patterns that make Beloved Community difficult to realize. Before beginning ministry at the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), Patrice served four congregations and as Program Director with the UU Justice Ministry of California. Patrice practices Tibetan Buddhist-based spirituality (20+years), has trained in teaching Shamata meditation, and studied Mindful Self-Compassion, and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR).

October 29, 2026 – 12:45 to 2:00 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Crusty Brown to Hope with Verdant Buds

Rev. Wayne Shelor

Living amidst a well-established homeostasis which is committed to maintain what is (general system theory), we seek ways to release a community into regenerative new life. The delicate little green question of what the Deity desires often helps a community break through their believed concrete

limitations to reveal the Creator's presence, power, and abundance. This engagement frequently reveals a glimmer of discovery and hope, which often provides an opportunity to guide a community into an inspired adventurous newness (Bullard) in service to the Deity.



Rev. Wayne Shelor is an Interim Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) serving in the Philadelphia area. He was ordained in 1986 and served as settled pastor in three congregations, then as Executive Director of Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp & Retreat Center (an outdoor ministry site of the ELCA in Virginia). Wayne is currently serving his eleventh interim. In addition to his IMN interim ministry training he has special training in conflict resolution, youth ministry, Bowen Family Systems, and stewardship.

October 29, 2026 – 12:45 to 2:00 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Transitions are Growth Opportunities

Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates

Transitions provide a chance to look at the life, vision, and mission of the church. Growth results when mission, vision, and actions align with church and community needs. Exploring can be exciting, rather than something to dread. Change can increase passion and faithfulness.



Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates is a trained coach and spiritual director who has a background in organization development, human resource development, a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry in transformation leadership. She has served as a local church pastor, associate conference minister, and conference minister in the United Church of Christ.

October 29, 2026 – 12:45 to 2:00 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

Developing Intercultural Capacity in Faith Communities

The Rev. Julie Boleyn

Faith communities are more diverse than ever, and so are the people within them. Interim ministry offers a unique window to help congregations grow in their capacity to welcome differences and foster genuine belonging. But effective intercultural leadership requires meeting people where they are, not where we hope they'll be. This workshop introduces the Intercultural Development Continuum as a practical framework for assessing your own intercultural capacity and designing meaningful interventions in faith communities. Participants will explore stage-specific strategies for supporting growth from helping those in polarization reconnect with shared humanity, to inviting those in minimization to discover how deeply our differences shape even our most universal values. Drawing on real-world examples from multifaith interim contexts, this session equips leaders with tools they can use immediately.



The Rev. Julie Boleyn is an ELCA pastor and the Executive Director of the Kaleidoscope Institute. A seasoned facilitator and nonprofit leader, she helps churches and organizations navigate cultural change, strengthen leadership, and cultivate communities grounded in justice and spiritual transformation. Pastor Boleyn has led strategic planning and intercultural leadership processes with churches and denominations across the United States and Canada. Pastor Boleyn comes to this work with experience in software development, fundraising, and community organizing. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from The Evergreen State College in 2002 and her Master of Divinity at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 2010. She is a Qualified Administrator of the Intercultural Development Inventory.

October 29, 2026 – 12:45 to 2:00 PM Eastern
Concurrent Workshop

BOOK TALK: Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking instead of Telling 3rd edition
By Edgar Schein
Leader: Rev. Arlen G. Vernava

In Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling, Edgar H. Schein encourages individuals to foster open communication by asking thoughtful questions rather than giving directives. The book emphasizes the importance of genuine curiosity and respect in building better relationships and improving teamwork across various settings. **Buy book here.**



Rev. Arlen G. Vernava holds Executive Process Consultant certification from the Society for Process Consulting, and additional certifications in Madanes/Adizes PAEI-Enneagram profile and Workplace Big 5. In addition to being a member of IMN's faculty, Arlen serves as IMN's Education Team Lead. He has extensive experience working with faith communities and their leaders in a mediation role, and as a consultant during interim time, strategic intentional interim, and an executive coach to interim-time practitioners. Arlen serves across the ecumenical and interfaith community – now in the last years of his 3rd decade of vocational life.

October 29, 2026 – 2:30 to 5:15 PM Eastern
Keynote Panel Discussion

From Transition to Transformation
Rev. Dr. Shannon Michael Pater and Rev. Dr. Eric Law

The keynote panel discussion, features Rev. Dr. Shannon Michael Pater and Rev. Dr. Eric H. F. Law engaging in a collaborative dialogue on transitional leadership. They will explore how faith communities can navigate disruptions and move towards renewal and transformation using Dr. Pater's Trauma-Integrating Somatic Leadership model and Dr. Law's Holy Currencies framework.

- Key discussion points include:
- Helping communities process disruption and build resilience.
- Identifying and leveraging existing assets within congregations.
- The importance of healing, discernment, and truth-telling in leadership.
- Fostering sustainable transformation instead of merely managing change.
- Practices for communities to fulfill their purpose and calling.

This interactive session aligns with the conference theme, Called to Faithfulness: Finding and Living Our Why, aiming to equip participants with practical tools and insights for leading transformative change in their faith communities. Attendees can expect a rich exchange of ideas, case examples, and audience interaction to inspire their leadership.

October 29, 2026 – 5:15 to 5:45 PM Eastern

Conference Closing and Spiritual Sending

As the conference wraps up, we reflect on the wisdom gained and relationships built under the theme "Called to Faithfulness: Finding and Living Our Why." This closing session will celebrate our learning, express gratitude for our community, and prepare us to apply these insights in our ministries and lives. Through worship and prayer, we will be reminded that our mission extends beyond this gathering, empowering us to lead with courage and compassion in our communities.