

# Leadership center equips women through online learning

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BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—In a hectic, fast-paced world, some Christian women struggle to find convenient, quality leadership training that they trust and value.

One resource that's been around more than 20 years is the Christian Women's Leadership Center, an initiative of Woman's Missionary Union that offers lifelong learning opportunities for Christian women.



The Christian Women's Leadership Center, an initiative of national Woman's Missionary Union, offers lifelong learning opportunities for Christian women. The center's leadership certificate program features nine online courses designed to help participants develop their gifts and skills in serving Christ. (WMU photo by Trennis Henderson)

While the Leadership Center's overall vision and goals remain unchanged, the practical details of providing those learning opportunities continually are being fine-tuned to keep pace with growing and changing needs.

Today, "the primary component of CWLC is online learning," explained Coordinator Kristy Carr, who also serves as national WMU's senior hub manager. She said the center offers "nine solid, insightful courses for the purpose of leadership development."

The nine courses explore such diverse topics as "Women Leaders from the Past," "Biblical and Theological Foundations of Leadership" and "Leading with Integrity." The self-paced courses are available online to participants on a rotating basis each quarter.

National WMU established the Christian Women's Leadership Center in 1999 in partnership with Samford University. Housed on Samford's campus for more than a decade, it primarily focused on leadership education opportunities for college women and networking events for professional women in the Birmingham area.

In recent years, the center's home moved to the national WMU building as its focus shifted to "equipping Christian laywomen in the area of leadership in the context of their Christian faith," Carr noted.

## **'Recognize and celebrate the giftedness of women'**

As early as 2013, the Christian Women's Leadership Center began offering online leadership training for women seeking resources in the area of church and community leadership. Today, the center has expanded to include a full certificate program for women who complete the nine online courses, which represent about 150 hours of coursework.

“Through CWLC, we recognize and we celebrate the giftedness of women,” Carr said. “We seek to assist them in developing their gifts and skills in serving Christ as they undertake leadership opportunities and responsibilities.”

Ina Rios, president of New York WMU, was among the recipients of last year’s Candy P. Phillips WMU Leadership Award. The annual award, established in 2019, provides funding for emerging leaders to enroll in the Christian Women’s Leadership Center’s online certificate program.

“For me, it gave me a deeper understanding of what’s required to be a faithful leader that wants to work within the Great Commission, and it gave me tools on how to be a better leader,” Rios said.

## **‘Get out of the box’**

When it comes to pursuing leadership training and ministry opportunities, “women have to get out of the box,” Rios added. “We have to see things differently, so we can see what the Lord is doing in other places and in other ways.

“When we get out of the box, we become energized. By being energized, other people get energized, and the Lord gets glorified, and the church gets edified.”

Amanda Martinsen, leadership development consultant and resource coordinator for WMU of North Carolina, serves as a Christian Women’s Leadership Center course facilitator for the program’s “Missional Living” course.

She said the course is designed for participants to examine “what it looks like to be on mission with God every single day, the way that God is using them not only in their churches, but in their communities.”

Martinsen noted the center has been “at the forefront of a lot of the online learning” since its online courses were well established “long before the pandemic hit.”

“It was wonderful to already have that in place and to be able to point people to that resource,” she added, “especially in light of the last year that we’ve walked through of church looking so different.”

Citing student reflections about their learning center experiences, Carr recalled one participant who wrote: “I took these courses to become a better leader, and, in the process, I became a better follower, a better communicator, a better planner.”

To view a related video, click [here](#).

*The Christian Women’s Leadership Center is funded in part by the Dr. Eleanor Terry Endowment for Christian Women’s Leadership. The fund, managed by the WMU Foundation, honors the memory of Terry, who helped plan the center’s launch and direction. For more information, visit [wmufoundation.com/womens-leadership-development](http://wmufoundation.com/womens-leadership-development).*