

# DBU launches Ministry Fellowship Program

February 24, 2023

The Graduate School of Ministry at Dallas Baptist University has launched a [Ministry Fellowship Program](#) offering fully accredited classes for participants in residency programs at partnering churches.



(Photo by Shannon Faulk)

Residents who complete required courses in a specific area of study earn an advanced certificate from DBU that enables them to transfer courses directly toward a master's degree in the student's respective field of ministry.

Areas of specialization include children's ministry leadership, Christian counseling, education ministry leadership, family ministry leadership, global leadership, special needs children's ministry, theological studies and worship studies.

"The Ministry Fellowship Program was developed out of DBU's desire to be a kingdom resource to churches who either already have a residency or internship program or are in the process of developing one," said program director Shelly Melia, associate dean of DBU's Graduate School of Ministry.

"Previous church staffing models relied on ministers attending seminary

prior to serving in a local church. However, a growing number of new ministers often serve in a church without any formal theological training. The Ministry Fellowship Program is designed to provide theological education alongside the valuable practical experience a resident is getting while serving inside the local church.”

Through a private donation, DBU can partner with a local church to provide an advanced certificate in ministry to the church’s resident or intern at no tuition cost to the student.

“This partnership has been a great blessing at just the right time as we are building a younger team with very gifted residents and ministers,” said Isai Cazares, discipleship pastor at Northwood Church, a Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated congregation in Keller.

“This program has facilitated our intentional development of these young leaders but also has elevated their sense of the experience of being on the Northwood team. It communicates clearly to our students that we care about them and their ongoing professional development.”

Becoming a partner of the program “was a no-brainer opportunity for us, especially when we learned how easy the process to get started and onboard a new student was,” Cazares added.

“We were motivated by this partnership because we knew the quality education students at DBU receive. Because of the list of learning focuses, the Ministry Fellowship Program is able to aid in providing the specialized learning and tools needed to further equip our interns, residents and young staff,” he said.

“It allows us as a ministry staff to focus more on providing the opportunities and environment for them to gain hands-on ministry experience and ensure they are healthy disciples.”

Dan Gibson, vice president for graduate affairs, expressed excitement about the opportunity to partner with churches through the program.

“The Ministry Fellowship Program equips ministers in their respective fields of calling, while also being a kingdom resource to their church and congregations. We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of our partners to make this endeavor a reality,” Gibson said.

In addition to Northwood Church, other participating congregations include The Heights Church in Richardson, Cornerstone Baptist Church in Dallas, Oak View Baptist Church in Irving, Longbranch Community Baptist Church in Midlothian, Fielder Church in Arlington and Valley Ranch Baptist Church in Coppell.

Other Texas churches participating are El Buen Pastor Church in Fort Worth, Community Life Church in Forney, Northwest Bible Church in Dallas, Champion Forest Church in Houston, Cross Creek Church in Colleyville, Igreja Batista Brasileira in Bedford, Stonegate Church in Midlothian, Rush Creek Church in Arlington and The Avenue Church in Waxahachie.

Two out-of-state congregations also are participants in the program—King’s Covenant Church in Bridgewater, N.J., and Primera Iglesia Bautista in Pompano Beach, Fla.

*Based on reporting by Dallas Baptist University’s communications office.*