



COVENANT  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

December 2018

**Why send your minister to pursue a DMin degree?**

*Vocational ministers don't burn out because they forget they are ministers;  
they forget they are people, sheep always in need of the Shepherd.*

Dear Church Session or Ministry Board Members,

Studies show that ministry leaders are increasingly leaving vocational ministry when they had hoped to serve for a lifetime. Why is this occurring? As recent research makes clear, ministry leadership is uniquely complicated, taxing, and isolating. Ministry leaders are often unhealthy physically, socially, and emotionally due to the stress of the profession.<sup>1</sup> All too often, the minister's role defines all areas of life, including marriage and home, and the responsibilities and expectations require more work hours per week than other managers and professionals.<sup>2</sup> Unlike other professions, ministry work has few formal arrangements for ongoing learning and development, no requirements for continuing education, and little structure for peer collaboration.

So, how do vocational ministry leaders pursue learning and growth? Where can those who lead the rest of us in ministry find sustaining mentoring and pastoral care? What helps them stay current in our rapidly changing world? Where do they find support in continuing to engage an increasingly hostile culture with gospel-derived love and truth? When do they routinely read and reflect in the fast pace of their 24/7 work? How can they refuel their passion for Christ and for His service, so they can serve for a lifetime?

The good news into this sobering reality is the increasing awareness that part of what sustains ministry leaders so that they will flourish over the long haul are rhythms of rest and reflection (promoting self-care); directed reading and learning opportunities (facilitating ongoing spiritual formation); and relationships with other ministry leaders (who understand the unique stresses and complications of vocational ministry). The health and fruitfulness of a ministry largely correlates to the health and growth of its leaders. Ministries thrive as a direct result of leaders who are spiritually mature and *maturing*, thoughtful, emotionally strong, culturally intelligent, and imaginative.

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<sup>1</sup> Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, Donald C. Guthrie: *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. See introductory chapters and bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> Jackson W. Carroll. *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

At Covenant Seminary, the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree is a rigorous, professional doctorate for practitioners, which focuses on the practice of ministry (like a Doctor of Psychology or Doctor of Business Administration). In terms of your ministry leader, we have designed our robust and well-facilitated DMin cohort to provide the following:

- A defining experience for surviving and thriving in ministry leadership.
- Continuing education for seasoned ministry leaders.
- Space and time for collaboration with peers and those with relevant ministry expertise
- Shepherding care with peers and faculty who understand their vocational world.
- Accountability to read and apply relevant research and resources to one's context.
- Support to process recent hardships in the context of trusted relationships.
- Renewed perspective from brief, structured times away from the local context.
- Encouragement to keep learning and pursuing excellence in ministry leadership.
- Practical benefits from course projects that focus on one's local context.
- Mentoring relationships for encouragement in one's spiritual formation.
- Networks and lifetime friendships with other likeminded ministry leaders.

Thank you for your prayerfully consideration of providing financial, structural, and relational support for your ministry leader to pursue a DMin degree. Because we are confident the ministry as a whole will benefit from your leader's participation in our DMin program, we invite you to reach out to us if we can be of help in your decision-making process.

In Christ's service,

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