

Lay Academy Faith Foundations Courses and Outcomes¹

The primary goal of Lay Academy Faith Foundations is to provide individuals with a firm foundation in the Christian Faith and an increased ability for theological reflection and faith-filled action in every aspect of their lives.

Individuals who complete two years of Faith Foundations will:

- Speak confidently about their faith with others
- Respect a wide range of theological perspectives and faith experiences
- Increase awareness of and respect for the faith traditions of others
- Seek common ground in the midst of differences
- Express a deeper understanding of their own beliefs and faith convictions
- Develop familiarity with Christian Spiritual Practices
- Grow in spiritual maturity by adopting or deepening a personal spiritual practice
- Broaden and deepen knowledge about scripture and theology
- Interpret scripture with greater confidence and purpose.
- Reflect theologically on the intersections between scripture, our world, their lives and God's ongoing presence and activity.
- Understand how God calls us to live our faith in the world today
- Enrich, encourage and support the life of the local congregation in cooperation with their Pastor and other leaders in the church.
- Act on faith within the congregation, Association and Conference
- Act on faith in and with the local community

What follows is a presentation of the courses we will offer.

¹ Throughout this document I have suggested which of the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ might be developed through the various courses. These are just my suggestions.

Faith Foundations Year 1²

Introduction to Lay Academy – July or August of year 1; Instructor: Tisha Brown and Sandra Graham

- Provide participants with a framework for what to expect from the two years of Lay Academy:
 - What you will receive/gain
 - How it will be useful to you on your spiritual journey
 - How you apply your learning and demonstrate growth
- Build confidence in their ability to be an active learning Community
- Identify Participants' learning styles and set personal growth & learning goals
- Develop frameworks for theological reflection
- Provide instrument for assessing the experience of Lay Academy (do this three times)

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Acquire the tools to participate successfully in Lay Academy - Faith Foundations
- Prepare a faith statement that reflects their current beliefs. Revisit this at the end of each year of Faith Foundations
- Identify their primary learning style
- Develop personal growth goals

Introduction to Christian Theology – You ARE a Theologian (September) Instructor: Dow Edgerton³

The main goal of this session is that participants will understand that they are theologians; that their thoughts and ideas about God are valid and important; and that they have authority as a person of faith to speak of God. This session will also:

- Provide theological language and tools to think about life and our world through the lens of theology and faith
- Connect scripture and theology by studying how people of faith make sense of their lives with God

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Develop theological language and vocabulary

² Participation in Lay Academy overall may exhibit Mark II. **Transformational Leadership Skills:** Encouraging leadership development through continuing education and lifelong learning (your own and others).

³ This course may develop mark: **VI Theological Praxis:** Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity. Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives. Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching and ecclesial community leadership.

- Participants will explore the intersection between their lives, their beliefs about God, our world and what they read in scripture.
- Participants will develop appreciation for a wide variety of theological perspectives.

The Hebrew Bible (Older Testament) Part 1 & 2 (November & January) Instructor: Carolyn Pressler⁴

These two sessions will:

- Introduce the literature, themes, major stories, authors etc. of the Older Testament and the various historical/critical and exegetical methods used by scholars to study Scripture
- Provide tools to study and interpret scripture, engage in the discussion of its meaning with others and develop authority experientially

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Identify intersections between their lives of faith, their congregational lives and our contemporary context and the stories and writings of the Older Testament
- Read and interpret scripture confidently
- Increase awareness of available resources and techniques for scripture interpretation
- Share what they've learned with their local congregations and communities in creative and thoughtful ways

Christian Theology: An Overview (March) Instructor: Carolyn Roncolato⁵

The primary goal of this overview of Christian Theological thought is to trace ideas about God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Church, Forgiveness, Salvation, Sin, the Cross/atonement, Suffering throughout Christian history – how have these ideas evolved over time?

- Provide a broad introduction to the various schools of theological thought (systematics, womanist/feminist, liberationist etc.) and the voices that remain influential in our contemporary understandings (Augustine, Greek Philosophy, Martin Luther, etc.)

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Engage the big questions of their faith and of the Christian faith as a whole

⁴ This course may develop Mark **IV. Sacred Stories and Traditions**: Exhibiting knowledge, understanding and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Understanding the history of the Christian church, from biblical times forward.

⁵ This course may develop mark: **VI Theological Praxis**: Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity. Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives. Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching and ecclesial community leadership.

- Address their own big questions using what they have learned so far
- Talk about their faith with confidence
- Develop appreciation for a wide variety of theological perspectives

Christian Ethics & Leadership (April) Instructor: Ben Sanders III (Ethics & Black Theology) at Eden Seminary⁶

The primary goal of this course is to provide an introduction to Christian Ethics through the lens of a particular issue relevant to our contemporary lives and world.

- Discuss the role of the church and people of faith in addressing the issues facing our world.
- Provide participants with tools to identify a pertinent issue in their community and develop a strategy for engaging that issue from the perspective of their Christian Faith

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Identify a key issue in their community and propose a response based on Christian ethical principals
- Implement a strategy for addressing a community issue
- Report on the outcome of their efforts and its impact on them and their community

⁶ This course may develop Mark II. **Transformational Leadership Skills:** Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power. Working effectively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Drawing on the ministry of Jesus to confront injustice and oppression.

Faith Foundations Year 2⁷

Christian Spiritual Practices/The Art and Craft of Discipleship (September) Instructor: TBD⁸

The primary goal of this course is to expose participants to a wide array of Christian Spiritual Practices. The format of this course is experiential.

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Experience a variety of Christian Spiritual Practices
- Grow in spiritual maturity by adopting or deepening a personal spiritual practice

New Testament Parts 1 & 2 (November and January) Instructor: Karl Kuhn⁹

These two sessions will:

- Introduce the literature, themes, major stories, authors etc. of the Older Testament and the various historical/critical and exegetical methods used by scholars to study Scripture
- Provide tools to study and interpret scripture, engage in the discussion of its meaning with others and develop authority experientially

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Identify intersections between their lives of faith, their congregational lives and our contemporary context and the stories and writings of the Older Testament
- Read and interpret scripture confidently
- Increase awareness of available resources and techniques for scripture interpretation
- Share what they've learned with their local congregations and communities in creative and thoughtful ways

⁷ Participation in Lay Academy overall may exhibit Mark **II. Transformational Leadership Skills**: Encouraging leadership development through continuing education and lifelong learning (your own and others).

⁸ Participation in this course may develop Mark **I. Spiritual Foundations and Ongoing Spiritual Practices**: Loving God, following Jesus, being guided by the Holy Spirit. Living a life of discipleship. Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices. Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the church. Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual nurture and development.

⁹ This course may develop Mark **IV. Sacred Stories and Traditions**: Exhibiting knowledge, understanding and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Understanding the history of the Christian church, from biblical times forward.

Christian History: Mission to Missional (March) Instructor: Ben Menghini¹⁰

The primary goal of this course is to introduce the broad strokes of Christian History through the lens of Christian Mission. Participants will explore the evolution of the Christian approach to Mission and its impact on how Christians relate to the poor, the marginalized and those of other religious traditions. Participants will explore Christian approaches to mission and the ways in which they are continuing to evolve and are calling for a renewed approach to the world.

Outcomes:

Participants will:

- Discuss how the events of the past influence the ways in which we practice our faith today
- Participants will Identify ways in which the history of Christian Mission has shaped our nation and the world in which we live
- Use the learning of this class to critique how their congregation engages in mission
- Offer resources for alternative approaches to mission in congregations

¹⁰ This course may develop mark **II. Transformational Leadership Skills:** Working effectively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Mark **IV. Sacred Stories and Traditions:** Understanding the history of the Christian church, from biblical times forward. Mark **VII. Justice and Mercy:** Engaging in Mission and Outreach

Exploring World Religions (April) Instructor: Kevin McConeghey¹¹

The primary goal of this course is to introduce participants to key components and core beliefs of a variety of World Religions. A secondary goal is for participants to compare and contrast what they learn about other religions with what they know about Christianity. This will be accomplished through reading and reflection, experiential opportunities and the arts.

Outcomes

Participants will:

- Experience some of the core beliefs and practices of a variety of world religions
- Understand the similarities and differences between the core beliefs and practices of other religions and the Christian Faith
- Appreciate the beauty and diversity of religious expression in our world

¹¹ This course may develop mark **II. Transformational Leadership Skills**: Working effectively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity. Mark **VIII. Inter- and Intrapersonal Characteristics**: Respecting the dignity of all God's people.