



July 31st – August 1st

42nd EPAUMC

Laity Academy

Eastern University

1300 Eagle RD, Saint Davids, PA

2026 COURSE CATALOG

The courses offered at the 2026 Laity Academy are divided into the Christ Servant Ministry categories of the BASIC Course, Speaking, Leading, and Caring. This year you may select from 11 courses, including 5 **NEW** classes for 2026. **Registration closes July 20th**

BASIC

BASIC – THE JOURNEY BEGINS

SPEAKING

SPEAKING 1 – PREACHING To BE HEARD

SPEAKING 2 – PREACHING BY The NUMBERS

LEADING

CREATION, EVOLUTION, INTELLIGENT DESIGN THEORY

FORGIVING BIBLICALLY: *How God & Jesus Instructs Us to Let Go* **NEW**

FROM CALLING to LEADING: *Practical Skills for New Church Leaders* **NEW**

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT – *Re-Discover the Lost Art of Communication* **NEW**

METHODIST THEOLOGY - *Through the Lens of John Wesley's*

Sermons & Charles Wesley's Hymns

MISSION, MINISTRY & FUNDING

CARING

A PRACTICAL PATHWAY to CULTURAL COMPETENCY **NEW**

WHAT TO SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE HURTING **NEW**

BASIC

1. BASIC COURSE: The Journey Begins

Ready to explore God's call in your life? Take the first step in the Christ Servant Ministry program with others who have heard that still, small voice calling in the night or are sure they have been hit across the head with a two-by-four. The Basic Course provides a firm foundational understanding of God's presence in our lives, the meaning and mission of the church, and insight into how and where you can apply the gifts you have and will receive from our Lord. You will learn about the need for servant ministries in our world and what it means to be a servant for Christ. The Basic Course is also the first step towards further development as a Certified Lay Speaker or Certified Lay Minister.

NOTE: Participants in this course must request the recommendation and approval from their Local Church and submit it with their registration. Registrants are required to complete assignments from a Basic Course Manual prior to attending the Laity Academy.

PREREQUISITE: Students must complete the application to enter the CSM program and submit to Ms. Judy Ehninger prior to the class.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: Instructor will assign homework equivalent to 2 hrs. of instruction to be completed and submitted prior to the class.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: is limited to 15 students.

INSTRUCTOR: Judy Ehninger, Certified Lay Minister

SPEAKING

2. SPEAKING 1: PREACHING TO BE HEARD

Speaking 1 is the basic course for those who wish to preach, or to enhance their speaking abilities. This class will look at the focus of our preaching, share ideas on the development of sermons, and create an opportunity for each participant to develop and present a "mini" sermon to the group. An important part of this experience is the sharing of feedback in a supportive and safe setting so that all who wish to preach can benefit from the group. The expectation is that our time together will be one of joy and excitement.

PREREQUISITE: Completion of The Basic Course in Christ Servant Ministry.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: Instructor will assign homework equivalent to 2 hrs. of instruction to be completed and submitted prior to the class.

SPECIAL NOTES: For **CSM participants**, this course is recognized as an advanced course in speaking. Successful completion of Speaking 1 is one of the requirements to receive Certified Lay Speaker credentials.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: is limited to 16 students.

INSTRUCTOR: Rev. Harold Burkett

3. SPEAKING 2: PREACHING BY THE NUMBERS

” Color by number” books help children become something of an artist. While preaching will always require particular spiritual gifts to be effective, it is an art, and by following a few simple steps most preachers can improve their craft.

Designed for those who have already learned how to craft an individual sermon, this class will look at the overall process of preaching, how to coordinate preaching topics with other aspects of ministry, and how to ensure that the preaching program has a purpose.

Participants must have taken the prerequisite CSM course in preaching and received a certificate from CSM Director, George Hollich.

It is highly recommended that participants have read (or at least purchased) *Sermons Reimagined*, by Rich Chromey, and *Unleashing the Word*, by Adam Hamilton.

SPECIAL NOTES: For **CSM participants**, this course is recognized as an advanced course in speaking. Successful completion of Speaking 2 is one of the requirements to receive Certified Lay Speaker credentials.

PREREQUISITES: Must have received a certificate from CSM Director, George Hollich, and completed a Speaking 1 class.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: Instructor will assign homework equivalent to 2 hrs. of instruction to be completed and submitted according to the directions in the instructor’s initial email.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: is limited to 10 students.

INSTRUCTOR: Rev. Dr. Lloyd Speer

LEADING

4. CREATION, EVOLUTION, INTELLIGENT DESIGN THEORY

The subject of ‘origins’ remains an ongoing source of high interest, discussion, and inquiry. The topic has far-reaching implications which involve ‘big questions. For example:

- “What is the best explanation for the origin of the cosmos? “
- “What is a reasonable explanation for the origin of life on earth?”
- “Can modern science inform our understanding of the Genesis record in the Scriptures?”
- “Could ‘evolution’ be the mechanism through which God created life on earth, including we □ ourselves?”
- “Is Genesis history, or is it best seen as allegory mixed with metaphor?”

In 1859 Charles Darwin released his well-known book, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection. This class will explore a fundamental question: “What do we know today that Charles Darwin, in the mid 1800s, did not yet understand?” A question which derives from this one is, “does

the significant increase in scientific knowledge since the time of Darwin strengthen or weaken the data base underlying evolutionary theory?"

We will first examine the primary areas of science relevant to these questions: Cytology, Molecular Biology, Genetics, Paleontology, Laws of Thermodynamics, Law of Biogenesis, Universal Law of Cause and Effect, Modern Information Theory. If you do not have a strong background in science but are interested in having answers to the questions proposed in the first portion of this course description, do not allow that to hinder you from exploring this important subject. If you have a basic understanding of high school biology, this will be a sufficient foundation from which to build. Even though each of these topics can be explored in great depth, our goal is not to engage in 'content overload'. There will be opportunities built into our curriculum to answer questions. And there are many supplemental resources available to those who 'would like to go deeper.'

After the primary scientific questions have been considered, we will examine the Biblical Record concerning the subject of 'origins. Although references to God's role as the Author of Creation are found in both the Old and New Testaments, there will be a specific emphasis in this portion of our class on Jesus' perspective about Creation.

PREREQUISITES & HOMEWORK:

- Students will view a DVD consisting of 6, ten minutes of segments which summarize primary content areas evaluating Darwin's Theory using research about which he himself had no knowledge. [approximately 1 hour] The presenters are highly credentialed research scientists active in their fields. A brief worksheet, based on the DVD content, will be completed by each registrant prior to our on-site meeting. A packet will be mailed to your home address – USPS - which will contain the DVD, the brief question sheet, and a separate document explaining the fundamental differences between "Creationism" and "Intelligent Design Theory."
- Students will complete a set of questions sent to your email inbox to be returned to the instructor by August 13th.
- Completion of both assignments is equivalent to 2 hrs. of instructions and is required for completion of this course.

INSTRUCTOR: Steve Myers

5. FORGIVING BIBLICALLY: HOW GOD & JESUS INSTRUCTS US TO LET GO NEW

How do you let go? Have you ever struggled with letting go or forgiving someone? How do you manage and deal with the feelings of hurt and sadness? How has your faith informed you to let go? In fact, how does God instruct us to let go and how did Jesus teach us to let go? If you struggle with letting go and/or feeling helpless in supporting others in their healing journey, then this course is for you.

Using scripture as the foundation a 3-step process will be explored of what is biblical forgiveness and how to let go. Using discussions, small and large group work, experiential activities, video clips, and reflection participants will uncover the challenges of healing emotional hurts. Participants will consider the blocks and benefits to forgiving biblically and letting go. In addition, through discussion, introspection, and scripture, participants will practice self-examination just like John Wesley did with

his 22 daily questions. During the workshop participants will have an opportunity to practice the 3-step process in their own lives and develop a forgiveness action plan.

PRE-CLASS PREPARATION/ASSIGNMENTS: 2 Hours (Assignment is due prior to class).

Participants will be given a series of readings and/or video clips. From what is provided, participants will create a summary of the challenges and benefits of forgiving based on the reading and video clips. In addition, participants will evaluate the challenges and benefits they developed and describe if they agree or disagree with them and why. Participants will be expected to share their findings with the class in break-out sessions. All materials will be sent to the participants in .pdf or print format upon registration.

RESOURCES: Participants will be introduced to a variety of resources on forgiveness, trauma, and letting go. A bibliography/reference list for the course will be provided.

INSTRUCTOR: Reverend Dave Piltz

6. FROM CALLING TO LEADING: PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR NEW CHURCH LEADERS NEW

Leadership skills for lay pastors, board chairpersons, SPRC chairpersons and others to maximize one's leadership skills and facilitate your local church mission. This class is designed for CSMs and CLM who have a pastoral assignment, for chairpersons of SPRC, Trustees, Finance and Administrative Board. Of course, everyone else is welcome to attend.

At the conclusion of this class, participants will be able to understand their leadership style and how to implement them to foster teamwork and facilitate their church vision.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Outside reading as noted above with a 1-page paper completed prior to class based on the reading. Participants will share their experiences with the leaders noted in the book and the self-surveys in the book regarding their own leadership style. During class, they will participate in a survey of workers to help them understand their beliefs about what motivates workers. There will be small groups to share their results of both the surveys and the homework paper. Class will also include an activity to help them envision areas in their local community that could increase their church's mission field and effect church growth.

PREREQUISITES: None; this class is open to all laity, including first-time laity academy students.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: Instructor will assign homework equivalent to 2 hrs. of instruction to be completed and submitted prior to the class.

INSTRUCTORS: John Lafferty and Margie Krut

7. LET'S TALK ABOUT IT – RE DISCOVER the LOST ART of COMMUNICATION NEW

This class will provide an introduction into the elements of communication, examining the "ins and outs" of effective communication. It will look at having difficult conversations, and using communication to, hopefully, resolve and even prevent conflict. It will focus on verbal and non-verbal communication, writing, and the all too important skills of listening.

Why is there a need for this class? A top concern of most businesses relates to communication, more importantly, the lack of effective communication. The church is no different. We know that we often communicate ineffectively, we experience it many times both in and outside of Sunday service, and we always complain about it when it occurs. Now let's do something about it. Everyone and most living things in nature communicate in one form or another.

- Communication is how we build relationships, maintain trust, lead followers, motivate others, and show love. And these are just a few things we do through communication. So, we need to do it right, or at least better.
- Communication, through whatever form it takes, has many parts. Each part can potentially impact the effectiveness of our communication. This class will look at those parts and address ways we can make each part more effective and efficient. As the body has many parts working together for the good of the whole, we'll examine how to make "the whole" of our communication with each other better.
- Communication is more than talking. In fact, what we call "talking" is only a small part of communicating. There is a whole world of other means by which we get our message out through communication. Done well, these various means enhance the message. Done poorly, we risk your message getting lost, misunderstood, or even mistrusted.

As the UMC enters a new season, we must be able to communicate with who we are to a world in need of hope. The days of talking about who we are through numbers (aka, metrics), need to give way to telling our story. In doing so, we cannot simply rely on those who hold official positions related to communication. They have a job to do, and they do it well, but we in our congregations must also be able to tell the story.

If someone is looking for a "how to" class on promoting the church on social media or on the web, this ISN'T the class for them. This is the class they need BEFORE they do that. This is the class they need to communicate with those in our churches and those outside the walls of our churches.

Now is the time to improve our communication skills. In our fast-paced world, we have only so much time to connect through communication.

PREREQUISITES: None; this class is open to all laity. IT IS recommended for CSM's and CLM's.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS PRE WORK REQUIRED: Instructor WILL assign equivalent to 2 hrs. of instruction to be completed prior to the first class session.

INSTRUCTOR: Joseph Skarbowski, CSM

8. METHODIST THEOLOGY – THROUGH THE LENS OF JOHN WESLEY'S SERMONS & CHARLES WESLEY'S HYMNS

Many United Methodists understand "What" we do at every Sunday morning worship service, at our Charge Conferences, and at Annual Conferences. But "Methodist Theology Through the Lens of John Wesley Sermons & Charles Wesley Hymns" is a class for anyone who wants to understand "Why" we United Methodists do what we do (from a theological and polity standpoint). The rich heritage of John Wesley's Sermons and Charles Wesley's hymns continue to serve as a bridge from the earliest

Wesleyan foundations of faith in the 1700's to the recent 2020/2024 General Conference. As United Methodists, we practice our faith, and we sing our faith as well.

At the conclusion of the class, participants will be able to discuss the theological underpinnings of several United Methodist “distinctives” – “Why” United Methodists celebrate the Lord’s Supper the way we do, “Why” United Methodists promote connectionally and accountability, and “Why” United Methodists are moving to become a more regionally centered global church, among others distinctives.

SPECIAL NOTES: Participants will be resourced with materials from John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology, The United Methodist Hymnal, The United Methodist Experience: A Sourcebook Vols. 1 & 2, and from the UMC General Commission on Archives & History.

PREREQUISITES: None; this class is open to all laity but is especially recommended for CSM’s and CLM’s.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: Instructor has assigned prep work equivalent to 2 hrs. of instruction to be completed prior to the first-class session. Outside readings and hymn recordings totaling 2 hours will be sent to the participants in .pdf and MP3 format upon registration. Participants will be expected to share their findings with the class and in break-out sessions.

INSTRUCTOR: Rev. Mark Salvacion, J.D., M.Div.

9. MISSION, MINISTRY & FUNDING

Jesus teaches us to love God and love our neighbors. John Wesley taught the importance of both personal holiness and social holiness. How do we combine these guidelines in our church ministries today?

Giving money to mission work is important, but do you need to receive money to accomplish your mission work or to advocate for justice in your community? Scripture helps us understand that God expects us to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). As we seek to discover ways of doing justice and showing kindness to our neighbors, our United Methodist Social Principles and the Faith and Fact cards of the General Board of Church and Society, as well as the resources of the General Board of Global Ministries, help us to see possible actions we can take through our churches.

However, we often find that doing what we feel God is calling us to do may take more financial resources than we have available. This course, presented by the Conference Global Ministries Team, will help you understand how our missionaries and mission projects are funded, and how you can raise money for mission work or obtain money for mercy and justice ministries through Peace with Justice Grants and approval as a Conference Advance Special.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Upon completion of this course, the participants will be able to:

- Describe the resources available through the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) and the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS).
- Use the 2024 Social Principles of the United Methodist Church to identify an action your church could take that would meet the priorities for obtaining a Conference Peace with Justice Grant.

- Describe how to provide funding for our EPA Conference-supported missionaries and mission projects, especially those in Tanzania, Liberia, and the Congo, and describe how to develop a Covenant Relationship with a missionary.
- Identify what our EPA Conference Advance Specials are doing and identify a project that your church could do and how to apply for Advance Special status to gain funding for the project.

PREREQUISITES: None; this class is open to all laity, including first-time laity academy students.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: Instructor will assign post homework equivalent to 2 hrs. of instruction to be completed at home and submitted to the instructor within 2 weeks following the class.

INSTRUCTOR: Deaconess Barbara Drake

CARING

10. A PRACTICAL PATHWAY TO CULTURAL COMPETENCY

NEW

This course is designed to expand one’s knowledge and understanding of cultural competency and relationship dynamics. The objective is to provide an overview of the pathway to cultural competency for living respectfully and harmoniously with all people. There will be definitions, illustrations, and activities to introduce the topics of diversity, culture, implicit bias, stereotypes, prejudice, and micro and macro-aggressions.

At the conclusion of the class, participants will have both information and some practice for working more competently with people of all backgrounds within the local church and beyond. They will also be ready to share vocabulary, concepts and tools with members of their congregations about ways to prepare for, or to move further into, welcoming and making disciples of Jesus Christ as part of the life of their congregations.

Our neighborhoods and communities are more diverse than ever. Our congregations and church life need to be approachable and welcoming to realize the joys, challenges and opportunities these changes offer. A culturally competent congregation is fertile ground for this growth to happen.

PREREQUISITES: None; this class is open to all laity, including first-time laity academy students.

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: The instructions for an interview project on culture and race in the local church will be emailed to registered participants; responses are due back to course coordinator prior to the start of class.

INSTRUCTORS: Members of the EPA Cross Racial/Cross Cultural Team of instructors from various cultures, led by Dennis Fisher, Rev. Stacey Jones-Anderson and Beverly Andrews. *The full team list will be shared with registrants.*”

11. WHAT TO SAY TO PEOPLE WHO ARE HURTING

NEW

When was the last time you found yourself in a difficult position stuck for the right words? Perhaps a friend shared tragic news; you were in the receiving line at a Funeral or walking into a hospital room

not quite sure what to say. This course will give you the insight needed for conversations with people who are hurting, whether you are in Starbucks, someone's home, or the hospital. Knowing what to say and when takes practice and patience, so we will be role-playing to better equip you for your next uncomfortable encounter.

Instructional methods include lecture, role playing, and class discussion.

By the end of class participants will be able to

- Recognize Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication
- Demonstrate Effective Communication in Different Situations
- Develop Self-Care Tools
- Provide Scripture for Support

2 HOURS OUT-OF-CLASS WORK REQUIRED: We will use "What to Say to People Who Are Hurting". It may be purchased from Amazon. Read Chapters 12-15 prior to class and be ready to answer questions.

INSTRUCTOR: Laurie Lewis, RN, Christ Servant Minister