

Academy for Vital Christianity offers chance to explore contemporary religious issues close to home

Call it a seminary without walls.

The Academy for Vital Christianity brings top theological scholars to teach short classes at churches around the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota. This spring, for instance, nationally acclaimed professor of historical theology Paul Capetz will offer a five-night class on “From One Jesus to Many Christianities.” Psychologist and ordained minister Mark Sundby will teach a two-Saturdays class on “Transforming Conflict.” And religion and arts scholar Wilson Yates will teach a two-part class on Spirituality and the Arts with one session at the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts.

The Academy was founded two years ago by United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in partnership with the Minnesota Conferences of the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. The aim: to offer seminary-quality classes in locations and formats that make it possible for individuals and clergy to pursue a deeper understanding of the Christian tradition without the commitment needed to take a seminary class.

The response has been enthusiastic.

Dawn Archer of Bismarck ND wrote:

“I greatly appreciated the professionalism and expertise of the professor. The reasonable cost of tuition, as well as accessibility of the location, made this a viable educational opportunity I would gladly take part in again. Thank you.”

Troy James Pribnow, UCC, Hastings MN, enjoyed Neil Elliott’s class on the Bible:

“Neil Elliot was the instructor and was great. We all got a LOT out of ‘What does the Bible have to do with Life Today?’”

Rev. Michael Wuehler, pastor at Christ UMC, Rochester MN, spoke positively about the Academy as a whole:

“I greatly appreciate United Theological Seminary’s Academy for Vital Christianity. I have been involved in two workshops. Both have been intellectually stimulating as well as a great setting for learning and professional growth. Most of all, I appreciate UTS moving beyond its own walls and creating learning opportunities in a variety of settings. The seminary has provided an exciting and fresh approach to continuing my education.”

“Christianity is relevant, powerful, and transformative for our 21st century world,” said Rev. Mary McNamara, president of United Theological Seminary. “The Academy is a way for us to reach members of congregations where they are and introduce them to our intellectually challenging and inclusive form of theological education.”

Other spring classes in the Metro will cover women and Bible, the hidden effects of racism in the church, and evangelism. Other classes on worship, living a contemplative life, the Bible, and reimagining the

contemporary church will be offered in Alexandria, Duluth, Mankato, and Rochester. All are taught by members of United's nationally renowned regular and adjunct faculty along with well-known regional experts.

To register or find out more about the Academy for Vital Christianity's spring offerings, contact Renee Flesner at rflesner@unitedseminary.edu or 651.255.6138, or check the Web site at www.unitedseminary.edu/CommunityPrograms/academy.asp.