

DAMASCUS PROJECT

A Guide

WHAT IS THE DAMASCUS PROJECT?

IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

WHAT ARE THE LEARNING TRACKS?

WHAT IS THE DAMASCUS PROJECT NETWORK?

HOW DOES IT WORK?

OUR ORIGIN STORY

Since our founding in 2017, we have remained committed to re-imagining what it looks like to follow Jesus in our modern context and inviting people to join us. After our team studied the story of Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, we were struck by his transformation in a new way. As we considered the evolution of the Wisconsin Conference's beloved Lay Academy, we kept coming back to the idea of engaging the strengths of our past to create a new future. We want to be your guides along the "road to Damascus" as you reconsider your foundational faith and make room for where Jesus is leading you.

Together, we will start carving a new path.

Through online theology courses, we equip seekers, lay leaders and authorized ministers to take the next step in their faith journeys, articulate why they believe what they believe, and become more confident leaders. We know not everyone is able to attend seminary or has time to drive to in-person classes, but that shouldn't mean you don't get access to theological training. With virtual on-demand classes and live discussions, you can learn from home while still participating in a supportive community where questions are encouraged and your opinions are welcome.

There's an urgent need for spiritually grounded, confident lay leaders and authorized ministers who are ready to use their gifts to serve the church and community. We believe that everyone has a role to play in the body of Christ and that the church needs your leadership now more than ever.

When you sign up for one of our courses, you'll not only revitalize your own faith and find your footing in a shifting culture, but you'll also be a vital part of leading the next generation.

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The Damascus Project

DAMASCUS PROJECT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Create brave, non-judgmental, theologically open spaces so that learners can explore and deepen their faith.
2. Equip all the saints by providing relevant theological learning so that laity are empowered to boldly speak their faith and share their gifts for ministries of all kinds.
3. Provide high-quality continuing education for clergy to promote a culture of lifelong learning and professional development in our congregations and conferences.
4. Provide multiple pathways for MiDs, creating opportunities for ministry training in alignment with the UCC Marks for Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers.
5. Strengthen the whole body of Christ by creating interactive opportunities for clergy and laity to grow together as leaders and learners modeling healthy shared leadership and governance.
6. Respond in particular to the needs of small and rural churches and their leaders nurturing their vitality while also drawing on their wisdom for the benefit of the wider church.

THE DAMASCUS PROJECT WORLD

DAMASCUS PROJECT WEBSITE
<https://the-damascus-project.org>

WHAT CAN I DO HERE?
Meet the Damascus Project
Sign up for the newsletter
Learn about Courses and Cohorts and sign up!
Pay for Courses and Cohorts
Access the Damascus Project Network

DAMASCUS PROJECT NETWORK
<https://learning.the-damascus-project.org>

WHAT CAN I DO HERE?
Access Cohorts and Courses
Converse with peers
Ask questions
Seek advice or resources
Meet colleagues
Discuss ideas
Invite others to join

COURSES

WHAT CAN I DO HERE?
Access on-demand course content
Join live discussions with peers and instructors
Grow in faith
Hone your skills for leadership
Discover a community

WHAT CAN I DO HERE?
Share and acquire resources
Join short-term, focused conversations
Connect with others

COHORTS
Rotating options include:

- Leadership Matters series
- Faith Formation & Youth Ministry
- Book Discussion Groups
- Seasonal Topics

DAMASCUS PROJECT COURSES AND COHORTS

It is a challenging time to be a person of faith. Maybe you're questioning your beliefs or feel uncertain about the future of your church. Without the tools and support of a like-minded community, it can feel overwhelming to navigate or even see the road ahead.

At The Damascus Project, we offer a non-judgmental, theologically open space for you to wrestle alongside others on the same journey. Through online interactive courses and cohorts, you'll learn how to take ownership of your faith and be equipped to develop and share your leadership gifts with your community. Together, we will begin to carve a new path.

Courses are longer-term, more in-depth learning opportunities such as Faith Foundations, Leadership Skills and Ministry Studies. Our courses are currently geared to seekers, lay leaders and people preparing for ministry in the United Church of Christ.

Cohorts are our rotating, ever evolving opportunities to gather around a specific topic. They include ongoing discussions around important ministry areas like leadership or youth ministry and faith formation and short-term conversations on a focused topic like a book or seasonal preparation. All cohorts are open to everyone (seekers, lay leaders, people preparing for ministry and authorized ministers).

For seekers, lay leaders and people preparing for ministry:

THREE LEARNING TRACKS

FAITH FOUNDATIONS

The primary goal of Faith Foundations is to provide participants with a firm foundation in the Christian Faith and an increased ability for theological reflection and faith-filled action. Each unit is designed to provide resources and support to grow in faith, become more confident discerning God's presence and action and develop language to share faith with others.

Subject areas covered in this learning track:

- Biblical Study
- Theological Exploration
- Faith growth and development
- History

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The primary goal of Leadership Skills is to equip participants to be spiritually grounded, self-aware, faithful and effective leaders in local congregations and in their wider communities.

This learning area focuses on leadership defined as the ability of an individual or group of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization. It also includes learning units and courses that promote skill building in key aspects of church administration and management.

Subject areas covered in this learning track:

- UCC history and polity
- Leadership style/personality style (The Enneagram)
- Conflict transformation
- Leading faith-filled meetings
- Financial literacy and stewardship for congregational leaders

MINISTRY STUDIES *(coming winter 2023)*

The primary goal of Ministry Studies is to provide participants with the opportunity to learn about, explore and practice foundational ministry skills.

Subject areas covered in this learning track:

- Faith formation for all ages
- Spiritual care/pastoral care
- Preaching
- Planning and leading worship

For authorized ministers:

CONTINUING EDUCATION

An ever-evolving set of cohorts and course offerings including:

- Seasonal worship, preaching and faith formation preparation
- Book discussion groups
- Leadership Matters: An ongoing leadership discussion series
- Anti-racism training and study

KUDOS

One of the things I love about Faith Foundations is hearing everyone else's perspective and opinion. It is important to me to know what other people are thinking and experiencing as we go along. The discussions we have in the course site enrich this experience for me. —*Sandy*

I've always been an explorer or an adventurer. I'm always looking for things. This class has helped me identify where to dig. I have more questions now than I did to begin with. I find myself taking what I've learned to family and friends and we are having these rich theological conversations. That's good stuff. For me, this has been life changing. —*Mike*

The Damascus Project has given me some additional tools. Before coming here I had some tools but now more and more tools are being added and I'm also learning new ways to use the tools I already had. This experience and the tools I've gained really shape how I engage with the youth in my congregation. —*Devon*

Prior to coming to the Damascus Project I was worried that I wouldn't be knowledgeable enough. But what I have found is that everyone is supportive of one another and appreciative of what we have to offer. What I am seeking is a sense of confidence that the message I'm sharing with the children I work with in my congregation is one that provides them with a better foundation than the one I feel I had in my life. —*Dar*

I have been out of seminary for almost 20 years. But taking a Damascus course allowed me to enjoy an intellectual challenge and keep my thinking fresh for a reasonable fee and a manageable time commitment. I look forward to registering for more Damascus Project courses in the future.

—*Rev. Ruth Wagner Bradshaw*

DAMASCUS
PROJECT

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions: info@the-damascus-project.org

Website: <https://the-damascus-project.org/>

Damascus Project Network:

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