

Savannah Presbytery's
J. Richard Bass

School of the Laity

Enrollment Brochure



Join the next graduating class
of Savannah Presbytery's educational ministry
known as the School of the Laity!

Registration Deadline is Friday, June 1st each year

*Brought to you by the Education & Training Team
of Savannah Presbytery*

What is the J. Richard Bass School of the Laity?

The School of the Laity is a specialized lay education ministry of the Savannah Presbytery sponsored and conducted by the Education and Training Team. The intent of this program is to prepare lay people for their Christian witness to the world. The Church exists for the sake of the world to do the will of God as revealed in Jesus Christ (John 3:16).

Focused on Scripture, reformed theology, and ministry, the School of the Laity is a two-year program consisting of seven weekend classes, pre-course preparation time and a follow-up assignment. Students participate in a total of three summer sessions, two fall sessions, and two spring sessions.

As evidence of their serious intent, students pay tuition fees and provide for their own transportation costs. Class participation can be done online or in-person. Most in-person classes are held at the beautiful Epworth by the Sea Conference Center on St. Simons Island, GA.

Graduates, who feel called into preaching ministry, can further apply to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE), a continuing education program that prepares individuals for possible commissioning to serve a church in a particular capacity approved by the Savannah Presbytery.

History of the J. Richard Bass School of the Laity

The School of the Laity began in the 1980s as a vision of the late Rev. Dr. J. Richard Bass who was then executive presbyter of Savannah Presbytery. Dr. Bass saw the desire of laypersons to engage in serious study of scripture, theology, and ministry. Out of a response to that desire, this important ministry was born.

In the fall of 1988, ten lay people of Savannah Presbytery became the first graduating class of this innovative presbytery ministry. To date over 350 laypeople have participated in the School of the Laity, representing two thirds of the churches of the presbytery. Its graduates are providing outstanding leadership in their congregations, the presbytery, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

In 2020, the School of the Laity began offering all its courses online via Zoom and will continue to provide in-depth study through this platform.

Course Information

Summer Courses are usually held in June and consist of 15 hours of class time with additional hours of personal study. Presbyterian Seminary and college professors teach these

courses. The summer courses are *Introduction to the Bible*, *Introduction to Reformed Theology* and *Practical Ministries*.

Fall and Spring Courses are usually held in October and March and consist of 12 hours of class time with additional hours of personal study. Savannah Presbytery ministers and other qualified leaders teach these studies on such subjects as *Old Testament Survey*; *New Testament Survey*; *History, Mission and Polity*; and *Elements of Worship*.

Textbooks & Homework

Books or Textbooks requested by the instructors may be purchased or borrowed from a church library or from a previous School of the Laity class participant. The cost of the textbooks usually does not exceed \$25 per session and information is posted on the website prior to each class meeting.

Assignments are required after class work for core courses to solidify topics discussed in a particular session. The papers are not for a pass or fail grade, but **completion of all homework assignments is a requirement for graduation**.

Costs, Lodging, & Registration

In-Person Session Costs include lodging and meals.

Lodging is double occupancy, meaning you will be expected to share a room. Private Rooms are available at an additional cost.

Program Registration starts by sending in the *Participant Agreement*, which is included in this brochure. Once the agreement is received, a packet will be emailed to each student which will include the *Registration Form*, *June Pre-Work Assignment*, and the *General Schedule*. After the first session, students must access registration information, forms, and schedules on the Savannah Presbytery website, which will be available at least 4 weeks before each session.

Online Registration begins in the same way as in-person, but costs are reduced as there is no lodging or meal fees. We use the Zoom platform and a link to join the class and Zoom instructions are included.

Example: Class of 2023 Course Calendar

YEAR ONE

June 25-27, 2021: Introduction to the Bible: Introduces students to study tools and interpretation methods as it offers a broad survey of the literature, history, and faith of the people of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament. Led by Dr. Robert Bryant, Bible Professor at Presbyterian College in Clinton, SC.

October 1-2, 2021: Old Testament Survey: This course delves deeper into the Old Testament scriptures and explores the inspiration, authorship, context, and criteria used to determine which books became part of our canon. This course builds on the *Introduction to the Bible* course developing a deeper understanding of Old Testament themes and early Hebrew theology.

March 12-13, 2022: New Testament Survey: This course delves deeper into the New Testament scriptures and explores the inspiration, authorship, context, and criteria used to determine which books became part of our canon. This course builds on the *Introduction to the Bible* and *Old Testament Survey* courses developing a deeper understanding of New Testament themes and early Christian theology and examining how contemporary Christians interpret Old Testament scriptures through a Christian lens.

YEAR TWO

June 24-26, 2022: Introduction to Reformed Theology:

This course provides a foundational introduction to Reformed Theology and explores how it shapes and informs the ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We will survey the tenets of the Reformed Tradition, doctrines of the Church, and various confessional and creedal statements.

October 1-2, 2022: History, Mission, and Polity: This course will provide an overview of our Presbyterian identity and help participants learn to use Presbyterian polity to address specific issues and practices in church life. Participants will also become acquainted with the Book of Order and how it helps to further the ministry and mission of the church.

March 11-12, 2023: Elements of Worship: This course focuses on what constitutes faithful Christian worship and discusses the theological underpinnings of key elements of worship including scripture, confession, prayer, music, sacraments, and sermon. Participants will be encouraged to think critically about each element of worship and develop a deeper understanding of why we do what we do when we gather to worship God. Participants will be encouraged to share their diverse experiences of worship.

YEAR THREE (COMPLETION)

June 23-25: Practical Ministries: This course is the capstone of the School of the Laity program. Participants will develop an understanding of how to use what they have learned by going out, integrating, and expanding their learning through application in areas such as leading Bible Studies, organizing retreats, and pastoral care visitation. Participants will be encouraged to share meaningful ministries from their home congregations and will be introduced to resources from the PC(U.S.A.), the Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators (APCE), and others.

October 2023: Graduation: Held at the Fall Stated Meeting of Savannah Presbytery. Students who have completed all courses and course work will receive a certificate of completion and a School of the Laity pin at the graduation ceremony.

Tentative Course Schedule

FALL & SPRING (12 hours instruction)

Saturday	8:30 am	CHECK IN
	9:00 am	Class time (2.5 hours) Includes stretch breaks
	12:00 pm	LUNCH
	1:00 pm	Class time (3.0 hours)
	4:00 pm	DINNER/socialize/explore
	6:30-8:00 pm	Class Time (1.5 hours)
	SUNDAY	
	8:45 am	WORSHIP
	9:30 am	Class time (3.0 hours)
	12:30 pm	LUNCH
	1:30-3:30 pm	Class Time (2.0 hours)
	3:30 pm	DISMISSED

SUMMER (15 hours instruction)

Friday	In-Person check-in	
	7:00-9:00 pm	Class Time (2.0 hours)
Saturday	8:30 am	Class Time (3.5 hours)
	12:00 pm	LUNCH
	1:00 pm	Class Time (3 hours)
	4:00 pm	DINNER/socialize/explore
	6:30-8:00 pm	Class Time (1.5 hours)
Sunday	8:45 am	WORSHIP
	9:30 am	Class Time (3.0 hours)
	12:30 pm	LUNCH
	1:30-3:30 pm	Class Time (2.0 hours)
	3:30 pm	DISMISSED

Important! Please Note!

**Course leaders & schedules are subject to change when necessary and at the discretion of the Education and Training Team of Savannah Presbytery.*

**Breaks will be decided by the instructors with consideration of the participants.*

Continuing Education Opportunities

Learning doesn't have to stop at graduation! School of the Laity graduates can take advantage of the Elective courses that are offered at each session every year. Classes include *Books of the Bible*, *Preaching*, *Pastoral Care*, *Christian Education*, *Advanced Polity*, *Calvin*, various book studies, and more.

If you feel called to provide specific pastoral functions of the church, graduates can further apply to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE), a continuing education program that prepares individuals for possible commissioning to serve a church in a particular capacity approved by the Savannah Presbytery.

Savannah Presbytery's Education & Training Team

Jamil el-Shair, TE Altama

Rodney Denmark, Richmond Hill

Rodney Fuller, Grant Chapel

Barbara Conner, CRE, St. Marys

Bain Head, St. Simons

Katie Hogan, Henry Memorial

Leslie McCracken, St. Simons

Nancy Bertrand, Beersheba

Your Savannah Presbytery Staff

Alan Baroody, Transitional General Presbyter

Jaclyn Beeler, Communications Coordinator

Proctor Chambless, Stated Clerk

Hermina Glass-Hill, M.K. Pentecost Ecology Fund Coordinator

Ann Henderson, Treasurer

Liz Richardson, Business Manager

Marty Susie, Interim Program Coordinator

Contact Information

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Brunswick, GA 31525

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MSusie1@savannahpresbytery.org

PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT
Savannah Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
J. Richard Bass School of the Laity

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (home) _____ (cell) _____

Email: _____

Church: _____

What is the best method and time to reach you?

Mail

Email

Home Phone

Cell Phone

COVENANT:

I agree to participate faithfully in the School of the Laity. I agree to attend and complete all assignments for each course. Finally, I agree that I will seek to apply the learning from the program in my work and ministry as a layperson in the Church universal.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Fill out this form COMPLETELY, sign, and date.
2. Do not include payment. Upon receipt of this agreement, a June Registration Packet will be mailed to you with further information on completing the registration process and the upcoming class.

3. Mail to **School of the Laity**
c/o Marty Susie/Wilmington Island Presbyterian Church
450 N Cromwell Road
Savannah, GA 31410

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, June 1st!