



ANNOUNCING
The “Connect with Us” Academy for Continuing Education
& 2021 Course Topics
ALPS-MTH Course of Study Extension School
in partnership with Union College and Annual Conferences

The “Connect with Us” Academy is funded by a Magee Christian Education Foundation grant, Academy partners, and through clergy participation. The Academy will develop, offer, and sustain high-quality continuing education courses and fellowship opportunities. The Academy was designed by the ALPS-MTH Alumni Advisory Committee, Union College, Annual Conferences, local pastors, who completed Course of Study and ACOS, and ordained clergy. All clergy, need access to high-quality, practical, and affordable continuing education.

Each Continuing Education course includes exemplary video podcasts, written resources, and a zoom session(s) for pastors. A congregational leader selected by the pastor may attend to support contextual implementation of the course goals in the local ministry setting.

All currently appointed part and full time clergy, Certified Lay Ministers, and district or conference clergy staff may enroll in these continuing education courses. Clergy may take one (or more) continuing education course during the year. Each course provides one CEU credit. The outline of the congregational plan is the only written assignment for CEUs. There are no required textbooks, although written resources will be provided and some texts may be recommended. Grades are pass/CEU. Clergy groups may enroll and work together.

Complete the registration form to receive [directions to Union College’s U-Learn Connect webpage to access the Video Podcasts, written resources, and email communication from the course instructor](#). The cost per course is \$75. This includes access to: 1) video podcasts 2) written resources, and 3) the zoom planning session. The pastor, local church or Annual Conference may pay the registration fee. Pastors, check with your Annual Conference first, prior to payment of your registration, if you are requesting Conference reimbursement. Please register 35 days prior to the course start date. Watch or listen to the 3-4 video podcasts per course at your convenience. Then, join the required zoom session on the date emailed by the instructor (or listed on the webpage). Thank you for connecting with us.

2021 Connect with Us Academy Continuing Education Course Schedule

By mid-month of when the course is offered, complete watching or listening to the 3-4 video podcasts at your convenience. Then, join the required zoom session on the date specified by the instructor. Zoom links will be emailed to you by the course instructor and/or listed on the Union College U-Learn webpage for the “Connect with Us” courses. **Register 35 days prior to each course.** Continuing education aims toward implementing course goals within congregations. Pastors are invited to select a congregational leader to register for these courses.

Preparing Sermons and Bible Study for Lent - led by Rev. Dr. Russ Sisson

Course Date: February, 2021 [You may register up to February 15, 2021 for this course..](#)

Russ is Professor of Religion at Union College. In addition, Russ is the interim pastor for a small Presbyterian congregation in Kentucky, while also a member and Sunday School teacher at First UMC, Barbourville. He has taught COS courses for over 20 years. This year, Russ had to transition his Bible and Philosophy courses to online delivery, navigate the pandemic at Union, and sustain his own church ministry virtually. Russ will offer video podcasts and a zoom session with written resources to support you in leading your congregation during Lent. These resources are offered in community to assist pastors with sermon preparation and/or leading a small group during Lent, when pastors may already feel overwhelmed due to time and energy to prepare to meet the growing demands of teaching and preaching in the virtual format. Psalms in the lectionary readings for the Sundays of Lent are the focus of this study. Participants will explore how the Lenten psalms provide a foundation for both personal and congregational reflection. Attention is given to how the psalms relate to other lectionary readings, particularly gospel readings (passages from Mark and John). Online materials used in this study can be used by pastors who wish to lead studies of Lenten psalms in their churches. Participants view short video lessons in which central themes of the lectionary texts are discussed. There are online discussion forums where participants may discuss how Lenten psalms can be the focus of sermons and Bible studies.

Rebuilding and Positioning the Church - led by Rev. Dr. Ken Ramsey

Course Dates: Offered in March and in June, 2021.

Ken is senior pastor of Bridgeport United Methodist Church in Bridgeport, W. VA. Ken is in his 40th year of ministry. He has taught in the Course of Study for 25 years beginning at the Henderson Settlement. Bridgeport UMC has 1800 members. However, Ken began on a six point charge in the mountains of West Virginia and has led small, medium and large membership churches. Like all clergy, Ken is experiencing the shifts in ministry and loss of in-person attendance due to the pandemic. Ken's course offers proactive, practical, and tested strategies for rebuilding as you position your church for proclaiming the Kingdom of God in promising and new ways during and in post-pandemic times. This course will highlight specific models and ways of developing new connections and strategies that can lead the church forward as we emerge from the COVID crisis.

Top 5 Ways to Understand and Utilize Wesleyan Theology in the Practice of Ministry Today- led by Rev. Dr. Rex Kaney **Course Dates:** Offered in April and in August, 2021

Rex is a retired UMC pastor in ministry for over 40 years. He has taught with Course of Study for 30 years for ALPS-MTH COS School, Candler School of Theology, and for the GBHEM online program. Like your congregation, Rex is experiencing first-hand some of the connectional challenges and tough issues facing the church as the loss of in-person community complicates how people view and respond to major issues and to the church. Join Rex to explore how to remain faithful to Wesley's ideas and how to facilitate forming small group study on very significant topics engaging the church today.

Combating Ministry Burnout During the Pandemic and the Digital Age - led by Rev. Paul Walles **Course Dates:** Offered in May and in August 2021

Paul is a retired UMC pastor living in Eureka, Illinois. He entered ministry from the teaching profession and never turned back. Paul has taught Course of Study classes for the last 20 years and continues to lead Bible studies for local UMC congregations. A sermon he preached for morning worship at ALPS-MTH Course of Study was entitled "Not Done Yet". Upon hearing this sermon at Union College, several local pastors said, "You were talking to me" or "God was speaking directly to me in that sermon." What they shared was that they were burning out. Clergy burnout has been an ongoing challenge, now complicated by the added layer of having to approach ministry in non-traditional and unfamiliar ways due to the pandemic. Learn from Paul how to face feelings of burnout during these challenging times and to know that God is with you as you faithfully proclaim His Word. Conversations will focus on current concerns.

A Deeper Dialogue on Systemic Racism- led by Rev. Dr. Ken Ramsey **Course Dates:** Offered in August and in September 2021

Ken is the senior pastor of Bridgeport United Methodist Church in Bridgeport, W. VA. Ken is in his 40th year of ministry. Bridgeport has 1800 members. However, Ken began on a six point charge in the mountains of West Virginia and has led small, medium and large membership churches. Like you, Ken is experiencing and rejoicing in the diversity of his church community as well as among his members in terms how they view and live into issues of the day like racism, immigration, homelessness, addiction, etc. How can we encourage one another to address the continuing problem of racism in a culture that is so polarized around challenging issues? In the course videos, Ken sits down for an open, authentic dialogue with the four bishops under whom he has served over these past 40 years in the West Virginia Annual Conference. His home Annual Conference provides the context for discussion, but the content is applicable to all geographic areas. These "front porch visits" are intended to facilitate discussion and reflection on the ever-present issue of systemic racism and white privilege. They are also intended to help pastors and congregations enter into challenging reflection so that they can explore their own involvement in abolishing racism where they are. These front porch sessions are developed especially for pastors and leaders in rural, small town, and urban locales where embedded beliefs and practices run deep.

Refreshing my Preaching Ministry and Sermon Preparation led by Rev. Dr. Stacy Minger

Course Date: Offered in June 2021

Stacy is Associate Professor of Preaching at Asbury College and an ordained elder in the West Michigan Conference where she pastored local UMC congregations. Stacy has taught Preaching for 16 years nationally and internationally. She received the Distinguished Dissertation Award from Asbury for her dissertation, *Preaching Biblical Financial Stewardship for Whole-Person Response*. The course will focus on proclaiming the Word of God faithfully in ways to support and strengthen sermons (illustration, invitation, and response, scriptural exegesis, etc.) and to better engage the congregation in discipleship for the church of today and for the future. The course will feature a special podcast on “What is Preaching” convened with key leaders who teach Preaching.

Repositioning Financial Stewardship - led by Rev. Dr. Phil Jamieson

Course Dates: Offered in June and in October, 2021

Phil is President of the United Methodist Foundation for the Memphis and Tennessee Annual Conferences. Phil has taught in the Course of Study for several years for both ALPS-MTH and GBHEM. He served local UMC churches as pastor for eleven years and taught pastoral theology at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary. There, he co-developed the course “Ministry and Money” with his wife Janet. Currently, Phil supports many local UMC churches to strengthen their financial stewardship, especially during these difficult times of virtual church and the absence of weekly in-person giving. He and Janet have traveled extensively offering seminars to clergy and lay leaders regarding the critical nature of financial ministry. This session will discuss innovative and strategic ways to strengthen financial stewardship and provide resources to use within the local church. Phil and Janet are coauthors of Ministry and Money: A Practical Guide for Pastors (Westminster/John Knox) and the 2012 and 2016 United Methodist Guidelines for Finance Committees (Abingdon). Phil is the author of The Face of Forgiveness: A Pastoral Theology of Shame and Redemption (IVP Academic).

Evangelism in the Digital Age led by Rev. Dr. Jeff Conklin-Miller

Course Date: Offered in September 2021

How does the Church proclaim the gospel, form faithful disciples, and participate in God’s mission in digital, virtual, and online space? This course will explore such a question through engagement with biblical models and Wesleyan theological frames to expand imagination and to develop new vision for congregational evangelism as participation in God’s creative and redemptive missional action in the world.

The course will be led by Jeff Conklin-Miller, a member of the faculty at Duke Divinity School who has taught in the Course of Study programs at Duke, Claremont School of Theology, and for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. An ordained elder, Jeff served as pastor to United Methodist congregations for more than a decade prior to his doctoral work in Methodist studies. He is the author of Leaning Both Ways at Once: Methodist Evangelistic Mission at the Intersection of Church and World (2020) Pickwick Publications. (Please note, because Part II of the course is aimed toward implementing course goals with a congregational team desiring to focus on mission and evangelism in the digital age, clergy are invited to have a congregational leader join the course).

