

Savannah Presbytery's  
J. Richard Bass

# School of the Laity

## Enrollment Brochure



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

**Registration Deadline is May 25<sup>th</sup> 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 education ministry of the Savannah Presbytery sponsored and conducted by the Education and Training Team. The intent of this program is to prepare participants 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 follow-up assignments. 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 as available. 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 Pastor (CP) or a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) 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 in 2022 moved into a hybrid model to continue to provide in-depth study through this platform.

## Course Information

**Summer Courses** are held in June and consist of 15 hours of class time beginning Friday evening and concluding Sunday afternoon 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 11 hours of class time beginning early Saturday morning continuing through Sunday afternoon 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 *Essential 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 assignments are not for a pass or fail grade but are used for assessment of comprehension. **Completion of all homework assignments is a requirement for graduation.**

## Costs, Lodging, & Registration

**In-Person Session Costs** include lodging and meals. Commuter fee also includes all 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 Covenant*, which is included in this brochure along with the *June Registration Form and fees*. Once received, the *June Pre-Work Assignment*, and the *General Schedule* will be emailed to you. After the first session, students will access registration information, forms, and schedules on the Savannah Presbytery website, which will be available at least 4-6 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: Cohort Course Calendar

### YEAR ONE

**June: 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: 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: 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: 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: History, Mission, and Polity:** This course will provide an overview of our Presbyterian history and 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 Confessions and Book of Order and how it helps to further the ministry and mission of the church.

**March: Essential 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: 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 are encouraged to share meaningful ministries from their home churches and will be introduced to resources from the PC(U.S.A.), the Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE), and others.

**October: Cohort 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 (11 hours instruction)

### Saturday

8:15 AM	<b>In-person Participants:</b> Check-In with SOL Registrar at Jones Center
8:15 AM	<b>Zoom Participants:</b> Use course LINK to be admitted online
8:30-12:00 PM	<u>CLASS</u> (3.5 hours) to include stretch breaks
12:00-1:30 PM	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b> ( <i>In-person participants: Epworth serves lunch 12:00-1:00 PM</i> )
1:30-5:30 PM	<u>CLASS</u> (4 hours) to include stretch breaks
	<b>**In-person: Check-In for Epworth accommodations begins at 4:00 PM</b>
5:30 PM	<b>In-person Participants:</b> Epworth serves dinner from 5:30-7:00 PM

### Sunday

7:00-8:30 AM	<b>In-person participants:</b> Epworth serves breakfast from 7:00-8:30 AM <b>**In-person: IMPORTANT: Check-Out of Epworth rooms before 9:30 AM</b>
8:45-9:15 AM	<b>In-person:</b> Worship available at Lovely Lane Chapel
9:15 AM	<b>Zoom Participants:</b> Use course LINK to be admitted online
9:30-12:00 PM	<u>CLASS</u> (2.5 hours) to include stretch breaks
12:00-1:00 PM	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b> ( <i>In-person participants: Epworth serves lunch 12:00-1:00 PM</i> )
1:00 -3:00 PM	<u>CLASS</u> (2 hours) to include stretch breaks
3:00 PM	CLASS concludes

## SUMMER (15 hours instruction)

### Friday

4:00-6:00 PM	<b>In-person Participants:</b> Check-In at Epworth accommodations begins at 4:00 PM
6:15 PM	<b>Zoom Participants:</b> Use Course Link to be admitted online
6:15 PM	<b>In-person Participants:</b> Check-In with SOL Registrar at Jones Center
6:30-9:00 PM	<u>CLASS</u> (2.5 hours) to include stretch breaks

### Saturday

8:15 AM	<b>In-person Participants:</b> Arrive at classroom
8:15 AM	<b>Zoom Participants:</b> Use course LINK to be admitted online
8:30-12:00 PM	<u>CLASS</u> (3.5 hours) to include stretch breaks
12:00-1:30 PM	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b> ( <i>In-person participants: Epworth serves lunch 12:00-1:00 PM</i> )
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1:00 -3:00 PM	<u>CLASS</u> (2 hours) to include stretch breaks
3:00 PM	CLASS concludes

## Important! Please Note!

**\*Course leaders & schedules are subject to change when necessary.**

**\*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 in the spring and fall sessions. 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 through the Committee on Ministry 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

**Rev. Cathy Belles, Education & Training Team Chair** Henry Memorial  
**Susan Parrish, Montreat Youth Conference Chair** First Presbyterian, Statesboro  
**Bain Head, School of the Laity Chair** St. Simons  
**Allison Shearhouse, Christian Educator** First Presbyterian, Savannah  
**Barbara Dickman, Elder** First Presbyterian, St. Mary's  
**Dr. Jimmy Griffin, Summer Camp Chair** CRE

## Savannah Presbytery Staff

**Rev. Andy Meeker**, Interim Stated Clerk  
**Rev. Deanie Strength**, Interim Director of Administration  
**Rev. Rick Douylliez**, Director of Pastoral and Ecclesial Affairs  
**Marty Susie**, Director of Mission, and Program Advancement  
**Jaelyn Beeler**, Communications Coordinator  
**Ann Henderson**, Treasurer  
**Christelle Giovannini**, Interim Accountant

## Contact Information

1105 Union Street  
Brunswick, GA 31520  
Phone: (800) 616-3671 ext. 703  
[www.savannahpresbytery.org](http://www.savannahpresbytery.org)  
[MSusie1@savannahpresbytery.org](mailto:MSusie1@savannahpresbytery.org)

**PARTICIPANT COVENANT**  
*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 (SOL) program. I understand that to graduate from SOL I must attend and complete all assignments for each of the core courses. Graduations consists of being recognized as having completed the full two-year program at a ceremony held during the Fall Stated Meeting of Savannah Presbytery at which time, I will receive a Certificate of Completion as well as a School of the Laity pin. 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. Include June Registration and payment found at [School of the Laity Classes - Savannah Presbytery](#)
3. Scan to: [MSusiel@savannahpresbytery.org](mailto:MSusiel@savannahpresbytery.org)

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

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS MAY 25<sup>th</sup>**