

*equipping the saints
to build up the body of
Christ*

*creating brave
spaces to learn
and grow in faith
and leadership*

DAMASCUS PROJECT

*gathering
spiritual seekers,
lay leaders, & clergy
together to learn*

*honoring diverse
theological
perspectives*

Greetings AUCE Members!

I was invited by AUCE to share a little bit about the Damascus Project with all of you. Thank you for this opportunity!

[The Damascus Project](#) is a collaborative effort between the Minnesota and Wisconsin Conferences, UCC to equip all the saints for ministries of all kinds. We exist to nurture vitality within the body of Christ by transforming the people of God through theological study and equipping them for effective leadership within their congregations and communities. In a rapidly changing world, well-equipped leadership is more crucial than ever. We need lay leaders who feel empowered and have access to safe spaces in which to create meaningful relationships and explore questions in order to grow and thrive in today's world. The Damascus Project is an emerging community of lifelong learners committed to walking together and participating in transformative conversations in the life of faith and leadership. We learn together so that we are better equipped to love each other, nurture the body of Christ and transform the world.

Building on the 25-year history of the Wisconsin Conference's Lay Academy, the Damascus Project opens the doors to theological study and leadership development to lay people, Members in Discernment and clergy in a hybrid online learning environment. All of our courses feature self-guided learning in combination with synchronous Zoom sessions for discussion and community development. All of our courses take place on our online learning platform, the [Damascus Project Network](#). A recent participant in one of our year-long courses titled Faith Foundations, recently let us know that the learning he was doing in Faith Foundations was not only helping to strengthen his faith but was also helping him to be a more effective youth ministry leader in his local congregation. "I now feel better equipped to help youth grow in faith and explore their questions about God and the Bible," he remarked.

In addition to a range of paid courses, we also offer a free gathering space for Faith Formation and Youth Leaders, which you are welcome to join using [this link](#). This Faith Formation and

Youth Leaders cohort is a growing group of leaders from across the country who come together regularly to support and encourage one another in ministry. It is also a growing library of faith formation and youth ministry resources and a place to ask questions and learn together. If you have questions about this cohort, you can [email Lisa Hart](#), the cohort administrator for more information.

Coming up April 28-May 26, we are offering a 4-week workshop titled, **Conflict Transformation: When Agreement Isn't Enough**. This workshop is part of our Leadership Skills series. Rev. Elena Larssen, workshop facilitator, describes it like this:

To live in “interesting times” is a burden and a blessing, and both can mean conflict as change takes a toll on God’s people. This course will cover popular concepts of conflict transformation, both interpersonal and community based. Emphasis will be placed on self-knowledge, prayerful practices, and the role of a lay leader in church conflict.

This unit is part of our Leadership Skills series. Registration information is available [HERE](#). Under “length of study”, select Unit 4: Conflict Transformation.

We will be adding additional learning opportunities as the next few months unfold. Visit our [website](#) to subscribe to our mailing list so that we can stay in touch.

I want to thank you all for the work you do every day to nurture faith in people of all ages. Thank you for your creativity, your passion and your commitment to nurturing and encouraging curiosity, kindness, and compassion in the name of Christ. The Damascus Project is honored to join you in this work and we look forward to supporting you as you continue learning and growing in faith and ministry.

Blessings to you all,

Rev. Dr. Tisha Brown

Co-Director, Damascus Project

