

Quotes from Participants in
United's Academy for Vital Christianity
2008-2009 Classes

“Learning about the context in which different Bible passages were written increased their relevance to my life today. The course was thought-provoking, lively, and enjoyable.” – Dianne Nilsen, North Oaks, Minn.

“As a lay person, I have done considerable reading and taken other classes related to the Bible. Nevertheless, Dr. Carolyn Pressler’s class, Bible 101, took me from a grainy, black-and-white home movie to a 3-D, Technicolor adventure! She combined her deep, scholarly knowledge and wisdom with insight, humor, probing questions, and creative learning strategies. This class simultaneously left me feeling fed and wanting ‘more.’ I can’t wait to discover what classes are planned for the next Academy!” – Kay Myhrman-Toso, Woodbury, Minn.

“Being a full time student at United is a dream of mine; unfortunately my life’s obligations make this an unrealistic dream at this time. When I learned about the Academy for Vital Christianity, I thought “Two Saturday classes? I can do this!” Being a part of this program was a way for me to keep one foot in the door of academia while still being fully present to the rest of my life.” – Amy Rostron-Ledoux, Oakdale, Minn.

“This spring I was fortunate to hear about and attend Understanding the New Testament in Today’s World offered by Marilyn Salmon through the Academy for Vital Christianity. I am a Presbyterian and currently participating in a lay pastor program offered through Northern Waters Presbytery. The class blew my socks off! With great precision, the class stripped me of my pre-conceptions and gave me a new set of glasses with which to read and interpret the Newer Testament. I came away from the class excited and greatly humbled. I am hungry and thirsty for more...” – John Stedman, First Presbyterian, Eau Claire Wis.

“This class was exactly the educational experience I was seeking. I had read through the prophetic books a year before taking this course and found them difficult to interpret without context, background, and a general understanding of the original Hebrew texts. Dr. Weis facilitated our learning so that these texts came alive and were less perplexing. He chose a textbook and supplemented it with his own research and other sources, so we understood several perspectives on the texts. He welcomed our questions and challenged us to dig beyond the surface of these texts. I now can re-read the books and chapters we did not cover with a better understanding, as well as with a more appropriate lens. The experience was enriched by my ‘classmates,’ who came from various backgrounds and perspectives. I appreciated their insights and their questions.” – Faye Sleeper, Minneapolis, Minn.

“The courses I completed fulfilled my unquenchable thirst for theology...what could be better...food, being in the company of people of faith, and theology...the inspiration for life and hope!” – Sarah Jessico, Duluth, Minn.

“When I participated in a class offered by the Academy for Vital Christianity last year, I expected that it would be interesting and stimulating—which it was. What I didn’t expect was how deeply I would be affected by the readings and, perhaps more importantly, the conversations/discussions in class. I find myself continuing to explore the interactions between the arts and worship, hospitality and evangelism, and aspects of my own faith story on an almost daily basis. The Academy class experience put my mind in motion in new ways and in new directions—which is, I think, exactly what it was intended to do.” – Christine Vesper Rhode, Roseville, Minn.

Although I knew that the course title, Reading the Prophets in the 21st Century, implied that there would be an effort to make these texts from the Old Testament relevant to modern times, I was not prepared for just how relevant they would be. During our first class when we read Jeremiah 5:20-29 I realized that when the author rails against the rich taking advantage of the poor and the failure of the legal system to provide justice, his words have the ring of truth for today. Participating in this course was truly a highlight during a long winter. – Robert A. Minish, Minneapolis, Minn.