

FAQ'S – Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

What is the Academy for Spiritual Formation?

The Academy for Spiritual Formation is a program developed by The Upper Room in the early 1980's for the single purpose of helping people to grow in their relationship with God. The daily schedule is very balanced between the academic (lectures and discussion) and the formative (silence and worship), hence the name "Academy for Spiritual Formation." Both "head" and "heart" are engaged during this retreat.

What is "spiritual formation"?

"Spiritual formation" is a process of learning and growing in the spiritual life. For Christians this means becoming more Christ-like in one's attitude and actions. Spiritual formation is a life-long journey, in which one comes to rely more and more on the Holy Spirit to guide and shape one's life. Robert Mulholland developed the following definition many have found helpful: "Spiritual formation is the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others." See his book *Invitation to a Journey* for more on this topic.

What's the Biblical basis for this ministry?

Acts 2:42 indicates that those baptized "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers." These four actions constitute the basic "practices" of the Academy: teaching, fellowship, worship and prayer.

Tell me more about the Five Day Academy. Who will attend?

The typical Five Day Academy has about forty participants, clergy and lay. Most but not all are usually United Methodist because of its sponsorship. We welcome people of other faith traditions and seek to provide a setting in which the focus is not on one's denomination, but on one's relationship with God.

Why do people come?

Some of those coming may come looking for a place to rest; others may feel drawn by the faculty or the topic or the place. The schedule of the Academy is designed to include both stimulation and Sabbath rest. We ask people to leave denominational politics and office talk behind, to come in response to God's call.

Is this right for me?

If you are looking for something to help you go deeper in your Christian journey, the Academy may be right for you. You do not need to be an expert in the faith, though some

familiarity with the Christian faith is assumed. A key is your willingness to grow and to struggle with others to make the faith real for you in your life.

What will be expected of me?

Mostly you will be invited to be a participant, to come to the well of God's living water and drink! You will not be asked to assume a major leadership role during the week. Dress is casual; this is your place to retreat, rest, learn and grow!

Who are the faculty presenters and what is their role?

The faculty presenters are carefully selected for their knowledge, teaching ability and personal faith. They are there to stimulate the community with new insights and perspectives, like fresh water flowing into a dry land. But not to flood it! Often the greatest wisdom comes from the dialogue between the faculty and the participants.

The faculty presenters for the 2021 Five Day Academy in Arizona are:

Rev. Vance P. Ross, Senior Pastor of Central UMC in Atlanta, Georgia. Vance has served as Assistant General Secretary of the General Board of Discipleship of the UMC. He is a contributor to the recent publication, "I'm Black, I'm Christian, I'm Methodist."

Rev. Hwa-Young Chong is Senior Pastor of the Community UMC of Napierville, IL. She currently serves as head of the Korean-American pastors task force on cross-cultural/cross-racial appointments. She is adjunct faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, IL.

Are there other things I'm supposed to be reading before I come?

This year we are asking all participants to read Latasha Morrison's book, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation*. The book is available for about \$10 from your local bookstore or Amazon.com.

Also, each faculty presenter will recommend one or two other books or articles. We will let you know what those selections are as soon as we get them.

This sounds really different than the Walk to Emmaus.

Both programs seek the spiritual renewal of the participants for the renewal of the church and transformation of the world. The Walk to Emmaus is more of a motivational retreat, lifting people to a mountain top experience. The Academy is more about integrating our life and faith, balancing head and heart, helping people to listen to their lives, to one another and to God.

What's the worship like?

Worship provides the framework for a typical day at the Academy, beginning with Morning Prayer before breakfast, Midday Prayer before lunch, Evening Prayer with Holy

Communion before dinner and Night Prayer before the Great Silence. Written liturgies in *The Upper Room Worshipbook* are generally used for Academy worship. This worship pattern is based on the ancient “liturgy of the hours”, some of the earliest practices of Christian worship.

Are there small groups?

Every evening you will meet in a Listening Circle to reflect on the day and to share spiritual journeys. A convener is assigned to help your group begin and end on time and create a safe space for listening to one another and to God. As the week goes on, the listening circle can be a sacred place for spiritual growth and intimacy

I’ve heard that the schedule includes silence. Why is that?

The schedule includes an hour of silence after each faculty lecture so that you may reflect on what has been said at your own pace. Between Night Prayer and Morning Prayer, we participate in the Great Silence...to listen to God through the night and to open our ears to the morning song. Silence is so important it’s sometimes called “the Church’s forgotten Teacher.” T.S. Elliot once asked, “Is there enough silence for the Word to be heard?” Too often the answer is no. When we are physically silent, we can also turn off the noise in our heads that keeps us from truly listening.

What does it cost?

The total cost for 2021 if you register by August 15 is \$975. Most of this is retreat center costs (lodging, meals, meeting rooms). Because of Covid restrictions, everyone will be placed in single accommodation, except for members of the same household who may share a room for the reduced price of \$875 per person. A \$200 deposit secures your reservation.

After August 15, registration goes up by \$100 (\$1075/\$975).

Every effort is made to make it possible for people to attend, regardless of their ability to pay. Clergy may apply for continuing education funds through Conference or their local church. Scholarship funds for lay people are available by contacting Jerry Haas at jndhaas@gmail.com.

Can I commute to this event?

No. This retreat model is based on the notion of a cloistered community. This means that we begin our journey through the day with morning prayer (7:30), continue through the day with times together and apart, and end with night prayer (9:15). Sharing meals together, sharing silence, sharing in the rhythm of the day is an important part of the Academy. This is a really valuable way to separate ourselves from the fractured schedule we often find ourselves living.

What is the daily schedule?

A copy of the daily schedule is below.

Who can I ask if I have other questions?

The Leadership Team consists of volunteer lay and clergy leaders who are here to assist you. Check with them for information about faculty recommended books, retreat center accommodations and cuisine, registration and check-in time. The team for 2021 includes:

Jerry Haas, jndhaas@gmail.com
Marylou Adame, mloulittle63@yahoo.com
Judy Holloway, jimbholloway@gmail.com
Gail Parson, gailma@comcast.net
Doug Handlong, pastordoughandlong@gmail.com

Schedule for Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

October 24-29, 2021 at Redemptorist Renewal Center

A Journey into the Heart of Christ.

Spiritual Healing and Justice

Sunday, Oct. 24 – Arrival Day

3:00 *Check in*
4:30 *Welcome -- Petroglyph*
5:00 *Opening Service of Word and Table – Chapel*
6:00 *Dinner – Dining Hall*
7:00 *Orientation*
8:00 *Listening Circles*
9:15 *Night Prayer - Chapel*
 The Great Silence

Monday through Thursday

7:30 *Morning Prayer*
8:00 *Breakfast – Dining Hall*
9:00 *Morning session with faculty presenter*
10:00 *Silence for reflection*
11:00 *Plenary with faculty*
11:30 *Community time*
11:50 *Midday Prayer*
12:00 *Lunch – Dining Hall*
2:30 *Afternoon session with faculty presenter*
3:30 *Silence for reflection*
4:30 *Plenary with faculty*
5:00 *Service of Word and Table -- Chapel*

6:00 *Dinner – Dining Hall*

Monday and Tuesday evenings

7:30 *Listening Circles*

9:00 *Night Prayer – Chapel*
The Great Silence

Wednesday and Thursday evening

7:00 *Listening Circles*

8:30 Wednesday: Taize Service with prayers for Healing – Chapel

8:30 Thursday: Unstable

Friday, Oct. 29 – Departure Day

7:30 *Morning Prayer*

8:00 *Breakfast – Dining Hall*

9:15 *Faculty presentations*

11:00 *Closing Service of Word and Table - Chapel*

12:00 *Lunch and Departure*