

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 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. While many will be United Methodist, we welcome people of other denominations. Some of the participants will have gone to an Academy before; others will be new to the experience. Our goal is to offer a setting in which the focus is 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, clergy talk and office business behind, so that they can be fully present to God's Spirit.

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?

We ask to be as fully present as they can be to the retreat, 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 2022 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 recently served as President of the Korean task force on cross-cultural/cross-racial appointments. She is author of the book *In Search of God's Power in Broken Bodies: A Theology of Maum* and adjunct faculty at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, IL.

Should I be reading something 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.

Other suggested readings are listed on a separate attachment.

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.” One of the greatest Christian poets of the twentieth century, T.S. Elliot once asked, “Is there enough silence for the Word to be heard?” Too often the answer is no. Becoming physically quiet is the first step, but we also need to begin to turn off the noise in our heads that keeps us from truly listening. *See schedule below.*

What does it cost?

The total cost for 2022 is \$875 for a single room. This covers all of your expenses (except books) including lodging and meal. The cost for those who sharing a shared room is \$775 per person. A \$200 deposit secures your reservation, with the balance to be paid by August 15, 2022.

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.

What about COVID?

The leadership team and the faculty have all been vaccinated and we anticipate that most if not all of the participants will have been fully vaccinated also. A survey will be sent to you to help the leadership team know how we can best assure that everyone will be safe. We now know that the virus has a mind of its own, and we will be prepared to employ various levels of mitigation as necessary.

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 other details should I know?

MEALS: The meals at RRC are excellent. The staff is very accommodating for people with dietary restrictions. Most people are pleasantly surprised by how tasty and inviting the dining experience is.

DRESS: You're on retreat, so dress casually. Note that the temperature in September will still be hot, so don't hesitate to pack and wear shorts and lightweight tops. The swimming pool will be open so bring your suit as well.

What is the daily schedule?

See 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
In-Sook Hwang, insookh53@gmail.com
Judy Holloway, jmbholloway@gmail.com
Gail Parson, gailma@comcast.net
Doug Handlong, pastordoughandlong@gmail.com

Schedule for Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

September 18-23, 2022 at Redemptorist Renewal Center

A Journey into the Heart of Christ.

Spiritual Healing and Justice

Sunday, Sept. 18 – Arrival Day

<i>3:00</i>	<i>Check in</i>
<i>4:30</i>	<i>Welcome -- Petroglyph</i>
<i>5:00</i>	<i>Opening Service of Word and Table – Chapel</i>

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, Sept. 23 – 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