

2023 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. This year’s Academy includes another practice, service, engaging with those who are victims of injustice (cf. Acts 4:32ff, Acts 6:1ff, Acts 14:8ff, etc.)

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

The typical Five Day Academy has about forty participants, clergy and lay. Because this Academy is sponsored by a United Methodist Conference, many will likely be Methodist, but we particularly welcome people from other denominations. Our faculty presenter in 2023 is Karen Gonzalez, a Lutheran laywoman raised by a Pentecostal grandmother and Catholic parents. About half of the participants will likely be new to the Academy; others will have gone to an Academy before.

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, engagement, 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. This Academy may be especially helpful for people who want to go beyond their comfort zone and grow in their commitment to discipleship as engagement with the world.

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 reflect, engage, learn, and grow!

Who is the faculty presenter and who are the consultants?

Karen Gonzalez was selected as primary faculty presenter because of her knowledge of scripture, her personal story as an immigrant and her work with other immigrants. Her writing is clear and accessible to lay and clergy, and hers is a dynamic faith journey. We believe she will stimulate us new insights and perspectives, like fresh water flowing into a dry land.

The staff of Arizona Justice for Our Neighbors bring local knowledge and focus to the context we are exploring – the US-Mexico border. AZ-JFON is a United Methodist agency providing legal counsel, advocacy, and community education.

While faculty and consultants are important in creating a learning environment, this particular Academy offers many points of engagement and dialogue.

Should I be reading something before I come?

This year we are asking all participants to read Karen Gonzalez's two books, *The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong*; and *Beyond Welcome: Centering Immigrants in our Christian Response to Immigration*. You may also want to read Trevor Hudson's book, *A Mile in My Shoes: Cultivating Compassion*. His book served as inspiration for this spiritual retreat.

How is this Five Day Academy different than others?

Five Day Academies have followed a retreat model balancing academic engagement and prayer, with time for rest and solitude. Five Day Academy participants are "cloistered," meaning they spend all five days at the retreat center as encouragement for the inward journey. For forty years, this model has been extremely effective in helping people go deeper in their journey with Christ.

With the blessing of the Upper Room's Director of the Academy for Spiritual Formation, Johnny Sears, this Academy experience includes two days of "engagement," traveling to various sites in southern Arizona in small groups to

meet migrants and those who work with them. Following these two days of field trips, participants will be given time to process their feelings and discern how they might respond as followers of Christ to what they've seen and heard.

This sounds really different than the Walk to Emmaus.

Both the traditional Academy and this Academy have the same goal as the Walk to Emmaus, namely 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 traditional Academy is more about integrating our life and faith. This Academy adds a focus engaging the world as Christian disciples.

What's worship like?

Worship provides the framework for the Academy, with Morning Prayer before breakfast, Midday Prayer before lunch, Word and Table (Holy Communion) and Night Prayer. Written liturgies in *The Upper Room Worshipbook* are generally used for Academy worship. For this Academy, Word and Table will replace Morning Prayer on Tuesday and Wednesday, before breakfast and the field trips begin.

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 2023 is \$925 for a single room. This covers all expenses (except books): lodging, meals, tuition, and fees. The cost for those who sharing a shared room is \$875 per person. A \$200 deposit secures your reservation, with the balance to be paid by September 15, 2023.

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 and for clergy who don't have access to Conference funding, are available by contacting Jerry Haas at jndhaas@gmail.com.

Can I commute to this event?

No. We begin our journey early in the morning and end in the evening. Full-time participation onsite is required to follow this full schedule and to encourage conversation within our community. Sharing worship, meals, silence, field trips, and time is key to learning what discipleship means. (See Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*.)

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
Efrain Zavala, revzavala@gmail.com
Donna Hughes, revdonna.hughes@gmail.com
Murry Holmstrom, murryholms@gmail.com
Doug Handlong, pastordoughandlong@gmail.com

Schedule for Five Day Academy for Spiritual Formation

October 22-27, 2023 at Redemptorist Renewal Center

A Mile in My Shoes.

Immigration and the Bible

Sunday, October 22 – 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 -- Petroglyph
8:00 Listening Circles
9:15 Night Prayer - Chapel
The Great Silence

Monday, October 23

7:30 Morning Prayer - Petroglyph
8:00 Breakfast – Dining Hall
9:00 Morning session with faculty presenter - Petroglyph
10:00 Silence for reflection
11:00 Plenary with faculty - Petroglyph
11:30 Community time
11:50 Midday Prayer
12:00 Lunch – Dining Hall
1:30 Afternoon session with faculty presenter - Petroglyph
2:30 Silence for reflection
3:30 Plenary with faculty – Petroglyph
4:00 Orientation to tomorrow's field trips – JFON staff
5:00 Service of Word and Table -- Chapel
6:00 Dinner – Dining Hall
7:15 Listening Circles
8:45 Night Prayer -- Chapel
The Great Silence

Tuesday & Wednesday (Oct. 24 & 25)

7:00 Sacrament of Holy Communion -- Petroglyph
8:00 Breakfast
9:00 Departure
Noon Midday Prayer (on site)
5:00 Return to RRC
5:30 Evening Prayer – Chapel
6:00 Dinner
7:00 Plenary with Faculty/Team
8:00 Listening Circles
9:15 Night Prayer with prayers for healing -- Chapel
The Great Silence

Thursday, October 26

Same as Monday, October 23 with The Unstable at 8:45

Friday, October 27 – Departure Day

7:30 Morning Prayer - Petroglyph
8:00 Breakfast – Dining Hall

9:15	<i>Faculty presentation - Petroglyph</i>
11:00	<i>Closing Service of Word and Table - Chapel</i>
12:00	<i>Lunch and Departure</i>