

## From My Perspective . . .

Maxie and I lived a block apart for ten years. We often rode together the The Upper Room. He had just returned from the initial meeting of The Ecumenical Institute. It was composed of spiritual “moguls” from several denominations. He was surprised that they didn’t talk about evangelism, church growth, missions, or even “coming to Christ.” They talked about **Spiritual Formation: ways and means by which persons not only grow, but mature in Christ.** He gave several examples.

We talked about the centrality of "coming to Christ" in our tradition. (As essential as that is, we have always known that there is **more!**)

We agreed that Spiritual Formation would become our **emphasis on more**, through The Upper Room. (We shook hands about it just as we rode under the Donaldson overpass.)

For the next ten years for him (he moved to Christ Church in Memphis) and 16 years for me, there came to be eighteen Spiritual Formation programs, like *The Two-Year Academy for Spiritual Formation* and *The Five Day Academy*.

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**Consider for your congregation**

## **The Four-Week Spiritual Formation Academy for Congregational Leaders.**

### **(1) Previous**

#### **The Two-Year Academy for Spiritual Formation**

*(Citations from The Academy Office at The Upper Room. Revised: 9/19/2014.)*

"The Academy" was started in 1983 after five years of research and preparation by Upper Room staff member, Danny Morris.

Approximately 1700 persons (lay and clergy) have completed the Two-Year Academy since 1983. Recent, current, and future Academies:

Academy # 32 (Florida) --Spanish/English bilingual.

Academy # 33 (Indiana)

Academy # 34 (Alabama)

Academy # 35 (California)

Academy # 36 (Texas)  
Academy # 37 (Alabama) begins August 2017.  
Academy # 38 (Nebraska) begins August 2016.

Another 8,000 + people have participated in short term adaptations of the Academy Program, including: Five-Day Academy; Colleague Covenant Forum (for rural, small-church clergy); Sankofa (African American); Spirit Streams (3 day model) Sedibeng (South Africa). These adaptations have been offered in Spanish (Florida and Puerto Rico) and Korean (US and Korea) as well as English.

Activity is underway to introduce the Academy in Singapore, UK, Ukraine, Cuba, and the English-speaking Caribbean.

In 2003, the Academy received a Lilly grant to: 1) Fund a study on the impact of the Academy on clergy participants; and 2) Initiate a program specifically targeted for clergy entitled, "Companions in Ministry," (which has been completed twice.)

*There are recurring Two-Year Academies in each of the U. M. Jurisdictions.  
For leadership training, four Korean Leaders are traveling from Korea to attend the  
Eight Sessions of the Two-Year Academy in California.*

### **The Five-Day Academy**

*There will be twenty Five-Day Academies in 2015.*

*There have been two Five Day Academies in Korea each year since 2011.*

*Five Day Academies are scheduled in The United Kingdom, Ukraine, and Cuba.*

*(See [Academy.UpperRoom.org](http://Academy.UpperRoom.org) for Academy Event Schedule.)*

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**(2) Future**

### **The Four-Week Spiritual Formation Academy For Congregational Leaders.**

*(An adaptation of the Five Day Academy.)*

#### **Features:**

- 1) A Series of Presentations on Spiritual Formation.
- 2) A modified version of Monastic *Prayers of the Hours*:

*Night Prayer* on Wednesdays.  
*Morning Prayer* and *Evening Prayer* (alternately) on Saturdays.  
3) Eucharist on Saturdays.

Pastor invites by letter the Church's Leadership Team to participate:  
*Board Members, Staff, and Retired Clergy.*

### **Weekly Time Frames**

#### ***Wednesday Evening (80 minutes)***

Pastor's first Presentation (#1) with discussion prompts. (30 minutes)  
Discussion, implications, and applications of the Presentation in groups of 6  
(30 minutes)  
Evening Prayer (20 minutes)

#### ***Saturday Morning (120 minutes)***

(Following Hospitality with coffee and condiments at 8:30)  
Morning Prayer (20 minutes)  
Initial Staff Presentation (# 2) (30 minutes)  
Discussion, implications, and applications (in groups of 6)  
(30 minutes)  
*Eucharist with brief homily (Retired clergy) (30 minutes)*  
Night Prayer (10 minutes)

#### ***Sunday Morning (75 minutes)***

(During the "Sunday School Hour")  
Staff Presentation (# 3) (30 minutes)  
Discussion, applications and implications (in groups of 6)  
(30 minutes)  
Noon Prayer 15 minutes

**Presentations 4 through 12 will be presented in weeks 2, 3, and 4.**

- Suggestions: 1) Pastor *presents* on as many Wednesday Evenings as are required to share his vision for the church.  
2) Staff members *present* on creative challenges that "break new ground" in the Church's Mission. (Staff Presenters attend all Sessions.)  
3) Retired Clergy will be invited to make Presentations about their spiritual journey.  
(Staff presenters and Retired Clergy will not be identified as

presenters prior to their time to *Present*.)

### **Phase Two, and Beyond**

Following the evaluation of this initial *Academy*, consider extending the invitation church-wide for a subsequent *Four Week Academy* to be led by participants from the preceding group. This will establish an additional self-perpetuating Spiritual Formation Track within the congregation.

A goal is for Spiritual Formation to increasingly,  
be a core-value of this  
Community of Faith.

**Leaders become participants, and  
Participants become spiritually formed leaders,  
*The Way God Intended.***

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### **Initial Academy Leadership Meeting**

- 1) Pastor invites Staff and Retired Clergy to this introductory meeting.  
(Distribute this agenda and answer questions about the process.)
- 2) The group will be praying The Daily Offices (also known as Prayers of the Hours) which is an ancient monastic practice. Begin the meeting with "Night Prayer."
- 3) Pastor lists his "points of content" to be presented and the number of Sessions required.
- 4) Retired Pastors will be invited to share about their spiritual journey and offer Eucharist on the four Saturday Sessions.
- 5) Staff will present at the eight Sessions on Saturday and Sunday Morning.
- 6) One staff person will serve as Prayer Coordinator and meet with Staff to

guide their preparation for leading "Prayers of the Hours."

- 7) The rest of the meeting will be devoted to brainstorming about "Creative Challenges." Staff will be responsible for presenting their *Challenges*, with prompts for discussion.)

Pastor: "Let's begin a list of "New Ground-breaking goals in the Church's Mission." (Appoint someone to take detailed notes.)

- 8) Pastor will remind about the next meeting which will begin the "**Trips to the Well**" guidance on Spiritual Formation Practices.
- 9) Persons who have been chosen will close each planning meeting with appropriate "Prayers of the Hours," either Morning Prayer (rising), Evening Prayer (ending the day's work), Night Prayer (going to rest.)  
*In turn, the community will experience all of the Daily Office.*

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Your invitation to make  
**Trips to the Well**

*"Jesus and the woman at the well."*

The Samaritan woman's life was changed when she met Jesus at the Well.

*Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give will never be thirsty. The water that I give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life. (John 13-14.)*

As Staff Members you are invited to enter upon this **spiritual formation emphasis** for yourselves, and lead it for congregational leaders, and retired clergy. Our New Testament bedrock will be the encounter of Jesus with the woman of Samaria. Like this woman, all of us will be privileged to make . . .

## **Trips to the Well**

Instead of water, our Trips to the Well are to help us *experience*, and *give guidance* about

### **Spiritual Formation Practices.**

*The following practices, published in 1965, are slightly amended.*  
See the current edition of the Primer and Participant's Workbook, entitled  
"Ten Brave Christians." (\*)

### **Spiritual Formation Practices.**

#### **1.**

Our Guiding Principle will be *learning how to pray*.

Designate an hour-and-a-half each week to meet together for prayer and sharing about what is happening during your *Trips to the Well*.

#### **2.**

Our Practice of Contemplation will be to designate a period for prayerful Contemplation about someone you will call or visit this week to thank or affirm.  
**(Self-surrender)**

(In no more than 50 words write about the impact of your action  
*for the person, and for you.*)

#### **3.**

The Tithe is a vital expression of Christian charity. Beyond your Tithe, pray about giving to *a need you see* that will prompt **Self-denial** in you.

#### **4.**

Spend a half-hour each day in prayer and the study of Scripture. **(Self-control)**

(A list of suggested passages is attached.)

**(The number of days for this spiritual discipline may be reduced by shortening the list of Scripture passages.)**

**In the first ten minutes**, read the Scripture for the day. Pray about, and meditate upon it. Write out in fewer than fifty words how this passage applies to your life.

**In the second ten minutes**, write out one totally unselfish and unexpected act of kindness or generosity you will do today.

Name the person--then act during the day, with love and compassion.

Make a written record of

- (1) The reaction of the person toward whom the kindness was extended and
- (2) The effect this act had upon you.

**In the third ten minutes**, write out how you would like to build and develop your life. When you get to the *end*, what do you want to be known for? One well prayed-out, and thought-out, statement per day will be excellent progress.

*You may wish to chose the early-morning half-hour of 5:30 so you will have an un-interrupted time.*

*(That discipline will provide you with a clear calendar.)*

## 5.

Witness for God your experiences to others. For many persons, the call to witness is one of the most frightening challenges of the Christian Faith. (In this group, witnessing is an on-going privilege and joy.) The concern that many of our people have about witnessing challenges us to get prepared to be a guide about *how to share one's witness*.

(\*) Available from Seedbed Publishing, Franklin, Tennessee, [www.seedbed.com](http://www.seedbed.com).