



The Long Road Toward Justice & Beloved Community 2026

A Civil Rights Pilgrimage with The Academy for Spiritual Formation

Pilgrimage Guides



Diana Cason

I reside in Fort Worth, Texas and am lay member of FUMC Hurst. I am married and have one grown daughter, two step daughters, and an 18-month-old granddaughter. During my two-year experience in the Academy for Spiritual Formation (ASF41) at Camp Sumatanga, I began to explore many of the Alabama Civil Rights historical treasures that are included in this pilgrimage. Our journey through these sacred places and stories will be enlightening, heart-breaking, and inspirational. I am thrilled you are joining us and look forward to seeing the Spirit at work in this community as we traverse this path. We are not alone, thanks be to God.



Rev. Dr. Safiyah Fosua

Safiyah Fosua has roots in both Kansas and Oklahoma. Her academic background includes a Bachelor of Arts degree from Northwestern University of Evanston, Illinois; a Master of Divinity degree from Oral Roberts Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma; and a Doctor of Ministry degree from the United Theological Seminary of Dayton, Ohio, in Afrocentric Pastoring and Preaching. Safiyah retired from nearly a decade's ministry as Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation and Christian Ministry at Indiana Wesleyan University's Wesley Seminary. She currently teaches a portion of the Black Leadership in Ministry DMin at the Nazarene Theological Seminary.

Safiyah is published with Abingdon Press, Upper Room Books, Discipleship Resources, Urban Ministries, Inc., Westminster John Knox Press and she contributed to Thomas Nelson Publishers' *Women of Color Study Bible*. Among her published works are *Mother Wit: 365 Meditations for African-American Women* (1996), *Jesus and Prayer* (2002), the *Africana Worship Book*, series (2006-2008) and *Companion to the Africana Worship Book* (2008) where she also served as associate editor, and *Preaching God's Transforming Justice: A Lectionary Commentary* for Years A, B, and C (2011-13), where she may be found among its 90 contributors.

Dr. Fosua is a retired elder from the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Her pastoral experience includes a new church start, cross-cultural ministry, ministry in the large downtown church, the unique ministry of the rural circuit, and the ministry challenges of the small inner-city congregation. Safiyah Fosua is married to the Rev. Dr. Kwasi I. Kena, who serves at Wesley Seminary as Associate Professor of Ethnic and Multi-Cultural Ministry. Safiyah and her husband, Kwasi, spent 4 years as missionaries in Ghana, West Africa. Safiyah and Kwasi are co-owners, designers, and weavers for *SankofaNSilk* on Etsy. The couple has two adult sons, and two adult grandchildren.



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Rev. Dr. Kwasi Kena

Rev. Dr. Kwasi Kena is retired clergy member of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. He served the body of Christ in various capacities during his 36 years of active ministry.

MINISTERIAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

Dr. Kena served in various national and conference positions in the United Methodist Church: Director of Evangelism Ministries, Director of Field Services and the General Editor of UMMen Magazine, and Congregational Development Coordinator. Kena and his wife, Rev. Dr. Safiyah Fosua, also served as missionaries to Ghana, West Africa, assisting the Methodist Church Ghana in curriculum writing, clergy and lay leadership development and local pastor's education. Kena has taught at several colleges and universities. He is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and has served as a pastor in Iowa. Kena is a published author of various devotional and Bible study curricular works. He has been in frequent demand as a preacher, workshop leader, retreat facilitator, and guest musician for worship events.

Kwasi is married to the Rev. Dr. Safiyah Fosua, who also retired, ordained clergy in The United Methodist Church. The couple has two adult children and two grandchildren. Kwasi and Safiyah are fiber artists who spin and weave “wearable art.” The couple co-founded Sankofa N Silk, an online store that warehouses their woven goods. He spends his spare time playing piano and creating new arrangements of familiar hymns and sacred music. He also enjoys photography, creative writing, and collaborating with imaginative performing artists in worship.

Dr. Kena's educational journey weaves together business, music, and theology. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Management from Bradley, alongside a Bachelor of Music Performance in Jazz Piano from the Wisconsin College Conservatory of Music. He later completed a Master of Divinity at Oral Roberts Wesleyan Seminary and went on to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree in Afrocentric Pastoring and Preaching from United Theological Seminary, where his dissertation focused on *Initiating African American Men into Manhood*.

A gifted writer and contributor, Dr. Kena has published widely. His works include *The Resurrected Jesus* (2001), *In Plain View of the Cross: A Lenten Study for Adults* (2001), and *40 Days in the Wilderness: Meditations for African American Men* (1998), along with numerous Bible study and age-level curricula for Abingdon Press and Urban Ministries. He contributed liturgical resources to *The Africana Worship Book* (Years A, B, and C) and to *Worship & Song* (2006–2008). Most recently, he authored “Exploring Distributive Ministry” in *Bivocational and Beyond: Educating for Thriving Multivocational Ministry* (2022).



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Johnny Sears

Executive Director, Upper Room Programs; Director, The Academy for Spiritual Formation

Johnny came to The Upper Room in 2010 as the Director of The Academy for Spiritual Formation. He is a native of Kentucky and a layperson who holds a Master of Engineering degree from the University of Louisville Speed Scientific School. Prior to joining the staff at The Upper Room, Johnny spent twelve years as a specialist in product design and sustainable practices for Lexmark International. His ministry is driven by a deep passion to help people awaken to and embrace the contemplative life for their own transformation and, ultimately, for the healing of the world.

Johnny studied at the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky and is a graduate of the Two-Year Academy for Spiritual Formation (Academy #25). He is a certified Myers-Briggs Practitioner, certified Pastoral Counseling Specialist through the AAPC, an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) Qualified Administrator, and trained facilitator for the *Confronting Whiteness* experience. Johnny has also studied with Parker Palmer and the Center for Courage & Renewal to become a Circles of Trust® facilitator. He has published a number of articles for *Weavings* spiritual journal and has served as a retreat leader and spiritual director for various groups, including the Merton Institute for Contemplative Living.

Johnny lives in Nashville with his spouse and high school sweetheart, Becky. They have two sons, Ian and Asher. When not working, Johnny loves attending Nashville Soccer Club games, hiking, and driving his Miata roadster on twisty mountain roads as a spiritual practice of wonder and play.