

Fellowship Focus

AN ADVENT REFLECTION

When Jesus Moves In

Nicole Curtis, Director of Fund Development



When I was a child, my grandmother often used the phrase, “when Jesus walked the streets of the earth.”

In my young mind, I pictured Jesus walking down our road, long robe flowing in the distance, sandals on his feet. It wasn’t until I was older that I realized Grandma was referring to Jesus’ life on earth, when he came to live among us.

What an innocent misunderstanding I had of my grandmother’s saying. It was rich, however, in relationship and theology. There is a part of me that longs for my childhood imagination. Seeing things through the eyes of a child opens us up to perspectives and truths we may otherwise overlook.

God came to dwell among us, to live like you and me—in our neighborhood. Can you imagine? It boggles the mind that God loved us so much that he came to earth to be with us.

I can imagine having this conversation with a few friends with each one giving the proper theological understanding of Jesus’ coming to save us from our sins so that we can have eternal life. But God didn’t have to do it that way. God chose to take on human form and live with us. God wanted to be with us—with you and me. My mind can’t comprehend this type of love, but it is as real as the air we breathe.

As we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Christ Child this Advent season, I invite you to join me in some holy childlike imagination. What would it be like if Jesus lived in your neighborhood, maybe right across the street from you? How would you act? How would you feel? How would his presence change you? I would imagine that Jesus would be the most popular person in the neighborhood. I can see myself going over to his house every day, talking about my problems, sharing my joys. I can see myself talking about you and your amazing generosity to the ministries of The Upper Room. I can see Jesus sharing in this joy, this good work among us.

The good news is that God does dwell among us, and we can hang out with him any time. Immanuel has moved into the neighborhood—and he dwells in our hearts today and always.



Advent and Christmas blessings from The Upper Room



“

*The Word
became
flesh and
blood,
and moved
into the
neighborhood.*

”

—John 1:14a, *The Message*

A Glimpse of Your Impact in

EMMAUS MINISTRIES

Emmaus Ministries Continues to Empower Disciples Worldwide

Emmaus Ministries consists of five programs—The Walk to Emmaus, Chrysalis, Face to Face, Journey to the Table, The Village Encounter—and one Fourth Day renewal offering, Day Four Restore. In 2024, more than 550 events were planned around the world. Highlights included Bolivia's fourth set of Walks, an Asia Leadership Development event, an Africa Virtual Gathering, an International Virtual Gathering, a Regional Gathering and Celebration (U.S.), and the publication of new Face to Face resources. We are grateful for your partnership in ministry as together we continue our work to renew Christian disciples and strengthen local churches.

Emmaus Ministries



THE ACADEMY



Community leadership pauses for a picture. (L-R): Pat Longstroth (covenant group coordinator), Johnny Sears (Academy director), and Juan Carlos Huertas (faculty)

The Academy Launches Hybrid Program

Thanks to the generosity of donors, The Academy for Spiritual Formation was able to start an innovative new program this year. *Spirituality in Practice: Embodied Imagination for Life and Liberation* is the first-ever hybrid (online and in-person) adaptation of The Academy. It consists of three in-person five-day retreats, three 24-hour online retreats, and includes monthly two-hour online community practice sessions throughout the journey. The first session was held in person at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois (near Chicago), September 6–11, 2024. The forty-two participants are clergy and laity from the U.S. (representing 20 different states) and South Korea. Ranging in age from 30 to 70 and coming from different walks of life, this beautiful tapestry of people will journey together through April 2027, learning to integrate their spiritual life and practice into the whole of their lives and embodying the love of Christ for a world in need.

HEALING AND RESILIENCE

Healing and Resilience

The Upper Room's newest program, The Center for Healing and Resilience, continues to be shaped and formed. The Center, which offers care for clergy and church leaders in the areas of mental and emotional health, held numerous workshops for these leaders, helping them to balance change and develop resilience practices. Due to the demand for these training workshops, The Center began offering virtual options.

The Reverend Dr. Ron Bell, Director of The Center for Healing and Resilience, is grateful for the donor gifts that have made this new ministry possible: "Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 teaches us that if one falls down, it's a friend who lifts them up. Your generous and continued donations make it possible to lift up those pastors and leaders struggling with emotional and mental health issues, and for that I say thank you."

To find out more about The Center for Healing and Resilience or to inquire about having Rev. Dr. Bell conduct a training for your local church or wider church structure, please visit UpperRoom.org/healing-resilience.

Ron Bell teaching a Healing and Resilience workshop



“Pray in the Spirit at all times . . .”

—Ephesians 6:18 (NRSVUE)

Ana recently shared her gratitude: “Thank you for your prayers! Knowing that others were praying for me made me feel stronger in my faith. Now, I’m empowered to pray for others too!”

On The Upper Room’s Prayer Wall, prayer partners worldwide lift up every prayer request by name and need. We often hear what a blessing this is for both the person requesting prayer and for the person praying.

From October 2023 through October 2024, the Prayer Wall received 23,445 requests and 91,570 responses. In addition, the Prayer Ministry receives on average 200 prayer requests in the mail each month.

The ministry of the Prayer Wall happens because of you, our faithful donors; and we are grateful for your ongoing support of this invaluable ministry. If you or your small group would also like to serve as a prayer partner, please sign up at UpperRoom.org/prayer/partner

Finish the Year Strong

LOG INTO YOUR DONOR PORTAL!

As the year comes to a close, it’s a great time to reflect on the impact of your giving. Our donor portal lets you manage every part of your philanthropic journey with ease. Update your information, review your annual contribution history, download tax receipts for year-end filing, and make adjustments to recurring donations—all with a few clicks.

Celebrate the difference you’ve made this year, and take a step toward making an even bigger impact next year. Log in with your donor email and activate your account today!



Scan to log on or visit
UpperRoom.org/donorportal

85 years of the Portuguese-Brazil edition

no Cenáculo, the Portuguese edition of *The Upper Room* in Brazil, celebrated 85 years of ministry in June. An anniversary service was held at the Methodist Church in Vila Formosa, and Rev. Nicanor Lopes, the National Editor, served as a guest speaker. Former National Editors, Bishop Nelson Luiz Campos Leite and Bishop Adriel de Souza Maia, were also in attendance. A special Sunday school was also held to mark the occasion.



Cover image of the 85th Portuguese-Brazil edition and scenes from the anniversary service

LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE

Did you know you can leave a legacy of love by including The Upper Room in your will?

There are three ways to leave a bequest:

- A **Specific Bequest** is one where you direct a specific amount of cash or a specific asset to The Upper Room.
- A **Percentage Bequest** is one where you direct a set percentage of your estate to be given to The Upper Room.
- A **Residuary Bequest** is one where you direct that the remainder of your estate be given to The Upper Room after all other bequests, debts, and taxes have been paid.

For more information about bequests or other forms of planned giving for The Upper Room, please contact Nicole Curtis at ncurtis@UpperRoom.org. The Upper Room’s EIN is 36-5019628.

Merry Christmas

and thank you for shining the light of Christ brightly in 2024!

DONORS GAVE From November 1, 2023 through October 31, 2024

\$1,052,025 to support the ministries of The Upper Room this year.

20.6% of donations were from first-time donors!

94% of all donations were \$100 or less.

408 Fellowship Circle members collectively gave **\$125,830** in the past twelve months, averaging **\$10,485** each month.



To join this monthly giving circle of friends, visit www.UpperRoom.org/fellowship



Disciplines 2025

For 65 years, *The Upper Room Disciplines* has gathered a diverse group of contributors who share contemporary reflections on traditional readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. Each week, a different Christian thought leader offers seven daily devotions, prayers, and thought-provoking questions that invite deep discussion and study. *Disciplines* has become a trusted companion for personal prayer and study and an essential resource for pastors and Christian educators.

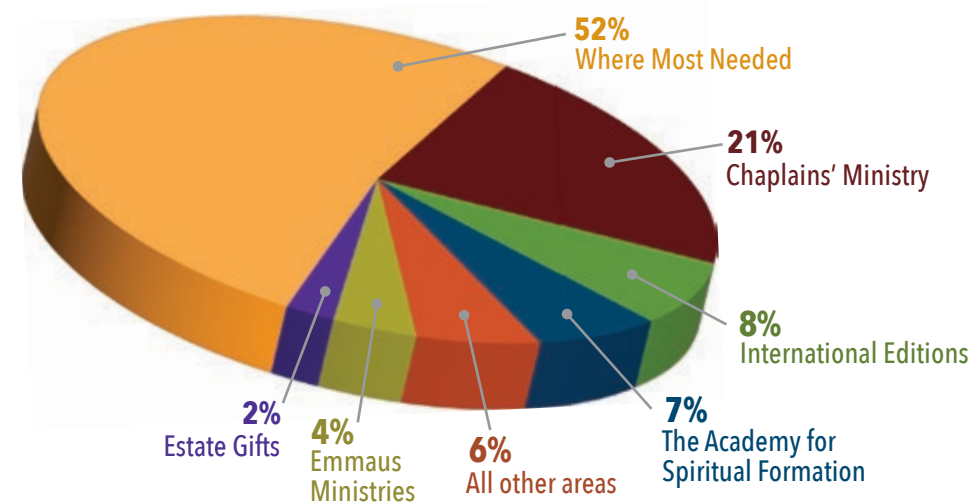
Visit UpperRoomBooks.com/ *Disciplines* for more information and use promo code **FC20** to receive a 20% discount and free shipping when ordering *The Upper Room Disciplines 2025*.

Disciplines is now available as a digital subscription in both English and Spanish.

DONORS ARE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Australia	Germany	Japan	Slovakia
Belize	Hong Kong	Malaysia	Singapore
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Barbados	Italy	New Zealand	United Kingdom
Canada	India	Puerto Rico	United States
Dominican Republic	Indonesia	Philippines	Virgin Islands (US)
Finland	Jamaica	Saint Kitts and Nevis	

HOW DONORS GAVE



The Upper Room covers all its ministry expenses from product sales, participants' fees, interest income, and the generous support of donors. We do not receive any apportionment funds from The United Methodist Church or any other group. Donations are needed to help sustain and expand the reach of our ministries so others may experience God more fully.



Continue to shine your light brightly in 2025. Scan the QR code to give online.