

MEETING STARTERS
THE UPPER ROOM, JULY/AUGUST 2008

Use this list of topics to help you in choosing readings from *The Upper Room* to lead devotionals for meetings. You may also use the meditation published for the day the group meets. Meditations from the issue are listed below by subject or committee name. See the next page for a format you can use to start each meeting.

Administrative Board/Council: July 9; August 4

Bible study: July 9, 14, 22, 23, 29; August 18

Children's Ministries: July 25; August 10

Christian Community: July 5, 10, 13; August 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 18, 26, 27, 30, 31

Covenant Discipleship Groups: July 20; August 1, 11, 17

Education, Work Area on: July 5; August 10, 19

Evangelism/witness: July 12, 18; August 2, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 31

Family life ministries: July 4, 9, 13, 25; August 3, 8, 13, 14, 19, 22, 24, 26, 30, 31

Finance committee: July 19

Gifts/Talents: July 2, 10, 19; August 29

Healing ministry: July 3, 7, 28; August 3, 7, 8, 20, 25

Hunger ministry: July 19, 30; August 29

Local missions, work area on: July 8, 19, 30; August 29

Mission/outreach, work area: July 8, 30; August 21, 29

Music Ministry: July 31

Pastor-staff Relations: August 5, 31

Prayer Ministry: July 9, 17, 22, 29; Prayer Workshop (p. 40); August 6, 8, 18

Social witness/Christian Action: July 19, 30; August 29

Special situations (Tragedy/grief/death): Editorial (p. 6), July 9, 12, 18, 26; Prayer Workshop (p. 40); August 9, 11, 20

Spiritual formation: July 1, 6, 10, 20, 24, 28, 29

Stephen Ministry: Editorial (p. 6), July 3, 7, 18, 26; Prayer Workshop (p. 40); August 7, 8, 20

Stewardship: July 16, 19; August 29

Worship Committee: July 27; August 28

Young marrieds group: July 13

Youth Council /Youth Meeting: July 5

A PATTERN FOR OPENING MEETINGS
USING *THE UPPER ROOM*

Listening for God's personal word to us within the words of the Bible is an ancient Christian practice. These steps adapt the ancient pattern called *lectio divina* ("sacred reading") for use in a group, basing the reading and reflection on the day's meditation in *The Upper Room* magazine. Allow about 15 minutes for this devotional time.

Step 1: Ask hearers to prepare themselves, to get comfortable and quiet. If the group is large, before reading begins, invite people to form groups of three or four.

Step 2: Invite hearers to listen for the word or phrase from the scripture reading that attracts them, stops them, gets their attention. Read the scripture passage suggested for the day. Read the passage again, more slowly the second time. Direct hearers to reflect in silence on "their" word or phrase. Then invite them (within their smaller groups if the group is large) to speak aloud their word or phrase, without further comment.

Step 3: Read the suggested passage again, asking hearers to consider how the passage links to their life. Following the reading, allow two minutes of silence for reflection.

Step 4: Read the verse of scripture quoted above the day's meditation and the "story" or body of the meditation. (You may ask a volunteer to do this.) Then ask listeners, "How do you connect with this writer's words or experience?" Allow a minute or two for silent reflection. Invite persons to voice in a sentence or two (no more) the connection they make.

Step 5: Ask, "Where do you sense in all this an invitation from God for your life in the next few days?" After a minute of silence, invite persons in their small groups to mention the invitation they hear. (Or anyone may "pass" at any time.)

Step 6: Invite persons within the small groups to pray for one another in turn, each person praying for the person to her/his right, that they may be empowered to respond to God's invitation. They may pray silently or aloud.

Read the "thought for the day" from the magazine. Close your time together by inviting people to mention prayer requests. You may pray the prayer printed for the day, adding the group's specific concerns, or pray, "O God, we come to you, entrusting to your great love these people and concerns. Be with us now, that we may hear your voice in our words to one another and faithfully do your work in the decisions and plans we make. Amen."

To learn more about spiritual formation resources, visit our website, www.upperroom.org.