

Fellowship Focus

Remembering is the First Step Forward



Sherry Elliott, Executive Director of Administration, Interpretation, and Development

As I settle into the second half of my life and edge closer to retirement, I realize that the Christmas season is as much about remembering as it is about preparation and

anticipation. I love nothing more than to sit with my sister and brothers and bring to life our Christmas past, remembering favorite holiday comfort foods, decorations from our childhood home, the wished-for gifts, church pageants, and other fond memories. These conversations make us laugh (and cry), no matter how many times we have heard the stories. Remembering has become a spiritual practice that helps me not to forget what's truly important.

The Upper Room has celebrated several significant milestones this year, which has the staff in a remembering posture. We are commemorating the 70th anniversary of The Upper Room Chapel, a place where the world meets to pray, located at the heart of our headquarters in Nashville. Our legacy programs, The Academy for Spiritual Formation (1983) and Emmaus Ministries (1978), are celebrating notable anniversaries, and *El Aposento Alto*, our Spanish language edition of *The Upper Room*, has been in publication for 85 years and is now distributed in 16 countries.

Not long ago, our staff drafted six guiding principles to define and shape our life together. At the top of the list is to

“Honor God’s presence that has shaped our past and guides our future.” This principle serves as a holy reminder that God is our constant companion. God is “the one who is and was and is coming.” When we recall and reflect well on all that God has done, we then can imagine what’s possible for the future like the people of scripture who remembered their deliverance story as they waited for the promised Messiah.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “the one who is and was and is coming, the Almighty.”

—Revelation 1:8, CEB

In his book, *Near Occasions of Grace*, Richard Rohr writes, “Our remembrance that God has remembered us will be the highway into the future, the straight path of the Lord promised by John the Baptizer [Luke 3:3–6]. Where there is no memory, there will be no pain, but neither will there be hope.”

Our dear faithful friends, thank you for all the ways you have remembered The Upper Room this year. You have supported, encouraged, and given us hope in so many beautiful ways. With God’s help, you have made these anniversary stories possible. Please know that we hold you close, pray for you, and give thanks for your kindness.

May the peace of Christ bring you great joy this Christmas season.



Enjoy this snapshot of your impact

Paving the Way in Asia

Thanks to the generosity of donors, our partners in Asia continue to have opportunities to grow and shape their ministries, leading the way for Christian leadership in their respective countries.

▶ Emmaus Ministries Leadership Development Event in Asia

From October 2–5, 2023, Emmaus Ministries gathered its Asian Community leaders in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, to network, to exchange best practices, and to grow in their understanding of the Emmaus offerings. Sixty-seven delegates attended, representing six communities: South Korea, The Philippines, West Malaysia, Sarawak, Taiwan, and Singapore. Rev. Stéphane Brooks (International Spiritual Director) and Chu Ming Law (Asia Regional Leader) led the event.

Emmaus Ministries GIFT Fund

This fund supports the development of emerging Emmaus communities, such



as West Malaysia, and the work of non-US regional leaders, including Chu Ming Law (pictured left). In 2023, more than 410 Emmaus Ministries events were held worldwide. We give thanks to God!

▶ The Upper Room Asian Leadership Seminar

Also in October, publishing partners in Asia gathered in Bangkok, Thailand, for The Upper Room Asian Leadership Seminar. Teams representing the Asian editions of *The Upper Room* attended sessions on translating and editing *Upper Room* meditations, exercising faithful stewardship and business practices, and raising funds to support and sustain their publishing ministry. The 75 participants, representing 10 countries, learned from one another, while sharing the joys, challenges, and opportunities of their publishing work. A special worship celebration was also held to commemorate the 70th anniversary of *The Upper Room's* Thai's edition.

Thai editions: current issue (left) and first issue —1953 (right)



Upper Room staff members, Rev. Im Jung (far left) and ED of Development, Sherry Elliott (far right), pose with the Tagalog editorial team from the Philippines at the Asian Leadership Seminar.

The Academy for Spiritual Formation

Participants in Academy #42 in Alabama, the first Two-Year Academy since the pandemic, completed their first year in October. With 76 participants, it is the largest Two-Year Academy in history.

We continue to celebrate the 40th anniversary of The Academy for Spiritual Formation, which began on May 17, 1983. The Upper Room held a special chapel service on May 17 to celebrate this milestone anniversary. The service featured leaders from around the globe and across The Academy's history.



El Aposento Alto Turns 85!

El Aposento Alto (EAA), the Spanish language edition of *The Upper Room* daily devotional, celebrated its 85th anniversary this year.

Pictured is a gathering of UMC Hispanic leaders, including EAA's managing editor, Jorge Berrios.



in 2023!



Publishing Partners Meet and Greet

On May 4, donors and other friends of The Upper Room attended an online event to meet four of our publishing partners, pictured top clockwise: Tarmo Lilleoja (Estonia), Makgoshi Sindane (South Africa), Juan Gattinoni (Argentina), and Manasi Mohanty (Odia edition, India).



Utilizing generous gifts to the **Crisis Impact Fund**, The Upper Room was able to partner with Africa Upper Room Ministries to offer the hybrid event **Resilience | Practicing Compassion in a World of Conflict**, September 29-30, 2023. Nearly 200 people registered for the event, which featured speakers from Ukraine, South Africa, Mexico, Namibia, and the United States.

Thanks to donors to the **Stephen Bryant Prayer and Spiritual Formation Fund**, The Upper Room was able to provide a few participants with scholarships to attend.

All of our ministries —both old and new— are made possible due to the generosity of donors.

Thank You!

Donors Make a Difference



NAME: John DeFrancesco

CITY & STATE: Monument, CO

GIVING FUNDS: The Upper Room Chaplains' Ministry, General and Military

YEAR OF FIRST GIFT: 2015

WHY DO YOU GIVE TO THE UPPER ROOM?

I believe chaplains reach people who are much in need to know the love, peace, comfort, forgiveness, and salvation that is available to them in Jesus Christ.

DO YOU HAVE A NOTE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR OTHERS TO GIVE?

Many chaplains are tasked to raise funds to support their mission. Donating to the work of The Upper Room Chaplains' Ministry helps to assure the support chaplains need to bring the Gospel message to those they serve.

John DeFrancesco is an artist whose painting *Tree of Life* was featured as the cover image for the March/April 2023 issue of *The Upper Room*. To find out more about John and his paintings, please visit www.johnde francesco.com.



Welcome! Christine Caruso!



Chris Caruso joined The Upper Room staff on August 1 as the Major Gifts Officer, a new position for

the development team. Chris has previously served as the director of development with St. Vincent Meals on Wheels in Los Angeles. Chris has an MDiv from San Francisco Theological Seminary in Claremont and BA degrees in Theology and Communications. She and her husband like to travel and hike. Connect with Chris at ccaruso@UpperRoom.org.

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 Chris Caruso at ccaruso@UpperRoom.org.

Merry Christmas

and thank you for shining the light of Christ brightly in 2023!

DONORS GAVE From November 1, 2022 through October 31, 2023

\$1,277,677 to support the ministries of The Upper Room this year.

15.3% of donations were from first-time donors!

93.6% of all donations were \$100 or less.

377 Fellowship Circle members collectively gave **\$129,133** in the past twelve months, averaging **\$10,761** each month.

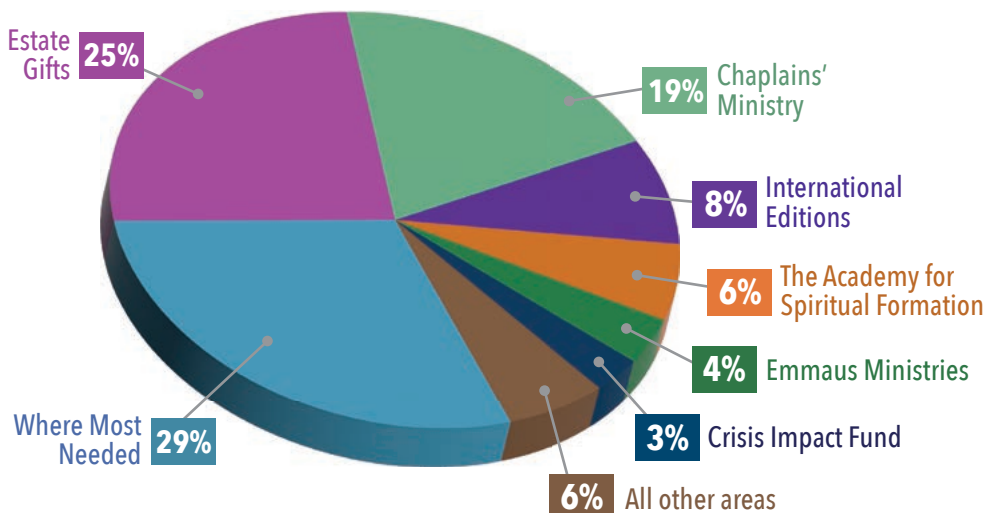


To join this monthly giving circle of friends, visit www.UpperRoom.org/fellowship

DONORS ARE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Australia	Hong Kong	Mexico	Singapore
Bermuda	Ireland	Norway	South Korea
Barbados	Italy	Puerto Rico	Taiwan
Canada	Jamaica	Saint Kitts & Nevis	United Kingdom
Czech Republic	Japan		United States
Finland	Malaysia		

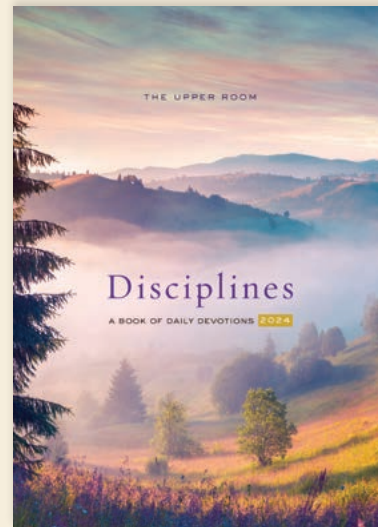
HOW DONORS GAVE



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.

A Best Seller!

The Upper Room Disciplines 2024



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 FRIEND to receive a 15% discount and free shipping when ordering *The Upper Room Disciplines 2024*.



Give Today!



Scan the QR code to give online.