

Fellowship Focus



Searching for a Place of Grace

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



Christmas blessings from The Upper Room. It's hard to believe that we have made another trip around the sun in what feels like record time, light speed.

The holidays are already here and once again I'm lagging behind, trying to get things in good order so that I can enjoy the season.

I've noticed that moving from disarray to order takes a lot of energy. My routines and best intentions are easily disrupted by the noise and news of the day. My regular spiritual practices of prayer, reading, and church attendance have been haphazard this year. Even during the quiet moments, I find it difficult to stay focused. Perhaps you are experiencing the same.

As the prophet Jeremiah reminds us: Return to God, search for God with all your heart, call on God, and pray. Do that and God's presence will be known.

Advent serves a high purpose. It is the start of the church's liturgical year and marks a period to prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child, the ultimate gift of God's abundant love. Jesus is our Savior and Redeemer, Emmanuel—God among us, which is why Advent offers themes of hope, joy, love, and peace.

This year, I'll add grace to my Advent themes list. Advent can be a "grace period" for you

and me at the end of another challenging year. Let's use this grace period as a fresh start, a time to reorder our lives and resume the practices of faith that renew our souls.

Here are three ways I plan to shape my life with God each day during Advent. Will you join me?

Search.

Take notice of God's work in our midst.

Call.

Be the presence of God to others through word and deed.

Pray.

Sit quietly with God in a prayerful, listening posture.

Just as we are an expectant people, God is also waiting patiently for us. Astonishing good news!

Thank you for all the ways you have encouraged us and supported The Upper Room this year. We are grateful beyond measure. Your gifts and other acts of kindness bring order to our ministry as we continue to invite people to create daily life with God. Please take a few minutes to read through this newsletter. It's our good news report, prepared especially for our donors, who make it happen.

May the peace of Christ be with you today and always.



I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the LORD; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope. When you call me and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you search for me, yes, search for me with all your heart, you will find me. I will be present for you, declares the LORD, and I will end your captivity.

—Jeremiah 29:11-14a CEB

Merry Christmas!

THE IMPACT OF THE DAILY DEVOTIONAL AROUND THE WORLD



A Special Note from Peter Velander Executive Director of International Engagement

The Upper Room has made an intentional decision to elevate our international work and focus on becoming a more effective global presence. Please join us in prayer as we follow the Spirit's leading.

Eastern Europe

The Upper Room continues to be actively engaged with our partners in eastern Europe, especially in support of their spiritual care for Ukrainian refugees. Here are some updates from our partners in Estonia and Hungary.



Tarmo Lilleoja, editor of the Estonian edition of *The Upper Room*

The United Methodist Church in Estonia continues to offer shelter to Ukrainian refugees. With the support of The Upper Room, we printed Ukrainian translations of the booklets *Finding our Way* and *Prayers for Hope*. Many of the devotionals were given to Ukrainians taking refuge on the cruise ship *Isabelle*, which was giving them temporary accommodation. We were also happy to work with the Estonian Christian Deaf Fellowship in their outreach to refugees who are deaf.

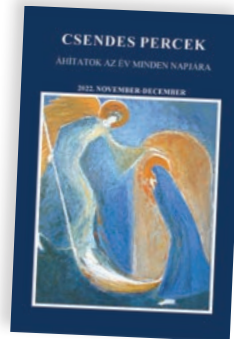


István and Éva Csernák, editor and coordinator of the Hungarian edition of *The Upper Room*



With the support of The Upper Room, we published in Ukrainian *Finding our Way* and *Prayers for Hope*. Some of the booklets were distributed along the Ukrainian border;

others were taken to aid centers in Hungarian cities. Furthermore, we sent copies of the two booklets, along with *Csendes Percek*, the Hungarian edition of *The Upper Room*, to our Methodist brothers and sisters in the Ukrainian cities of Uzhhorod and Kamenitsa, who are very active in serving refugees coming there from eastern parts of the country.



Visit www.TURpeace.org to find out more about these resource initiatives.

Latin America

Special Partnership with Academic Institutions

In partnership with the United Methodist Church's General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, *El Aposento Alto*, the Spanish language edition of *The Upper Room*, produced a special edition (print and online) for academic institutions in Latin America.



Students and other members of the academic community developed this special edition in order to support the spiritual life of faculty and students and to foster writers for the magazine.

Across Asia

This year, Asia Upper Room took the chaos of COVID-19 and turned it into opportunity by offering an online leadership seminar series for our Asian publishing partners. Each bimonthly session was designed to share best business practices to strengthen our publishing and ministry efforts. Some partners developed new innovative strategy teams in order to share the trainings in regional conferences.

BECAUSE OF YOU,

our generous donors, *The Upper Room* daily devotional is shaping hearts and minds around the world. People both near and far are creating daily life with God.

Emmaus Ministries

In-person events are making a comeback after experiencing a pause due to the pandemic. Between April and October, 230 events (Walks, Flights, and Encounters) took place. **Day Four Restore**, a one-day retreat that supports the spiritual growth of 4th-Day-ers, was successfully launched in January. **Village Encounter** will premiere at the end of the year. Both programs have great flexibility and can be offered virtually or in person.

Working with the development team, the International Office launched a **100 Days of Giving** campaign in which the **Emmaus Ministries Wellness Walk** played an integral role. The 100 days end on December 31.



The Academy

This year, 16 in-person Academies (both Five-Day and Three-Day) were held throughout the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and Puerto Rico. Preparations are underway for Academy #42, which begins January 2023. It will be the first Two-Year Academy since the pandemic. Throughout the year, the Academy continued to cultivate community online through Day Apart Retreats and the **Spirituality of Resilience within the Hispanic & Latinx Community** and **Spiritual Formation in Today's World**, both of which held their final sessions.



Members of the Academy Advisory Board visit Br. Paul Quenon at the the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky.

Healing and Wholeness Initiative

The Upper Room has contracted with Rev. Dr. Rob Bell, Jr. to explore creating an Institute for Healing and Wholeness, which will focus on emotional formation and resilience for spiritual leaders.



Ron Bell

Prayer Wall

The Upper Room Prayer Wall was given an update and a redesign. Please leave your prayer request or sign up to become a prayer partner at www.UpperRoom.org/prayer.

Advent in The Upper Room Chapel

You are invited to attend "Advent Around the World," featuring preachers from Zimbabwe, Ukraine, the Caribbean, and the Philippines. Each Wednesday, 11:00 a.m. CT, November 30–December 21. www.Facebook.com/UpperRoomCenter.

THANK YOU!

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

Donors Make a Difference

NAME: Bocca Sue Rambo

CITY & STATE: Longview, TX

GIVING FUNDS: Crisis Impact Fund, Fellowship Fund, Chaplains' Ministry.

YEAR OF FIRST GIFT: July 2018

WHY DO YOU GIVE TO THE UPPER ROOM?



I give to The Upper Room because the devotionals touch my life each day. It is amazing how meditations that were chosen for publication several months ago speak to me the

day I read them. I know I am not alone in experiencing this miracle from God. I want others to have the same experience, so I give to The Upper Room.

I have lived by Malachi 3:10–12 since my college days when I tithed what my parents gave me for an allowance. In this scripture, God says to try him and put him to the test. I have for over 57 years, and God has not failed me yet. Now I give more than my tithe. The blessings are not always money but are rich friendships and needs met. Encouraging words from *The Upper Room* on days when I am down are also part of that blessing.

"It is amazing how meditations that were chosen for publication several months ago speak to me the day I read them. I know I am not alone in experiencing this miracle from God."

— Bocca Sue Rambo

THANK YOU

for shining the light of Christ brightly in 2022!

DONORS GAVE From November 1, 2021 through October 31, 2022

\$989,661 to support the ministries of The Upper Room this year.

17% of donations were from first-time donors!

93% of all donations were \$100 or less.

374 Fellowship Circle members collectively gave **\$125,212** in the last twelve months, averaging **\$10,434** each month.

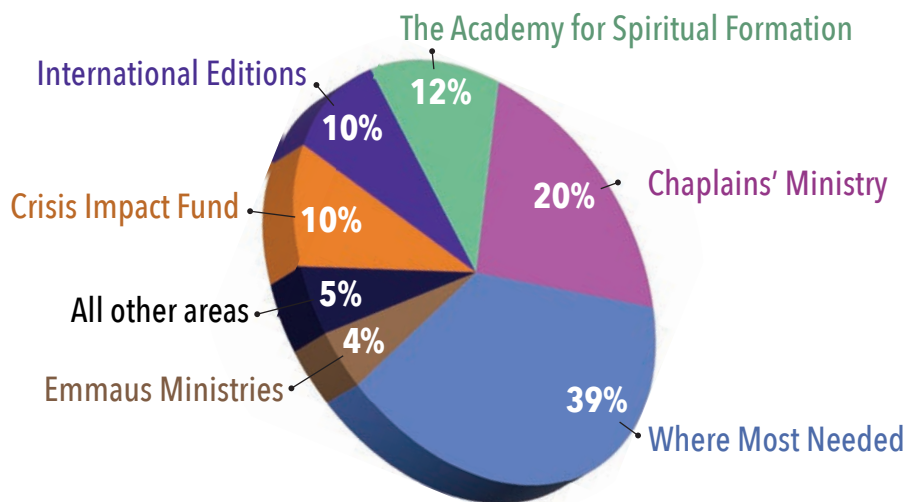


To join this monthly giving circle of friends, visit www.UpperRoom.org/fellowship or call **1-877-899-2781, ext. 7530**.

DONORS ARE FROM AROUND THE WORLD

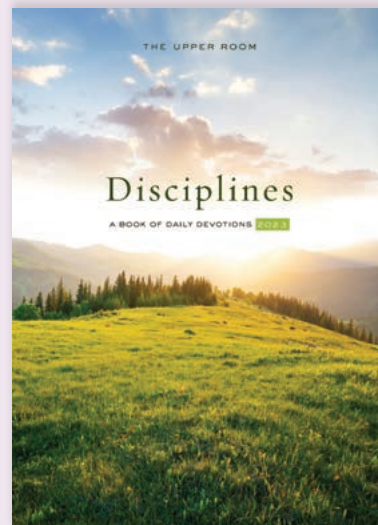
Australia	Ireland	Norway	United Arab Emirates
Barbados	Italy	Puerto Rico	United Kingdom
Canada	Japan	Singapore	United States
Hong Kong	Malaysia	South Korea	Virgin Islands (U.S.)
Indonesia	Mexico	Taiwan	

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 denomination. Donations are needed to help sustain and expand the reach of our ministries so others may experience God more fully.

The Upper Room Disciplines 2023



For nearly 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 www.UpperRoomBooks.com/Disciplines for more information and use promo code FRIEND23 to receive a 15% discount and free shipping when ordering *The Upper Room Disciplines 2023*.



Scan the QR code to give online.