

Fellowship Focus



Alleluia is our Song!

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



"We are an Easter people, and alleluia is our song!"

This beautiful turn of phrase is attributed to Augustine of Hippo, a fourth-century saint of the church. As

Christians, we embrace a living hope that Christ is risen indeed, and God is actively at work in the world. This is why we shall live as Easter people every day. May we be joyful, kind, peacemakers, justice lovers, bearers of light and goodness, always growing in the likeness of Christ for the sake of others.

The Upper Room has much to celebrate in this year of our Lord 2023. God's glory and faithfulness is on full display in our midst as we celebrate the many significant milestones you will read about in this newsletter. One celebration is the commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of The Upper Room Chapel, which held its first worship and communion service on April 8, 1953, at 10:00 on a Wednesday morning. At the opening service, our then leader Harry Denman consecrated the chapel as a place "open to all people for the worship

of God" and commissioned us to focus on "the deepening of the devotional and spiritual life." *The Upper Room* daily devotional guide had launched in 1935, so its rapid growth and success made it necessary and possible for the construction of the building with the chapel as its central point, located at 1908 Grand Avenue in Nashville.

Since the Chapel's opening, millions of people have visited; they have worshiped and prayed, sang praises, wept, laughed, and shared bread. I've been fortunate to be one of the millions.

During my first days on the job at The Upper Room, my colleague Dale Waymack walked me into the chapel and showed me the two focal points. In the front, above the altar, is an awe-inspiring, huge woodcarving replica of da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, and on the back wall is a 20' high stained-glass window with more than 9,000 pieces of colorful glass. Both the woodcarving and the window illustrate an event that took place in the biblical upper room. The woodcarving depicts Jesus with his disciples, sharing a Passover meal on the night before his crucifixion (Mark 14), while the stained-glass

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

—1 Peter 1:3 (ESV)

window illustrates the Pentecost story found in Acts 2, where the Holy Spirit descends on Christ followers, filling the room and giving birth to the church.

Our work at The Upper Room is like these two stories that frame our mission. We invite people to sit prayerfully with Jesus and then go into the world as Easter people. This is the inward and outward journey of faith.

Your support and encouragement over the years allow us to celebrate these special occasions and to continue to dream and vision for the next seventy years. Thank you for being a part of our past and our future. Alleluia is our song!



Visit our interactive website to view *The Last Supper* woodcarving and the World Christian Fellowship Window: www.UpperRoom.org/chapel.

Join our weekly Chapel services on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. CT: Facebook Live at www.facebook.com/UpperRoomCenter or YouTube @UpperRoomMin.

So many anniversaries, so ma

We give thanks for the ministry of El Aposento Alto, The Walk to Emmaus, The Academy for Spiritual Formation, and The Upper Room Chapel. Each one of these vital ministries is marking a milestone anniversary. Throughout the year, there will be many opportunities to connect with these ministries and to celebrate with us.

Join us!

Celebrating

40
years

The Academy
for Spiritual Formation

The Academy for Spiritual Formation

Since 1983, The Academy has offered a sacred place for spiritually hungry pilgrims, both clergy and lay. The Academy fosters spiritual rhythms of study and prayer, silence and liturgy, solitude and relationship, rest and exercise. There are many variations, both in person and online, of the Academy experience. To find out more, please visit www.academy.upperroom.org.

Join the Academy for *The Long Road Towards Justice and Beloved Community: A Civil Rights Pilgrimage*, November 5–11, 2023.

As we celebrate this 40th anniversary, please join us on a civil rights pilgrimage. We will visit sites in Nashville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma and have conversations with local guides, historians, and scholars. The Rev. Dr. Amy E. Steele, Dean of The Upper Room Chapel and a Howard Thurman scholar; Johnny Sears, Academy Director; and Diana Cason, Academy #41 alum and architect of the pilgrimage, will be our guides. Each day will be rooted in times of prayer and small group reflection.



To find out more or to register, please scan the QR code or contact The Academy office at academy@upperroom.org.



In January 2023, Two-Year Academy #42 began, the first Two-Year Academy since the pandemic. With a full house of 76 participants, it's the largest Two-Year Academy to date.

The Walk to Emmaus

Living up to its mission—**Renewing Christian Disciples, Strengthening Local Churches**—The Walk to Emmaus is celebrating 45 years of ministry. Since 1978, The Walk to Emmaus has been equipping Christian disciples for action in their homes, churches, workplaces, and communities. A pilgrim's Walk begins with a 72-hour retreat that is wrapped in prayer and signs of sacrificial service but continues for the rest of the pilgrim's life, their Fourth Day.

To celebrate this significant anniversary, the Emmaus Ministries staff is leading a ten-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land this November. The pilgrimage is open to leaders and members of Emmaus Ministries communities around the world, as well as their family and friends. You don't want to miss this opportunity to retrace the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. To find out more or to register, please visit www.UpperRoom.org/walktoemmaus.



Top left and bottom right: Women's Walk #1, Men's Walk #1, Argentina

45 YEARS
WALK TO
EMMAUS
THE UPPER ROOM

my reasons to celebrate!

CELEBRATING
70
YEARS
of THE UPPER
ROOM CHAPEL

The Upper Room Chapel

The Upper Room Chapel, located at the center of The Upper Room headquarters in Nashville, opened in April 1953. Dr. J. Manning Potts, the editor of *The Upper Room* devotional guide from 1948-1967, served on the building committee and envisioned a chapel that was dedicated to prayer and devotion. The Chapel features two commissioned works of art: a 17' wide woodcarving replica of da Vinci's *The Last Supper* and the World Christian Fellowship stained-glass window. An estimated four million people have visited the chapel for prayer and worship, and each year thousands join us online for the weekly streaming service. Commemoration services are in the works and will be announced soon.



Welcome!

Dr. Rev. Ron Bell, Jr.



Rev. Ron Bell has joined The Upper Room staff as Director of Healing and Resilience. He is a pastor, teacher, lecturer, author, and regular guest columnist for several publications.

He is passionate about emotional formation and the intersection of faith and mental health and writes on topics such as race, trauma, empathy, and grief.

Ron is an ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church (Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference) and is married to Dr. Eboni M. Bell. They have two young sons and reside in North Carolina.

El Aposento Alto

In 1938, just three years after its founding, *The Upper Room* was translated into Spanish. *El Aposento Alto* (EAA), the Spanish version of *The Upper Room*, has grown in ministry and reach. Today, EAA enjoys distribution in 16 countries with a circulation of more than 87,000 per issue.

In Latin America, *El Aposento Alto* often enjoys unique opportunities of distribution. For example, in the Dominican Republic, EAA is sold in its most popular supermarket, Nacional. In February, Managing Editor Jorge Berrios was interviewed on Inspira 88.1 FM, a popular Christian radio station in Puerto Rico. He had the opportunity to talk about the ministry of EAA and invited people to subscribe to the devotional guide.

EL APOSENTO ALTO
85
AÑOS
ANIVERSARIO



Top: Jorge (blue shirt) at radio interview
Right: EAA in the Nacional newsstands



Cris Smith



Cris Smith joined The Upper Room staff on April 1 as the Major Gifts Officer, a new position for the development team. Cris has previously served as Director of Individual Giving with Blue Star Families and Director of

Annual Giving with Spring Hill College, a Catholic Jesuit school in Mobile, Alabama. An active United Methodist, Cris loves good music, good food, and the great outdoors. He has hiked several sections of the Appalachian Trail. If you would like to connect with Cris, you can reach him at csmith@upperroom.org.

Thank YOU!



In 2022, **7,700** donors gave **\$915,950** to support the ministries of The Upper Room.

We are grateful for your amazing generosity!

THE FELLOWSHIP CIRCLE

Have you made a one-time gift or regular donations to The Upper Room?

Consider joining the Fellowship Circle, our giving circle of friends who support the ministries of The Upper Room by donating monthly. Designate your gift to your favorite Upper Room ministry.

To join, visit
www.UpperRoom.org/fellowship
or email
Development@UpperRoom.org



THURSDAY
MAY 4
8:30 a.m. CT

Meet Our International Publishing Partners!

REGISTER
NOW

The Upper Room invites you to attend an online event to meet four of our international publishing partners and to learn more about their ministries. The good work they are doing for the Gospel will inspire you and strengthen your faith, and your support and prayers will be an encouragement to their ministry. Please register today at

.....● www.upperroom.org/international-editions.

Tarmo Lilleoja
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Manasi Mohanty
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Juan Gattinoni
ARGENTINA



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.