



UPPER ROOM

Brenda Lombardi & Michelle Biagi
brenda.lombardi@yahoo.com, michelle.biagi@me.com
St Joan of Arc Parish
Powell, Ohio 43065

UPPER ROOM

History: Upper Room commenced out of a strong desire instilled by the Holy Spirit to pray and worship God as a community. The apostolate modeled its meeting format, to be discussed in this document, after a parish ministry of the same name at Christ the King Parish in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Having been fed and filled during a large worship gathering, where prayer and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit were present, a small group of 15-20 Columbus individuals began to meet, play praise and worship music, and pray together. As the group continued to meet, it began to grow, and members' homes were no longer able to hold the amount of people who longed to gather and grow closer to Jesus. Praise God! We were seeing demonstrations of the fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit as well as charisms being freely-gifted upon us and we were hungry for more.

In concert with our monthly meetings, we began our prayer ministry team formation and education on how to pray with/for people, and how to foster the charisms we were experiencing. Together we read, discussed, and learned from Damian Stayne's book, Lord, Renew Your Wonders, Neal Lozano's, Live Free Unbound and Heart of the Father Ministries and Dr. Mary Healy's book, Healing: Bringing the Gift of God's Mercy to the World and more. We heard talks by various leaders in the renewal ministry, clergy, and others with expertise in spiritual theology. We were seeing Christ's signs, miracles and wonders come to fruition and humbly gathered for more. We pressed into St. Paul's exhortation to "Pursue love and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." We always made LOVE our aim.

A small group of individuals met with Fr. James Black to get his blessing and approval to hold Upper Room in the St. Joan of Arc Parish social hall. At the same time, we met with Fr. Mark Summers and received approval to hold our Upper Room gathering every other month at St. Peter's social hall. Thus, our prayer and fervent desire all along, to be under the authority of two parish priests, was answered. We met monthly between the two parishes in Powell and were able to officially advertise the event to the parishes at large.

Furthering the dream and desire of the Upper Room, we began in early 2020 to offer *Adoration* and *Confession* with our event gatherings. Who better to offer love and healing than the Healer Himself?

List of Founding Members: Brenda Lombardi, Michelle Biagi, Colleen Lewis, Peigi Fisher-Hanson, Jennifer Whitsett, Mary Ann Rivera, Bryan O' Donnell, Joe Rayen, Nancy Hutchings and Marianne Trafficant.

Board of Directors: Chair-Brenda Lombardi, Co-Chair-Michelle Biagi, Legal Counsel-Angel Fox, Spiritual Advisor, Fr. James Black, Chaplain-Deacon Chris Reis, Secretary-Colleen Lewis.

Vision: Upper Room invites people to experience the power of the Holy Spirit, enabling a life-changing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, through the intercession of the Blessed Mother.

Mission: Upper Room seeks to foster the dynamic grace of baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5) in a parish community, that empowers a supernatural lifestyle for personal holiness, renewed Catholic life in community, and evangelization.

Audience: All ages are welcome! Upper Room invites all parishioners, Alpha alumni, youth ministry, and Columbus Catholic Renewal members. Currently, other parishes who hold praise & worship events similar to Upper Room with Adoration are St Michael's, St Catharine of Siena, St John Neumann, and St Francis De Sales.

Frequency & Attendance: Upper Room gathers once a month as a parish community in the church sanctuary for worship, teaching/testimonies, and prayer ministry. The Upper Room serves on average 75-100 attendees per gathering.

Magisterial Evidence of a Spirit-led Parish & Church:

- A. Pope John XXIII prayed that the 2nd Vatican Council would be like "a new Pentecost" for the Church.
- B. *Lumen Gentium* said that the Church is both hierarchical (leadership structure of Pope and bishops; sacraments) and charismatic (gifts freely given by God to all members for the building up of the Church).
- C. Pope Paul VI, John Paul II, Pope Benedict, and Pope Francis have all demonstrated their support for charismatic gifts and renewal. They have met with leaders and given official Church status to the International Catholic Charismatic Services (ICCRS) Office in Rome and most recently in 2019 Pope Francis established CHARIS, a new unified service for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal to serve all who express this "stream of grace called to revitalize the whole Church" so that those in the whole Church would know that the Charismatic Renewal belongs fully to the universal Church.

Upper Room accomplishes our Mission and Vision by:

- Proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the love of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit through the Blessed Mother, which leads to the renewal of grace and promotes a culture of Pentecost.
- Encouraging the awareness and the experience of the full role of the Holy Spirit among parishioners and parishes in the Diocese, with the goal to be fully conscious of the action of the Holy Spirit, that leads to:
 - Experiencing intimacy and union with God
 - Inner transformation; a renewal of the mind, leading to personal holiness
 - Building communities that witness to a renewed Catholic life
 - Ministry empowered by the supernatural charisms for evangelization and service
- Teaching, equipping, activating and deploying missionary disciples to be able to demonstrate the love of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in their spheres of influence.
- Empowering other parishes (through dialogue and witness) regarding the full role of the Holy Spirit and its transformative effect on parishes by inviting them to initiate an Upper Room in their parish.

Elements of Upper Room:

1. **Song, Praise, Worship, Adoration:** Honor, worship and enter the presence of God through the power of the Holy Spirit along with worship music and, at times, through Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. (Ephesians 5: 18-20 & Colossians 3:16; example in Revelations 5: 6-14; 7: 9-17)
2. **Teaching & Testimonies:** Communicate wisdom about the presence of God by proclamation of the Gospel and its evangelical power through inspirational, educational, experiential teaching and testimonies. Invite anointed guest speakers; lay people, clergy, parishioners, and guests from other ministries: (Damascus, Urban Encounter to name a few). (Ephesians 4: 1-32: 2 Peter 1: 3-9: Romans 12: 1-21: 1 Corinthians 2: 10-16; 3: 9-23: Galatians 5: 16-26; 1 John 2: 24-27; Colossians 3: 1-17)
3. **Prayer Ministry:** Adhering to the *Guidelines on the Practices of Charisms in the Diocese of Columbus in the Context of Evangelization*, Upper Room has trained teams of prayer ministers available at each monthly gathering.

Fruits of Upper Room:

1. **Growth as a Supportive, Serving Community:** Led by the Holy Spirit to live and love in the supernatural, sharing the spiritual gifts to build the body of Christ whereby we live, love and work together in our parish community. Eph 4:11-16 describes the importance of being “joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the bodies growth and builds itself up in love.” As a result, attendees will be inspired to greater participation and service in their parish community and the Columbus Diocese at large.
2. **Development of Missionary Disciples:** It is the desire of Upper Room to operate a school of ministry for the purpose of teaching, equipping, activating, and deploying missionary disciples to be able to evangelize in their spheres of influence. Prayer ministers used during Upper Room gatherings shall be required to attend the school of ministry.
3. **Testimonies:**

“I must say that I have been impacted by the Upper Room. As I have spent some time with them, I recognize the integrity and sincerity of their ministry. I see a love emanating from these women and a desire to draw others into a deeper relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I have seen a flow of the Spirit and I have never witnessed any jealousy or rivalry. The women seem to have a lively movement of the Holy spirit in their personal lives and ministry. I have witnessed the leadership and professionalism of Brenda Lombardi. I admire her goals and attention to detail and follow through. In praying with these women at the Women’s conference a couple of years ago, I saw their faith in action, and I saw other’s hearts moved. These have all impacted me as I do ministry, it gives me a deeper conviction to let the Spirit lead and move through ministry is an orderly directional flow as God would have it. Their example of leadership is of excellence and this impacts me in the leadership roles I have in ministry. I pray that God Bless them and multiply their ministry and impact.” Cheryl S.

“My name is Angel Fox. I came to know Upper Room ministry through a desperate need for prayer. Not so long ago my cancer had returned, and I was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. I was lost with no hope and in complete despair. I am a faithful person and was praying with family and friends and was doing fine. I heard of Upper Room from a friend associated with another parish and decided to go one evening. The fear that had been pushing me into darkness was lifted. Such true and gentle prayers surrounded me not only through attending the group gatherings but also knowing this ministry was keeping me in their fervent prayers. The continued support of this ministry has led me to a continued full and miraculous healing. I am free of all doubt as to where God is leading me in my faith journey. I am so thankful for that invitation which led me to this ministry. Every parish truly needs this ministry. “Where two or more gathered in His name, there He is!” Angel F.

"The Upper Room has been a tremendous blessing in my life. It was a joy to attend prayer meetings and experience the Power of the Holy Spirit through Prayer, Praise & Worship and Testimonies. At one of the Upper Room Prayer meetings at St. Peter Church, I heard the words "to Love more" in my heart and this has helped me to work on my attitude and receive more joy and peace. This is one of the gifts I cherish from this Group. On a personal note, it has been a blessing to meet a very united and loving group of members - who are able to enrich one another through "unconditional love" Joe R.

"The Upper Room has given me the opportunity to open my heart in Prayer and grow in a deeper relationship with Our Lord and desire More of Him in my life. I have been led to activate the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to receive God's Love and resist negative thoughts.

Also, as a "prayer warrior" for Upper Room, I have been led to reach out to people and journey with them in their pain and suffering. Upper Room is a very closely-knitted Group ever willing to embrace hurting souls." Anastasia R.

"It's a place where I can go too. Here people like me witness to God in their life and encourage me to expect God to work in my life - a support on my walk. It is communal prayer time with The Triune God, and I feel His presence and love through others I may have only passed at Mass. It is a place where one can feel safe telling their needs and be joined in prayer for healing through the power of the Holy Spirit the often-forgotten New Paraclete and God. I have been touched and comforted and inspired by the love that we all share for God that is not communicated in our hurry to get out of the parking lot on Sunday. It is a place where God's people bring His love and truths and support to each other based on the teachings of God." Celestine G.

"Being a part of Upper Room has allowed me to find real joy amongst other Catholics in praising God in a physical way. I love meeting Jesus every day in the Mass. But I need to apply Christ's love in community. I love the boldness Christ has given these fellow Christians to apply the gifts we were given in Confirmation. Praying with people in need and witnessing Christ's love to others fills me with joy. Having others pray with me when I am in need has brought physical as well as mental relief at times. I am grateful for the Upper Room." Suzanne H.

Two Versions of Upper Room

Draft Agenda 1:

- 6:30PM-7:00PM Recitation of the Rosary
- 7:00PM-7:30PM Welcome & Praise & Worship
- 7:30PM-8:00PM Faith testimonies or teaching
- 8:00PM-8:30PM Praise & Worship with song
- 8:30PM-9:00PM Silent prayer and/or personal prayer ministry

Draft Agenda 2 (*with Adoration of Blessed Sacrament & Confessions*):

- 6:30PM-7:00PM Recitation of the Rosary
- 7:00PM-7:30PM Welcome & Praise & Worship
- 7:30PM-7:45PM Faith testimonies or teaching
- 7:45PM-8:45PM Adoration of Blessed Sacrament (Confessions heard)
- 8:45PM-9:00PM Praise & Worship with song
- 9:00PM-9:30PM Silent prayer and/or personal prayer ministry

Upper Room Roles for Logistics and Operations

Audio Visual: Trained technicians to set up and operate computer, projector, screen, video, speakers, and microphones. Technicians will conduct and test systems prior to event and may run live-streaming technology on social platforms.

Budget: Monthly cost expectation for worship band, hospitality and marketing materials averages \$225/month.

Communications: Communications lead will create and send emails through Flocknote or MailChimp systems, post and promote events on social media and maintain current UR website events. Email prayer chain communications to UR list.

Music: Worship leader will contact and organize local worship bands for the year. Collaborate on themes for song lists for each UR. Organize payment for each event with parish office. Coordinate with technicians on lyric visuals and sound systems.

Hospitality: Team that welcomes all guests to UR and manages the welcome table to capture email lists and allocate name tags. Plans, purchases, and organizes refreshments and snacks per event. Consistent follow-up with guests through email or texts showing them our appreciation and gratitude for attending the UR events. Manage any paperwork required of the church location (i.e. Covid waivers, etc.)

Rosary Team: Leads the recitation of the rosary, assigns decades to be recited, manages prayer book & intercessory prayer.

Prayer Ministry: Prayer Ministry Coordinator organizes and coordinates prayer teams for each meeting, ensures name tags are given, organizes teams into pairs based on experience, prays with team prior to meeting and reviews guidelines and manages prayer ministry lines.

Website Creation: Web Technician develops website for Upper Room that contains worship band resources, agendas, prayer team contacts (should a Parish need to “borrow” some), events happening around the Diocese, recorded talks from other Upper Room events, and more. Perhaps seek advertising on the website that would allow funding for the worship bands and/or hospitality.

Upper Room Guidelines for Prayer Ministry Teams (in accordance with *Guidelines on the Practices of Charisms in the Diocese of Columbus in the Context of Evangelization*):

1. Prior to the event, team members should begin to pray for the attendees. Although not a requirement, frequent reception of Holy Communion and participating in the sacrament of reconciliation is fortified spiritual preparation for prayer ministers.
2. Gather as a team to pray at the beginning of the event, prior to starting, asking the Lord for His anointing, wisdom, knowledge, compassion, love, power, etc.
3. Prayer ministers shall minister in teams of two or more. If possible, a bilingual prayer team should be available and both male and female prayer teams.
4. Team members should take turns in leading the prayer while the others agree in prayer and/or pray softly. After the leader finishes praying, if the Lord has given you something additional, then do it. Please do not repeat the same prayer over again.
5. Be gentle, loving, and sensitive to other people's needs. Listen to their request.
6. Direct their attention to Jesus as the one who heals. Bring people to Jesus. Healing is a manifestation of Christ's love and compassion. Not even Christ healed everyone. Healing should be seen as moments of grace within a process of ongoing conversion in the lives of people and not as isolated, individual events.
7. Ask permission to place your hand on their shoulder and if it is for healing prayer only place hand in appropriate place, use your holy judgment and do not cause a scandal. Do not massage a person or area while praying.
8. When you anticipate they may rest in the Spirit, do not push people down. If the Lord wants them to rest in the Spirit, He can do it. Do not disturb people resting in the Spirit, except when they are on the ground a long time.
9. Any prophetic ministry must release words that have the effect of building up, encouraging, or consoling the receiver (1 Cor 14:3). Words that are negative or condemning in nature are NOT permitted. Words about vocations, death, and childbirth are not permitted in this context. A prophetic word should never speak or inspire something that is contradictory to Scripture or Tradition.

10. Adults should not minister nor pray with minors unless they have the express consent of parents who are present.
11. Make sure you have someone to catch people who may rest in the Spirit. If you are a catcher, please do not close your eyes.
12. Be encouraging and loving and please limit counseling unless strongly prompted by the Holy Spirit.
13. Be brief, concise and honor those waiting in line to move your prayer station along.
14. Be humble and have self-awareness when sharing about Upper Room that you are not sharing confidential information about a guest you prayed with and let Upper Room speak for itself especially by those who attended and encountered Christ.
15. Testimonies of individual experience in prayer is encouraged, most appropriately following a process of vetting for authenticity and confirmation that “the sign” is pointing to the Savior.
16. When finished, pray as a team to thank the Lord asking Him to seal everything with His Precious Blood and anything that was not from the Lord, be cast out, in His Name. A prayer against retaliation of evil spirits is often said at the end of the evening.