

History of Emmaus

The roots of Emmaus began over a half century ago on the small island of Majorca, 150 miles southwest of mainland Spain. Spain had been involved in a bitter Civil War from 1936-1939, followed by World War II, and there was a desire for church renewal which became a priority for the *Young Men*s Branch of the Catholic Action* group. This group designed *Cursillos,* or *Short Courses* in 1948, and the original format was 6 to 7 days long, but were gradually shortened to 3 to 4 days. In 1963, the movement received Papal approval, and *Cursillo* weekends continue today.

In 1956, Cursillo was introduced to the United States by two Spanish Air Cadets who were studying at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. The first U.S. Cursillo was held in Waco, TX, in 1957. The content of the Walks was translated into English, and the Roman Catholic English Cursillo was developed. Episcopal, Lutheran and Methodist denominations also used the Cursillo format for the development of Christian leaders in their own communities. In Spring of 1977, the first Upper Room Cursillo Walks were held in Peoria, ILL., and a Cursillo community was later established in Nashville, TN, under the direction of the Methodist Upper Room. The model was further developed with a more ecumenical focus, and in 1981, by mutual agreement of the Roman Catholic Cursillo Movement and the Upper Room of the Methodist Board of General Discipleship, the Upper Room Emmaus Movement was created. The Walk to Emmaus draws heavily from its Cursillo background, and much of the content and techniques are taken from this proven format.

The Upper Room Emmaus developed the youth walk to Emmaus, or Chrysalis, in 1984, and participates actively with the Kairos ministry, a similar ministry for prisons. The Walk to Emmaus is a copyrighted program. There are communities like the New River Valley Emmaus community throughout the United States and worldwide. As this is being written, communities in the Bahamas, India, Mozambique, Myammar and Norway are beginning.

One of the stated purposes of Emmaus is to directly express God*s love. This expression allows Christian leadership to be encouraged in our churches, our homes, our work, and in our everyday surroundings. Emmaus is ecumenical, and is respectful of differing traditions within denominations while stressing the essentials of a truly Christ centered life.

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