

## *‘A Merciful Presence for Others’*

Maureen Conroy, RSM, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community, is a teacher at heart. After teaching high school for eight years, she transitioned into spiritual direction and retreat ministry in 1985.

As a co-director of the Upper Room Spiritual Center in Neptune, NJ, Sister Maureen teaches people how to be spiritual directors. She also travels internationally to educate people about spiritual direction, spirituality and discernment.

As a spiritual director, Sister Maureen enjoys helping people to grow in their relationship with God and to experience God’s healing. “Through this wonderful ministry, a person has the opportunity to find God in hard times, in the struggles and in the joys of his or her life,” she says. “Spiritual direction is an opportunity for people to connect with a loving, healing God. I feel like I’ve been called to be a compassionate presence for others.”

Sister Maureen adds that the longest journey is the journey inward. “With all our ministries here, we help people to take that long journey inward and help them to find God there,” she says.

The Upper Room, which is sponsored by the Diocese of Trenton, offers a variety of spiritual workshops, monthly women’s gatherings, weekly centering prayer sessions and Taizé prayer. The center also offers 12-step retreats and Rachel’s Vineyard retreats for those who have experienced an abortion. Sister Maureen, along with Maureen Christensen, RSM, (*See story on bottom of page*) and Trudy Ahern, SSJ, are co-directors of the Upper Room.

In addition to being a co-director, Sister Maureen is a certified massage therapist. She has also written books on spirituality, spiritual direction, and supervision of spiritual directors. Her books include “Looking Into the Well: Supervision of Spiritual Directors,” “The Discerning Heart: Discovering a Personal God,” “Journey of Love: God Moving in Our Hearts and Lives,” and “Growing in Love and Freedom: Personal Experiences of Counseling and Spiritual Direction.”

Sister Maureen says it is a privilege for her to be a merciful presence to people. “We really are a center of mercy for those who are wounded psychologically and need spiritual healing,” she says. “This ministry gives me the opportunity to let God’s merciful

compassion flow through me to the people with heavy burdens in their life. People really find a safe haven here.”

## *Helping People in Their Faith Journeys*

Maureen Christensen, RSM, a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community, accompanies others on their faith journeys as a co-director of the Upper Room Spiritual Center in Neptune, NJ.

While she was serving as a vocation director for the Sisters of Mercy in New Jersey, Sister Maureen wanted to become a better listener, so she attended the spiritual direction training program offered at the Upper Room. “During that time I fell in love with the ministry, and I wanted to do it full time,” she says. “It fulfilled a desire in me to give back what’s been given to me and also to be that mercy presence here.”

“People come for spiritual direction for a variety of reasons,” Sister Maureen says. “Sometimes people are dealing with difficult situations in their lives and they’re looking for the presence of God in those situations. Others want to deepen their relationship with God.”

Sister Maureen, along with co-directors Maureen Conroy, RSM, and Trudy Ahern, SSJ, train spiritual directors and offer continuing education in spiritual direction at the Upper Room. “We all have unique gifts, and our wonderful blend of gifts make the Upper Room what it is,” says Sister Maureen, who also facilitates a monthly women’s gathering and Taizé prayer services at the spiritual center.

She enjoys the opportunity to offer mercy to others through her ministry. “Heartfelt mercy and compassion is very much a part of our everyday living here, listening to the stories of others, listening to their faith journeys,” Sister Maureen says.

Reflecting on her ministry at the Upper Room, she says, “I never thought I would be anywhere for 18 years, yet each year has been so fulfilling. I’ve learned so much about God, about myself, about the goodness of people. It has just enriched my life in so many ways.”