



THE UPPER ROOM MISSION (URM)

2025

ANNUAL REPORT Jerusalem – Holy Land



1. INTRODUCTION TO URM

*The Upper Room Mission (URM) is a Christian ecumenical, non-profit institution established in Jerusalem to serve and empower **the Living Stones of the Holy Land**—the local Christian minority that continues to witness, work, and hope in the land of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Registered in 2020 with the Israeli Ministry of Justice, URM accompanies Christian families, young adults, and emerging leaders through programs that combine spiritual formation, economic empowerment, and community resilience .*

URM's identity is deeply rooted in the image of the Upper Room: a place of prayer, encounter, courage, and renewal. Just as the first disciples gathered in the Upper Room to find strength, unity, and direction for their mission, URM seeks to offer a safe and nurturing space where youth and families can grow, rediscover hope, and embrace their God-given purpose amid ongoing political, economic, and social challenges.

In a context marked by instability, rising emigration, and limited opportunities, URM serves as a space of hope, accompaniment, and empowerment.



Purpose of URM

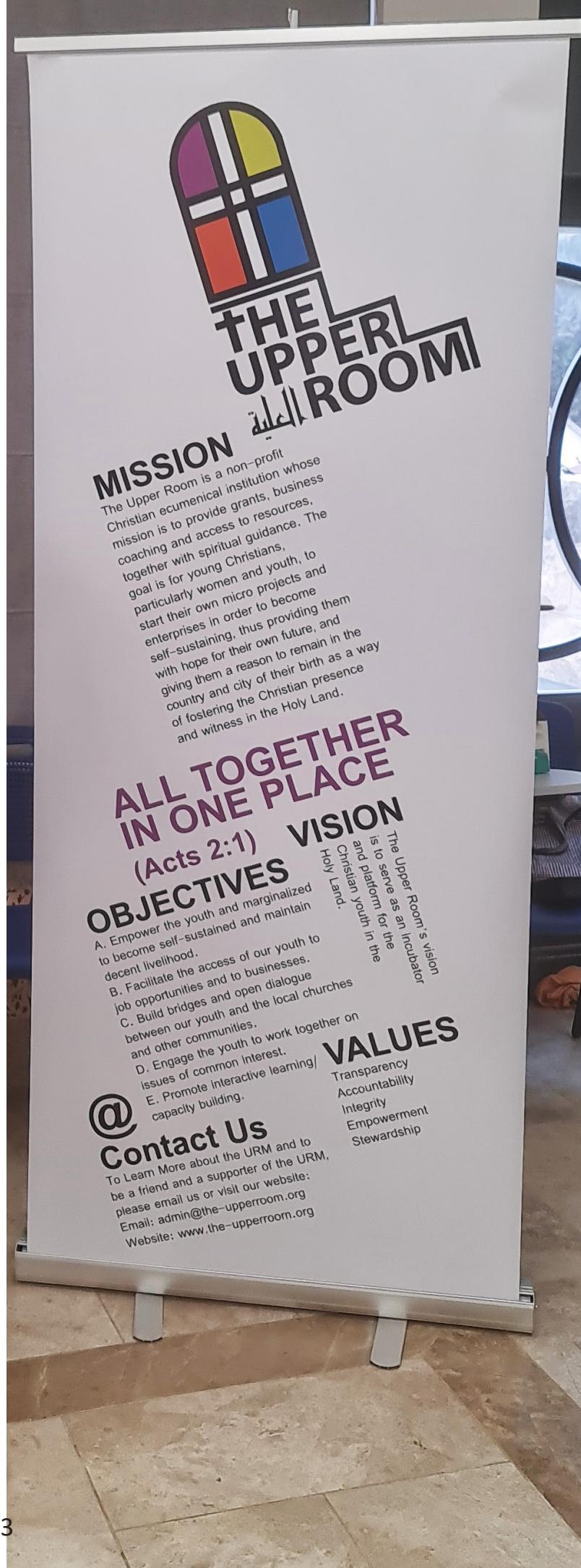
URM was established to:

- Strengthen the Christian presence in Jerusalem
- Equip young Christians with the skills and opportunities needed to remain in their homeland
- Build bridges among Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities through shared engagement and mutual respect

URM recognizes that economic stability, spiritual belonging, and social dignity are essential to sustaining the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

URM's Goals

- Empower Christian youth—spiritually, professionally, and economically—to build sustainable futures in Jerusalem
- Strengthen ecumenical unity by bringing together youth and leaders from different denominations
- Promote Christian witness through service, leadership, and community presence
- Support vulnerable families through accompaniment, guidance, and emergency assistance
- Foster resilience and hope by offering a welcoming space for learning, dialogue, and spiritual grounding.



2.

MESSAGE FROM THE UPPER ROOM LEADERSHIP

2.1 Words from the URM Founders

“When we established the Upper Room Mission, our vision was to create a place where faith meets daily life—a space where young Christians receive the support, skills, and spiritual grounding they need to remain rooted in Jerusalem. Over the years, URM has grown into a home of hope for the Living Stones of the Holy Land. We remain committed to strengthening our community, empowering the next generation, and ensuring that the Christian presence continues to flourish in the city of peace.”



Tony Khashram



Bassem Thabet

Chairman: Deacon Bassem Thabet

CEO: Mr. Tony Khashram

2.2 Message from the Spiritual Advisor

Rev. Fursan Zumot, alongside several respected church leaders including Archbishop Atallah Hanna, Bishop Emeritus Munib Younan, Pastor Carrie Ballenger, and His Grace Mar Afram Samaan, encouraged participants to integrate faith and entrepreneurship, emphasizing that economic initiatives can serve as a form of Christian witness, resilience, and rootedness in the Holy Land.



Archbishop Atallah Hanna,



Bishop Emeritus Munib Younan



Pastor Carrie Ballenger



Mar Afram Samaan

Rev. Fursan stated:

“ The Upper Room is more than a ministry —it is a reminder that God meets us in our needs, our fears, and our dreams. Every young person we accompany carries the light of Christ into their family, their work, and their community. May this mission continue to be a source of strength, faith, and renewal for all who enter its doors. ”



Rev. Fursan Zumot



3. URM Achievements

3.1 Overview of Courses Conducted

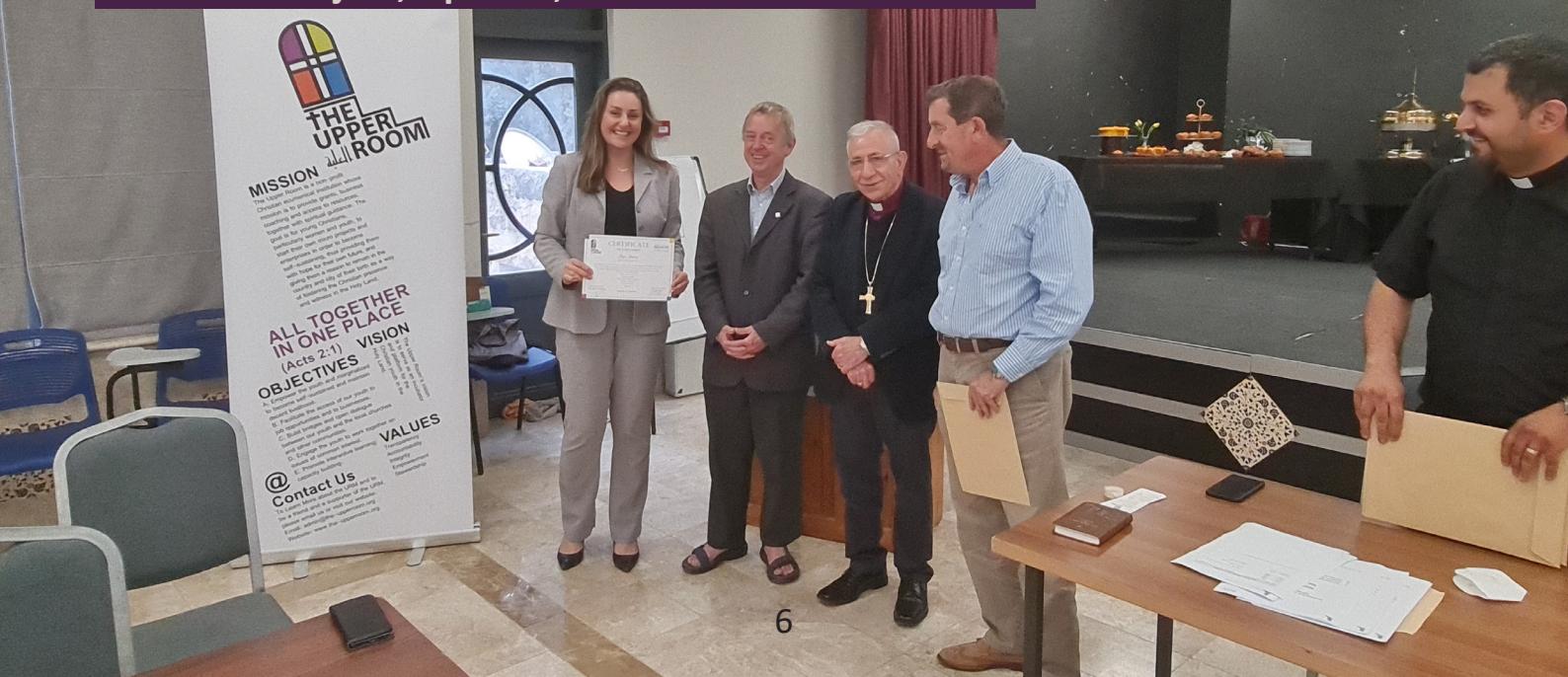
Over the past years, URM has successfully conducted three major entrepreneurship and empowerment training programs, through which:

- More than 30 participants, (primarily women) were trained
- Over 20 micro-projects were launched
- Participants generated income streams ranging from \$800–\$1,200 per month
- Leadership, confidence, and self-reliance were significantly enhanced
- Job creation and economic resilience were strengthened
- The Christian presence was reinforced through sustainable livelihoods

Unexpected and positive outcomes included:

- Increased women's leadership within their communities
- Strengthened ecumenical unity across Christian denominations

The Pilot Project, April 22, 2022



EXIT



URM Second Training, March to June 2023



The 3rd training courses: 6 training sessions from 10 June – 6 September 2024



3.2 Fourth Entrepreneurship Program (2025)

From August 6 to October 10, 2025, URM carried out the fourth iteration of its Entrepreneurship and Business Development Program, bringing together 15 participants from Jerusalem.

The program aimed to equip young adults with practical tools to transform ideas into viable, sustainable business projects. Over eight interactive sessions, participants engaged in:

- Business planning and feasibility studies
- Marketing and branding
- Financial management
- Teamwork and leadership
- Pitching and presentation skills

Professional trainers and guest speakers guided the participants throughout, providing both technical expertise and real-world inspiration.

Several participants developed strong, community-oriented initiatives in areas such as:

- Art and handicrafts
- Food and catering services
- Tourism and guiding
- Beauty and wellness services
- Creative and digital design
- Sports and education initiatives

Their progress was evident in the presentation of trial business plans, which showcased confidence, creativity, and a deeper understanding of entrepreneurship as both a professional pathway and a form of service.



This edition of the program also incorporated a thoughtfully designed interfaith component. Whereas previous cycles focused primarily on fostering ecumenical relationships among Christian denominations, this phase—without compromising its Christian identity or mission—created space for respectful encounters and shared learning with participants from other faith backgrounds.



Through URM's partnership with **the SFL Job Hub (Star for Life)**, a small number of participants from different religious backgrounds joined the training sessions. The purpose of this initiative was to:

- Encourage **mutual understanding and respectful dialogue**
- Promote cooperation in **community-based and business initiatives**
- Support a shared commitment to **peaceful coexistence**
- Strengthen the **social fabric of Jerusalem**

This experience enabled Christian participants to embody values of **hospitality, reconciliation, and peaceful engagement**, offering a tangible expression of their faith in a divided context.

During the course, URM was also honored by the visit of **Dr. Inga-Lill**, who attended a session to meet the participants and learn about their journey.



At the graduation ceremony, **Archbishop Atallah Hanna** personally distributed certificates to the participants. He was joined by **Mr. Rajai Nusseibeh, Chairman of the SFL**, who expressed ongoing support for future editions of the program.

This program once again embodied the heart of URM's mission:

Empowering and uplifting local youth while creating tangible opportunities and fostering bridges of understanding in the Holy Land.



3.3 URM Trainees

The URM trainees represent a diverse group of motivated young people from Jerusalem, with initiatives spanning areas such as:

Each participant embodies a story of perseverance, creativity, and deep commitment to remaining active and rooted in their homeland.

Many have built their businesses from scratch or expanded existing ventures with URM's support. Here are some of the participants and their entrepreneurial projects:



Michline:

Driven by her lifelong passion for football, Michline boldly founded her own football club, becoming the first Palestinian woman in Jerusalem to do so. Through her academy, she teaches young children, especially girls, to play the sport she loves, creating a safe, empowering environment where confidence and teamwork flourish.



Merna:

Merna, a dedicated dietitian from Jerusalem, has steadily established herself as a respected young professional in her field. Her project focuses on acquiring an InBody 120 machine, enabling her to provide advanced body analysis and personalized nutrition plans that help clients make informed decisions about their health and well-being.



Nicolas:

As a content creator and sound engineer, Nicolas blends creativity and technology to produce digital media and music projects. He aims to grow his business by upgrading his equipment—including a new laptop and streaming tools—to enhance production quality and reach broader audiences through online platforms.



Wedad:

Wedad is an ambitious home baker who has transformed her passion for cheesecakes, muffins, and other desserts into a growing local business. Her dream is to open her own bakery in Jerusalem, expand her presence in the community and, with URM's support, acquire professional equipment to elevate her craft to the next level.



Hamza:

A sociologist with a passion for education, Hamza and his colleagues aim to create an environment where children can learn through play and creative interaction. His project introduces board games as a dynamic tool for teaching problem-solving and teamwork. With additional resources, he hopes to expand his reach and engage more schools and community centers across Jerusalem.

3.4 Success Stories

Example 1:

Michline began her journey as a football enthusiast, coaching small groups informally in her neighborhood. Over time, she noticed a lack of structured opportunities for children—especially girls—to receive proper training in Jerusalem. This inspired her to formally establish her own football academy, becoming the first Palestinian woman in the city to create and lead such a program.

As her academy grew, Michline recognized the need for a clearer operational and financial structure to sustain and expand it. Through URM's entrepreneurship course, she refined her business model, organized her budgeting and planning, and developed a practical roadmap for future growth. Today, she runs a fully functioning academy with defined goals, improved management tools, and a solid business plan that positions her project for long-term success.



Example 2:

Merna began her career as a young dietitian in Jerusalem, offering basic nutritional consultations with the limited tools available to her at the time. As her client base grew, she recognized the need to provide more precise and professional assessments to strengthen her practice and improve the quality of her services. This led her to pursue the acquisition of an **InBody 120 machine**, enabling detailed body composition analysis and elevating her work to a higher professional standard.



Through URM's entrepreneurship course, Merna transformed this idea into a structured and feasible project. The program taught her to plan finances, assess market demand, and present her project clearly and effectively. Today, she has a well-developed business plan, a defined growth strategy, and the tools to advance her nutrition practice with confidence and meaningful impact.

Example 3:



Wedad began baking from her home kitchen, preparing cheesecakes, muffins, and other desserts for neighbors, friends, and small local orders. As demand steadily grew, she realized her hobby had the potential to become a real business. She set her sights on opening a small bakery, expanding her production capacity and establishing a stable presence in her neighborhood.

Through URM's entrepreneurship course, Wedad transformed her ideas into a structured business plan. She learned to calculate costs, plan for equipment upgrades, and map out a realistic path toward opening her own bakery. Today, she has a clear operational strategy, a stronger grasp of financial planning, and a solid foundation to grow her home-based initiative into a fully functioning neighborhood bakery.

3.5 Interfaith Impact

The fourth edition of the URM program also contributed, in a modest but meaningful way, to strengthening interfaith understanding.

By creating a respectful learning space for participants from diverse faith backgrounds, the program enabled young people to:

- Share life experiences and perspectives
- Explore common challenges and aspirations
- Build relationships grounded in mutual respect
- Engage in joint learning and practical cooperation

These encounters enhanced participants' ability to communicate across differences and heightened awareness of the value of dialogue in a complex social and political reality.

Through collaboration and shared purpose, bonds of **trust and mutual respect** were formed, contributing positively to social **cohesion in Jerusalem**, particularly among the younger generation.

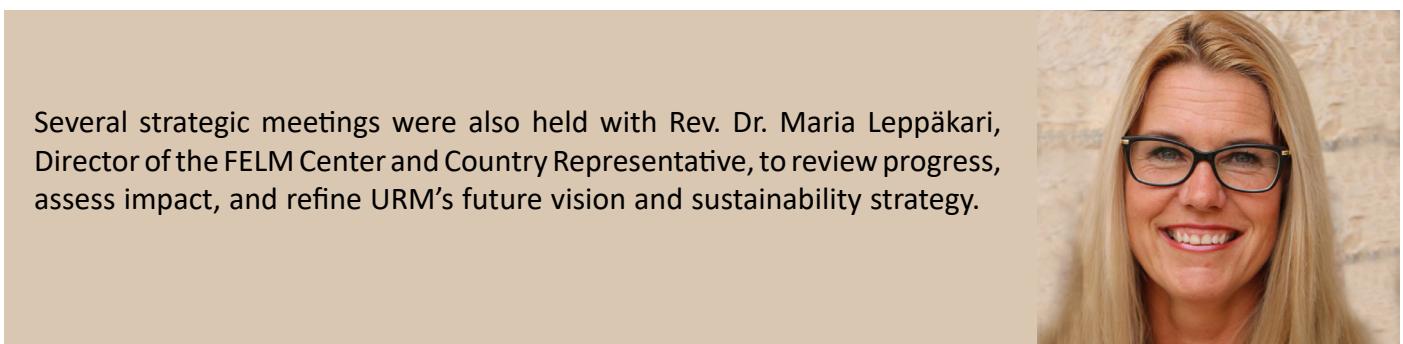
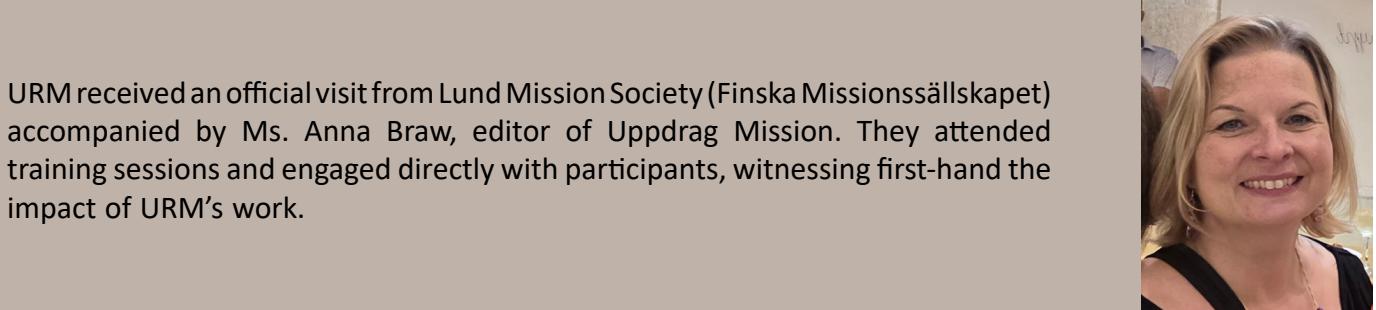
URM regards these carefully guided encounters as a complement to its primary mission of empowering Christians, reflecting its commitment to **peace, dignity, and coexistence**.

INTERFAITH SUMMARY BOX

Interfaith Engagement Highlight – Fourth Training Program In partnership with the Foundation for Peace in the Holy Land (SFL), the Upper Room Mission piloted a modest interfaith participation model during its 2025 entrepreneurship program. While maintaining its Christian identity and ecumenical foundation, URM provided a limited space for respectful encounters and collaboration with participants from Muslim communities. This initiative fostered dialogue, encouraged mutual understanding, and promoted shared economic cooperation among youth, contributing to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in Jerusalem.



4. Official Visits & Strategic Engagement



URM extends gratitude to its partners, including:



Lund Mission Society
(Sweden)



LUTHERISCHER
WELTBUND

VELKD – LWF



Felm¹⁸⁵⁹

FELM – Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission



Local and international churches and friends



5. Pilgrimage Experience – Living Stones



URM partnered with Aeolus (Allious) Tours to create organized pilgrimage and educational experiences connecting visitors with the Living Stones of the Holy Land. These tours deepen understanding of the Christian presence in Jerusalem while generating sustainable income for URM's work.

Itinerary Details → <https://www.the-upperroom.org/living-stones-pilgrimage/>

6. Sustainability & Vision

URM is actively working toward establishing an **Endowment/Trust Fund** to secure:

- Long-term financial stability
- Continued youth empowerment
- Sustainable programming
- Reduced reliance on short-term funding

Combined with income from organized tours and strategic partnerships, this fund will help ensure URM's ministries continue to grow and serve future generations.

7. Final Reflection & Conclusion

The Upper Room Mission stands as a living testament to faith in action in Jerusalem. By empowering youth, supporting families, nurturing unity, and fostering hope, URM continues to safeguard and revitalize the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

In a time of uncertainty, URM remains a place of courage, resilience, and renewal—a modern Upper Room where faith meets daily life and hope takes

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