



Maria Donnelly has earned her Master's in Instruction and is an educator with over twenty years' experience teaching both Science and Bible. She is a Licensed Minister and has served as Bible Teacher, Christian Education Superintendent, Women's Ministries Leader and Children's Pastor. Raised in the inner city of Philadelphia, Maria understands the unique struggles the impoverished face and believes that the Spirit-filled teaching of God's Word will transform communities, towns and eventually the country. Maria enjoys life to the fullest with her husband, Tom, and their three active teenaged sons. They serve together at Five Rivers Assembly of God in Elkton, Maryland.

God With Us

Maria Donnelly

Jesus, fully God and fully man, came to the earth as *God with us*. Immanuel, *God with us*, walked the earth, giving hope and healing. *God with us* took the punishment for sin, giving His life as the payment for the sins of all humanity.

Jesus' short sighted disciples were distraught thinking Jesus was no longer with them. But was He gone? No, though He died, he arose three days later, returning to them in a glorified body. He was still Immanuel.

Hope and joy again. He walked and talked with them for forty days. Then He announced he was leaving again. Really? Again that feeling of desperation came upon them. But He said, *I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

And He did. Jesus sent His Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and *God with us* has never left us again. He is truly with us at all times.

This idea of God being with us was first introduced to me as a young Catholic girl. Every week I would attend Catholic Catechism and Doctrine class after school at Saint Thomas Aquinas of South Philadelphia. I was astounded when the lay teacher told me that Jesus lived in my heart. I asked, "Really? He lives in my heart...*my* heart?" and tapped my chest. She said "Yes, your heart, right here" and pointed at my chest. I was so surprised and shocked and overjoyed! What an idea!

He lives in me! He is present. *God with us* - right here, right now.

One of the mistakes of modern times is that we think God is not here simply because we don't see Him. On the contrary, God is with us constantly. He is as present as the objects you see before your eyes now; as present as He was when He walked the earth with Peter, James, John, His family. We don't question the existence of microwave radiation or UV waves. The same could be said of gravity, wind, and other scientific phenomenon. We see evidence of their effects, are told they are real and that is enough for us. God moves among us, we sense His spirit, and see Him do great works in the hearts and lives of men, yet we often doubt or forget He is truly with us at this very moment.

God with us means He can speak to us and guide us all the time. He is here for a reason. He is here to guide, comfort, and give wisdom and power. He speaks every day to those who listen and believe. As a woman leading ministry, a middle school teacher and a mom of teenaged sons I find it invaluable to listen to the voice of God in regards to daily decisions. His presence makes my burdens light. My work and ministry are successful because of His leadership in my life. He guides and comforts. I just couldn't do life without His presence. I speak to Him, looking for His guidance, and He answers through His still small voice in my heart.

As we celebrate this Christmas season, let's remember the reason for our celebration; Immanuel has come. He is in our lives. He has redeemed us to bring us into relationship with Him. Would He then leave us? No, He is here. He is now. He is truly *God with Us*.

*Joy to the world, The Lord has come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare Him room.*