

Dear Fellowship Partners,

update April 2005



“This is familiar ground,” I thought, as we began preparing for the *Taking Back Ground* Spring Retreat, and for the Conference that would follow two weeks later. Many events in the life of Portland Fellowship have become routine. And our program formats seem to be working well. There’s a sense of “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Sometimes for me and for my staff, there’s that sense of repetition that many people experience in the workplace.

But for us, it’s never boring. While it’s true that we have our familiar program components including Tuesday nights, retreats, conferences, open groups and the like, in this ministry we experience the constant freshness of God’s healing presence.

Obviously, every new participant is a unique child of God. Each man and woman that comes to us tells us of a different life journey. We cannot fail to observe singular qualities of courage and commitment in each new person we meet. It’s also true (and this can be hard) that we keep seeing additional ways that the Enemy brings hurt to God’s children.

All this was so evident at the retreat.

Our Spring Retreat is an important event in the *Taking Back Ground* program. First-year participants are often a little nervous about sharing rooms with others. They wonder how well they will do in close company with others in the program. And perhaps they’re a little anxious about what God will do with them during the weekend.



Leaders enjoying a moment in the sun at Breakaway Lodge

They quickly relax. The retreat house is a welcoming place. It’s on the Oregon Coast, where everyone can find something they like doing – walk on the beach, visit a museum, climb around in the old bunkers at Battery Russell, see a movie. There’s huge value in simply being able to relax and spend time with people who know and understand you.

I have to say that it’s just *cool* to watch this happen. And I’m aware of how important the experience of healthy relationship are in the healing process.

But we had our serious moments too. We listened to the incredible teaching of Sy Rogers, who challenged and encouraged us with his own story and profound insights into the nature of human struggle with sin. Sy’s contribution to our retreat was huge.

On Saturday night of the retreat we hold our Surrender Service. Participants have the opportunity to confess to God some sin, self-perception, or behavior they recognize should no longer be in their lives. They usually use some object to represent that part of their life – as obvious as pornography or as personally significant as, say, an old keepsake. The participant confesses before the group, then places the object before the cross, kneeling down for prayer. Several people gather around to pray for their brother or sister in Christ. Tears flow. Sometimes people wail. In all these years, the same thing has never happened twice.

The Surrender Service this year lasted over five hours. (Not our longest, by any means.) No one would have left even if it had gone on much longer. We were there for each other. We felt the presence of God. During that time there was nothing more important in the world than these divine appointments.

So while the routine was familiar, the important stuff (the healing encounters with the Lord) were astonishingly new.

“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners.”

ISAIAH 61 : 1

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I have written many times that it is a tremendous privilege to do this work. As I now look forward to our spring term of *Taking Back Ground*, our summer program, and other familiar events, I know that we will be witnessing God doing something never seen before.

In our newsletters we try to bring to those of you who support PF with your prayers, your gifts and encouragement a sense of our wonder at all this. For this is *your* work too. Those who benefit from this ministry have a profound sense of gratitude for PF, whose very existence is made possible because of your faithfulness.

In this season of Spring, may God bless you in your own journey into that newness of life He offers to all of us.

With much appreciation,



Jason Thompson
Executive Director



Sy teaching for our Saturday morning session

welcome catherine

It is our privilege to welcome Catherine Chapman as our new Women's Ministry Director. Catherine is no stranger to PF. She



came to us in 1997 to seek God's healing from sexual abuse and homosexuality. In August, 2000, she joined the staff as Project Coordinator, a position she held for two years before leaving to home-school her daughter. Now she returns to the staff at a time when our women's ministry has a great opportunity to grow.

Catherine has been a speaker and educator on sexual abuse recovery, and has appeared on the Trinity Broadcast Network and local Christian radio. You can read her story on our website or on our interactive CD-ROM, *The Map: A Journey to Freedom*.

Catherine lives in Portland with her husband Chuck and daughter Christina.

prayer

Please pray for:

Our retreat participants, that God will help them walk in the new measure of freedom they have obtained.

Our *Taking Back Ground* participants, especially our second-year folk as they approach completion of the program.

Our *Upper Room* Interns as they consider employment and ministry opportunities following completion of the program next month.

In thanksgiving for God's countless blessings on us, and especially for our freedom from bondage to sin.

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events calendar

april 5, 12, 19, 26
Taking Back Ground Series
Discipleship program for men, women, and wives impacted by same-sex attraction. 7 p.m.

april 6, 13, 20, 27
Homosexuality: It's Personal
PF interns will be sharing at Hinson Memorial Baptist the personal and institutional perspectives on ministering to those struggling with same-sex attractions. 7 p.m.

april 8
Family and Friends Group
For those who have a loved one involved in homosexuality and want guidance, encouragement, and support.
Second Friday of each month: 7 p.m.

april 17
Sunset Presbyterian Church
Jason will be speaking in the Sunday evening service. 7 p.m.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com