

Dear Fellowship Partners,

update August 2006

In his final staff meeting before leaving on Sabbatical, Jason, our Director, did two risky things: he left his Dad in charge of the shop, and he gave me free reign to write what I chose in the August Update. (And I thought I had instilled good judgment in him!) Worsening matters, he said, "Be sure it's personal."

Obviously, I need to weigh two realities: first, this is my chance to correct a few things; and second, this is my opportunity to find myself unemployed upon his return!

Well, let's start- ever so carefully- with the corrections. Portland Fellowship is a most amiable workplace. It's great to team up with other staff members who are actually *friends*. And this lovely old house sure beats the cramped, windowless cubicles where so many people spend their workdays. So what's my complaint? PF isn't pet-friendly. I miss my dog Cuthbert, especially on those days that stretch into evenings. But the law has been laid down – *no dog*. I understand. You can imagine yourself being someone coming to PF for the first time, about to share your deepest secrets with someone you've never met. You step into the cavernous first floor room, hear this thundering noise coming down the stairs, and then espy the 90-pound Old English Sheepdog headed straight for you! But that's the problem, isn't it? Love – even unconditional love – can look pretty scary when it comes at you hard and fast.



There, got that out of my system.

The other correction has to do with my elderliness. Since the departure of one of our senior small group leaders, I'm the oldest guy in the organization. Age is relative, of course. Last year I worked in a church where the people referred to my wife and me as "you kids." Here, I have at least a twenty-year jump on everyone. While we have a few participants of post-retirement age, this is mostly a young peoples' game.

Now those who are psychologically informed recognize that this is a setup for *transference*. Briefly put, I'm everyone's dad. Of course, I'm literally dad to the director. (We'll talk about that just before I run out the door.) And a number of the folks – especially a few of the interns – have adopted me as dad, at least for the duration. That's really cool. (The psychologically informed will here remind me of the dangers of *counter-transference* – taking on the role the client mentally assigns to you.) So I walk that fine line between being interested in their weekends and picking up their clothes off the floor. Same fine line I've been walking for 36 years.

The correction? I do *not* remember D-Day. We *did* have electricity when I was a kid. I *am* younger than President Kennedy. Oddly, on those rare occasions when I open up about my age, I'm met with disbelief. I *do* remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. We did *not* have television. And I am now older than the sitting president. On bad days, when I go home feeling outmoded, I am consoled by being met with the aforementioned Unconditional Love. But then, 'Bert – in dog years – has almost caught up with me.

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

ISAIAH 61 : 1

I'm writing on a Friday afternoon in the summer – the very quietest time at PF. All the other staff members are off. The interns have either moved on, or are working at summer jobs. The phone calls are usually somebody looking for someone else's number. It's a good time to reflect.

Walking through the house now empty of people, reminds me of how I used to walk through my church on a weekday. I'd see where all the people sat, wondered how their week was going. There would be a few bulletins and left-behind items that brought back all the excitement of Sunday morning. And I'd see a candy wrapper stuffed into a cushion, and smile at being able to identify the little culprit. And I'd realize what a huge privilege it was to be part of something that was in its essence *people*.

Here at Portland Fellowship, it's not just *any* people, but the courageous men and women who have opened themselves to the difficult and sometimes painful work of receiving the Lord's healing of their sexual brokenness. I have a deep sense of privilege that God has given men the opportunity to stand with these brothers and sisters in their struggle.

I'm glad for the silence today. It helps me to reflect on the symphony this place is. And to stand in wonder that God called me to be here – a gift in the late summer of my life – and an especially treasured gift being able to work with my son of whom I am so proud – with my friends – and with all those *kids*!

Thank you, PF family, for making this possible. I thank you. Cuthbert thanks you.

Jim Thompson
Pastoral Support

additional updates

A new ministry is beginning in the Albany, Oregon area under the direction of Duan Walker, a graduate of the *Upper Room Intern Program*. The Board of PF has provided a small grant to assist with start-up costs. Mid-Valley Fellowship will use the *Taking Back Ground* curriculum and provide services similar to those of PF.

The workbooks for *Taking Back Ground* Volume One are going into a second printing in a slightly revised version. Participants who join the program in October will be using the new books.

Our *Taking Back Ground* Volume One workbook, which is used throughout the United States and in other countries, has now been translated into Spanish – *Recuperando Lo Que Nos Pertenece* - by Lidia Baker and Jeremy Gordon-Smith, both former interns. Jeremy has already carried copies to Buenos Aires. A contribution to underwrite further printing (\$600) would be most welcome!

prayer / praise

Pray for those whom God is now preparing to come to Portland Fellowship this Fall as participants and interns, that He will prepare their hearts for the healing and learning that awaits them.

Pray for our staff, especially as we do our planning retreat, that we will be open to God's leading as we plan for the new season.

Pray for Duan, and those working with him as they start the new ministry in the Albany area: for board members, volunteers, finances, and a suitable meeting location.

Pray for those who are affected by HIV/AIDS, that they will know the Lord's encouragement, especially when struggling with regret and fear.

Praise God for his unfailing goodness – especially for his healing of our lives and relationships. Pray that we might be more deeply rooted in his love as we undertake the work of ministering, healing and being healed.

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events calendar

august 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Summer Series Continues
“Deeply Rooted: Growth through the Disciplines”
7:00 p.m.

august 21
Family & Friends
For those who have a loved one involved in homosexuality and want guidance, encouragement and support. Join us the third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

august 23-34
Staff Retreat
Our staff will meet overnight at a local conference center to relax, pray and do planning for the coming year.

september 5, 12, 19, 26
Leadership Training
Taking Back Ground
small group leaders meet.
7:00 p.m.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com