

update October 2008



Dear Fellowship Partners,

It's one of those moments when your love of your work is met by your sense of inadequacy. Please God, let these be your words.

For the past several years I have been asked to teach the first lesson of Year One in the *Taking Back Ground* program. The lesson is called "The Journey Begins." For the men and women that will be seated in front of me, this isn't the exact moment that their journey began. That may have been weeks or months ago, when God began to stir in their hearts. That beginning may have been a moment of deep prayer – or of deep embarrassment. In other words, they may have finally reached a place of trusting God, or they may have gotten caught! Whatever the circumstances – and God's methods are truly various – they made the decision to seek help with their ongoing sexual struggle.

The next step – coming to see a PF staff member – may have been the hardest. On the final night of the program when the second-year people tell their stories, we'll often hear joking about "wanting to puke," or "driving around the block x number of times." It can be terrifying beyond words to finally open up to someone about your secret sin and shame.

Finally, the night comes and Jason stands up to welcome the group. He's the face everyone is most likely to recognize. Then Drew gathers his music team and invites us all into a beautiful, powerful place of prayer and song. After worship, the second-year people peel off for their class in the basement. And now this is when I stand in front of all the expectant, questioning, frightened first-timers. The journey begins in earnest.

It would be easy to make "deer in the headlights" comments, but this moment is too sacred for light humor. I look around the room at upwards of thirty men and women and see eyes full of hope, of uncertainty, and sometimes of desperation. I can almost hear their questions: "Have I made a mistake coming here? Who is this man? What's going to make this different from everything I've already heard?" I start with a promise: "Relax – tonight I'm going to do most of the talking." And this is where I think to myself, "God can you do all the talking?"

Of course, it's my voice I hear, and they hear. *We have been given this ministry of reconciliation.* That's the fearful and wonderful part of this. On opening night the efforts of countless people come together. Donors have given. Musicians have practiced. Counselors have referred. Teachers have gone over their notes. The house has been readied. The volunteer leaders have done weeks of training. God putting on human hands, human voices. But it's clearly God.



Brave men and women cross this threshold every fall to become participants in the Taking Back Ground program.

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

ISAIAH 61 : 1

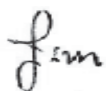
post office box 14841
portland, oregon 97293
telephone 503_235_6364
fax 503_235_3896
e-mail pf@portlandfellowship.com
portlandfellowship.com

Much of this we can do by skill and effort. In once sense, Portland Fellowship has become a well-rehearsed ministry. Yet the clearest evidence of His hand in all this is the room full of new faces each year. Who could have so moved in the hearts of all these people to bring them here? Who could have helped them past their fear and resistance, have gotten them out of the car and across the threshold? Only our Lord God.

Should God choose to withdraw His hand, we would quickly see how little we can do. Yet that hand of blessing has remained upon us for many years, praise be to our God! This year's incoming class will be the largest ever. We look forward to seeing our second-year people – already so dear to us – return for more work.

As I write this letter, that night has not yet arrived. As you read this, it will have drawn very close. That moment of standing before a room full of expectant faces is yet to happen. But, in God's good pleasure, it will.

Dear friends, you, with us, are the hands of God. That opening night – and every night that follows – are possible only because you have chosen to take part in this ministry. You are as dear to us as the men and women that come to this house for healing. I pray that you will have expectation in your hearts as well, expecting that all who seek Him will find Him. There is every reason to embrace that hope, for God is faithful and will keep his Word. That's what I want the new people to know.



Jim Thompson

Jim serves PF as a *Taking Back Ground* teacher, and a mentor for our *Upper Room Program*, and our new on-line *Reach Truth* program. Jim also leads our *Family & Friends* support group.

Visit www.pfhope.com
to see how you can share
Portland Fellowship
resources with local churches.

reach truth: making an impact, one person at a time

Thanks for being patient with me. I absolutely love reachtruth.com. It's been the best tool for me because it is causing me to "journal", and that's how I generally process what I'm feeling and thinking. The site is really high-tech and has a great "look and feel". You guys are definitely cutting edge!

I want to thank you, thank you for your prayers and encouragement.. I truly feel like I can do this journey. Thank you!

Before starting this study with Reach Truth I was not really talking with God. Sure, I was going through the motions but not really letting Him in.

Reach Truth has been so helpful to me. I had not previously spent time analyzing how my lack of ability to form meaningful male relationships earlier in life may have been a contributor to some of my same-sex attraction issues.

prayer

...for wisdom, protection, and blessing for our 20+ leaders who give of themselves and their time to make Taking Back Ground work so well.

...for all of the Portland Fellowship staff and our families as we head into another busy season of ministry and service.

...for utter gratitude as we recognize God's continued faithfulness to this work for more than 20 years.

...for courage and strength for all the men and women starting the *Taking Back Ground* program this fall.

...for continued growth of the financial base of support that funds all the services.

...for the continued growth and utilization of the Reach Truth internet program.

portland fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 non-denominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services, and offerings. Thank you for your gifts.

events calender

**october 7, 14, 21, 28
november 4, 11, 18, 25**

Taking Back Ground
Discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions. 7 p.m.

october / november
Living Well

Support and encouragement for men living with HIV/AIDS. Call our office for more information and confidential meeting times.

october 17/ november 21
Family and Friends Group

Monthly meeting for those who have a loved one involved in homosexuality and want guidance, encouragement and support.
7 p.m.

**Third Friday of
each month**

Check website for additional updates
at www.portlandfellowship.com