



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## My Journey With *Reach Truth* by Nora Seemann

*Through Reach Truth, I am able to help other people heal and, believe it or not, my interaction with these people also helps me get past the hurts in my own life.*

I first became familiar with *Reach Truth* through the online *Taking Back Ground* program. *Reach Truth* is a program of Portland Fellowship that walks participants through twenty destinations on the journey to freedom from same-sex attraction. Each lesson is to the point and helps the participants face the things that have brought them to this point in life. Participants also sign up with a mentor who helps encourage them on their journey. This program, in my opinion, is second to none. Not only does *Reach Truth* minister to those seeking new life on this journey, but as a mentor I too am helped. My heart thrills when another woman completes the program, and I know she is walking in freedom in Christ. I am blessed knowing I am helping another daughter leave homosexuality, bringing peace also to her parents. You see, my own experiences in life help me relate to each one of these women I mentor through *Reach Truth*.

As a child, I grew up in a home that was completely dominated by my mother. I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior at the age of 16, on March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1948. Because of my mother's complete control, I had absolutely no idea that our home life was not like everyone else's. I had no dreams for my future, and I had no desires. Mother hadn't told me I could have desires of my own. It sounds weird, but it is true. Then, at the age of 24, my pastor (an authority in my life, I felt) told me and a young man in the church, "If you even think you love each other, elope. Her mother will never give permission." We did—a month later, we were married. There was no dating. There truly was no real love. Mother had sealed my fate by, over the years, declaring, "You will be the one who will remain at home and take care of me until my death." It's no wonder I listened to my pastor—I didn't want my mother's prophecy to come true!

I had been married to my first husband for 13 years when he, an ordained minister, sexually abused our nine-year old daughter. My daughter shared with me that very day when I returned home from work. When I confronted my husband, he told my daughter and I that he would kill us—her for telling me, and me for wanting him to face his behavior and seek help. He had also been unfaithful during our marriage. Two days after that incident, he packed his bags and left me with our four children. Our divorce was final a year later.

I was left with the full responsibility of the care and discipline of my children. We were a close-knit family and the children were my main concern in life. Each of the children had accepted Christ at a young age. We remained in church and were active participants, but each of the children was still strongly affected by the loss of their father. When my oldest daughter, Beth, was about 15 years old, I found it very difficult to have a care taker for them while I worked to support us. Beth would help me get the children ready for



Fred & Nora Seemann. Nora has been a mentor with *Reach Truth* for over 6 years.

school in the mornings and was given the chore of taking care of her siblings for a few hours each day until I returned home from work.

I never realized, until years later, how I had given her an adult responsibility—taking away her freedom to be herself and grow as God intended. Naturally, the siblings resented having Beth in charge. Many times, my phone at work would ring and I would hear, “Mom, Beth ...” By the time I arrived at home, they would be comfortably sitting together watching a western on TV or playing a game. I was in such deep depression for so long that I didn’t address the earlier problem most days.

Eight and a half years after the divorce, I was introduced to a man at work who was a Christian. Fred found favor with each of the children, and to make a long story short, a year and a half later he and I were planning to be married. On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1978, Fred and I were shopping for our rings. After making the purchase, we turned to walk in the mall and froze in our tracks. Coming toward us was Beth and a girl from our church, hand in hand and...kissing. Fred took me home and waited with me until Beth came in. Her excuse for her behavior was foolish and she knew we did not accept it as truth.

Almost three months later, we married and moved both our homes into our current home. It wasn’t long before Beth moved out and into an apartment with a friend, supposedly to share expenses. When their relationship ended, she became active in the Air Force. Beth visited us often, and brought her new “friends” with her. They never behaved in any way in our presence that would have caused us to confront them.

During her years living as a lesbian, Beth gave us our first grandchild, a beautiful little girl who won our hearts immediately. Beth lived in another state for a few years with our granddaughter and her partner’s family (husband & three children). When that relationship ended, Beth packed up and moved in with us. For five years we shared our home and had a wonderful time with our granddaughter and with Beth.

Eventually they left, moved into an apartment, and Beth found another partner—another married woman. Confrontation seemed to be a continuing part of our lives then. Fred soon learned that was not the way to address the situation. It was a few months after that relationship ended that Beth noticed bruising on our granddaughter’s ankles. Beth took her to a doctor the next morning before school. The doctor’s diagnosis was, “I think she has leukemia.” Blood tests proved it to be a correct diagnosis. Our granddaughter was admitted to Children’s Hospital that day. She was in the hospital for a full month, and during that time had a stroke. Thankfully, she was healed of effects of the stroke—praise God! Beth

remained by her side the entire month. It was during this time that God clearly reached Beth’s heart. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Beth answered God’s call. She walked away from homosexuality, and to this day lives as a beautiful witness of God’s forgiveness, love and care.

A year and a half later, in August, 2002, Fred and I began attending *Bridge of Hope* in Columbus, Ohio, just to learn about homosexuality. We had never heard, “Mom, I’m gay,” but during those 24 years we lived with suspicion, dread and all of those emotions that bring such feelings of grief and fear.

Today, Beth is living a celibate and happy life. She witnesses to her clients in her business, talks with parents of children in homosexuality and is a leader at *Bridge of Hope*. We are so blessed. Fred and I are now co-directors of *Bridge of Hope* and have come to know and love those who attend and are seeking help to overcome same-sex attractions. Our home is open to them and we are always available to them. They are family – in truth – children of God learning the freedom God has for them. Fred and I are also co-leaders of *Circle of Love*, a group that supports parents and anyone

affected by homosexuality. This month we had eight men/women attend the group who have left homosexuality and now come to encourage parents. We praise God!

God uses the pain and heartache that comes into our lives. I thank God for giving me loving compassion for this particular group of people. My husband is involved as well, and gives me so much support. Ministry is my life, and mentoring with *Reach Truth* has been another exciting way for me to bless and encourage women who are struggling with same-sex attraction. Since beginning mentoring in 2009, I have mentored four ladies from different states who have completed the program and are walking in a new relationship with Jesus. Four others are still on the journey with *Reach Truth*.

If you are reading my story and feel God tugging at your heart, I suggest you check out this program and prayerfully consider if God is calling you to be a mentor to someone who is struggling. I thank God and I thank Portland Fellowship for making *Reach Truth* available, and for allowing me to be a part of how He is transforming people’s lives.



Nora's daughter, Beth Seemann

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If you, or someone you know, are a teen or young adult struggling with un-wanted same-sex attractions, or if you would like to mentor someone who is, we encourage you to check out *Reach Truth* at [www.reachtruth.com](http://www.reachtruth.com).

## Missionary Update: *Camino de Salida*

*Camino de Salida (The Way Out)* is Portland Fellowship's sister ministry that we support in Guayaquil, Ecuador. They communicate Christ's love and hope to people struggling with same-sex attraction, as well as train and educate churches, ministry leaders and counselors. Read Elsa's prayer update to discover how your partnership with Portland Fellowship impacts God's people in South America.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings from Guayaquil, Ecuador! I am honored to share with you how God is at work through *Camino de Salida*, and how you can partner with us in prayer. God is doing great things in our city, country and region.

In the fall of 2014, we had the blessing of bringing Fernando Garzon and his family from Columbia to work with our ministry here in Guayaquil. Fernando is a missionary with JUCUM (YWAM), and has found freedom and healing from his own homosexual struggle. He is now married to a Brazilian woman and they have two daughters, the youngest of which was recently born in Ecuador.

In partnering with Fernando, we were able to travel to Ibagué, Columbia, to start a support group for people struggling with same-sex attraction. The leaders of this group are working through Portland Fellowship's *Taking Back Ground* book with the participants, and we keep in touch with them through monthly Skype calls. Over the past two months, on the weekends, we've begun helping a church in Huaquillas (another city here in Ecuador) with their SSA support group. Finally, we have a long-term vision to work with groups of interns, teaching them God's Word and showing them how counseling and discipleship can guide people who desire to live according to God's plan for their sexuality. God is certainly on the move, and we're trying to keep up with Him!

Today, as in many other places in the world, there are numerous challenges to the work God is leading us in. In Ecuador, we are facing laws and customs that accept and promote homosexuality. Currently, homosexual unions, are legal, and legalized gay marriage is nearing, but adoption by homosexual couples hasn't yet been legalized. Our prayer is that no more pro-gay laws will be passed. In addition to social policy, the government continues changing the qualifications and statutes that we have to comply with as a non-profit organization, and our prayer is that we can maintain our legal status without any problems. One of the biggest challenges we face in our ministry is the large numbers of teens and youth affected by gay ideology who embrace a homosexual identity and are not seeking God's redemption. Because of this, we have many discouraged parents coming to us looking for hope.

Though we face many trials, God is faithful, and He doesn't abandon His children. His Word says in Romans 12:2, "*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*" God doesn't call us to get comfortable with this world and its laws, customs and values; rather, He calls us to transformation. The only way to transform is through the renewing of our minds and our understanding—this is necessary to know the will of God. As such, our desire is to continue walking forward together in this work of proclaiming and sharing God's transformational power.

Please continue to pray for us. Pray for opportunities to proclaim God's truth about sexuality in our homeland and in neighboring Columbia. Pray for sustainability for the missionary that we brought to support our ministry (Fernando Garzon and his family). Pray for more leadership training opportunities for our ministry leaders and counselors in Guayaquil and Quito who are eager to continue learning and growing. Finally, please pray for the men and women in our support groups who are wrestling with their SSA and learning how to walk in holiness as they contend with the wounds of the past. Pray also for the parents who need hope and encouragement.

We are so thankful for your prayers and support for us and the work God is doing through us. Hebrews 6:10 says, "*For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do.*" We pray for you and for Portland Fellowship every week, and we know God is pleased with your service to His people.

Sincerely,

Elsa Izaguirre Saldaña  
President  
*Camino de Salida*



Fernando, Veronica, Omar, Jason & Elsa



## may - june calendar & services

### tuesday nights in may **taking back ground + solid ground**

Our discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction, both alumni and new participants.  
7-9 pm.

### may 8 & june 12 **the hope group + wives group**

Join us for a time of prayer, encouragement, support and a great meal. Wives meet together separately after dinner. 6:30 p.m.

### may 29 & june 26 **home groups**

Friends & family of SSA-strugglers connect, share and pray together in host homes. Groups are currently in Tigard and Oregon City.

### may 25 **Shepherd's Gate Church**

Jason will be speaking to a group of youth in SE Portland.

### may 29-31 **upper room retreat**

Final URC event of the year.

### june 2 **Vancouver Bible Institute**

Jason will be teaching a class in Vancouver, WA.

### june 23-28 **restored hope conference**

Restored Hope Network annual conference in Lancaster, PA.

### additional updates

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)  
Please take advantage of your online profile. If you don't have a username, please email or call.

### speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be arranged through the office.

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## URC 2014-2015 Year-End Review

We have mixed emotions as this year's Upper Room Community comes to a close. We are sad that this amazing group of men and women will be leaving us, and yet we are incredibly optimistic for the future prepared for each of them. Julie, Cody, Joe, Cole & Patrick have worked immensely hard at pursuing God's best for their lives. They have pressed into deeper wholeness and healing and have worked together as a community to grow and be made more into the image of Christ.



Every year is uniquely crafted to meet the needs of the people that God brings to us for the Upper Room. This year was a year of being called into deeper maturity and leadership. We were blessed by hearing from multiple voices that imparted their wisdom to our community. Steve Baliko, former PF staff member and now counselor, shared with us about Godly rest. Stephen Black, from First Stone Ministries, exhorted us to have a foundational truth to

stand on in this wayward generation. Kevin Beasley, a discipleship pastor from Alabama, Skyped in to share with us about Biblical masculinity. We also spent a great deal of time learning about God's purpose for our gender through Dr. Larry Crabb's book, *Fully Alive*. This has certainly been a rich year of learning and sharing!

Please pray for this group of men and women as they prepare for the next season of their lives. We truly believe that Julie, Cody, Joe, Cole & Patrick are fully equipped and capable of pursuing a life of fullness and abundance, of living out God's dreams for their lives and being holistically healthy.

We are currently accepting applications for next year's Upper Room Community. The URC will continue to be a safe, structured community for people to come and be fully known and ask personal, heart-felt questions about God, life, love, sexuality and gender. We will explore different personality and mind types, and learn about how our personal timelines are influenced by the stages of development we go through. Also planned for next year is a series about spiritual disciplines in the context of our sexuality, as well as retreats, times of fellowship and fun.

Applicants must have a measure of healing and work done in this area—completion of *Taking Back Ground* or a similar program is required. Visit our website or call us for more information. The application deadline is May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015, and the program starts in September. If you are currently reading about next year's Upper Room Community and God is stirring your heart, we ask you to deeply consider applying. God bless you.



**PORTLAND**  
fellowship

The Fellowship Message is a monthly publication of Portland Fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ

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