

Dear Friends,

update april 2016



On March 11-13, I had the privilege of joining approximately 35 Taking Back Ground and Upper Room participants, leaders, alumni and Portland Fellowship staff at the annual TBG Retreat. It was held at the Breakaway Lodge, located on Oregon's scenic north coast, in the quaint seaside town of Gearhart. I have attended several TBG retreats since my first retreat in March of 2004, and it is always one of the best weekends of my year. This year's retreat did not disappoint and was a tremendous blessing for all.

This was by far the stormiest retreat I can remember. Several late-winter storms pounded the Oregon coast in the days prior to and during the retreat, and we experienced everything from hurricane force wind gusts to pounding rain and hail. While the weather certainly dampened the traditional Friday night bonfire at the beach (not even an entire can of accelerant could get that wood to burn!), it could not dampen the spirit of community, nor the excitement and anticipation that drew us all to the coast for an opportunity to deepen our relationships with each other and, most importantly, with God.

The weekend was filled with: amazing times of worship and corporate prayer; individual time spent hearing from God through His Word (our focus was the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7); small group time sharing and praying for each other; creative time using art, clay and journaling to process what God was speaking to us; free time to socialize, have fun and deepen relationships; and a special time on Sunday morning to affirm and bless one another, as well as share in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

In my mind, however, the highlight of every retreat is the surrender service that takes place on Saturday night. I remember hearing about the surrender service for the first time a few weeks before my first retreat back in 2004, when I was a participant in the Taking Back Ground program. The thought of getting up in front of a group of people, being vulnerable and transparent, and surrendering something publicly was downright frightening. I imagine most, if not all, participants have a similar feeling, especially when experiencing it for the first time. But we step forward in faith, and our lives are changed forever.

The room we were in was lit by dozen of candles and a simple cross stood at the front. We started the evening worshipping together. Jason Thompson then spent a few minutes talking about what it means to surrender and the significance of physically laying something down at the foot of the cross--something tangible that represents whatever is being surrendered. He prayed over the group, asking the Holy Spirit to guide, guard and protect us throughout the evening. After resuming worship for a few more minutes, it was time for someone to have the courage to step up in front of the group and be first...and they did.



*Jason sharing on  
surrender at the TBG  
Retreat in Gearheart, OR.*

*"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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Throughout the evening, person after person bravely walked to the front of the room, shared what they were surrendering and why, then placed their physical item at the foot of the cross. They themselves knelt before the cross and were surrounded by other participants, members of their small groups, and PF leaders, received the laying on of hands and were lifted up in prayer. For many, there was an overwhelming release of emotion as they shared their surrender and knelt before the cross. Some confessed recent failures and received grace and forgiveness. Others surrendered unhealthy habits or relationships that were obstacles in their walk with the Lord, vowing to make the necessary changes to put their trust completely in God. There were those who shared about the tremendous hurt from past abuse, neglect and rejection and received mercy and healing. Still others laid down the lies and false identity they had believed to be true, and walked away believing the truth about who they are in Christ. For all, it was a humble act of laying down, letting go, drawing a line in the sand and walking away changed by the power of the cross. We ended the evening in worship, proclaiming that God is good and He will never let us down!



As I drove back to Portland on Sunday afternoon after the retreat, I reminisced on all the TBG retreats I have attended over the years and the profound transformation that has taken place in countless lives, including my own. The truth always has been and always will be that He who began a good work in me (and in you) will be faithful to complete it (*Philippians 1:6*). I am eternally grateful for the ministry of Portland Fellowship, and on behalf of myself and the other PF board members, I thank you for your faithful prayers and continued financial partnership. You are a vital part of our ministry team that facilitates opportunities for minds and hearts to be renewed and transformed.

Blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Eddie Keener  
PF Board Member

## HOPE 2016: Restored Hope Network Annual Conference

Portland Fellowship is a member ministry of Restored Hope Network. This year's annual RHN conference will take place on June 24th & 25th, just outside of Chicago, IL.

There will be dozens of breakout sessions, worship and special guests like Janet Parshall, a national radio and television commentator, author and advocate for the preservation and promotion of family values. For more information on pricing, registration and other details, please visit: [www.restoredhopenetwork.org](http://www.restoredhopenetwork.org).



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**Portland Fellowship** is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services and offerings. Thank you for your gifts.

## events calendar

### april 8 Hope Group

For Family and Friends.  
Dinner will be provided.  
6:30 pm at the PF house.

### april 12 Pastor's Workshop

Western Seminary & Hinson Church are hosting a training day. Jason & Kathy Grace are sharing.  
9am-12pm

### april 15-17 Spokane Conference

Jason and two of our Hope Group parents will be speaking at a church conference in Spokane, WA.

### april 29 Hope Home Groups

Opportunities to connect with other family members for prayer and support. Call office for info.

**Speakers, counseling, youth support and personal support** can be arranged through the office.

Check website for additional updates  
at [www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)