



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update june 2016

Each year at the start of the Upper Room Community (URC), I lay out a brief, yet cautionary explanation of what the participants can expect their year to look like. What I tell them accurately describes the process, program and communal life of the URC, and it goes something like this: *"I'm so glad you are here! I can sum up this year for you now: 'It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...'"*

I usually get nervous chuckles at that point, particularly since I waited until *after* the participants enrolled to share with them the paradox penned in the opening lines of Dickens' 1859 novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. Then, as the year unfolds...that very truth is fulfilled.

I share this with you because the Upper Room Community has officially ended for the 2015-16 program year. As I reflect over the best and the worst things that have happened this past year, I am reminded that the URC experience is just like many other spiritual paradoxes that I've come to appreciate and value. The Bible is full of what seem like glaring contradictions. Matthew 16:25 says, *"If anyone wants to keep his life safe, he will lose it. If anyone gives up his life because of Me, he will save it."* Elsewhere, we see that we receive through giving (Acts 20:35), find rest under a yoke (Matthew 11:25), and gain strength through weakness (II Cor. 12:10). We reign by serving (Rev 5:10), are exalted through humility (James 4:10) and even Jesus is both the Lion and the Lamb (Rev 5:5-6).

This year's URC has certainly fulfilled many paradoxes. As a 9-month residential program, participants undergo mentoring, counseling, discipleship and communal living to partner with God's deeper healing in the area of sexual and relational wholeness. There are many difficult things that Upper Room participants confront; relational messes transpire, and spiritual work at times seems daunting. *"It was the worst of times..."* can definitely feel accurate in certain moments. Yet, with all of the frustration, tears and pain that come with the Upper Room, there are in equal measure copious amounts of laughter, memories, growth and building up. Not only that, we also repeatedly witness God performing miracles in the lives and hearts of the URC participants.

Rigel Hernaez is one example of God's miraculous work. Rigel was one of our Upper Room participants this year. Not only did he have to work hard to obtain his visa documentation and U.S. nursing certification (he's Canadian), but he also had to wrestle through the spiritual and emotional challenges that came up for him this year. In March, we encouraged everyone to pray about what God was asking them to surrender at our TBG Retreat, along with a tangible object (representing an intangible reality). God told Rigel two weeks before the retreat what He was calling him to surrender: his running shoes. Immediately, walls went up and Rigel's reply was a firm, *"No."* You see, his running shoes were more than just a pair of Nike Free 4.0 Flyknits—even though Rigel's body was in



The 2015-16 Upper Room
Community participants.

*"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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Portland, the shoes represented all the ways his heart was running away from the Lord. For him, running *back* to what was comfortable and familiar was easier than running by faith *towards* the unknown future God was calling him to.

Entering the surrender service, Rigel fought with the Lord. He did not want to let go. It was then that God gave him a vision: Jesus was holding a pair of running shoes, and spoke to Rigel's heart. He knew that Jesus would give him everything he needed to run the race set before him. In surrendering his shoes, Rigel knew he was gaining a reward: Jesus Christ our Lord. Since then, Rigel has experienced incredible peace, strength and comfort. He is more fully known by his community, which means deeper life-giving relationships and freedom. He says he even sleeps better! And the incredible thing is, this is just *one* example of the powerful things God has done in the lives of our URC participants this year.

The members of the Upper Room are the bravest people I've ever met. This year Rigel, Mel, Trevor, Liz and Joe have worked extremely hard. Please pray for them all—they covet your prayers and desire God to reveal His next steps for their lives. Please pray as well for Rigel's visa, as his paperwork is still being finalized.

Would you also ask the Lord to bring us next year's Upper Room participants? We are currently accepting applications until July, 2016 for the upcoming ministry year. Many of the people who join this program know the truth, yet are struggling to consistently walk in it. The URC offers a special process that helps them address some difficult real-life questions: *How do we learn to treasure God above all things? How do we build healthy, life-giving relationships? How can we use the gifts that God has given us to His glory, instead of misusing them to meet our own needs?* This is the goal of the URC—gaining practical tools, becoming equipped and walking in righteousness together.

We are so grateful for your faithful prayers and financial partnership, through which programs like the Upper Room Community are made possible. We trust and believe that God has unbelievably good things for those who join us in the URC, that they may experience "*the best of times.*"

In Christ,



Cynthia Beaudry
Ministry Administrator

Mark Your Calendars: Summer 2016 PF Open Nights

This summer, Portland Fellowship will be hosting two special Open Nights. On July 19th and August 16th, from 7-8:30pm, we will be opening our doors for people to come and connect, worship together, hear testimonies of God's transformational power and learn more about the ministry of Portland Fellowship.



We are excited to offer these nights as a way to support those who are going through our programs, as well as introduce new people to our ministry. If you are a local pastor, lay leader, financial supporter or even just someone who's curious about what actually goes on here at PF, we want to invite you to come and experience a taste of the incredible work God is doing in our midst.

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

june 10

Hope Group

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

june 21

Pastor's Luncheon

Patrick will be sharing on ministering to gay loved ones with a group of Presbyterian pastors.

june 24

Hope Home Groups

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

june 24-25

Restored Hope Conference

RHN's annual conference
held outside Chicago, IL.

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

Check website for additional updates
at www.portlandfellowship.com