

Dear Friends,

update august 2017



*"We go to an evangelical church, but our church is becoming more progressive, so we're open to all of that."* A fellow student made this smiling comment with proud hesitation to our openly gay instructor. I interpreted my classmate's declaration as being unsure about how to reconcile the fact that we had a gay instructor who was also a long-time professing Christian. It was another reminder that the body of Christ is struggling and confused about how to respond to "Gay Christianity."

During the four-week training I recently attended, our instructor displayed fruits of the Spirit. He was patient, kind, and gentle. Symbols of The Trinity were tattooed on his body. He frequently made reference to his mission trips, choir participation, and church activities. He was a nice guy. Add to all that the fact that he and his partner have been in a committed relationship for more than twenty years; they even got married! Don't all these good things prove his lifestyle and his gay relationship to be healthy choices? Wouldn't God look at this and say, *"This is good"*? Shouldn't the Church and its people embrace this? This is our struggle. It's real. Real people, with sincere hearts, in real relationships, with real longings. And the world says, *"Yes! Go for it! This is good for everyone."*



Eric has served on  
PF's Board of Directors  
for over 2 years.

The community of Portland Fellowship (PF) offers an alternative in the midst of these genuine struggles. It's a *real* alternative: the real God made a real sacrifice so that we could have real freedom. The many programs offered through PF all have the goal and focus of helping participants surrender their personal desires to God and live in the freedom He offers. The methodology of PF recognizes a real need for relationship and the reality of persistent desires that have been rooted over time.

The members of the PF community struggle together. They encourage and support one another through sharing personal stories, praying for each other, worshiping together, and listening to each other's hurts and joys. These programs are not about shaming us for our desires, but rather they are about embracing our identity in Christ. They are about living out a process of obeying God's desires and surrendering our desires that conflict with His.

I have benefited from the safety of the PF community. In 2007, I entered the Taking Back Ground (TBG) program, hoping that I would finally be given the "secret formula", the formula that would take away the sexual desires that I knew were in conflict with God's desires. I had previously been part of many counseling sessions and small groups that, over time, eventually "failed me". Through TBG, I learned that surrender is a process, a process that will continue for the rest of my life. I learned that God does not shame me for my desires and actions as I live this process; when He burns my conscience with guilt, it carries the purpose of helping me recognize my need to surrender my desires and embrace His. My process continues, my desires continue, my surrender continues.

*"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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We cannot do it alone. The community at PF meets relational needs in the process of surrender. Using small groups, large groups, and interpersonal relationships, we experience the reality of God's love. We affirm the realness of each other's struggles, we embrace each other despite our failures, and we exhort one another in the continuing process of surrender.

My involvement at PF over the past ten years has changed. After initially going through the two-year TBG program, I joined an alumni group. Later, I led small groups. At one point, it seemed inconceivable not to be part of a PF small group. However, part of the relational healing process is to build healthy relationships outside the PF community that encourage the real and continuing process of surrender.

This past program year at PF was a real success. Hope Group ministered to the real needs of friends of SSA strugglers and gay-identified loved ones. Taking Back Ground encouraged authentic surrender in the midst of real struggle. The Upper Room built genuine community among participants. All of PF's programs continue to point to Jesus as our real hope, in real life.

I'm thankful that God is faithful to meet us all wherever we are in the process of surrendering to Him. I'm thankful that He has provided Portland Fellowship as a place for those who are struggling with relational and sexual wholeness, specifically unwanted same-sex attraction. I'm thankful for the volunteers and staff that continue supporting program participants in their process of surrender.

Please continue supporting this ministry, or consider doing so if you have not yet. Through your partnership of prayers, donations, volunteering, and referrals, you are supporting the real work of Christ at Portland Fellowship. If you have questions about how you can be involved, in any capacity, please email or call the PF office. We would love to hear from you. Thank you for helping us keep it real.

In Christ,

—Eric Bindewald  
PF Board Member

### **Ministry Update: Taking Back Ground Revisions**

In 2015, we decided to replace the TBG teaching time with group discussion and have participants watch the teaching videos online. This new format has allowed us to go so much deeper with our participants! At the same time, digging into the TBG workbook together each week has highlighted several areas in the curriculum that need editing, rewriting, and revisions.

This summer, we are working hard to revise the entire TBG curriculum, both Year 1 and Year 2. We are excited for this opportunity to turn closed-ended questions into open-ended discussion-starters, fine-tune chapters that need more clarity, and clearly articulate Biblical truths about sexuality, relationships, and redemption. As we look forward to launching our revised curriculum this fall, please consider promoting Taking Back Ground in your church or small group. We are praying that God would use these updated workbooks to bring even more people into Christ's healing and transformation.



### **events calendar**

**august 4**

#### **Upper Room Move-In**

The 2017-18 Upper Room Community participants begin moving into PF.

**august 11**

#### **Hope Group**

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

**august 15-17**

#### **TBG Year 2 Rewrite Project**

PF Staff will be revising and updating the TBG Year 2 workbook.

**august 28**

#### **PF Board Meeting**

Board members meet to pray over PF & plan for the fall.

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

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at [www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)