

Dear Friends,

update october 2017



A few weeks ago, I spent seven hours at the emergency room, checking to see if my husband was having another heart attack. I say *another* because he has had a five-bypass open heart surgery and nine stents put in since 2009. The air in the emergency room seemed thick—even tense. All my senses were heightened as my mind tried to remember what the last attack was like. It takes forever to get answers in the E.R. I saw people who were in so much pain, one lady in particular, and it took everything in me not to stand up and scream, “Somebody help her! Can’t you see she needs help *now*?! ”

All this pain, intensity and heightened awareness reminded me of another time when I had those same feelings. Close to twenty years ago, my husband disclosed to me his same-sex attraction. When I first walked through those doors at PF to find help, it felt like an emergency room atmosphere—all kinds of people with different pain levels that needed help *right now*. I couldn’t make sense of this issue. I had no idea my husband had been wrestling with same-sex attraction for most of his life. His struggle was a hidden secret that initially brought shame, isolation, grief and betrayal into our home. It was messy and painful, but it was also beautiful.

Dealing with my husband’s disclosure was messy because of all the implications of infidelity. I needed to get tested for AIDS. I had to wrestle with doubts and insecurities about my value as a wife and a woman: *How could I be the wife whose husband couldn’t share his darkest secrets with her? Why didn’t he trust me with his deepest shame, his biggest fears?* My husband’s disclosure was also beautiful, because we both acknowledged a God who would meet us at our lowest time to extend grace and hope. He continued to sustain us and meet our needs as we both walked in sexual wholeness and healing.

For many years, every Tuesday night I would sit and listen to the teachings at the PF House—my initial “emergency room”. It was a triage situation: I had to drop everything I thought I had to do and, instead, take care of the vitally important stuff: my heart and my relationship with God. I would try to make sense of the life-giving words the teachers shared. I followed their hopeful instructions for walking with my husband on this unexpected journey, and for walking through my own journey. Every day, I would go to the Scriptures, with the Psalms being the salve to treat my raw wounds of betrayal and grief. I would try with all my strength to take in and learn as much as I could to understand about my husband’s healing process. Mark 12:30-31 says, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*” These verses gave me the foundation to rebuild my unexpectedly broken life. Just like the slow process of waiting and going through all the many tests at the E.R., I had to trust God to be with me as I went through the slow, daily dying to myself and my agenda as I walked along the healing process.

I also learned empathy here at Portland Fellowship: taking the time to find places in your heart where you have experienced terrible pain, and sitting next to the one who feels hopeless and overwhelmed. God does that for us. God was there in the PF “emergency room” with me, and He



Heidi and Ron are long-time leaders of Taking Back Ground and the Hope Group.

“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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showed Himself to me through the people and leaders at PF. These friendly people greeted me at the door when I came in and loved on me during that time of healing. These were understanding, strong people who saw a better future for me when I couldn't see it for myself. Being accountable and honest in my weekly small group was an incredibly safe place, where we shared victories, defeats, acceptance and love. Just like the interpreter in the hospital, God had people at PF who could speak my language, empathize with my pain and meet me where I was at, in order to help move me forward in healing.

This past summer, I had the privilege of editing the TBG workbooks with Jason, Patrick and Ron. We updated the lessons, corrected grammar and rewrote many of the questions. Just like in the E.R., during that time of revising the TBG books, huge waves of emotions would wash over me, as each chapter caused me to remember my own journey through TBG. I laughed and I cried as I thought of all the misperceptions I had about same-sex attractions. I was reminded that we are constantly growing and learning to be more prepared and able to care for the hurting and wounded people who come through our "emergency room" doors at PF. We want to meet people who are struggling exactly where they are at. Just like skilled E.R. nurses, identifying and correctly responding to people's individual wounds and traumas, the leaders at PF are passionate about caring for the participants (the "patients") and leading them to the Great Physician (Jesus), the only one with the power to change people from the inside out.

For over twenty years, I have seen many people come in through the PF doors with trauma or crisis in their lives. It is so encouraging to see their lives being transformed and redeemed. Hope is restored where shame existed before, and many return to serve as leaders for the next batch of wounded warriors coming into this safe haven. Please, continue to support PF with your prayers, financial gifts and time. Your partnership makes possible all the programs at PF: the Upper Room Community, Hope Group, Taking Back Ground, the Wives Support Group, and all the online programs. You are making a difference in so many people's lives, and we are so grateful to serve the Lord alongside you here at Portland Fellowship.

Thankfully,

—Heidi Perry
PF Hope Group &
Wives Group Leader

Program Update: Upper Room Community

Meet the final member of the 2017-18 Upper Room Community!



CJ McConnell

I just moved here from Chehalis, WA, where I spent most of my life. Having been raised in a Christian household, I always had a sense of what was expected of me as a child of God. However, growing up, I was a very sensitive and artistic child and some of the other boys would tease me for it. Taking some of the things they said to heart, strange and unwanted feelings started to grow in me as I moved closer to manhood. Because of my faith, I never sought to act on these feelings with other men, but privately indulged in them through pornography. Eventually my guilt mounted and the truth came out to my parents. Responding with love and concern, they sought out ways for me to cope with these feelings, eventually leading us to discover Portland Fellowship. In 2011, I took part in Taking Back Ground, where I found healing and companionship with others who shared my struggle. Only now, four years later, have things come together for me to take the next step and join the Upper Room Community. I sense God's hand in leading me here and know that He has great things planned for me through this program. I pray for faith and obedience as God leads me forward and know that I will be blessed by Him in return.

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

october 13

Hope Group

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

october 21

Women's Betrayal Conference

For wives and fiancées working through the betrayal of infidelity.
www.tuffstuffministries.com

tuesdays in october

Taking Back Ground

Group for those struggling with unwanted SSA.
7-9:30 p.m.

thursdays in october

Upper Room Community

PF's live-in discipleship program.
12:30-3:30 p.m.

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

Check website for additional updates
at www.portlandfellowship.com