



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update april 2023

After praying for sunny weather for our spring TBG retreat this year, we were treated to fresh snow on the ground in the hills around Camp Tadmor, about two hours south of Portland. Taking Back Ground participants and leaders arrived through the slushy snow on the roads that Friday evening, ready for a full weekend of fellowship, worship, and surrender.

I was asked over the weekend how many retreats I have been to, but I had some trouble remembering—maybe eight? These retreats have been a blessing to me over the years, as a participant over a decade ago, several times as an alumnus, recently again as a participant, and now as a leader. I came in nervous, but excited, to share this experience with our current participants; ready to serve and bless; and happy to enjoy the company of so many men and women whom I love.

With TBG now offered both in-person and online via Zoom, many of the participants flew or drove in from out of state. After many months (or years) of getting to know someone over video calls, it is a strange but joyful experience to meet face-to-face. It was great to “get to know” each other in this way, and also for our online and in-person participants to get familiar. Even without prior interaction, there can be a shared understanding when meeting someone else who has similar, unique struggles like the ones we process at Portland Fellowship.

After dinner and settling in, we begin the retreat together with a time of worship. Worship at Portland Fellowship has always been a special thing to me—this is a group of Christian brothers and sisters who know their need for God’s help, and cry out earnestly. I felt during this time an anticipation for the work God would do in the next few days, as well as a soberness as a new leader, in hoping to be present and ready to show hospitality to the participants. We wound down in the evening with fellowship, some of us braving the mild drizzle to enjoy each other’s company around a campfire, another cherished retreat tradition.

Saturday is the fullest day of the retreat, starting with a hearty breakfast, time for worship and personal devotion, and then moving into a time of Scripture study. This year, we looked at the book of James, taking time to read the entirety on our own. After an hour of reading and processing, we took time in small groups to share our reflections. This book is so rich with imagery and wisdom that cuts to the heart, and there’s a lot that can be taken away. What stood out to me this time is the theme of “purity”: *“Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.” (James 3:12)* How often I am double-minded! I need these reminders to consider, “Where do my thoughts and actions differ from what I proclaim?” On previous retreats, this time of Scripture study prepared me for the mindset of surrender, prompting me to ask, “What is in my life that has no place as a follower of Christ?” After lunch, we come back to our small groups for a powerful time of prayer for one another.



The 2023 TBG
Surrender Service

“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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The afternoon is designated as free time, but many choose to take part in shared activities. A large group of us went for a very muddy hike at the nearby McDowell Creek Falls. The mud provided an opportunity to see participants helping each other in a touching way, with some of the men helping the women keep from slipping on the steeper sections of trail. After the hike, some of the guys went off for a rowdy time playing dodgeball. I was hesitant to join, being someone who has typically shied away from sporty activities, and I was tired from the hike. However, I'm glad I joined, as it was a lot of fun, and it was cool to see the playfully-competitive spirit that arose in these men.



Following the afternoon diversions, we started to prepare for the evening Surrender Service. This is a time for participants to publicly surrender to God something they need to let go of, along with a physical object to represent their surrender. Participants come forward and describe what they are surrendering and why, before laying the object down at the foot of the cross, with others coming up to pray a blessing over them. This year, it was amazing to see participants lay down lies they've believed, sinful habits, inner vows, and broken identities that hold them back from their true identity in Christ.

A few weeks before this year's retreat, I had the honor of sharing my experience with previous Surrender Services. This caused me to reflect with gratitude on how meaningful these surrenders have been in my life, and how the impact didn't always show in the moment, but years later I could still see an impact. My prayer is that the service and the retreat have the same long term impact on all who took the same step this year, bringing them to greater trust, obedience and intimacy with their Lord.

Thank you for praying for the Taking Back Ground participants, leaders, and PF staff. The work God does in and through this discipleship program is only possible through your partnership, and we are so grateful for you.

In Christ,

Tim
TBG Leader

RHN 2023 HOPE Conference

This year's Restored Hope Network annual conference, HOPE 2023, will take place online, June 9 & 10. This special online conference will feature powerful biblical teaching, and inspiring life stories of former LGBTQ-identified individuals transformed by the love of the living God.



Keynote speakers will include Dr. Linda Seiler, Dr. Robert Gagnon, Dr. Quentin Van Meter, and Elizabeth Woning (CHANGED movement).

For pricing, registration and more information, please visit:
www.restoredhopenetwork.org/hopeconf

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

tuesdays in april

Taking Back Ground

Discipleship program for Christians struggling with unwanted SSA.
7-9:30 p.m. PST

april 12, 17

Jason Speaking

at Portland Bible College

april 14

In-Person Hope Group

For friends and family of gay or trans-identified loved ones. 6:30 p.m.
www.portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php

april 27-29

Jason Speaking

Jason will be sharing at a pastor's conference in Tri-Cities, WA.

Speakers and personal support can be arranged through the office.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com