



THE NEWSLETTER OF PRODIGAL MINISTRIES

NOVEMBER 2012

Reaching Out

IN MEMORIAM

Mike Kidd (1949-2012)

A reflection on the life of Prodigal's Senior Support Group Leader

BY DAN BURTON

In 1970 The Five Man Electrical Band wrote a song that says...

Signs, Signs, Everywhere there's signs.

Blocking out the scenery. Breaking my mind.

Do this! Don't do that! Can't you read the signs?

Mike Kidd used to sing that song a lot. It fit him. He wasn't one to conform to others' expectations. He didn't appreciate those who judged people based on appearance.

And the sign said "Long-haired freaky people need not apply"

So I tucked my hair up under my hat and I went in to ask him why

He said "You look like a fine upstanding young man, I think you'll do"

So I took off my hat, I said "Imagine that. Huh! Me workin' for you!"

I met Mike in the summer of 1991 when he stepped into our church. I didn't know it at the time, but it was the first church Mike had stepped foot in for 18 years. I could tell right away that Mike was cut from a different piece of cloth. He not only looked different — shorts in the winter, ponytail and a mullet, bushy beard — he also handled himself differently. Refreshingly so. I didn't quite know what to think of him, but I enjoyed his unique take on life. He openly stated his opinion regardless of

what others thought or how it made him look.

Our friendship started haltingly as Mike was hesitant to let me get very close to him. He told me he was divorced and had two grown daughters. It would be more than a year later that I learned that story was a ruse. He was testing to see if we would accept him even if his background was less than pristine. Our Senior Minister, Dave Faust, later laughed that he had been praying for Mike's (imaginary) daughters for over a year before he found out they were a ploy!

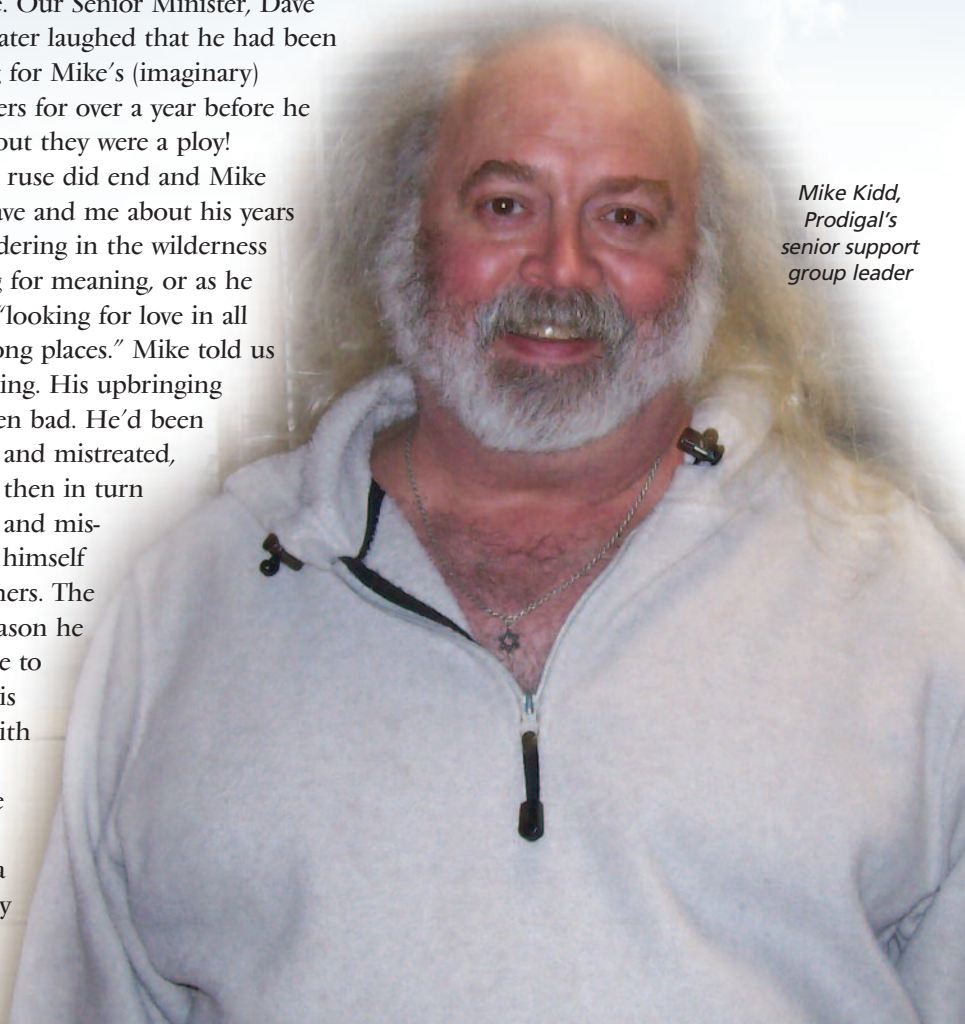
The ruse did end and Mike told Dave and me about his years of wandering in the wilderness looking for meaning, or as he put it, "looking for love in all the wrong places." Mike told us everything. His upbringing had been bad. He'd been abused and mistreated, and he then in turn abused and mistreated himself and others. The only reason he was able to share his story with us was because he had found a ministry that

gave him hope for a brighter future.

Jerry Armelli, through Prodigal Ministries, was the tool God used. I am not privy to HOW God used Jerry, but I was privy to SEE how much Mike changed as a result of the ministry of Jerry and Prodigal.

Mike blossomed. I've **never** met anyone more grateful for the love and

continued on page 5



Mike Kidd,
Prodigal's
senior support
group leader



Ruth Henn, member of Prodigal's support staff

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the last in our series of articles written to introduce you, our readers, to three part-time staff persons who are critical to Prodigal Ministries' mission—our support group leaders. Having served in that capacity just since June, 2010, Ruth Henn is the newest member of Prodigal's support team, but is far from new to Christian counseling, holding a Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology. During the past 16 years, Ruth's primary positions have been "Mom" and "Home Educator." She and her husband of 21 years are thankful parents of five "blessings."

How I wish that each of our readers could sit down with Ruth to hear her story first-hand and to feel the Christ-like compassion and zeal, which she exudes! Following the format used in my sketches of Mike and Earl, I have done the "next best thing," simply transcribing without comment Ruth's responses to my interview questions.

Deep Calls to Deep... **Ruth's Story**

Editor – In your role with Prodigal, you regularly provide support and advice to women struggling with a variety of deep-seated emotional, spiritual and physical issues. Beyond your formal education in Christian counseling, are there elements of your personal story that have equipped you for such intense ministry?

RH – I do think God uniquely set me up for this. Each person who comes to us is dealing with issues of relational dysfunction and brokenness, which we all encounter in some form in this broken world. My personal history? To begin, I am a "p.k." (I've always wondered why there is a special abbreviation for "preacher's kid.") Even before I entered the picture, though, my father struggled with what he called "problems with his nerves," debilitating enough to warrant hospitalizations and "shock treatments". So, this was the scene I was born into. By the time I was five, I was the only child left at home. Truly, we were the definition of "generation gap," a child of the 1970's with parents born in the 1920's. The "Great Depression" part of their history felt like it became part of mine. My dad was stuck in a cycle of periods of manic performance for approval alternating with periods of crashing defeat and depression. My introverted mother plugged away at the female role expectations of their generation—roles which I rejected. To me it felt like we were living in the same home yet in different worlds.

If we stopped there, my story would be a pretty sad one, wouldn't it? And I wouldn't have much hope to share. At that point I knew what the "good news" was supposed to be, but rarely did I experience it as such at home. I

guess that is what motivated me early on to study psychology in a Christian context...to try to find some answers.

Ed. – Did you find answers?

RH – I did, over the journey, thank God! It took a while though. A lot of years passed trying to look good on the outside, but not feeling like I had a soul to turn to for wise counsel. I couldn't exactly go to my pastor about my dad's issues, because my dad was my pastor! And even if there were someone equipped to deal with such things in those days, in the small town communities in which we lived there was always a sense of guardedness to protect my dad's reputation, and my own. So I got good at trying to look "normal", no matter what was going on inside, and at finding my own ways to survive. I believed in God for salvation, but beyond that, I didn't have any real-life models of what I would call "abundant life" lived out. Somewhere along the way, I had picked up the philosophy, "Life is hard, then you die." I lived under the impression that you just do the right things, catch some pleasure where you can, and hope for your reward when you die.

Ed. – That's a pretty negative picture.

RH – It did feel that way for some years. But looking back, I see where God provided people and opportunities for me to experience His love beyond the limitations of my home circumstances. I'm thankful that my parents put me into the care of some other great people while they were occupied with church work and their own struggles. They took me to family camp and sent me to a youth camp where I experienced God's unconditional love outpoured beyond anything I'd

known before.

Another example was the first time I heard someone preach on "baptism of the Holy Spirit." This seemed like something I needed. I asked my mom what she thought about it and her response was that she had prayed for that once, but nothing happened. Still, I felt compelled and went forward for prayer. The next morning I remember waking up with music in my mind. I believe God honored that open invitation that I gave Him and that He was there, working in my spirit. A transition was happening for me from singing about God, to relating more directly **with** Him.



"We were the definition of a generation gap... By the time I was five, I was the only child left at home."

– Ruth Henn



Ed. – So that was a turning point for you?

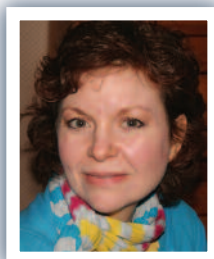
RH – Absolutely. However, on a life-application level, I still had a long way to go.

Unresolved issues, unhealthy coping habits and relational patterns did not just disappear. "A satisfied soul loathes

continued on page 4

Ruth's Story

continued from front page



"The most valuable lesson that came to me during this period was that God actually wants to communicate specifically with me."

– Ruth Henn

the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." I was nowhere close to being a satisfied soul at that point.

I had a pretty difficult adjustment from high school to college. Any security I'd felt in at least being a successful student in the "small pond" of high school was long gone as I moved to a Christian university. There I encountered a lot of what I saw as "shiny, happy people," people who I doubted could relate to where I had come from and the pain I still felt. What was I to do? Certainly not talk about all that with people that looked like they had things way more together than I.

To be fair, there were some great people there. I made a few friends, and really did learn some foundational principles. But my own habit of hiding my pain, making the grades and looking fairly put together had become my automatic escape pattern, a pattern that ironically really kept me from experiencing the things I needed most. I made it my goal to get my degree and get out of there as quickly as possible without getting too attached.

Ed. – And after college? Were there other events that God used to set you free from that pattern?

RH – My church camp experience was the gift to me that "kept on giving." An important part of my story is that I married a boy I met there. He loved the Lord and made me laugh. I think I was hoping that this would be my ticket into "happily ever after," but alas, my "knight in shining armor" had come from a different – but equally dysfunctional – home. Not to paint the picture too dark, because on one hand, we did dedicate our marriage to God to the extent that we knew how to do at the time, and He has faithfully been there. Yet I can relate to so many people who have the false expectation, programmed by fairy tales, romance movies and sappy '70's lyrics, that a "prince" or

"princess" will make the pain of the past all go away. In our case, the "princess" fell deeper into a habit of medicating the lingering pain through food; and my "prince" didn't know how to lead me out of it. As I said, he had his own issues. But God was still working, positioning us among other people who were a little farther along in seeking after God.

Ed. – Keep going. What people? Where?

RH – Through a set of circumstances that could only be God, I ended up with an internship at a local Christian counseling center which had a vision to equip the Church for Christ's healing work, teaching healthy relationship skills, renewing of the mind, and breaking free from the past. It quickly became clear that this had been what I needed: genuine community, and a healing experience with God that cut to the core. God began to build into my life foundational vision and skills that would enable me to experience Him exponentially more.

Ed. – Can you be more specific about that vision and those skills?

RH – The most valuable lesson that came to me during this period was that God actually wants to communicate specifically with me. Whenever that has clearly happened in my life, it has been life-changing. I guess that makes sense. That's how He worked from the beginning of creation: He spoke and things happened. I still find that to be true! In this context, prayer began to make sense to me: listening to the Spirit of the Creator of the Universe, rather than doing all the talking. What could be more fun and fulfilling than that? Would it be fair to even call it "addictive"?

Communicating heart to heart in the safety of friends willing to be real, I began to experience God as close and caring rather than as a distant, demanding Dad. The more I became able to

continued on page 5

Ruth's Story

continued from page 4

internalize that truth, the more I became willing to trust Him, which is key. And the more areas of my life I opened up to Him, the more healing I received. All the good things that He says about who He is and what real life in Him is like, became personally accessible to me, almost like a bank account in my name that I had never known how to tap into. I could tell you story after story of how His Word and prayer became life to me beyond what I asked or imagined possible.

Ed. – That is beginning to sound like “happily ever after”! When during this process did you connect with Jerry Armelli and Prodigal Ministries?

RH – A “God thing,” again. Jerry also happened to be interning at that same counseling center 20 years ago. His story stood out to me as unique — an example of what was possible when someone really meets Jesus and trusts Him. I was drawn to the ministry here because of what I had experienced: the chasm between the potential that God puts in us for healing and healthy relationships on one side, and the reality of pain on the other when a void remains,

waiting and starving for that potential to be fulfilled. I especially have a heart for people who, like me, have grown up in church, hearing about the feast that is available, but having no idea how to access the feast. I have a passion to see God's potential for His people become reality. Since God is present, and the best life possible is available in Christ, why settle for less than the best?

Ed. – Can you really connect with women who are struggling with specific issues that you probably have never experienced?

RH – I relate. No two life experiences are the same, but I find that our human hearts are very similar. The generational and personality differences in my family left me with a sense of disconnect with my mother much of my life. Add to that my father's distance and unpredictability due to his own issues. I reacted strongly against the idea of God as “Father” and was repulsed at the idea of submission. For many years I tried to fill those voids outside the boundaries in too many ways to tell, which only added up to more pain, instead of bringing the fulfillment which I was seeking. God is the Counselor and Healer. He makes the connections. It's the coolest thing ever

continued on page 7

No two life experiences are the same, but I find that our human hearts are very similar.

– Ruth Henn



IN MEMORIAM

Mike Kidd

continued from cover page

grace of God than Mike Kidd. Just bringing up the topic would cause Mike to cry. He went from feeling hopeless and lost to being a hope-giver to hundreds. Mike could be brutally honest when necessary...and he would then follow that up with a hug and overflowing grace. It was an experience I've never encountered in another earthly relationship.

And the sign said, “Everybody welcome. Come in, kneel down and pray”

But when they passed around the plate at the end of it all, I didn't have a penny to pay

So I got me a pen and a paper and I made up my own little sign

I said, “Thank you, Lord, for thinkin' 'bout me. I'm alive and doin' fine.”

Grateful. Thankful. Blessed. Those are words Mike would use to describe his life. He knew God had redeemed his life from the pit and he was quick

to tell others his story.

Mike died August 10, 2012 shortly after cancer was diagnosed. He lived just past his 63 birthday, three “bonus” years longer than he ever expected. He finished strong — and now he's more alive than ever, and doin' just fine.

[Dan Burton serves as Campus Minister/Dean of Men for Cincinnati Christian University. Mike Kidd spent those last days of his life on earth with Dan and his family. We extend our sincere thanks to Dan for his care of our dear brother and friend during those difficult days and for writing this beautiful, fitting tribute.]

Blessed

hope for wholeness

*Prodigal set to launch
ground-breaking
video curriculum*



**"...this if the first
DVD-based
curriculum and by
far the most
comprehensive,
practical program
that we have
encountered."**

– Jerry Armelli

In January 2013 Prodigal Ministries is set to take its group support ministry to an even higher level of effectiveness by utilizing a new, first-of-its-kind video and workbook curriculum. Years in the making, "Hope for Wholeness" will

bring into Prodigal's group room numerous men and women recognized as the nation's leading teachers and speakers on the complex issues of homosexuality and Christ-centered, Biblically-based counseling.

"Our support groups are critical to our mission," says Prodigal's executive director, Jerry

Armelli. "A significant portion of our clients receive guidance, encouragement and accountability through our groups."

"Structuring our group sessions around a professional, Biblically-based curriculum is not new ground for us," Jerry explains. "But this if the first DVD-based curriculum and by far the most comprehensive, practical program that we have encountered. All of us on staff are excited about the new dimension 'Hope for Wholeness' will bring to our groups."

The DVD lessons feature testimonials by numerous individuals who formerly struggled with same-gender attraction or other forms of gender brokenness.



In addition to the 17 video lessons, "Hope for Wholeness" includes a workbook, which is the product of six authors, all of whom have years of experience in Christian counseling for men and women struggling with same-gender attraction or other forms of sexual brokenness.

"The potential value of this dynamic series in the greater Cincinnati area reaches beyond Prodigal's support group sessions," Armelli adds. "'Hope for Wholeness' will be an excellent resource and tool for pastors or for anyone desiring to better understand these issues or in a position to encourage persons seeking to walk away from homosexuality and to become the men or women God designed them to be."

To that end, during the first quarter of 2013, Prodigal Ministries will be holding a series of seminars to introduce the curriculum to pastors and other interested parties.

Persons interested in attending or hosting a seminar should contact Jerry at 513-861-0011, or Jerry.Armelli@Prodigal-Ministries.org.



Ruth's Story

continued from page 5

to get to be part of what He is doing!

Ed. – What would you want to add in conclusion?

RH – I've heard it said, "I don't believe in miracles, I depend on them!" And I identify with that. I know that God is big enough and loving enough to handle whatever we trust to Him, because what was impossible for me, He's done. Name any area of my life, and it's got His name on it. I could tell you so many stories! Where I talked about feeling emptiness, there's overflow. I do have a few scars, but with every mark, now I have stories of forgiveness to tell. Health and relationships have been restored. Stuff that's beyond coincidence and out of my control, He's done...Even now, change and restoration in my parents in their eighties. It's a whole new story! I now look at challenges as opportunity to see what God will do. He took me from terrified of having a child, to a house full of fun, love, and healing, and yes a few messes, (and lots of those "opportunities"/ challenges I mentioned, too!) From depression to purpose. From anxiety to peace. From anger to gentleness. From compulsion to self-control... And of course I'm still growing! I love the adventure of non-stop intimate connection with God, bringing freedom and responsibility. Purpose lived out of His overflow. His life & love creating family and friends.

Now that you've got me going, I could go on and on...But to sum it up: His Word is alive.

*For He satisfies the longing soul,
And fills the hungry soul with goodness.*
(Psalm 107:9)

*A father to the fatherless, a defender of
widows, is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families, he leads out
the prisoners with singing; but the rebel-*



lions live in a sun-scorched land."

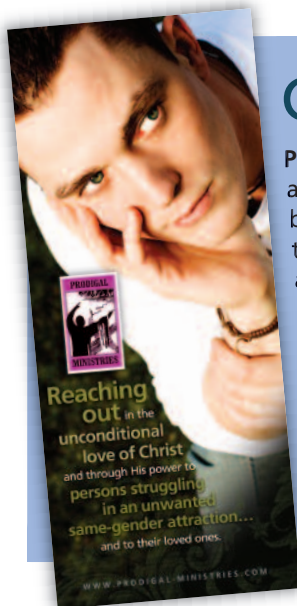
(Psalm 68:5-6)

*The Lord will guide you continually,
And satisfy your soul in drought,
And strengthen your bones;
You shall be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water, whose waters do
not fail.
Those from among you shall build the old
waste places...
They shall raise up the former desolations,
And they shall repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.*

(Isaiah 58:11-12a, 61:4b)

**"From terrified of
having a child...to a
home full of fun,
love and healing."**

– Ruth Henn



God Only Knows...

Prodigal Ministries' attractive tri-fold brochure is a great tool to increase awareness of Prodigal's unique, Christ-centered counseling and support. Succinctly and compassionately it covers Prodigal's mis-

sion, foundational truths and professional services. Along with a personal endorsement, pass one on to your senior pastor, youth pastor, missions director... or to a friend. Strategically place bulk copies in your church, your place of business, or public venue. God only knows whose life might be transformed through such a simple action.

To order free copies, contact Prodigal Ministries via phone, email or Web form.

from the desk of our chairman

Dear Friends:

Prodigal Ministries' 26th year is quickly drawing to a close. For all of us on the board and staff, this has been another year during which God has confirmed over and over again both His faithfulness and His desire to continue reaching out through this ministry.

Both truths have been demonstrated most notably by the very fact that hundreds of precious individuals seeking to walk away from a troubling sexual lifestyle or distorted gender identity have found their way to our doors. And they have done so in spite of all the obstacles that Satan has presented to keep them away. Obstacles such as an increasingly hostile culture...an intensely negative campaign by vocal "gay affirming" groups on our university campuses...and in spite of growing confusion within the organized church regarding God's creative intent in sexuality and marriage.

Another poignant example of God's faithfulness to and design for this ministry stems from the loss of Mike Kidd, our beloved senior support group leader. Even in the midst of our grief over the loss of a dear friend and brother, we were crying out to the Lord, "How can we possibly fill the void Mike's absence will leave in this ministry?" And with that cry still on our lips and in our hearts, a thankful, former client approached Jerry and asked to be taken on as an intern in our group support outreach. I never cease to be amazed at God's desire to meet our needs in ways that we cannot even ask for or imagine!

One final example of God's faithfulness and design that I must mention centers on our financial support. During the 2011 fiscal year, Prodigal Ministries received several significant, one-time gifts. Upon receiving those unusual gifts we immediately began praying that God would show us clearly how those gifts should be applied to the ministry. By the end of that year we did not yet have clear direction and therefore closed the year with a surplus.

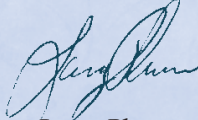
Today, we understand that the apparent lack of direction regarding how to use those funds to expand one or another aspect of the ministry was in fact God's perfect answer to our prayers. During this year, you see, our normal operating expenses considerably exceeded our revenues. God had given us — in advance — the funds that we needed to meet this year's expenses without debt.

God is faithful! He **does** continue to work powerfully through Prodigal Ministries. And we **will** trust Him to supply our needs.

We thus do not plead with you, our prayer partners, to join our critical financial support team. But we do want to make you aware of our needs and we do ask that you honestly ask God whether a portion of the funds with which He has entrusted you should be directed to expanding the Kingdom through Prodigal Ministries.

Be assured, always, that all funds received will be applied directly to our mission of helping precious individuals struggling with same-gender attraction or other forms of sexual brokenness find freedom and joy in an intimate relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

To Him alone be the glory!



Larry Plum
Chairman of the Board



Larry Plum
Chairman, Prodigal Ministries



PRODIGAL MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 19949

Cincinnati, Ohio 45219-0949

513-861-0011

www.Prodigal-Ministries.com