

COMMON GROUND

Newsletter of United Campus Ministry

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A Retreat Survey or How I Became a UCMer

My freshman year at UAF I attended the second Vespers of the year with a friend I dragged along out of shyness. I was methodically checking out different Christian groups on campus. I'm ashamed to admit my conclusion was not only negative but reeks of pride. My thoughts were along the lines that the people were plain, not especially beautiful or charismatic, and in the singing no one seemed especially excited about God. I allowed myself to be too busy to try UCM much more during the fall semester, but over Christmas break I realized I wanted to become more connected with other Christians on campus. UCM had grown on me a little from reading their newsletter articles and going to a couple more activities and so I resolved to give the group another try. Consequently, after school started up I signed on for the UCM retreat in February, complete with a nervous lump in my stomach about spending the weekend with people I hardly knew. God's love overwhelmed me on the retreat. This was through time alone with him, worship times, and through deepening friendships. Last year I again attended the Spring Retreat at Circle Hot Springs. This time I could hardly remember what my nervousness from the year before had felt like. During a reflection time, I wrote a letter to God recounting these two retreats. I want to share the beginning of the letter with you (along with a couple of parenthetical inserts to explain myself). The first paragraph is about my freshman year and the second about my sophomore year experience on the Circle Hot Springs Retreat.

My Father

February 12, 2000

Thank you for another retreat and another year at UAF – being here at Circle Hot Springs brings back memories of last year. The poker game (no, we didn't play with money), cuddling on the bed (a bunch of the girls laid in a heap on the bed one evening), and flying back with Steve and Jer (Jer and I got to fly home from Circle in Steve's plane rather than drive. It was my first flight in a small airplane!). Also my conundrum about Ben and Amy K. praying for me and the "decision" in my life and how my ears hurt from going too deep in the pool and then after our evening prayer they were healed. (I was really concerned over the weekend of the first retreat about a changing relationship with a friend, Ben, although I didn't talk to anyone about it. When we were praying together in a group, God led Amy to pray for me and the decision I was struggling with, even though she had no idea of the struggle inside me. With joy I realized that this was God saying that he saw what I was thinking about and He cared.) Also the worship times, especially the last one in Cabin 24 where we shared testimonies, and the song "El Shaddai" and how the lines "to the outcast on her knees He is the God who really sees" touched me deeply. God sees me!! And during our reflection time when I climbed the hill and knelt in the snow and felt God's love for a self-appointed outcast. (The self-appointed outcast refers to how I had originally judged the students in UCM harshly and set myself above them which alienated me from them in my mind.)

Jesus, I thank you for the people I'm surrounded by who are seeking God. I thank you especially for getting to worship last night with Charlie and Toby and the reminder that focusing on our God makes all desires except the desire to know You fade away. Please help me continually to focus on you in this way and let the things in the foreground grow fuzzy . . . What are you saying to me my God? How can I listen more attentively? I'm your daughter. I'm loved and cherished. You have chosen me. You are patient. You'll help me to study your word. You have blessed me with desire for you . . . I'm Yours.

This letter is special to me, because it gives me a glimpse back to last February and to the February before that. Every so often God helps me to stop focusing on my immediate surroundings and see where I've come from and remember where I am going in my life. Then I stand in awe of Him, again. This is that kind of letter. It reminds me of God's intimate care for me, of the deep friendships I sometimes take for granted, of the maturity the Master Gardener is slowly growing in me, and of my Father's steadfast love during changes in my life.

- Rachel

WEEKLY EVENTS

MONDAY: "Ra-Mon-Day"--Have a free Ramen lunch with friends in the UCM office (306 Constitution Hall). Drop in anytime between 11:30 and 1:30pm.

Music Practice--Come to the office at 4pm to sing, play guitar or just listen as we practice the music for Tuesday's Vespers service.

TUESDAY: Vespers--A casual worship service, Upper Lola Tilly Commons, 7:30pm.

THURSDAY: Dinner & Bible Study--At 5:30pm we will meet at the office and go to the home of David Moore for a great home cooked meal and a casual bible study.

SUNDAY: Leadership--Open to anyone interested in planning UCM activities and willing to make a commitment to leadership. UCM office @ 3pm

SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall Retreat will be on **October 7-8th**. Our destination is Wiseman, AK to enjoy the company of Wiseman's newest resident, Amy Price. It will be a great time to focus on worshipping God and to appreciate old friendships as well as build new ones. We will meet at the United Campus Ministry office (306 Constitution Hall) at 9am on Saturday the 7th (Please be on time or early) and we will make the 7 hour road trip above the Arctic Circle to Wiseman. We will play games, have worship and time alone with God. On Sunday we will take off from Wiseman at 1pm planning to return to the UCM office at 8pm. The cost is \$25, which covers all meal including breakfast Saturday morning and dinner Sunday night. If you are having trouble rounding up the money, PLEASE talk to David Moore.

YOU NEED TO BRING THE FOLLOWING:

TOILETRIES

WARM CLOTHING

WARM SHOES OR BOOTS

SNACKS

PILLOW

FLASHLIGHT

SLEEPING BAG (IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ONE, TALK TO DAVID)

FOOTBALL, FRISBEE, BOARD GAME OR CARDS ETC.

PERSONAL MEDICATION

MOST IMPORTANTLY – DON'T FORGET YOUR BIBLE



SINGING AT ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH. We will meet in the UCM Office (Constitution Hall) at 9am Sunday October 15th, where we will practice the songs we will be singing. We will sing at the 11am service and go out for Pizza afterwards.

FALL FUNDRAISER DINNER!

Come join us for a fun evening with friends and community supporters. Meet at the UCM office, 306 Constitution Hall, at 5:30 PM on Saturday, October 28th. We will caravan to Wickersham Hall, for a catered dinner, slide show, and singing. This is a great evening for dressing up! No jeans or T-shirts, please. Cost: free.

COVENANT PLAYERS at Vespers – October 31st.

These actors do a great job of illustrating important ideas and real life principles in short sketches. This will be a very fun evening! A freewill offering will be taken to support their ministry.