I sat in a chair in the corner and looked at Scott lying on the hospital bed. *He could be dying,* I thought. *Life has changed forever.* The reality of this hit me with such force that I cried out: "God, this is too hard for me! I can't watch my son die."

Mignon with son Scott and husband, Bob.

Suddenly, as I sat there in tears, God's peace came over me as His Spirit personalized one of the Bible verses I had taught Scott and his sisters years earlier: *I know it is too hard for you, Mignon, but My strength is made perfect in your weakness* (2 Cor. 12:9). Then I heard something else as clearly as if God said it in person: *There is a world out there that needs to know about My love. I want you to go and love them.*

I knew in my heart that the world He meant was the patients in those other 15 rooms, none of whom had any family there to support them. After praying for wisdom, I stood up and went into the room across the hall where Scott had stayed during his first hospital visit. Jerry, the patient in that room, was very sick. After we talked for awhile, I said, "Jerry, I can see that this is a very lonely place, and that AIDS is a very lonely disease. Do you ever feel alone?"

"Sometimes," he said. "Sometimes it seems like no one loves me."

"Well," I said, "I just wanted to tell you that God loves you and that you are precious to Him." Then I shared with him about how this experience was very hard for me as a mom, and the only way I could get through this was knowing that God cared about me and that He had His watchful eye on me and on Scott.

"How can you *really* know that?" Jerry asked.

I told him about my background, about growing up in a Christian home and going to Sunday school when I was a child, and about how I believed in God with all my heart.

"I want to believe it," he replied. "I went to Sunday school, too, when I was a kid. My parents sent me. But since then, I've drifted."

The conversation was very relaxed after that; not forced at all, which was amazing. But I think the real breakthrough occurred when I asked Jerry if there was anything I could do for him that would make it a better day for him. "Yes," he said. "Would you rub my back?"

"Okay," I said, not sure how to proceed. But I put the lotion on my hands and he rolled over on his side and I gave him the best back rub I knew how to give.

I went back to Scott's room convinced that not only *should* I do what had seemed impossible, but that I *could* do it, with God's help. By the time we left Century City, I had visited every patient on the floor. And all of the people involved there, including the staff, had started calling me "Mom." I wanted to help these people see that the love of God still exists in this world for them.

As Scott's disease progressed, his sadness over dying young changed to anxiety in relation to death itself. About six weeks before he died, he confessed, "Mom, I'm afraid." As we talked, we realized that Scott's primary questions were no longer physical or intellectual, but emotional and spiritual.

The very next day, through the arrangement of Scott's doctor, retired Superior Court Judge Howard Patrick visited Scott for the first time. Judge Patrick came to read and pray with Scott every day for the rest of Scott's life. Scott was very comforted by this and often fell asleep listening to a devotional or prayer by this wonderful man; by the time Scott died, he was ready, and no longer afraid.

The end came on September 19, 1989, at half-past midnight. I was alone with him in his hospital room, his dad and sister asleep in adjoining rooms. Though he couldn't respond, I said softly, "Scott, if you don't feel forgiven about something, from Dad or me or Jesus Christ, just know that you are. Claim that forgiveness, and go."

Scott died 20 minutes later. All of a sudden, as I stood by his side, he took a breath and then was quiet. Then he took another breath, followed by a little gurgle in his throat, and he was gone.

"My dear, dear son," I whispered to him, "I am going to miss you more than I could ever have imagined. You taught me how to laugh and find humor in life. You taught me how to be brave and strong and how to claim victory in the face of defeat. Dad and I will go on, and God will be our strength."

Before homosexuality and AIDS came to our home through Scott, I might have classified our family as "winners" compared to those whose less-than-righteous lifestyles demonstrated that they were "losers." Now, I'm convinced that we're all just fellow pilgrims in the process of discovering who we are, what life is about, who God is, and how He is working in our world today.

On a particularly difficult day while Scott was still alive, I was feeling angry and abandoned. I walked through the house, looking up toward heaven, sobbing, "Jesus, somehow help us. Just help this family."

As I prayed, a peace gradually came over me. I am convinced it was Jesus Himself ministering to my heart. I didn't hear a voice or see a bright light. Bells didn't go off. But in my heart I knew something in a way I had never known it before that moment: God was in control, and He would be my strength. •

Mignon and her husband, Bob, are co-founders of Support for the Journey (PO Box 1794, Oak Harbor, WA 98277), a ministry to those living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones. This testimony is adapted from ***When AIDS Comes Home*** *© 1996 by Mignon Zylstra & David Biebel. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson Publishers, PO Box 141000, Nashville, TN 37214.*

OFFICE NEWS

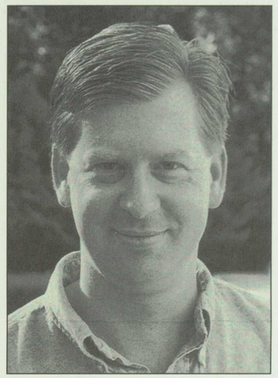
Exodus Begins Internship Program

This month the Exodus office welcomes its first intern trainee as Exodus launches an internship training program for future ministry leaders. Mike Cooley, a graduate of the *Love In Action* residential program in San Rafael, CA, will work in the Exodus office through the end of June.

"We are very excited to have Mike join our team," says executive director Bob Davies. "He has the perfect office skills to assist us during the busiest time of our year [as we prepare for the annual conference]. And I trust that his time here will be very profitable for him as well."

Mike joined Love In Action in 1992, becoming an assistant house leader in their residential program two years later. Since Love In Action's relocation to Memphis in December 1994, Mike has been part of the new ministry in San Rafael called *New Hope*.

In 1995, Mike became a member of Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church in Corte Madera, CA. He joined the choir, was elected to the vestry and oversaw the development of a parish bookstore. He also wrote for the parish newsletter.



***New Intern:* Mike Cooley**

"I am praying that my work with Exodus will afford me greater ministry opportunities within the Episcopal church," Mike says. "I am considering the possibility of course study and ministry training at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. I would love to serve as a deacon someday."

Mike will assist Exodus staff with a wide variety of office duties, including answering the phone, fulfilling requests for literature and other resources, and processing all donations and bank deposits. He will also lend assistance to staff at *Metanoia Ministries,* the local Exodus agency in Seattle, where he will be involved in support groups for several hours each week.

Welcome aboard, Mike! •

Do You Want Training?
Are you interested in receiving "hands-on" training in ex-gay ministry? Exodus is now accepting applications for future interns. Commitment is 3–6 months; we pay $500/month and help arrange local housing. Interns must raise monthly support if they desire additional income during their time in Seattle. Contact the Exodus office for full particulars and an application form.

ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

• **Sacramento.** *HIS Ministry* had a "friendship night" where men in the support group invited their accountability partners. "We average 20 men in the group, and we had 40 in attendance," reported director Carl Conli. "Testimonies from overcomers and their accountability partners were a tremendous blessing to all."

• **Winnipeg**. *New Direction for Life Ministries* had a successful fun-raiser on Nov. 7. Pat Allan, coordinator of Exodus's International Board, was guest speaker. Over 240 attended; offering was just over $5,000.

• **Oklahoma City.** *First Stone Ministries* has experienced a marked growth in ministry to women over the past two years and has launched its first-ever study group for women only. The women are studying the book *Out of Egypt: Leaving Lesbianism Behind* by Jeanette Howard.

• **Irving, TX.** Four Exodus ministries in Texas joined efforts to staff an Exodus booth at the Dallas Promise Keepers Conference Oct. 25–26.

"Many people actively sought out the Exodus booth to ask for advice, counsel, prayer and information for family members and friends," reported Michael Newman, Exodus regional rep for Texas. "Numerous people also stopped by to offer thanks and personal encouragement for the efforts of Exodus International. It was a great blessing."

• **Minneapolis**. *Eagles' Wings Ministry* is creating a Web site on the Internet, which they hope to have running in the next month. The ministry recently published a new professionally-designed tract for teens struggling with homosexuality (send a self-addressed stamped long envelope to PO Box 11246, Minneapolis, MN 55411 for a sample copy).

• Congratulations to two Exodus ministries which recently celebrated their tenth anniversary: *Where Grace Abounds* (Denver) and *Freedom At Last* (Wichita). •

CALENDAR

• *Mar. 7–9/Washington, DC.* Sixth annual Transformation Ministries conference on "Healing for the Homosexual," featuring former Exodus president Joe Dallas. Details (call to confirm date): 202/371-0800.

• *Mar. 14-16/Denmark.* Events with Sy Rogers. Details: BASIS, 011-45-75-562751.

• *Apr. 1–4/Dunham, Quebec, Canada.* "Sexual Healing" with David Kyle Foster at the Youth With A Mission base. Info: Alain Boucher, 514/295-2744.

• *Apr. 23-25/Anaheim, CA.* Living Waters Leaders Conference (for Living Waters coordinators and their team). Details: Desert Stream Ministries, 714/779-6899.

• *May 5-9, 1997/England.* Exodus Europe conference, with Dan Allender. Exodus International Europe, PO Box 407, Watford WD1 5DU, U.K. 011-44-181-420-1066.

• *July 5–10/Lexington, KY.* Annual Exodus North American conference, with Dr. Erwin Lutzer and others. A brochure will be mailed to all newsletter recipients this month. Contact the Exodus office for additional (free) copies for local distribution!