

EMPOWER THE MINISTRY

Fall 2025

# AROUND the FIRE

RESCUE the Equine ★ MENTOR the Child ★ HOPE for the Family ★ EMPOWER the Ministry

## Faith or Fear

BY KIM MEEDER & TAYLOR BOLIN  
-FOUNDER- -INTERN-



Surrounded by a glorious blue sky, my friends and I looked for the perfect place to settle. Among the group were Stephanie, her visiting friend Kristy and the Ranch Interns. We had just summited Black Butte and were searching for the best spot to have lunch. We found a wonderful area behind an old wooden lookout. The jaw-dropping view covered many of Oregon's western mountains and reached into Washington's most southern peaks.

Our crew of eight mingled into a passive circle. I smiled as I silently watched each girl carefully choose from the myriad of gray stones to determine which one would become her special seat. Once everyone sat down, all the backpacks were opened and the high altitude buffet was pulled out and arranged throughout the jumble of stones between us. After our well-earned lunch was blessed, a delightful tangle of reaching, passing, laughing, munching and sharing ensued.

The interns were completely unaware of my thoughtful observation. I watched each of them revel in the unabashed joy of simply sharing snacks together. These five remarkable young women chose to lay aside their life—and devote eight months to deepen their relationship with Jesus and serve Him through the ministry of Crystal Peaks. Each had a miraculous encounter of how they came to the Ranch. And each hailed from a faraway place—California—Alaska—Canada—Germany—and Israel. Yet, here *together*; they formed what felt like the beautiful points of a brilliant star.

Sitting straight across from me was Taylor. At 19 years of age, she was the youngest of the intern team. Although young in years—she had already endured more physical challenges than most would endure in a lifetime. She was finished with lunch and now sat completely fascinated by a chipmunk who bravely leaned on her hand to beg for any crumbs she could spare.

As I watched Taylor, a flood of awareness swirled through my heart. The healthy girl who sat before me was no longer the fragile, thin waif who arrived only a few months earlier. I could feel tears of gratitude fill my eyes for all Jesus had done over-in-through her since her arrival at the Ranch.

It was time for everyone present to understand what JESUS had just done during our hike.



"Hey Taylor," I asked, "Would you please tell our guest Kristy why sitting in THIS place is so special?"

She looked up and smiled, "What do you mean?"

I clarified, "When you think of where you were when you first came to the Ranch . . . and where you are right now . . . on top of a MOUNTAIN . . . why is that so special?" I watched Taylor's innocent expression melt into thankful tears as realization poured over her.

With glistening eyes, she looked at Kristy and said, "When I was young, I was diagnosed with epilepsy and started having grand-mal seizures. They were really bad. Sometimes, I had several a day. I was living my life in bed, always afraid of when the next one might come. My family desperately wanted help for me. So, we made the decision to have brain surgery and remove the short circuited areas in hope that this would stop the super seizures."

"They did the surgery when I was fourteen. I had an EEG on my skull for four days to determine where the damage was. When I woke up, I didn't recognize my dad. I could no longer speak and I couldn't move. I had to relearn EVERYTHING. This took a long time and was really tough. Almost everything came back except my right leg. From my mid-thigh down, it remained completely numb. Because I couldn't feel my right foot, walking was really unstable and difficult."

"Before I came to the Ranch, I was trying to take a few college classes. It was so hard for me that sometimes I ended up sleeping 18 hours a day. I could only walk short distances—like from a handicapped parking place into a store—and even that would sometimes bring on a mild seizure. Everything I did was always under the fear that I would have another seizure."

"I was so excited to be accepted into the Crystal Peaks Intern program because I love animals and I really love Jesus. Once at the Ranch, I went right into Intern Orientation, which was really intense. One day, Sarah Robinett was teaching us how to drive a Kubota."

*"When we started driving, I was with Sarah and Caitlin in the rescue paddock. Sarah got out of the Kubota and asked who wanted to drive. Caitlin and I looked at each other then back at Sarah. In my head I was telling myself, 'I hope she doesn't pick me.' Sarah said, 'Taylor! How about you?' I felt very scared in that moment because I didn't have my driver's license . . . I didn't even know how to drive."*

"She noticed that I was pushing the gas pedal by moving my right hip forward and how herky-jerky it was. When she asked why I did this, I told her that I hadn't been able to feel my right foot for five years. Sarah smiled and said,

*'Well let's pray for it!  
The power of prayer heals everything!'*

She looked up and asked Jesus to heal my foot."

"We were feeding horses and the next time we stopped, I stepped out of the ranger . . . and I could FEEL something in my foot! I told her what I was sensing." She laughed and said, 'Oh, wait! God's Word says in James 5 that we should lay hands on those who need healing.'

*"Then, she literally grabbed my foot and prayed a simple prayer, 'Dear Jesus, we're so thankful for Taylor and we pray that she gets all the feeling back in her right foot. Amen.'*

"Then, I could FEEL MY WHOLE FOOT—ALL OF IT! I got SO EXCITED! I kept telling her that I could FEEL my foot! She celebrated with me and said, 'THAT is how much Jesus loves you!' 'It was amazing! In that moment, Jesus fully healed my leg and foot!"



"A week later, Kim and I were walking back from taking care of the boy sheep—which is about a quarter of a mile. I told her all about my new leg and foot. While we were walking down the dirt road, she put her hand on my shoulder and asked Jesus to heal my epilepsy and completely restore me."

"A few weeks later, Kim led the Intern team on a flat hike together. It was so beautiful! At the end of the hike, Kim pointed at a sign that she wanted me to read. The sign said that the hike we just did was 4.2 MILES! I was getting stronger!"

"And today . . . we're sitting on top of a MOUNTAIN! I'm tired—but I didn't need to stop—and I didn't have any seizures!"

I looked at Taylor and asked, "Do you know how high you've just climbed?" With a wide-eyed expression, she shook her head. I continued, "Friend! You've just climbed—UP—1700 VERTICAL FEET—in TWO MILES! You are sitting on TOP of a mountain that is over 6400 feet high! Just a few months ago, you weighed less than 100 pounds and could barely go up a flight of stairs! Now you're a buck-twenty and a fit ranch girl! Taylor! Look what JESUS has done!"

An expression of pure wonder filled her countenance.

After a pause, I continued, "Do you believe that HE has healed you?"

Across the stones, we held each other's gaze. I watched her nod in agreement as two beautiful streaks slid down her cheeks. "Yes," she confirmed, "I do."

In a way, Taylor's journey reflects everyone's journey.

When Jesus encountered a father who was in an impossible situation, He said, "*Don't be afraid. Just have faith.*" (Mark 5:36, NLT). In six words, Jesus gave us a blueprint of how to handle every challenge we will ever face in this life. As trials arise, so does the choice, the "Y" in the road of choosing to react in fear . . . or respond in faith.

Just as light and darkness cannot coexist, neither can our fear and our faith. The response that motivates our ACTIONS is our true leader.

*"Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living." (Rom. 6:16, NLT)*

Fear is a prison—faith is a pathway.

Fear leads to a loss of freedom—faith leads to a life of freedom.

Fear leads away from Jesus—faith leads toward Jesus.

While we were still up on the mountain, Dana, our Intern from Canada agreed with Taylor by adding, "I was afraid to even try and climb a mountain because I didn't think I could do it—until I DID!"

Taylor responded,

*"Prayer has become a big part of my life. Because I experienced a miracle—I now know how strong prayer actually is."*

Friend, no matter what you're facing, this same truth awaits. You can choose to stay stuck in a prison of fear—or—you can choose to move forward into the freedom of faith in Jesus Christ.

*"I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from ALL my fears." (Ps. 34:4, NLT, emphasis added)*

So, beloved, like these precious young women, "Don't be afraid, just have FAITH" . . . and step forward into the miraculous space of love He is holding . . . for you.



**"The POWER of PRAYER  
heals everything!"**



# Surrender

BY DANA WENGER - INTERN -

Within days of arriving at the Ranch for the 2025 internship season, the Lord started preparing my heart for a period of pruning and refining. He told me there were things in my heart and my thinking that were holding me back. He intended to uproot those things so that His truth could grow deeper.

I can attest—just as He said—this refinement has been happening at Crystal Peaks. Although it has been painful at times, I cannot deny the miracle-working power of Jesus setting me free from chains I've lived with for as long as I can remember. He has broken me out of shame and fear cycles that kept me a prisoner. By doing so, He has revealed to me what it looks like to be fully free.

June 12th was a staff and intern fellowship day. We took fifteen horses to Tumalo Reservoir and spent several hours on the trails. I was delighted to ride a little mare named Nakia. This small Arabian is one of Crystal Peaks'



## What one trail ride taught me about living free from fear

most dependable session horses. She is known on the Ranch for her gentle and sweet personality. I was expecting she would be an easy-going horse who would give me a smooth and uneventful ride.

The Lord had better plans.

Nakia was an absolute angel and she listened so well. What I didn't know beforehand was that my tiny mount was *terrified* of water. When we approached a shallow creek crossing, Nakia did everything in her power to not step into the water. She tried many times to go back the way we came and look for any other way across. When I urged her forward, she responded by stomping her feet and refusing to budge.

Several staff crossed back over the creek with their horses and tried to help. Even with a buddy, Nakia couldn't bring herself to move forward. When she finally stepped into the water—her flight instincts kicked in—and she ran through the creek and right into several horses waiting on the other side.

By the time I had regained control of her, my heart was racing. I felt humiliated by all the staff and interns who had watched our struggle. In that awkward moment, I realized how afraid I've been to appear "messy or imperfect" in the sight of others. I am more comfortable giving the illusion of having everything "together."

Seeing everyone else peacefully cross the creek and being in the spotlight for so long only displayed my imperfection as a beginner rider. My pride took a hit and I started crying right there on the trail. Another direct hit to my pride was when my desire for control was revealed.

Deirdre—the Ranch Equine Manager—noticed the experience had stirred up strong emotions in me. She asked if I wanted to pray. I figured the right answer is always "Yes." I was assuming she would pray *for* me, instead, she invited me to *lead*.

With acute awareness of the people around me, I quietly asked the Lord to take away this desire in me to do everything perfectly. I asked Him to help me realize that my imperfections do not determine my identity.

The Holy Spirit responded to my prayer by immediately giving me profound peace and joy.

Nakia and I walked and trotted on and off the trails for several hours. I had the chance to get comfortable on her

and make sweet connections with the staff and interns who were riding with me. Inside my heart, I quietly thanked the Lord for meeting me by the creek. The trail ride felt redemptive and reflective of how Jesus was transforming my heart, mind and attitude.

By the time we returned to the creek on our way back to the trailers, I was determined to step up as the leader Nakia would need to face her fears. Once again, she avoided the water at all costs. After unsuccessful attempts to urge her forward, I handed over a rein to Sarah Robinett, the Ranch Equine Director. She used Nakia's open rein as a lead rope while riding her own horse ahead of us. Two others on horseback followed close behind to add gentle peer pressure on Nakia while I urged her forward with my legs and lots of encouraging words.

Again, when her feet touched the water, she panicked. Nakia bolted forward, leaving Sarah with no option but to let go. I held on tightly and took deep breaths. I tried to relax as much as I could until Nakia understood she was safe. In light of how emotionally difficult it was for me to cross the creek with Nakia the first time—because of Jesus' answer to my earlier prayer—the second crossing was an entirely different experience.

Even though there was an awareness of risk in what Nakia might do, I felt a deep sense of peace that hadn't



been there before. Once Nakia stopped, I recovered my open rein and continued on my way, giving her much love and encouragement during the last stretch of our ride.

After we finished, I felt a sweet connection with my little horse—and—an even sweeter sense of being set free from a layer of fear that had held me captive for so long.

When I think about that moment at the creek, I am reminded of the transformative power of prayer to shift my heart forward and overcome fear. God's Word instructs us in Philippians 4:6-7,

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (ESV)*

The Lord responded when I brought my fears to Him. He brought a stillness to my mind and heart that wasn't there before. Seeking Him in the midst of my pride and insecurity became the turning point that enabled me to face the rest of the ride and the return crossing with courage. Between the first and second creek crossing, I tangibly experienced the difference between trying to succeed in my *own* strength—and—living in full surrender to *HIS* strength within me.

As a result, the Lord used a single trail ride to reveal this deep truth to my heart. Another valuable lesson I've learned through this experience is that it's okay for others to see me in the middle of the process. I can't put an expectation on myself to always be an "after photo" or to appear that I've "arrived" at knowing and doing everything just right.

The best place my heart can be is—humble before the Lord—open to His instruction—and peaceful in who I know myself to be as a daughter of the King of Kings.

It is when I remain in this place of total surrender that I experience the *perfect peace* described in Isaiah 26:3,

*"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." (ESV)*

Another thing I've learned is that fear isn't something I can conquer by standing and staring at it. My fear can only be defeated when I trust Jesus *more* and face it with Him.

Obeying Jesus with all that I am also means trusting Him when I naturally want to flee. Nakia was determined to find another way to the other side of the creek, but in fact, her only option was to cross *through* it.

I chose to trust Nakia when I crossed the creek the second time without control, even though I had no idea how she would respond in the face of what she feared. In the same way, I am called to trust the Lord when He brings me to the edge of unknown waters. His presence will be sufficient for me. (2 Corinthians 12)

May this fact become the life ring you cling to when you feel out of your depth. No matter what your figurative water crossing might be, I encourage you to rest in the truth that you are not in control . . . and that's *a good thing* . . . when you fully surrender . . . and trust in the One who *is*.

# Beyond What We Can See

BY SARAH WILSON – PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR –

*“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.” (Isaiah 55:8, NLT)*

I've read this verse time and time again. I've underlined it in my Bible, prayed it over uncertain decisions and whispered it in moments of disappointment. But somewhere along the way, the words began to dull. They became something I knew, but didn't *feel*. Something I said out of habit—a spiritual reflex. True, but distant. Familiar, but no longer alive in me.

I had repeated them so often that I stopped letting them sanctify me. I stopped being amazed by them. And maybe—if I'm honest—I even stopped letting them transform and refresh my heart and mind.

In a moment of frustration, I cried out to Jesus:

*“Renew these words in my heart. Bring them back to life. Help me see what You’re doing beyond my fickle understanding!”*

Not long after that prayer, an invitation arrived—an invitation to a wedding. Not just any wedding, but a very special one in Germany.

Deep in my spirit, I knew: *I had to go*.

A few months later, I found myself standing in a tiny Bavarian village. It was the kind you only expect to see on a postcard. Cobblestone streets wound through timber-framed homes, rolling hills stretched into the horizon. Spring flowers spilled from windowsills and tree branches alike, creation itself celebrating the Easter to come.

And then it hit me—I was *there*. I was actually in the very village I had only ever known through the stories of someone's homesick memories.

Years earlier, Leo had come from Germany to intern at the Ranch. Over time, she became family. She spoke often of home, her parents, her village and her boyfriend, Pascal. And though she missed them deeply, she knew Jesus had called her to Oregon for a season. It wasn't easy. There was uncertainty, distance and longing. But underneath it all, was the foundation of her surrendered heart.

I watched Jesus meet her at the Ranch. I saw joy awaken, courage take root and intimacy with Him deepen. Her transformation was visible, tangible. What I didn't realize was that Jesus was also moving far beyond what I could see—in Pascal's life, in Leo's family and in the quiet corners of a village across the world.

It all came into focus on the day of their wedding.

In her hometown church, I witnessed the fruit of years of unseen obedience. Pascal stood with strength and clarity, no longer hesitant but full of conviction.

Leo—whose name means “lioness”—embodied pure courage. She was bold, tender and fearless in her faith.

Together, they worshipped unashamed, hands lifted high in a church and community where many still only know Jesus through tradition. Before everyone they stood—living testimonies of what it means to walk in relationship with Him.

Their wedding was more than just a ceremony—it was a holy declaration. A story of redemption, transformation and faithfulness. Two hearts, two families, two nations knit together by the hand of Jesus.

Leo had given Jesus her full and quiet “Yes” in Oregon. She trusted Him that somehow it mattered beyond what she could see in the moment. And now, here I was in Germany, watching that same “Yes” echo across continents. Jesus had been weaving a masterpiece the whole time.

That day, Isaiah 55:8 came alive again.

Jesus's ways truly are beyond our own ways. While I was focused on what I could see, He was building legacy, healing hearts and writing stories I never could have imagined. My trip wasn't just a visit. It was a sacred unveiling—a glimpse into the God we serve. He is the One who moves when we can't see it. The One who answers prayers we've long forgotten. The One who restores in ways beyond our ability to understand.

He is the Jesus of the full picture—of the slow, unseen work—of the quiet “Yes” that changes everything.

At the Ranch, we often witness transformation in the moment—but rarely do we see the ripples it creates after. This time, I did. God allowed me to experience a tiny ripple, a droplet of His Almighty ways.

Now, when I read Isaiah 55:8, I don't just recite it. I believe it. I draw it in. I remember the cobblestones—the daffodils—the worship.

I trust again in the mystery and majesty of our God whose ways are *always* higher—*always* better—than mine. And my faith has been made stronger—to trust HIM—for every single one.

*Photo Credits: Emily Green*



# Something Beautiful

Dear Friend,

This morning, during my quiet time with our Heavenly Father, the old hymn "Something Beautiful" came to mind:

*Something beautiful, something good;  
All my confusion He understood.  
All I had to offer Him  
Was brokenness and strife,  
But He made something beautiful of my life.*

Later, with those words still streaming through my heart, I stepped out of my office and stopped to greet one of our session kids' grandmother. In the midst of our conversation, we spoke about the loss's we both had experienced and how to let go of the pain and move forward.

The sweet grandma had experienced great loss in a short amount of time. She shared with me—when she needed it most—how God spoke to her by way of a small child. Through the Holy Spirit, He reminded her of how deeply He loved her.

Letting go isn't easy—we live in a fallen world where much grief takes place. Within this broken place is where Jesus' love comes in. When we are falling in grief, He is there to catch us. By trusting Him to walk with us—and heal our brokenness—Jesus takes that pain and makes pure beauty from it.

*"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10, NKJV)*

Because of this truth, I am so thankful for places like Crystal Peaks. The Ranch provides space for God to make *something beautiful* out of the lives of children, families—and even our horses. When we choose to let go of our pain and let God fill that space, it is His beauty that comes in.

God has clearly made *something good* through all those who financially support Crystal Peaks. Please know that I am so deeply grateful for each one of you. Thank you for listening to Jesus in this most personal way. Through your faithful gifts, God is truly making something beautiful for all who come here.

Today, may He make *something beautiful* in you.  
Ellen



All stories written in "Around the Fire" newsletter are true. Some of the names have been changed to protect individual privacy. "Around the Fire" newsletter stands on the Word of God. All translations of the Holy Bible are used to assure clarity for our readership. Each author is afforded the right to choose the translation that best suits their submission.

Yes! I would like to shoulder with Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch to support children, horses and families in need.

#### Please use my donation for:

- Where it is needed most
- Rescue the Equine
- Mentor the Child
- Hope for the Family
- Empower the Ministry

#### Payment Method:

A check payable to Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch or CPYR for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send donations to: Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch, 19344 Innes Market Road, Bend OR 97703.

You can also make your donation at [www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org](http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org) with your credit card or PayPal account.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

#### Please make my donation a gift

- In honor of:

\_\_\_\_\_

- In memory of:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

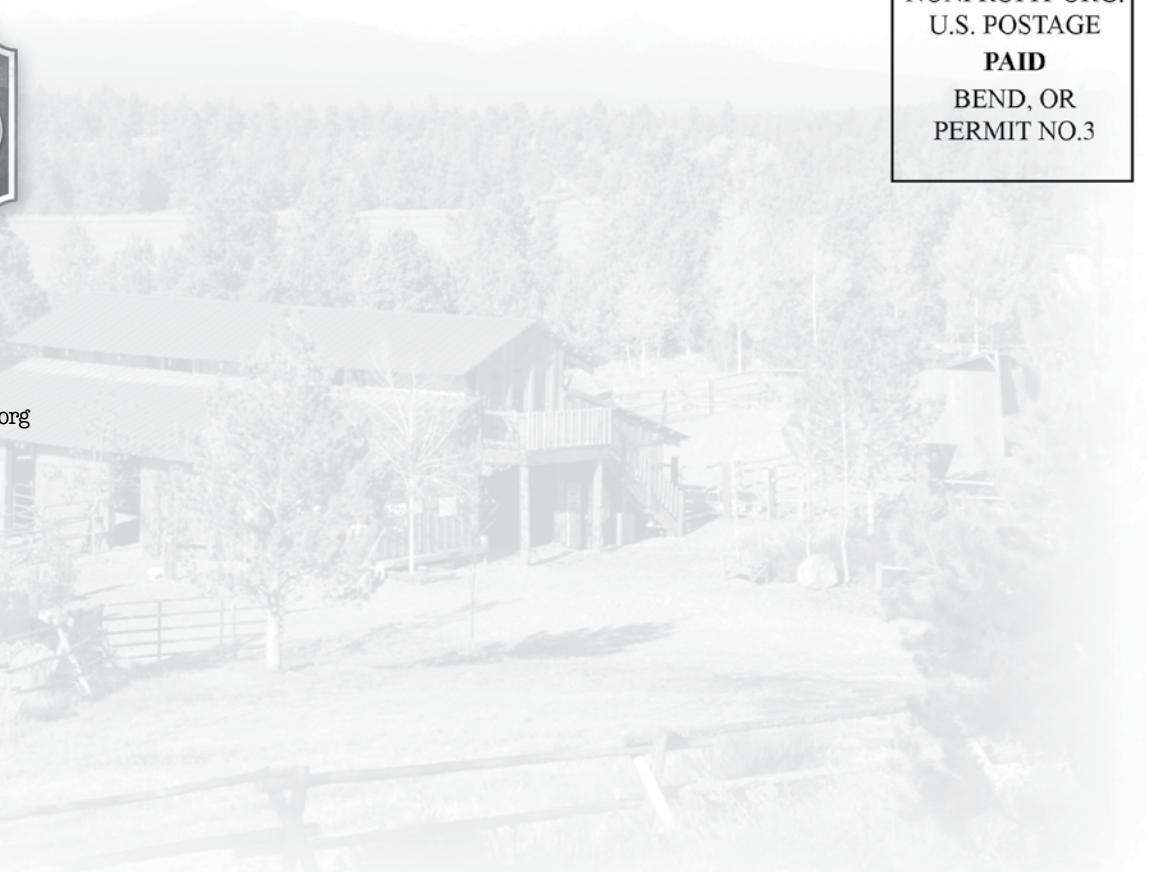
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_



NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
BEND, OR  
PERMIT NO.3

Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch  
19344 Innes Market Rd.  
Bend, Oregon 97703  
541-330-0123  
[www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org](http://www.crystalpeaksyouthranch.org)



# You Are Invited . . . REFUGE 2025

*“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1, KJV)*

In the midst of life's storms—when the days feel heavy and the way forward unclear—Jesus remains our constant.

He is not just the light at the end of the tunnel . . . but the light within it.

He is our stronghold, our safe place and our unwavering Refuge.

Refuge at Crystal Peaks is a space for the Beloved to gather—just as we are—to share a meal, connect through fellowship, worship Jesus together and receive a simple word of truth from Scripture.

Whether you're weary, hopeful, or somewhere in between, you are welcome here.

## Gathering Details:

**When:** Every second Tuesday of the month

**Where:** 19275 Innes Market Rd., Bend, OR 97703

We always begin with a potluck-style dinner: please help us fill the table and make it overflow with welcome for all.

## If your last name begins with:

- A–K: Please bring a side dish of any kind
- L–Z: Please bring a dessert of any kind

Come hungry—for food, for connection and for the hope only Jesus can give.

