

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, readers!

I recently celebrated a full year (on November 29th) since moving from Seattle to work with Sacred Road Ministries. The year flew by! I was able to spend Thanksgiving with my family, and took some time to reflect on the past year. It's a lot to process, but one thing that I have found to be continually true... is that there is much to be grateful for, in all circumstances [1

Thessalonians 5:16-18]. So, here are some of those things:

- that after a year of living here, this place has grown to feel more like home. It's a strange, yet beautiful process when a place becomes "home" and what was once new and unknown becomes familiar. I'm grateful to have learned so many names - which seemed near impossible at first, along with the many different routes we drive to pick up the kids - and now much more beyond that. It really is such a privilege to know, really know, each one of the kids. To know their stories and their God-given personalities and what makes each of them unique. This is what it's all about, loving them as they are, so that they might know the love of Christ in their lives. And in turn, seeing Christ at work.
- for a slower fall season to catch our breath after the intensity of summer. It's also nice to have a "groove" to fall back into, which is what I am looking forward to now that I'll be repeating the coming winter and spring seasons. The extra margin and rhythm of weekly routines also make it possible to invest more time in relationships. I'm especially thankful for these relationships that bring lightness and joy - like gathering with the young adult small group for Friendsgiving, playing pickleball in a nearby town with empty courts on a Saturday morning (virtually unheard of in a big pickleball city, like Seattle), and going to cheer the kids on at their football, volleyball, basketball games, and wrestling matches.
- speaking of summer... for the opportunity to spend part of my summer serving on the Warm Springs Reservation in Central Oregon. Every other week in June and July, another summer intern (Rebekah) and I road-tripped down to help host short-term teams alongside the full-time staff there. What initially came as a surprise became a gift. Definitely a lesson in trusting the Lord and a reminder that His plans are better than mine. My heart has grown in love for two different reservations, and I'm deeply grateful for those relationships that God has formed in both places.
- more and more time with the kids. Over the past year, my role has continued to evolve [being cross-trained across many of the different ministries at Sacred Road], but I'm grateful that most days of the week, I get to spend time with the kids and youth. Currently, I'm helping out with the youth group on Tuesday nights, the after-school program on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, and a Sunday School class for the 4th and 5th-grade girls, as well as co-leading a discipleship group for high school girls with Connie. This fall, in our D-group, we have been focusing on studying the Bible with our girls, and the way they have approached it with such excitement has got us energized! There's definitely a weightiness in teaching the Bible, so please pray for us. One of our girls shared that she doesn't like studying in school, but likes studying the Bible... we'll take that as a win! We recently went through a series of Advent lessons on the biblical themes of hope, love, joy, and peace, and introduced a resource that I personally love - The Bible Project.

Though my initial commitment here was a one-year internship, after much prayer and deliberation, I have decided to extend my time by six more months! I feel extremely blessed to have raised enough financial support to stay longer. This extension will give me a chance to finish out another school year with the kiddos and hopefully find some closure as I discern next steps.

Some perks of my small town, ranch life? Cows and horses on the side of the road along my morning commute, cheap gas prices, zero traffic, and breathtaking stars, sunrises, and sunsets. Whenever I come home from a long day, I just look up at the stars on a clear night, and I'm overwhelmed with gratitude that this is where God has placed me. I am constantly reminded that He is faithful, and it is such an answer to prayer to be able to serve here and be a part of this community. Thank you for being a part of this ministry, too.

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