



WATERING HOLE

Church Music

The Belfry transforms a Sisters church into a rockin' new gathering place

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A

block north of the main drag in Sisters sits a big, beautiful 100-year-old church. At night, candles flicker in the stained glass windows, and colorful light streams out onto the sidewalk. The bell tower is lit up by bright red lights. And rock and roll music is shaking down the doors.

This is The Belfry—the hottest new venue in Sisters.

Owner Angeline Rhett bought the building that was formerly the Sisters Christian Church just over a year ago. “It was kind of a lonely little building,” she says. “I think it wanted a second chance.”

Speakers have replaced the baptismal. The knotty pine church office has been transformed into a bar. Pews have been removed to make way for dancing. But one thing remains the same—the place still brings people together.

Rhett is also the owner of Angeline’s Bakery and Café—which, after 15 years in business, is a mainstay in the Sisters downtown community. She came to Bend in the mid-1990s as a firefighter, and after fire season ended she began selling sandwiches to local businesses out of a little red wagon. That turned into a popular bakery and café, with a busy music venue out back.

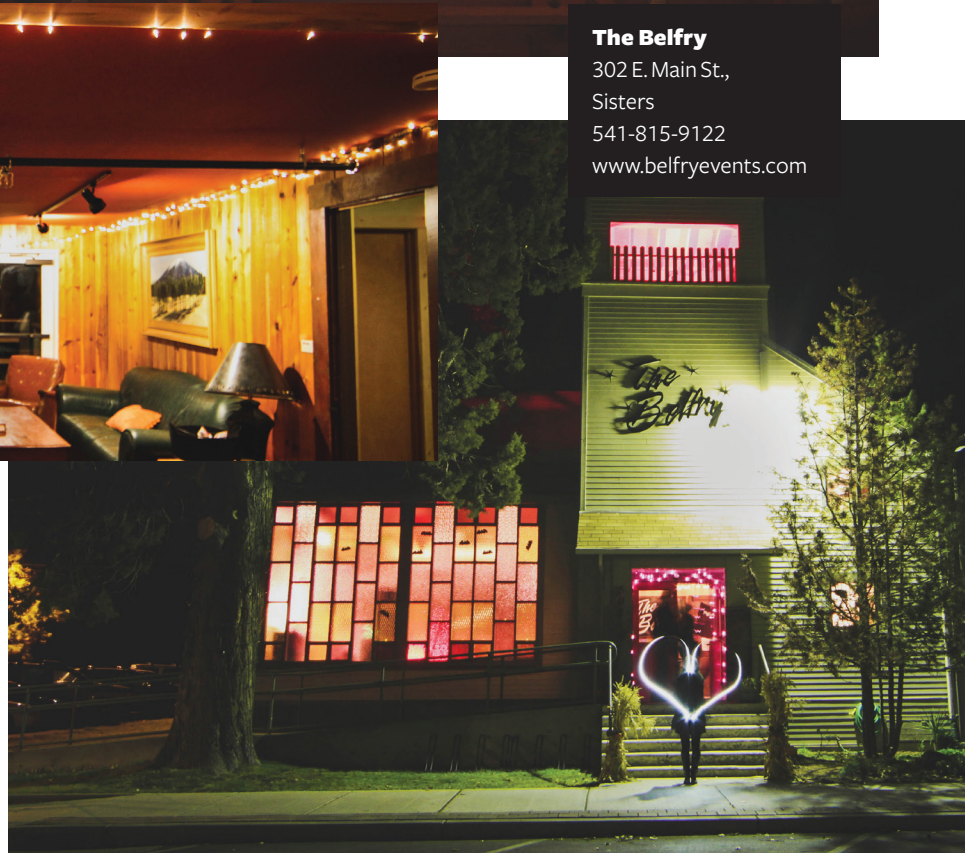
“I was in a comfortable place in my life,” says Rhett. “I was determined not to do anything else.”

All of that changed with a phone call. The owner of the old church thought Rhett might be interested in the space. He was right—she walked in, fell in love and bought the building.

Churches are perfect structures to transform into music venues. The main sanctuary of The Belfry



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is huge—with high ceilings conducive to great acoustics and a beautiful wood floor ready for dancing. The church was built in the early 1900s, but the latest remodel was straight mid-20th century.

“I inherited acres of wood paneling and orange carpet,” jokes Rhett.

That retro vibe is what gives the place character. Rhett brought in big, bright orange Chinese lanterns, tapestries and contemporary art to mix with 1960s kitsch an urban hipster would die for. Upstairs in the choir loft, cocktail tables are set up next to inherited orange crushed velvet pews. On the third floor, just under the bell tower, is a little room called the Skybox, where patrons can sit on stools and check out the crowd below.

And yes, there is a huge bell way up top in the belfry, which is still rung on special occasions. Outside, on the side of the building, is a huge cross, which Rhett has pondered whether to remove or not.

“When I asked a friend what he thought about the cross, he said, ‘You have a mortgage, right? Keep it! You need all the help you can get!’,” laughs Rhett.

Rhett loves being a conduit between good music and the local community. She’s been booking bands for years at the café, so expanding to a larger venue was a natural progression. Bands at The Belfry range from local favorites to national acts in a variety of genres, including folk, rock, bluegrass, hip-hop, electronic, funk and more. Musicians say The Belfry is home to one of the best sound systems in Central Oregon, and the Sisters community is well versed on how to get down.

“It’s so satisfying seeing a big party or show come together,” says Rhett. “It’s wonderful to see local community members embrace when they haven’t seen each other for a while.”

The Belfry is catered by Angeline’s Bakery and Café, and spirits, wine and beer are also available. The venue can be booked for events, weddings and parties. Science club, movie nights, book readings and yoga are hosted as well.

But mostly, The Belfry is about good, live music. 🏔️

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