

# **BELONG TOGETHER**

Spring 2019

Quarterly Update



Dear Belong Together family,

I don't dislike too many things, but there is one thing I for sure drag my feet in doing; going to the eye doctor. Why my disdain? Every time I go, the results have often been the same: my vision has gotten worse. And the uncomfortable question returns, *"What would life be like if I couldn't see?"* When we think of how we see our reality, we think of our eyes. We live in a visual world and our eyes are a gateway to taking in all that's around us.

**But our eyes aren't the only way we see things. In fact, our eyes, as we know them, cannot show us the things we most desperately need to see.**

Ask yourself this question, *"How do you see yourself?"* Perhaps the first thoughts that come to mind pertain to your visual appearance. But there's the chance that over time, some of those things will change. Do you become any less "you" if you change your hair color, get wrinkles, grow or shrink? No.

**Who you are is rooted in things that are deeper. Things that last.** Your appearance, hobbies, where you live and your job, won't. We spend a great deal of time trying to improve or maintain our looks, accolades and status. Yet, how often do we look at our character, values and beliefs for how we see ourselves? For how often you go visit the optometrist, **how often do you check in on the eyes of your heart to see how they're working and what they're seeing?**

**When you know who you are and Whose you are** –the deep, inner things the world cannot outwardly see– *it changes the way your physical eyes see the world around you, too.* Your Belong Together family is making the commitment to use our spiritual eyes –the eyes of our heart– to see not only who we are, but who you are, too. We don't want to see the people and experiences around us as they appear on the surface. **We want to see you, and everyone, for who they really are – for Who we all belong to.**

Thank you for walking alongside us as we choose to do the deep work of discovering and living from our true identity. From Portland to Louisville to Rwanda, the refugee men and women of Belong Together see your purpose and your value. **We are so thankful that you are YOU.**

With joy and gratitude,



Taylor Smith  
Founder and President  
[belongtogether.org](http://belongtogether.org)



# Becoming Belong Leaders

Leadership isn't limited. It just takes courage. Regardless of one's experience, we believe God qualifies those He calls. In Belong Together, after the first six months of guided group meetings, members are given the opportunity to lead. They get to choose the topics they feel are relevant for the group. They get to research, plan and pray. And come meeting day, they are the ones who will lead. The high school and early-college age men of Belong Together Portland are prepping to take the lead of their meetings now. The ideas God is leading them to are awesome -- of course!

Last December, two members of the charter Belong Together Rwanda group were resettled to Kentucky. It turns out Louisville is home to many families resettled from Rwanda. Now that they're all settled in, Jeanne and Seth feel God calling them to start a Belong group there. Their first meeting happened last weekend! We can't wait to see the fruit from this group Seth and Jeanne are boldly and courageously willing to shepherd under God's lead.

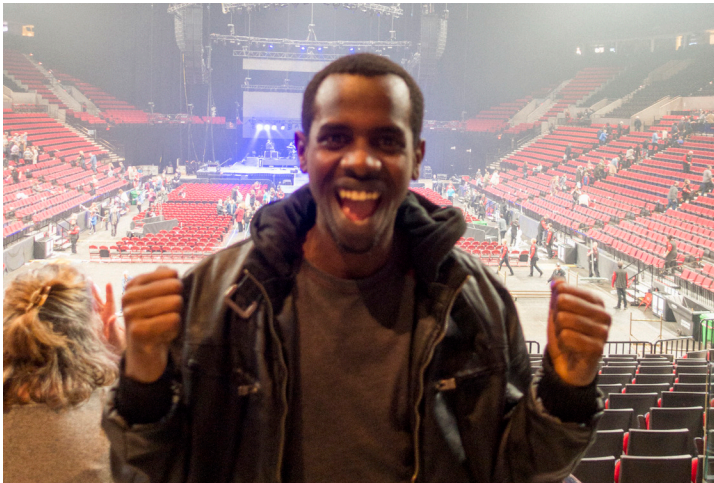


*First group meeting in Louisville, Ky*



## Unashamed

What's one thing every culture has in common? MUSIC. No language necessary – music breaks barriers and invites everyone in. This year, your Belong Together family in Portland has been part of two evenings of incredible worship by Chris Tomlin and Bethel Church. One Belong member said it was the freest he has ever felt. When we let our praise rise, walls fall down. We saw it happen during these worship nights, and we can't wait to join in more as the year goes on. One day soon, the Belong Together Portland members want to lead an evening of worship for anyone and everyone to join. When that happens, you will for sure be invited!



God's Word is alive and active. Summer 2018, Belong members began to meet for weekly Bible Time (based on our friend Dr. Garry Friesen's Matthew 4:4). Belong Together board member Nick Oberg was so inspired by seeing the impact that reading Scripture in community was having, that he has now started a Bible Time meeting weekly at his home. SO COOL! The awesome thing about Bible Time is that you need zero experience or Bible knowledge to take part in it. Literally, if you have a Bible, you can do it! In fact, if you're interested in having a Bible Time at your home with your friends, family or neighbors, let us know. The men and women of Belong Together would love to come to your home and read Scripture with you!





# Finding Joy in Unexpected Places

Ask Belong members what they were most surprised of when they were resettled to the U.S. and you'd most likely hear, "We didn't know there were homeless people in America!" And if you've been to Portland, it's hard to miss that many of our neighbors struggle with homelessness. Part of Belong Together focuses on how we put our God-given love into action. Recently, one of our high school Belong members got to serve our homeless neighbors through washing their feet, sharing in conversations, and praying for them. It was a POWERFUL night. So powerful that he is organizing a group of six others to go back and join him this month. He said, "I want my friends to see how homeless people have emotions, feelings and hopes, just like us."

In East Africa, it's rare for a married couple to not have children. As couples age, they often depend on their children and grandchildren for support. When the charter Belong group in Rwanda heard of a struggling elderly couple in the Gihembe refugee camp who was without children, they knew God was calling them to go love and serve this man and woman. The couple expressed such gladness and gratitude that the Belong members decided they want to keep coming back to spend more time with them! In fact, the crew now considers this man and woman their honorary grandparents!





## How you can join your Belong Together family this spring

Every action in our life is building upon something. At Belong Together, we want the base of all we do to be built upon prayer. Prayer is nothing small to us. Thank you for joining us to pray for our needs, and as the Spirit leads you!

### Prayer requests

- For healing. As we dive deep into our identity, that often includes stepping into old wounds that come to the surface to be healed. Please pray for the courage to keep reflecting, processing and releasing – it's worth it!
- For the growth of servant hearts. The young men and women of Belong Together have been feeling more and more drawn to put their love into action. As they commit to serve, pray they become channels for God's love to work through them and minister to all they meet – and that God would minister to them through those they serve, too.
- For celebration! Beginning in June, several Belong Together members will be getting married, graduating from high school and launching into leadership positions. We want to praise God for the ways He has led the women and men of Belong to grow, take risks and live out their big dreams!



# Tangible ways you can partner with us

God is up to something in Belong Together. More and more young people in Portland, Rwanda and Kentucky are saying “yes” to a journey of seeking who they are and what it means to live from their identity in Christ. These are exciting times! Do you feel called to be part of this ministry? We’d love to have you join us!

**Right now, you can be part of what God’s doing in Belong Together this spring**

- The Belong Together Kentucky and Portland Belong Girls groups are launching with beautiful and powerful beginnings. Want to support these men and women on their journeys of identity and belonging? It’s \$100 to provide for supplies and snacks for each monthly Belong group meeting. There are nine total meetings per group in a one-year session. We’d love to have you sponsor a meeting!
- Board member Nick Oberg will be traveling to Rwanda this summer and is looking forward to visually capturing the story of Belong Together, as well as the personal stories Belong members want to share. Want to be support the storytelling Nick will be doing on this trip? (\$100/day to support Nick’s journey)
- We want to remove barriers for Belong members to get to meetings. One way we do that in Rwanda is by covering their transportation to and from monthly group meetings. It’s an average of \$5 per Belong member per meeting, and for one month, \$125.

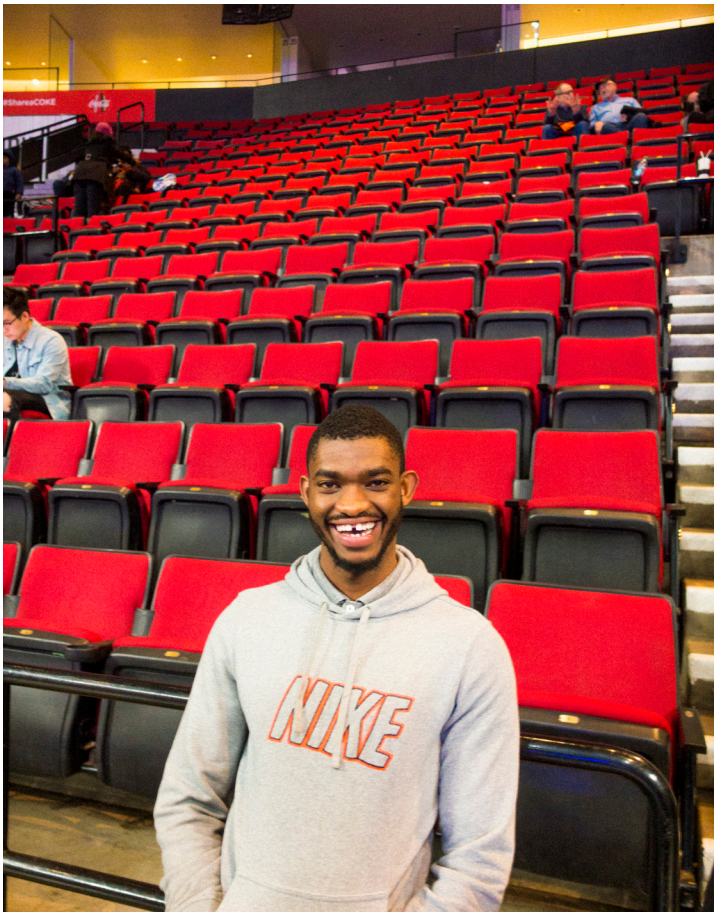


One of the many things we’ve learned in the last year-and-a-half is that teens LOVE cookies. Should we have been surprised? Definitely not. If you’re looking for a way to be part of Belong Together through using your time and baking talents, contact Taylor about dropping off a plate of cookies for an upcoming Belong meeting or Bible Time in Portland! Trust us, they will all be eaten by the time the meeting is over!

# Thank You

On behalf of your Belong Together family, **thank you for walking alongside us on this journey to celebrate how we all belong to God.** Thank you for being with us as we commit to living from our identity in Christ, and loving and serving our world wholeheartedly.

We love you!  
Your Belong Together family



## Giving

If you'd like to give, you can do so online through PayPal on our website

**[belongtogether.org/donate](https://belongtogether.org/donate)**

Or, you can send your support via mail!  
Make checks payable to:

**Belong Together  
PO Box 6553  
Portland, OR 97228**

Our Tax ID number is 82-4357562

You're receiving this Quarterly Update because of your expressed interest and involvement in Belong Together. If this was a mistake, or you'd prefer to not receive the Quarterly Updates, please reply to this email and we will make sure to remove you from this email list.