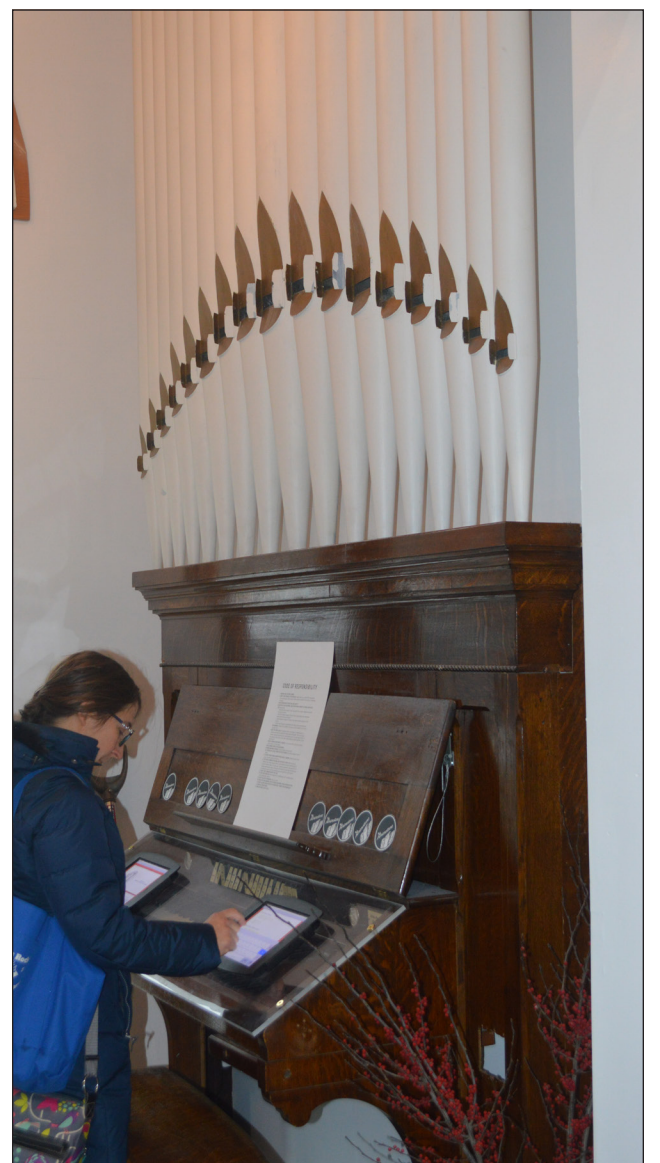
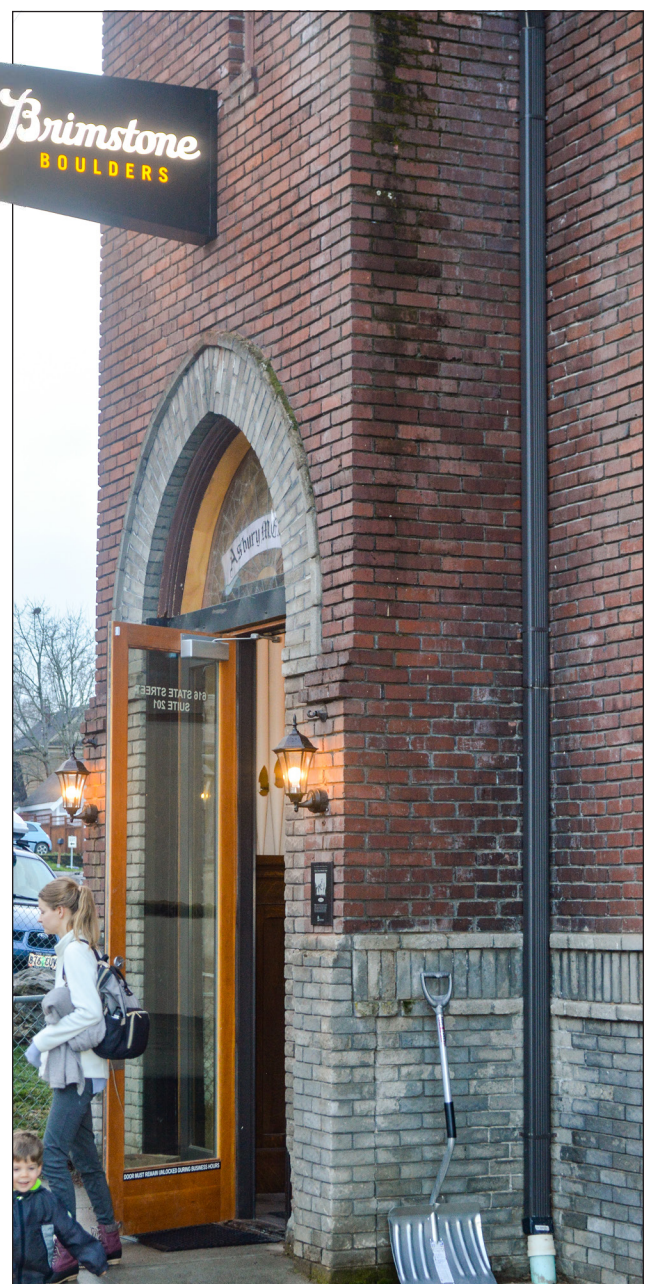


## BOULDERING COMMUNITY



### Climbing in the light of stained glass: A church is transformed



Story and photos by  
**KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**

From Rock of Ages to rocks for all ages, the former Asbury Church has been transformed into Hood River's first full-scale indoor climbing gym.

Brimstone Boulders opened earlier this month on State Street near Sixth, the realization of a two-year project by new building owners Jen Altschul and Conor Byrne.

The high-ceiling space has become an indoor climbing gym, drawing locals and visitors aged kindergarten and up. Altschul and Byrne purchased the building from Andy and Claudia von Flotow; the downstairs tenant, Bright Beginnings Preschool, continues in its 26th year. After initial remodeling in 2018, the building briefly housed a martial arts school.

The stained glass windows remain, along with other vestiges of the former place of worship, built in 1896, but the pews have been replaced with palisades of climbing walls. The former Methodist church saw its last worship service in 2012 and was decommissioned in 2013. Brimstone's new exterior sign incorporates the Psalms-inspired image of a woman climbing a rock, symbolizing the strength of Christ, the focal point of the primary stained glass panel. Routes, or "problems," start in the sanctuary and continue on the north side with walls suitable for beginners.

"We want this to be a living room for outdoor sports in the Gorge," Byrne said. They envision speaker series, trip reports and movie nights, in addition to the individual climbing and the youth program and other group climbs, and competitions they said will be "not super-competitive."

Brimstone is about bouldering. See BRIMSTONE, page B10



**STAINED GLASS** form backdrops to climbing challenges in the old sanctuary; owners Jen Altschul and Conor Byrne, top; Stephanie Kitner signs her kids in at the repurposed organ keyboard; below, as the space looked in 2010, as then-sanctuary of Asbury Methodist Church.

