

## Ring Praise Music Ministry 2007 Journal

(weekly articles in the Nampa Church Sunday bulletins)

### Lostine, Oregon

Our trip to five churches in Eastern Oregon Presbytery began on Thursday, February 15 heading to Lostine Presbyterian Church. Lostine is located about 53 miles out of La Grande on the way to Wallowa Lake. This stretch is a beautiful drive as you wind along the Minam and Wallowa Rivers and through the valley. The population of Lostine is 250 and the church is located on the inside of a sharp curve near the east end of town. At Christmas they had an electric candle in each window. They liked it so much that they leave them on all the time. It is beautiful!

Introducing us was Steve Kliewer who had been the pastor in La Grande when Ron and Phyllis lived there in the 1980s. He is now living in Joseph, Oregon, and serves as the moderator of session for the church. What a special treat to see him after many years and to share memories of our families. He shared with everyone that Phyllis had sewn the “doctoral stripes” on his robe which he still uses, and his son was slightly younger than her two boys and inherited their Easter suits.

The church is in the process of seeking a pastor, but it is difficult because of finances. Right now they are hoping to find someone to serve part time. They average around 40 for worship.

Fifty-three people filled this quaint church even though the weather was horrible. It was so windy that during the concert you could hear the trees blowing and the windows rattling. There is a bell choir in Enterprise, the next town to the east, and some came after their rehearsal. They were a very responsive audience and came through with some “Amens” and rang and sang out during the Ring Along.

Afterward the youth group served refreshments. It was great to see the young people involved. The next morning we stopped at the coffee hut across from the church and the girl asked if we were the ones who gave the concert (she might have noticed the Idaho RNGPRSE license plate). She wasn't able to be there, but her best friend had been there and had already told her about it.

We spent the night at the log home of a couple who work very hard keeping the church going. She is also on the planning team for the Cascades Presbytery Summer Conference where we will be music clinicians this June. The concert was definitely a community event. Of the 53 in attendance, only 15 were regular church attendees. We were so pleased that they could use the concert as an outreach.

### La Grande, Oregon

On Friday, February 16, we traveled to La Grande, Oregon. Phyllis had lived there and attended the Presbyterian Church. This is also where she started directing a bell choir and also began soloing.

The church has been struggling for a few years with declining attendance and called a pastor about a year ago. It was exciting to hear how the people are enthused about him and to see growth again.

There is a very nice pipe organ as well as a fairly new grand piano so Sean played solos on each instrument. He also used the organ to accompany Phyllis on *The Lord's Prayer*.

When we finished setting up, a lady on the worship team told Phyllis about the fall someone had and would be unable to come to the concert. Gerda was going to her 88<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration when she fell and broke her arm, banged her head, and bruised her herself quite badly. Phyllis has known her for a long time and also knew that she had a piano and organ in her home. Definitely mission time – we went up to see her and Sean played. First he played *He Arose* that he plays near the end of each concert. From there he took requests. Gerda's daughter, who lives close, came down. She is a lay pastor in the Methodist Church and Phyllis had played in a couple of the churches she pastors. It was beautiful to see Gerda sitting with a foot up and her arm on a pillow, eyes closed, whispering the words to some of the songs Sean played. The organ hadn't been played for many years, but we fired it up. Check out the picture at the organ – he didn't have his organ shoes but played an awesome Bach prelude and fugue.

One person at the concert does not like “praise” songs. Afterward, he came up to Phyllis and commented that he never thought he would enjoy praise songs but loved the ones we had in the concert.

A special treat was staying with the lady who over many years has donated all the bells and equipment at the church. When Phyllis was directing, if there was something needed, she would ask Robbie and was usually told to order it! It was fun hearing the complete history of the initial bell purchase back in the 1970's in honor of her parents. She also

teaches china painting and showed us several of the beautiful pieces she has done and what her students are working on. What energy for someone in her 80's!

## **Ukiah, Oregon**

Saturday evening, February 17, we drove to Ukiah (50 miles south of Pendleton). Since the worship service began at 9:30 am, we thought it would be better to stay there rather than Pendleton. They arranged for a couple of rooms at the only inn in town – Antlers Inn. It was very quaint. The rooms were upstairs with twin beds that were mainly springs with a little covering. There were two community bathrooms down the hall. The coffee pot was in the lobby and the first person down there was to pour the water in to make the coffee. Amazingly there was plenty of hot water!

The church was across the street. As we walked in, there were many boxes of food stacked on a table in the back of the sanctuary and a few piles of empty boxes on a couple of pews in the back. This is the food pantry for the town – that's mission in action! They help up to 60 people a week. We led the entire service which consisted of opening prayer, two hymns, reading about the Snake River Mission Area church of the week (it is listed each week in our Mini Link under new prayer concerns), prayers of praise and petition, offering, and the sermon. One of the hymns we selected was "Amazing Grace" since we were also highlighting it in Nampa the same day. Phyllis had bell parts for each hymn. The sermon was our "Tell Me the Story of Jesus" portion of our concert ending with "Just As I Am" and the glorious "Symphonia on Hyfrydol."

They have 11 members which is also their average attendance. There were 8 in attendance that day including an adorable 6-month-old boy who enjoyed ringing a bell afterward. During the service one person was able to finally grieve the lost of a family member. Sean spent time visiting with her afterward. After the service one lady commented how she couldn't believe that as professional as we were we would come to Ukiah. We explained that we enjoy going to the smaller communities because they do not have much that comes to them. Leftover birthday cake from someone's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party the day before was enjoyed by all.

## **Stanfield, Oregon**

After the morning worship service in Ukiah on February 18, we headed to Hope Presbyterian Church in Stanfield, Oregon. Stanfield is located about 20 miles west of Pendleton and about 5 miles south of Hermiston. It is a small community with a population of 1,979 according to the 2000 census (looks smaller). The sanctuary is only used by the church once a month. Since the attendance is small, around 20, they meet in the Christian Education building behind the church. A Hispanic congregation rents the church on a regular basis.

Rev. Jim Glover, part-time pastor, has been there for several years. When we contacted him about a concert, he hadn't heard about us but said fine. We gave him some names to contact if he wanted to hear about us from someone he knew. At the end of the concert when we asked for questions, he was first and asked when we could come back!

The concert was well attended – around 35 people. A few that have heard us in Umatilla come and it was so nice to visit with people we've met on other trips. A couple of ladies also came from Pendleton where Phyllis conducted a workshop on Saturday. They asked if we could give a concert in Pendleton. Well, April 19 we're starting our next trip there and also having an offering since they are a larger congregation. They will be listed along with Nampa as a sponsor next time we head to smaller churches.

There was an organ that Pastor Jim was trying to get working so Sean could play it. It had a few problems, like mixtures and tremolo were always on. (Ask Sean what those are!) Sean did play a Bach piece as prelude and many really enjoyed hearing the organ. The room was very dead acoustically so Phyllis was going to use her microphone. Unfortunately, the best place to set up the tables was between the two speakers and we couldn't get the squeal out. To help a little we poked the microphone up between the table covering and skirting and had it sticking up a couple of inches. It helped, but Sean had to remember to keep the volume down!

Instead of a home stay that night, they had rooms for us at the Best Western on the south end of Hermiston. We had a taste for pizza so we just started heading into Hermiston and found a pizza place in the corner of a shopping center. Wow, it was great!

It is always such a joy to be able to bring our music and message to these smaller churches and communities. We thank you for your generous financial and prayer support. We are always so excited to share with each audience about our wonderful congregation and to be your ambassadors in the name of Christ.

## **Baker City, Oregon**

The last stop on our mission trip was Baker City, Oregon on Monday, February 19 for a 5:30 pm concert. The concert was held at an unusual time because the community civic chorus normally rehearses at the church at 7:00 pm. They

moved their rehearsal to 7:30 and we did the concert earlier. Even for the unusual time, the church was quite full with around 85 people.

The concert was well-received, but there were some minor glitches that took place before and after the concert. The first glitch was with the sound system. After an hour or more of trying to get the door to the sound equipment open, Susan Barnes, pastor, had to use a screwdriver to break into it. Alas, we finally had sound!

At the close of the concert, we were moving the piano back to its normal place and noticed there was an F-sharp that had literally broken off their Steinway piano (the raised part of the black key). We were assured it would be easy to fix. The church has a nice music ministry that includes a Steinway console piano, an Allen digital pipe organ and a set of Suzuki tonechimes.

Baker City's Presbyterian Church has beautiful banners and we were taken on a tour of the building which included a room which houses over 20 of these banners made by their members. Susan also shared with us her mission of banners celebrating ordination of women and how it was grasped by Presbyterian women around the country who sent in 2-inch squares. Three banners were made and are now "touring" the country. Susan was so appreciative to all the women in her congregation that helped with the project.

There was a nice reception with a lot of homemade goodies where Sean was able to connect with some of his friends that he met as a chaperone at Youth Triennium 3 years ago. Phyllis saw the teachers from the Seventh-day Adventist School who come to Cool Ringings every January that she helps lead out at Gem State.

As a fitting end to our tour, Susan took us out to eat at the Geiser Grand Hotel where we enjoyed wonderful food and fellowship before driving home.

## **Parma, Idaho**

On Sunday, March 4, we went to Kirkpatrick Memorial Community Church in Parma. They had just completed major renovations of their fellowship room in the building next to the sanctuary. It had suffered some severe flood damage when a water main broke. There was a potluck to celebrate the completion and a basket on each table for donations toward it and for the New Church Development project in Meridian/Eagle, Reflections Church. As with most Presbyterian potlucks, there was an abundance of wonderful food and desserts. We had to be careful and not spill any lasagna on our concert clothes!

After setting up, we wanted pictures of the church to add to our display boards. They have an electronic sign out front with changing messages. One advertised the "Free Concert Sunday" while another had our names in lights.

They have a small pipe organ which Sean played for prelude and also used to accompany Phyllis on "The Lord's Prayer." Whenever there is an organ, he does like to use it. The sanctuary has some beautiful stained glass windows, and the center of the ceiling is recessed and painted blue with lights – you feel like it is open to the blue sky.

After the concert we were sharing with Pastor John "Murph" Murphy about Holy Humor Sunday and the different "hymns" we sing. He is a lot of fun and told us about the "Repent" words he wrote to the hymn "He Lives." It is hysterical especially with the emotion he puts into singing it.

As is the case at all the churches we visit, the ring along is very popular. If someone is reluctant to try a chime for the first song, by the time we are on the third one they want to ring. The audience participation is always so much fun.

The concerts this year are the first where we have taken our display boards of all the places we have played in the Snake River Mission Area. Afterward many ask where some of the churches are and we enjoy sharing about each one.

We are so blessed to have the support of this wonderful congregation. Thank you!

## **Ontario, Oregon – St. Matthew's Episcopal**

On Palm Sunday, April 1, we had the privilege of leading the two worship services (7:30 and 10:00 am) at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Ontario, Oregon. This is the church in which Sean grew up (ask him about acolyte antics!) and began playing the organ full time at the age of 8 and where his mom is a member. Because of the early service, we went over on Saturday and Ron was able to join us. After setting up, we thought the piano was extremely bright. The sound board was facing into the chancel and we discussed getting a piece of felt to cover it. We then asked the priest if she had a blanket and she found a quilt that covered the top and back of the piano and improved the sound tremendously.

After prelude, everyone took their hymnals, received a palm branch, and lined up outside. Phyllis led the annual processional around the church singing "All Glory, Laud and Honor" with a bell tree playing the melody. Sean and Ron rang on the chorus.

Once inside, we began with “Tell Me the Story of Jesus” and proceeded from the triumphant entry into Jerusalem to the crucifixion. It is their tradition to read the story from one of the gospels, and this year it was Luke. The text was set up with each of us reading specific portions. Ron was the narrator, Sean read Jesus’ words, and Phyllis read what anyone else said. After each section, Ron gave a little history into the song we would play as we set up for it. After a couple of the scriptures, the congregation sang specific verses of “Ah, Holy Jesus.” A few bells were rung as they sang. Our “sermon” ended with the extremely moving arrangement of “Were You There.” To hear the story read in this manner and to end with that song was very powerful.

The bell tables were set up blocking the center entrance to the chancel so you could only get up there on either side. As Sean was playing offertory, the priest asked Phyllis to go down and get the offering from the ushers and bring it up since she would be busy getting everything ready for communion. Communion was served in front of the tables rather than how it is normally done by the rail up front by the altar. As the priest served Ron, she asked him to come and serve everyone the cup which is done by everyone drinking from the common cup. New experiences for all! We played “Just As I Am” while people came forward for communion.

The service ended very upbeat with “Symphonia on Hyfrydol” and our race to the finish. What a privilege it was to be able to weave our music into the tradition they have for Palm/Passion Sunday.

### **Pendleton, Oregon**

We’ve just finished a tour including Pendleton, Moses Lake, Spokane, Coeur d’Alene, and New Meadows. Over the next few weeks, we will share with you about each of the places we played.

On Thursday, April 19, we headed to Pendleton with a “fuel stop” for incredible hand-dipped milkshakes at Nell’s in La Grande. We were there in February for a workshop Phyllis conducted for the 3 bell choirs in town, and Sean played the organ for one of the pieces and rang bells. They have a beautiful Moller pipe organ which Sean showcased for 15 minutes before the concert and included one organ piece during the concert. He also played it for “The Lord’s Prayer.” Instead of doing a Ring Along like we do at the smaller churches, we had them sing a hymn so Sean could again use the organ and Phyllis added bells to each verse. They also have a beautiful antique grand piano, but would like to purchase a new one since there are several concerns with this one. A member opened up her pottery shop for members to make unique pottery bowls which will be auctioned in May for the music department to help raise money for a new piano. They were displayed around the church.

Forty-two people attended our concert. Several members were disappointed in the number, but we were not. Everyone seemed to enjoy and came to Rogers Fellowship Hall for refreshments provided by the bell choir. The hall is quite a ways from the sanctuary winding through the halls. One man came up and thanked Phyllis for our mission to the smaller churches. He asked us to please continue. Afterward, Phyllis also visited with a few of their bell choir members and answered questions about bell technique, especially regarding wrist injuries. Since the church’s membership is rather large, an offering was taken so they will be listed as a sponsor the next time we head to smaller churches in Eastern Oregon. Many enjoyed all the pictures on the display boards showing where we have been in the Snake River Mission Area.

We stayed with Jack and Annette Matlock. Annette is the director of Bells of Joy at the church and is also on the worship team. Both were very intrigued when we shared Holy Humor Sunday with them. Annette wants information!

### **Moses Lake, Washington**

The next stop was First Presbyterian Church in Moses Lake, Washington. The sanctuary is geared for contemporary worship services with a couple of platform levels, a Roland keyboard (no piano or organ), and a shell for the drummer that was enclosed even on top and complete with a hanging fan for ventilation. The church has been growing and attracting many new believers.

The sound technician had talked to Phyllis a couple of weeks before we arrived regarding her microphone and staging needs. Sean had to decide which of many piano sounds he liked on the keyboard. The seat was quite interesting – not a typical piano bench. It was more like a large bicycle seat. Banks of lights allow for a variety of lighting effects, and he did special fading at the ends of songs and even some adjustments depending on the mood of each piece.

We had planned on singing a hymn like we did at Pendleton, but there were no hymnals – everything is projected on the screen. So we did ring along using the church’s chimes. This saved time so they could be passed out as people arrived and we didn’t have to collect them for use in the second half of the concert.

Seventy-seven people attended the concert, and there were 6 bell choirs represented from Moses Lake, Othello, Wenatchee, and one person from Portland. They were from various denominations including Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Christian. After the concert one director asked about weaving so Phyllis gave her a quick lesson on that and

some other techniques. Last year one director had submitted an article to the Northwest handbell area's newsletter about a ringer who had celebrated her 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. She was at the concert and is now 89! Using a walker, she is still a faithful member of their choir.

The couple we stayed with, Jim and Francie Irwin, are long-time members of the church. Francie serves on General Assembly Council, and it was fascinating to listen to her involvement with mission on the national level. They treated us to a late dinner after the concert at a restaurant overlooking Moses Lake (the lake). Superb food and outstanding conversation! Sean enjoyed the beautiful Steinway piano in their living room, and we enjoyed listening! Phyllis helped Francie learn how to hold two bells in one hand to help with a tricky part she has in the bell choir.

Phyllis' son, daughter-in-law and two grandsons live about 15 miles from Moses Lake, so we went to lunch on Saturday with them and then spent a little time loving grandkids, ages 8½ months and 6½ years.

## **Spokane, Washington**

On Saturday, April 21, we headed to Knox Presbyterian Church in Spokane. Faith McCallum, Betty Pearson's sister, is a member there and worked on all the logistics and publicity. She also hosted us for the night.

Knox is an older church on the north side of Spokane. They have worked very hard at making it handicapped accessible by installing an elevator and lifts by stairs. This presents a challenge to many of the older churches. The sanctuary had beautiful dark wood beams and numerous candles and Feng Shui rocks and bowls. The church is shared with a Chinese Reformed congregation.

After getting everything set up, there was a nice potluck dinner so we could meet with some of the people beforehand. A wonderful surprise was seeing Scott and Brenda Mallory and family. It was so nice to visit with them and see how the kids have grown.

Knox has a beautiful pipe organ so Sean played some prelude music as well as an organ piece during the concert. He "pulled out all the stops" and many commented that they had not heard the organ at full strength. We had the audience sing a hymn to which Phyllis added bells. The fullness of the organ with the singing was magnificent and encouraged everyone to sing out their praise to God.

We definitely needed Phyllis' microphone, but it was the most challenging system we've encountered in all our travels. Whenever the sound technician, who said they have lots of problems with it, thought it was adjusted, Phyllis would move toward one end of the table and there would be feedback. Since levels had to be set lower, this made it even more challenging for Sean because he had to work hard at controlling the intensely bright piano.

At Joanne Abbott's memorial service a few weeks earlier we played *Grazioso*. Faith told us that it would be fine if we would play it at Knox, so we included it in all the concerts. It was very special playing it for her that evening.

As a couple of men were helping to load the van afterward, one expressed concern about crime overnight with all the equipment in the van and it being parked on a street. Phyllis reassured him that everything was insured and not to worry. When we went out Sunday morning, all was well!

## **Coeur d'Alene, Idaho – St. Luke's Episcopal**

Sunday morning, April 22, we left Spokane and drove to St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Coeur d'Alene. We arrived at 9:00 am as the first service was finishing so we could set up and be ready for the 10:00 service. Someone helping organize the handbell workshop Phyllis was conducting that afternoon rings in the bell choir at the church and arranged for us to play.

As it worked out, Sean knew the priest, Pat Bell, who had been at St. Matthew's in Ontario for 13 years. He was influential in Sean's mom studying to go into the Deaconate. He is recently married and Sean discovered that he and Pat's wife rode big wheels together as kids in Ontario. What a small world!

The church has a small pipe organ which Sean played for some pre-prelude and then Phyllis joined in for the main prelude piece. We also played offertory and postlude (our race to the finish Hyfrydol). The organ faces the wall in the chancel and the piano faces out sharing a common bench. The piano is up on a riser so the higher organ bench works for both. Phyllis set up on the opposite side of the chancel where their bell choir tables are normally positioned.

Due to many announcements and a special stewardship plea, the service was over 1½ hours! The announcements and special plea were at least 20 minutes. The sermon was given by a young man who is joining the staff at the church. It was very interesting as he shared about his call to the ministry and the roadblocks as well as opened doors that led him to where he is now. Communion is served each week and the people come forward and kneel at the rail to receive it.

After refreshments, we loaded up, got a quick bite to eat at Subway, and headed for the church where the workshop was being held (it was also in Coeur d'Alene). We arrived as several of the choirs participating were unloading. Next week we'll share about the workshop.

### **Coeur d'Alene, Idaho – Spring Ring**

Sunday afternoon, April 22, was the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual North Idaho Spring Ring in Coeur d'Alene where Phyllis was the guest conductor for the fourth year. Eleven handbell choirs from Moscow to Sandpoint, Spokane and Cheney gathered to work on three pieces with Phyllis. The bell choir from St. Luke's Episcopal Church, where we played in the morning, was there. They rehearsed for a little over 2 hours to work on playing the pieces musically and together. Some choirs opted to not play the easiest piece while others sat out during the hardest one. All were encouraged to ring one particular piece even though it stretched them. A challenge like this is good because if you don't ring every note, it's okay because someone else in another choir will ring it! We worked at a tempo that was doable for all. For the first time, all the directors worked on one short piece. For some, this was the only opportunity they had to ring.

While Phyllis was rehearsing the choirs in the gymnasium of the church, Sean noticed a nice grand piano in the sanctuary. The music director turned lights on and he practiced for 2½ hours and learned Two Rhapsodies by Brahms, opus 74. A few people wandered in and listened for a while. Perhaps he will play them at his concert in June!

After a break, the group gave a concert at 4:00 pm. Besides the three "massed" pieces and the one with the directors, individual choirs played. Each of the three bell choirs from Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Moscow played – Emmanuel Junior Bell Choir, Paradise Ding Dongs, and Emmanuel Bells. De Colores, a community group from Spokane, rang an awesome arrangement of "Jacob's Ladder." 4<sup>th</sup> Street Ringers from First Presbyterian Church in Sandpoint rang "Pirates of the Caribbean." A couple of the youth in the group donned pirate hats. An ensemble from Whitworth College rang "What Wondrous Love Is This." We played our special version of Zacchaeus which was a huge crowd pleaser. Most of the ringers in the choirs were very serious; they saw us having a ton of fun.

Afterward, we went with Jane Orto, the Festival Coordinator for all 11 years, for a beautiful walk on the longest floating boardwalk followed by dinner in the restaurant on the lake. There were two musicians playing, an 8 or 9 year old boy with his fiddle and his dad on guitar. Of course we had to stop and listen and add some cash to the fiddle case.

Sean was hosted by the director and her husband from Coeur d'Alene Bible Church. Her mom had fallen and broke 2 ribs and was celebrating her birthday in rehab. Sean sent her a "Moonlight Serenade" CD!

Phyllis has already been asked to direct the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual North Idaho Spring Ring. Maybe we'll do another tour around it!

### **New Meadows, Idaho – United Methodist Church**

The last stop on our mission trip was New Meadows United Methodist Church on Monday, April 23. Ray Bennett was instrumental in a lot of the work on the church during the years he and Jeri lived there. He asked if we would ever go there so we were thrilled when they agreed to host us. We were not able to meet their beloved pastor because he is being transferred to Albany, Oregon, and was there visiting.

The sign out front said that the week before was Renovation Sunday – celebrating the 15 or so beautiful stained glass windows that were installed. The stained glass window in front is almost identical to the one on the cover of our *Ring Praise 2* CD which is from Pioneer Presbyterian Church in Burns, Oregon. There was an old pump organ up front that Sean tried, and unfortunately the strap connecting one of the pumping pedals broke. It would have been fun to have an organ piece on it during the concert!

Setting up the tables was interesting – the floor wasn't level. One end was raised one inch and then pamphlets put under the legs in between. It might have still been a little low, but at least this way the bells didn't want to roll!

They were a very enthusiastic and warm congregation and so appreciative because they don't get many events in New Meadows; most artists go to McCall. This made us feel so good about our desire to go to the smaller churches.

There were 23 at the concert. They loved the ring along that we do in the smaller churches where they get to ring the chimes and sing a few hymns. Afterward, one guy told us that he wanted to open all the windows and doors so the rest of the town could hear what they were missing.

Mission was evident in the fellowship hall. We noticed padded squares covered the entire floor with a few pieces of equipment, and we were told that a member gives free karate lessons to kids in the community on Mondays and Thursdays.

We stayed with Sylvia who was raised in Beverly Hills. She and her husband had been to China and had many gorgeous pieces from there. She told us she was Jewish and we wondered what she would think about the concert with the narration pointing to God's grace and salvation through Jesus Christ. Afterward she told us how moving the concert was and how she enjoyed all the narration. She wants to promote us to the McCall Music Society so we gave her a demo DVD and a CD.

Tuesday morning we headed home and reflected on how blessed we were to be able to share the gospel through our music, scripture and hymn history. Thank you for your prayers and support of our mission. All of you are truly blessings to us.

## **Burns, Oregon**

On Friday, June 22, we set out for Pioneer Presbyterian Church in Burns, Oregon. We've been excited about getting back to this church since it is their beautiful window on the cover of our *Ring Praise 2* CD. They were thrilled to see the CD cover! If you look carefully at the words under the picture, one side is lighter than the other. We learned that this is where a section of glass had to be replaced.

They have acquired a couple of new instruments. New to them is a very nice baby grand piano. What a joy to play and hear such a nice instrument. They have also purchased a digital piano. The organist/pianist told Phyllis before the concert that she isn't too clear on how to use it. Well, we worked on that! Sean was able to give her and another person instruction on Saturday morning on what the keyboard will do and how to use some of the many features. Besides concerts, this is one of the many ways we have helped some of the churches we visit.

So people would be able to see a little of what is possible with the digital piano, Sean quickly found some cool settings and used it to accompany Phyllis on "Jesus Loves Me" and "Variations on Zacchaeus." Rather exciting performing this way without rehearsing! The organist also wanted to hear the organ so Sean played a prelude.

When we were there 2 years ago the pastor, Jean Hurst, was unable to be at the concert since she was accompanying some youth on an outing. It was exciting to watch her face as she absorbed Sean's "He Arose."

Around 45 people attended the concert. They were excellent singers during the ring along adding harmony and singing with gusto.

A youth group from a Presbyterian church in North Dakota was spending the night in the church basement on their way to California on a mission trip. Several came in and listened to the end of the concert when they arrived. Afterward the pastor asked if we ever go to North Dakota!

Following the concert there were some very tasty snacks for everyone to enjoy. This also gave us an opportunity to visit with lots of people. Before the concert, we had dinner at the home of Sean's host. It was a delicious antelope stew with rice. Neither of us had ever had antelope, and we found it very lean and tender. It is always such a joy to visit with members in their homes.

We did have about 300 miles to drive on Saturday so lunch was a quick stop and eaten in the van!

## **Aurora, Oregon**

On Saturday, June 23, we left Burns and headed to Aurora Presbyterian Church just south of Portland. Aurora is a historical town, population around 670, with many antique shops we didn't have time to visit! After setting up, our contact took us to dinner at the bar behind the church where the College World Series with Oregon State was on TV. There were loud outbursts whenever OSU scored a run. The bar had wanted to add a patio out back and the church petitioned against it because of Sunday morning noise, and the church won!

The church has recently been painted inside and out. We noticed an artificial white bird on a structural cable inside the sanctuary. The bird was put on the cable by the youth to look like it was really on the Christmas tree. When the tree came down, the bird remained. Much later it was removed. When people remarked that they missed it, they put it back.

The church has a lovely small pipe organ which Sean played as a prelude to the concert. The lady introducing us gave a very short introduction and Sean was scrambling to change from his organ shoes to dress shoes. As he raced to the piano, he left the shoes behind the bell table in Phyllis' path for the processional! Ringing, climbing a couple of stairs, squeezing through a small opening to get behind the table, and kicking shoes out of the way was interesting and definitely taxed her concentration!

There was no microphone system to amplify the bells and we needed to deal with a very bright piano. Luckily our contact had a nice burgundy blanket that worked perfect to cover the soundboard of the piano and mellowed it beautifully.

Sean's sister, Jill, and her husband live in Corvallis and came up for the concert. This is the first time they have seen us in concert. There was a wonderful crowd of 18 who were so responsive and great singers for the ring along. The church put everything together on very short notice (1 week!) since our other concert venue didn't work out. What an awesome congregation – reminds us of our congregation!

We stayed in a home on the Molalla River. They had 2 very friendly, large dogs and 3 cats with unbelievable patience with the dogs. Our host had quite a painful job holding them back until they got to know us – he broke 5 ribs and his collar bone only 2-1/2 weeks before from falling off a ladder.

### **Aurora, Oregon – Sunday morning worship**

On Sunday, June 24, we played again at Aurora Presbyterian Church for their worship service. How nice it was to leave all the equipment up from Saturday. We were scheduled to play prelude and offertory. Their prelude is in the service where we have Moment of Meditation. Bonds Organ Building is owned by the organist and her husband – now we know why it was such a nice organ!

The organist said they usually have special music between scripture readings; there was none was scheduled, so we played “How Firm a Foundation” which fit perfectly in that spot. She also asked if we would like to do postlude so we ended with “Symphonia on Hyfrydol.”

There was a guest preacher who is the spiritual coordinator of the eight Oregon prisons. We shared with him our wonderful experiences in Ontario. One of the pictures is with his mother-in-law who was here visiting and his daughter.

We were glad someone warned us that they were an “applauding” congregation – after the extremely meditative “As the Deer” for prelude, they applauded enthusiastically. It was even stronger after the upbeat “How Firm.” ☺

While everyone was enjoying tasty treats (cheese, crackers, veggies, cookies & brownies) in the Fellowship Hall beneath the sanctuary, a humming bird flew into the sanctuary. By the time we packed up, they had been unable to coax it out. As we were leaving, a local fiddler group was beginning to play at the strawberry social across the street.

The rope for the outside bell in their bell tower is in an unusual location – the restroom off the sanctuary! Be sure to check out the picture. They told us kids need to be warned not to pull the rope!

Many asked if we would be willing to come back – they would even work on finding us more places to play. We'll have to see what can be worked out!

Armed with coffee, we headed into Portland for the Cascades Summer Conference. After salads at McDonald's, we found Reed College and where we needed to be to register.

### **Cascades Summer Conference 1**

We arrived at Reed College in Portland for the Cascades Presbytery Summer Conference around 2:00 pm on Sunday, June 24, and saw a very familiar face – Roger Fisk – who was instrumental in having the planning team invite us. After getting settled in our dorm rooms, we drove closer to the chapel to unload all the equipment.

It was a long walk with the equipment in order to use the elevator to the chapel which was on the second floor. Security kept telling us the van needed to move which we did after everything was removed from the elevator. Luckily trees kept the rain pretty well off of us until Sean parked the van blocks away and then it poured! He waited a while for it to let up before making his way back to the chapel, but still was rather wet when he arrived.

After setting up, we had dinner in the cafeteria; then the conference appropriately began with worship.

The cafeteria was a five minute walk. For an early cup of coffee, the “Circuit Rider Bookstore,” which had a wonderful store set up next to the cafeteria, provided Fair Trade Coffee in our dorm. Bless them!

Morning worship each day featured music from around the world. Monday was Asian music. Bells were added to a couple of songs. For an anthem, since the drop-in conference choir hadn't rehearsed yet, we played “This Is My Father's World.”

The keynote speaker was after worship each morning. Bill Robinson, president of Whitworth College in Spokane, was very inspiring. He heads the college by his Christian principles. The theme of the conference was “Proclaiming the Gospel in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” and he shared many business changes that have occurred that we need to look at as a church in this century. Throughout he stressed that the church will benefit from good business principles, but we need to remember that it isn't a business but a church.

### **Cascades Summer Conference 2**

After the keynote speaker each day at the Cascades Summer Conference, Sean taught a class on “Developing a Theology of Worship Through the Arts.” Phyllis taught an afternoon class on “Joy of Ringing.”

Immediately after dinner on Monday we had our first choir rehearsal. This was open to any participant who had a desire to sing. With the worship themes focusing on a different continent each day, we chose choir anthems that also fit each theme. This meant that not all anthems were sung entirely in English! Bells were also added to a couple of them.

We dismissed the choir a little early so we would have a few minutes to change clothes and collect our thoughts for our concert Monday night. Roger Fisk helped us out by doing the narrations between pieces. He did a great job!

Phyllis had publicized the concert on “Handbell-L,” a discussion list for handbells. She had also let some people in Portland know about the concert. A few people that she knew came, one being Nancy Hascall from whom she has had a few lessons. Nancy is also the one who arranged “Joshua” and a couple of Christmas pieces we play. What a joy to have her in the audience. This is the first time she has seen us in a full concert.

Several people at the conference came up afterward and also later in the week wanting to know if we would come and play at their church. We’ll have to see if we work out a trip along I-5 from Medford to Portland!

Since it was Sean’s birthday, Phyllis wanted to take him out for some type of snack and Nancy Hascall said she would love to come with us. We ended up at Papa Haydn’s, known for its incredible desserts. Sean and Nancy quickly discovered that they are both graduates of Albertson College of Idaho (though many years apart) and were amazed at how many people they both knew at the college and in Caldwell where Nancy grew up. Ask Sean about it! Phyllis asked Nancy for some feedback on the concert. She loved the variety we had and was extremely complimentary with how everything was executed. Phyllis told her she had a great instructor! Watch for the three of us to get together and give a concert.

What a great first full day of conference!

### **Cascades Summer Conference 3**

Each day of the Cascades Summer Conference began with worship at 8:30 am. As choir leaders, we warmed up the choir at 8:10 and also practiced some songs with the worship leader. Since each day focused on music from a different continent, we tried to have choir anthems that also had different origins and appropriate texts. On Tuesday they sang “Santo, Santo, Santo,” an Argentine folk tune. The accompaniment for the choral arrangement is also available for a handbell choir, and we happen to have the music now at church! Since there was neither time nor enough ringers in Phyllis’ class to learn the entire score, she simplified parts of it and had her class participants ring in sections.

Wednesday’s continent was Africa, and the choir sang “We Are Singing, for the Lord Is Our Light,” a traditional Zulu song. There is also a handbell score that goes with this anthem. Phyllis took a section of it and had two girls mallet on the chorus (enthusiastic volunteers are great – they came in during free time to practice). For the verses, others rang chimes. Thursday’s anthem was one our chancel choir has done, “The Greatest of These Is Love.” The text fit so well with the focus on Middle East Christians. Friday’s closing worship was a little later in the morning. The choir did an unusual piece mixing a Gregorian chant with an African chant. They worked hard and met the challenge! We also celebrated communion and hope to include some elements of this service in our celebration of World Communion on October 7.

Phyllis’ class of 5 participants sampled a variety of music. The levels varied from never having rung to ringing many years in a bell choir. Each day a different element of ringing was introduced. We began learning the basic ring and damp and moved into music using just two bells per person. They quickly discovered how challenging it is to remember what’s in each hand and then ringing it on time! From there we worked on various techniques done with the bells and how to handle more than two bells. Each time they played some music using these techniques and skills. They were pushed because our time was limited and they hung in there! For the last class they learned ringing in an ensemble where the 5 of them had 3 octaves of bells out. Lots of laughs as bells were put back in the wrong place and forgetting to put a bell back on the table to pick up something else or make it available for your neighbor to ring. For the sharing on Thursday evening, they played the first two pages of “Zacchaeus” and wowed the audience!

Next week Sean will share a little about his class and the concert by a Korean Presbyterian Church choir to wrap up our week at conference.

### **Owyhee, Nevada**

Even though we haven’t finished reporting on the Cascades Summer Conference, today we want to share our trip to Owyhee Presbyterian Church on July 31. The fires on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation caused prolonged power outages so that all the food that the people had in their refrigerators and freezers spoiled. With main grocery stores 100 miles away, they tend to have quite a supply. In addition, the Senior Center in Owyhee had damage from a couple of weeks prior to the fire so the church took over the preparation and serving of the noon meal.

They are a small, yet very strong, congregation. Taking on the senior meal was wearing them down so members of the Boise Presbytery decided to give them a break. On Tuesday, July 31, thirty-two of us representing six of the churches in the presbytery traveled in a school bus (no air conditioning!) to prepare and serve a BBQ and then worship together. Around 220 people were served. The highlight was the lettuce salad. With no refrigeration, they hadn't had fresh vegetables and many commented what a treat it was to have the salad. Kathy Mattson traveled with us and can fill you in on details of the meal.

We weren't sure where in the service they would like our music or how much so we came with an abundance of songs with uplifting scripture passages to fit each one as well as some of the hymn history. After setting everything up, those in charge were awed by all we brought to offer. Narrowing down our choices to what would fit in each slot and not run too long took us a while. Various pastors did parts of the liturgy of the service (Call to Worship, Scripture, Prayer, etc.) with us having scripture and a song or two between each. Pastor John Murphy from Parma helped us by doing the readings before each song. We also thought it was important for the congregation to participate so they did a chime Ring Along singing "Amazing Grace" and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

After the service we packed everything up and had a bus tour around the school. They have around 320 students K-12 and also have a branch of the community college in Elko right there so students are able to further their education and not have to leave the reservation quite as soon.

The ride home was certainly hotter than going down, but the entire experience was definitely worth it!

### **Cascades Summer Conference 4**

After worship every morning Sean would teach a class called "Developing a Theology of Worship Through the Arts". The attendees had a wide variety of experience in the subject. There was a musician/voice teacher who was also music director of her church in Lostine, Oregon. She had a different perspective on the use of the arts in worship compared to many of the other class members who were from larger congregations. Other attendees were an interim pastor and his wife, a visual artist, a church organist of a highly political downtown church, and a pastor who has served large and small churches and has dealt with the issue of being a woman in the pulpit. With this type of accumulative experience the class was always full of ideas. Discussions were at times passionately diverse and other times there was instant agreement. Even though the intention of the class was to develop a theology around worship, there were some misunderstandings of the purpose of the class and at times the group needed to take class time to ask their peers how to solve internal church issues. Due to the discussions and varied experiences, Sean, as a teacher, learned quite a bit, also.

One of the great experiences of the conference was listening to a Korean Presbyterian Church choir from Portland. They gave an hour concert in which we were asked to close the concert with a couple of prayerful, meditative selections. The purpose of our playing after their concert was to give them a gift on behalf of the conference in return for their participation and Spirit-filled offering. Overall the conference was a great success and inspirational.

Our drive home was especially memorable as we took our time to enjoy God's creation. The scenic highway through the Columbia River Gorge is breathtaking with several waterfalls and lush countryside.

### **Ontario, Oregon – First Christian Church**

Ring Praise Ministries has traveled to Ontario, OR several times to minister through the prison, churches, and for a big gala civic concert called "Help Them To Hope". HTTH is an organization that raises money to help feed and clothe those who are in need. Sean has been involved in these annual and sometimes bi-annual concerts for 18 years. This Christmas Phyllis and Sean will participate in their fourth concert for this civic organization along with other musicians and choirs from local area churches and Treasure Valley Community College. As Ring Praise is more well-known in Ontario, we have been asked to do more concerts in the area. This includes two upcoming concerts in local churches including the First Baptist Church, where Sean was Organist/Pianist from 1983-1989 and Organist/Choir Director from 1986-1988. One church where we performed at was the First Christian Church of Ontario, OR. Sean's very first music teacher, Wanda Lehmkuhl, is pianist at the church and is the coordinator and one of the featured artists of all of the Help Them To Hope concerts.

One of the featured treats of the concert at the Christian Church was the Ice Cream Social in the very well air-conditioned fellowship hall. Outside, the temp was well over 100 degrees and inside the sanctuary was almost 90 degrees with humidity from a swamp cooler that had been on from the night before. Unfortunately, the water in the swamp cooler had turned hot so it was VERY WARM in the sanctuary. In our formal clothes with layers, we performed and made it through. Some thought Sean was crying during one of his solos. It was actually perspiration in the eyes. Actually, call it sweat. *Did we tell you it was very warm in the sanctuary?* The cold ice-cream and air conditioned fellowship hall was well worth the wait!

Sean attended Vacation Bible School as a 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grader at this church. After the concert, a sweet, soft-spoken lady came up to Sean and asked if he remembered her. She embarrassingly confessed that during those years of VBS, she and some other well-intentioned ladies used to talk about that Rogers boy who wouldn't behave. Evidently, Sean used to always play the piano and organ without permission and she wished Sean would have stayed with his classmates instead of always sneaking off to play the keyboards. This lovely lady laughed and said that if she knew what she knows now she would have told Sean to continue playing and apologized if she yelled at him too much. Sean, fortunately or unfortunately (it depends on how one looks at this situation), didn't remember this happening. They had some good laughs about these incidents. As Phyllis and Sean left, they remarked at the warmth of the congregation as well as the heat of the building. This concert has led to more concerts in Ontario. Once again, we thank Nampa First and individuals for their incredible support in this exciting ministry which has been a blessing to both us and the communities in which we have served.

### **Caldwell, Idaho – Ustick Road Church of the Nazarene**

On Sunday, August 5, Sean and Phyllis ventured to Ustick Road Church of the Nazarene in Caldwell for an outdoor concert. During August, they have various groups give one hour outdoor concerts at 6:00 pm followed by special treats. This week was going to be root beer floats. We would be on a trailer with speakers so all sounded well. The only keyboard available at the church was a shorter one with only 61 keys (a full-size piano has 88 keys). At least the keys were full size; some keyboards have small keys. Because of this, Sean wasn't going to do any piano solos.

When we arrived, the flatbed trailer wasn't there yet. About 15 minutes later it came. Phyllis had to be careful where the tables were set so she would at least have a full board to stand on behind the tables without a large space between boards (the boards ran parallel to the tables). Then we worked on getting the keyboard on the trailer in a way that it would not rock and Sean didn't have tree branches in his face. The sound tech was working on getting speakers, etc. hooked up when it started getting windy. Around 5:40 it was quite gusty and all kinds of stuff fell out of the trees onto the tables. It looked like it could rain at any moment. The pastor felt it was best to move inside – we heartily agreed. Inside, Sean had a nice baby grand piano so we added a piano solo. The Lord sure blessed us at this concert with wind and the makings of a storm.

The congregation was a mix of ages, but most were young families. The kids were fascinated with the bells. At the end, many of the children had excellent questions. Afterward several came up interested in seeing the bells up close and trying to ring. It is always such fun to watch the excitement of young people when they get to carefully ring a bell. The root beer floats sure tasted good!

We've now done a couple of outdoor adventures – one was with the blazing sun spotlighting us at 1:30 pm on a very hot summer day last year. The handles of the bells softened so much that they slipped when Phyllis tried the bell tree on "Symphonia on Hyfyrdol." She took the tree down, turned around to Sean, and told him to finish it! Afterward she explained to everyone what had happened. Wonder when the next outdoor concert will be and what other adventures are ahead for us?

This week we are heading to five churches in the Kendall Presbytery. We were at the first three in 2004, Soda Springs in 2005, and Jerome a couple of times around Christmas. We so appreciate all your support both financially and through prayer. Please pray for this trip that our music helps each person praise God and touches them through the stories and scripture we will use with the music. Here's our schedule:

Thursday, 9/27, First Presbyterian Church, Buhl.

Friday, 9/28 – First United Presbyterian Church, Malad City.

Saturday, 9/29 – Bear Lake Community Church, Montpelier.

Sunday, 9/30 – music for worship at First Presbyterian Church, Soda Springs.

Sunday, 9/30 – First Presbyterian Church, Jerome. We travel home Monday am.

### **Buhl, Idaho**

On Thursday, September 27, we embarked on a tour of five churches in the Kendall Presbytery. The first three churches were the same ones we visited three years ago.

First stop: First Presbyterian Church, Buhl. In front of the church was a beautiful harvest display of straw bales, corn stalks and pumpkins with a poster advertising our concert prominently displayed. The church is across from the high school football field and there was a game going on, but the only sounds heard in the sanctuary were bells and piano. The sanctuary was built around the same time as Boise First Presbyterian Church and looks very similar but on a smaller scale. They have a Commissioned Lay Pastor, Blake Walsh, who is a member of the Wendell church.

They are celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in November, and our dinner host was very interested in everything we did to celebrate. She really liked the idea of a catered dinner rather than a potluck so everyone can simply go and enjoy

without having to fix anything. Knowing it was their 100<sup>th</sup>, a few of the narrations were tailored around it such as mentioning that “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” was written the same year the church was founded.

Questions at the end were a little different than at many concerts. Someone asked about Phyllis’ education. She didn’t share what her degree was in (You’ll have to ask her), but covered attending a variety of workshops and a having a few private solo lessons from a wonderful soloist in Portland. Sean’s four degrees from ACI are mentioned in the program. They also asked where our arrangements came from; most are purchased arrangements with Sean doing “some” embellishing. We told about Zacchaeus being written for a bell choir and that we adapted it.

Our dinner host was the pianist/organist and had also rung in a bell choir when she lived in Sun City West, Arizona. She loved the ring along and thought it was a great way to teach people how to ring and give them a taste of it. A feast of goodies was prepared by the women for after the concert –pumpkin cheesecake, lemon sugar cookies, 2 kinds of fudge, Rice Krispie treats, chocolate haystacks, and more.

Toward the end of “He Arose,” Sean noticed a note in the bass wasn’t playing. Then another key next to it wouldn’t go down. After the concert he peeked inside and found a broken hammer. Oops. He felt terrible, but the ladies he showed it to laughed.

There had been a trout festival the previous weekend and all kinds of large trout cutouts were painted and attached to the lampposts downtown. There was also a beautiful metal sculpture on a building.

Special attendees at the concert were Phyllis’ daughter-in-law and grandson who lived 8 miles away. She was able to stay with them that night.

## **Malad City, Idaho**

“It was as awesome as being at a cow camp.”

Friday, September 28, we headed to First United Presbyterian Church in Malad City. To get to the church off Main Street, you need to drive through the parking lot of the bar. The name has changed from 3 years ago, but it’s still a bar.

The church sets up on a little rise with a very nice sign to welcome those who come to worship. Currently the average attendance for worship is around 12 with up to 18 on a good day. It was thrilling when 28 attended the concert.

After setting up, we wandered through a few stores in town. The local flower shop had a beautiful silk fall centerpiece that Phyllis felt would be perfect on the dining room table – and 25% off! It made loading and unloading for the rest of the trip more interesting since it needed to be on top of everything. People in the stores remembered seeing an article in the local paper about our concert when they asked if we were from out of town and we invited them to the concert.

We were to have dinner with two couples from the church, but Phyllis mixed up dinner arrangements with another church so we inquired at a store about a good local place to eat. They recommended the Dude Ranch Café. Great food for very small prices (hamburger & fries for \$3.35, etc.). As we were finishing, two couples came in and exclaimed, we found you! They went to the church looking for us, saw we were all set up, and then called the 2 restaurants in town to find us! We happened to be at their popular one and had a great time getting to know them.

The church is celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year so we adapted a couple of the narrations fitting with the year it was founded and what songs were new or not even around yet. The congregation really had fun during the ring along portion and sang out well on “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” It is always amazing how reluctant they are at first to try a chime and by the third song are really enjoying it.

During refreshments afterward, there was a phone call to the church asking to talk with the “bell lady.” She had attended the concert but left immediately afterward and wanted to tell us what a blessing it was to her. That really touched us that she would take the time to look up the number and call the church.

There are two pictures of the bell outside the church on the display board. One was taken 3 years ago showing lots of rust and barbed wire around the structure. The new one shows the wire gone and the bell and support completely refurbished as an Eagle Scout project.

We stayed in the manse and noticed around 15 bird feeders and a few huge buckets of birdseed. The two indoor cats must be very frustrated!

Oh, back to the opening line. This was the incredible compliment by one of our dinner hosts – he is a cattle rancher.

## Montpelier, Idaho

The weather turned during the night and it was windy and cold with snow coming down when we left Malad City. We were very thankful it wasn't sticking on the road; just wet and a little foggy. To fit with the weather, we listened to Christmas music and worked on Advent and Christmas services as we drove to Montpelier.

Before the concert, there was a church dinner of delicious homemade beef stew, a variety of salads and homemade rolls – great food and wonderful conversation. Getting to visit with the people in informal settings like this is always such a joy. They shared with each other about how some weren't feeling too well. You could sense their concern for each other. One lady told us about a special activity they have for kids in the community. There are no children currently attending the church, but they have a Bible Camp once a month where a few kids come and hear Bible stories, sing songs and work on craft projects for about 3 hours. She compared it to VBS but meeting monthly. We saw the current craft project of painted pillow cases. What a wonderful outreach for this congregation where the average Sunday morning attendance is 10-12. There was lots of stuff piled up in one area of the basement/Fellowship Hall behind a portable room divider – they are getting ready for a yard sale.

The church has a very nice Rodgers electronic organ. Sean played about 15 minutes prelude and also adapted a few of the accompaniments to organ. The audience was very responsive – there were several loud sighs and reflective amens after most of our pieces. Quite a few quietly sang along on many of the songs. It was inspiring to look out and see the glow on their faces as they absorbed the music and let the Spirit move them. Several commented after how healing the concert was for them. We never know how God will use our music. One lady afterward commented that she hadn't felt so full of the Spirit in a long time. Another, not a member of the church, thanked us for coming to a small church. She was so appreciative. We then used that opportunity to explain that our mission is to share the gospel through our music and especially enjoy going to the small churches. They hope we don't wait three more years before coming back.

The man who had taken lots of pictures of us three years ago was there. He had given Phyllis all the pictures on a disk. She showed him on the article from *Presbyterians Today* that the picture used was taken by him and his name was on it. The washout background on all of our posters is also a picture he took. We could tell he was very pleased that we were using his pictures.

Like many of the other churches, they had wonderful cookies afterward downstairs in the Fellowship Hall. They insisted on us taking some with us to snack on the rest of the trip.

## Soda Springs, Idaho

When we left Montpelier Sunday morning to head to Soda Springs, it was a chilly 25 degrees outside. The weather, however, was beautiful. We were responsible for all the music in worship. They are without a full-time pastor and Jan Goldbeck, a Commissioned Lay Pastor at the Pocatello church, was preaching. She gave a very nice message from the lectionary texts of Psalm 91 and 1 Timothy 6:6-19 entitled "The Life that Really Is Life." Since Jan had given Phyllis the hymns ahead of time, bells were added to most of them.

In order to offer more music, we did 15 minutes of prelude. They applauded after each piece. For the anthem, we did our version of Zacchaeus. Kids learned the song a year ago in VBS so they were smiling and singing along. The Children's Sermon was done by a couple using Veggie Tales foam hand puppets of Bob and Larry. It was really cute and the kids were very responsive. The kids were then given a candy treat from a basket before going back to their seats. For the Gloria Patri and the Doxology, they use Avery & Marsh versions that are in our hymnal. These versions are peppy and have a Caribbean-Latin feel which is energetic, and the congregation seems to really sing out on them. Sean played the organ, which hadn't been played for quite some time, for the opening hymn. It was missing several pedal stops, but had one loud one; he made it sound great. He decided to do the rest on piano. At the close of the service, Jan announced that we would be playing postlude and everyone sat down and listened. They had 38 in worship which is about what they have each week. It was nice to see the wonderful age mix they have for a small congregation.

After the service there was a wonderful time of fellowship like we have with everyone staying around for a while. A gentleman gave us a gift of a cassette tape of some of his own music. He does a lot of country/western. Sean visited with Jan who had recently met with the new CLP at Tutuilla. She was very excited about what is happening there and that we were heading there in a couple of weeks. She also extended a personal invitation to come to Pocatello.

Many members of the congregation remember us from the last two times we were here. Three years ago (on the way home from Montpelier), we stopped at their annual fall bazaar and did a little impromptu concert in our casual traveling clothes around lunchtime as people were enjoying a wonderful turkey dinner. Then in 2005 we returned and did a full concert in our black and gold concert attire. Many asked when we'd be back for another full concert!

We so appreciate all your prayers and support of our ministry.

## **Jerome, Idaho**

On the way to Jerome for our concert on Sunday, September 30, we stopped at Applebee's in Pocatello for lunch. There was a street sign, "The Way to Grace," near the restaurant (see the picture on the board). What a cool name for the street taking you to Grace Lutheran Church!

Upon arriving at the Jerome church, we found a very organized committee waiting to help. They helped us unload and pack things up several stairs, moved anything we needed moved, and were ready to hook in Phyllis' microphone. Several ladies had a reception organized for afterward. We decided to put the CDs and display boards downstairs at the reception, but waited until after youth group was over. They worked on setting up the display for us.

When we found out there was a youth group of about 10 youth there, we asked if they would be interested in learning more about the handbells and organ. Phyllis played a song for them (Zacchaeus) and then took questions. Then she let them ring the bells for ring along and they really enjoyed it. Sean then had them gather around the organ where he showed what different things did and then played a Bach piece.

This is a growing church. The average attendance on Sunday mornings is around 100, and 52 were at the concert. A couple we have stayed with in Burley drove over for the concert. They were in Nampa a few weeks ago and visited our church! One member was saying that hopefully in a few years they will not be considered a "small church" on our tour and would sponsor us to other churches. In essence they are sponsors for the next trip to Kendall Presbytery because they insisted on giving us a check.

Like at all the other churches, this was also a very responsive audience. One gentleman in the back was great with the amens! It was also more intergenerational with several young people in the audience.

Sean spoke to a gentleman whose brother was one of the people that the pipe organ was dedicated to. He lost his brother in World War II. He gets teary-eyed every time he hears it played for solos because it is a reminder of how his brother went to Quantanamo Bay in his place.

The next morning we got up early to head home. If you are looking for a great breakfast heading to Twin Falls from Nampa, take the second Wendell exit and go to the Farmhouse Restaurant. The toasted Basque bread is incredible as are the omelets.

We so appreciate all your prayers and support of our ministry. We are always sharing what a loving and caring congregation we have. Thank you!

## **Tutuilla, Oregon**

On the south side of the interstate from Wildhorse Casino near Pendleton is Tutuilla Church Road on the Indian reservation. The church sits on 160 acres of land with a fellowship hall (Lowery Hall) and a manse which is being rented. This church used to be the center of all activities for the area tribes. They have not had a pastor for 18 years and have struggled trying to keep the church going. This past summer Jack Schut, a new Commissioned Lay Pastor from LaGrande and friends of Ron and Phyllis, accepted the call to this church. He and his wife, Terral, along with faithful members of the congregation are working hard to build a community where the church is once again the center. He immediately asked if we could share our ministry so we headed there October 12. The following weekend they were celebrating their 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

After a stop in La Grande for Nell's shakes & malts, we arrived to see a newly painted exterior. It took 65 gallons of paint and was all done with volunteers including the tribal fire department. The department was having a breakfast fund raiser the next morning and served up sausage, eggs and pancakes. The proceeds from their fund raisers are used for outreach and service projects instead of equipment needs. The breakfast proceeds will buy Christmas gifts for needy children in their community.

Behind the church is a cemetery which gives a glimpse of the Indian culture. A couple of the pictures show how items special to that person are placed on the grave. It is full of history and signs of struggle where many died in the same year including several children.

The sanctuary had incredibly live acoustics. The earthquake in Sean's "He Arose" has never trembled like it did here – extremely powerful. The malleted and mated (bells gently hit on the padded table) sections with the bells also came alive and sang out in this acoustic environment. To tame the bright piano for accompanying, a new piece of equipment that we carry with us was used – a light blanket to cover the back of the piano! This has come in handy in several churches. Sean pulls it up for his solos.

One of the first things that were fixed this fall was the bell in the bell tower. It can be rung in two ways – one rope moves the bell like in a traditional bell tower and another moves only the clapper to hit the side of the bell. To begin the concert, Phyllis rang it by pulling the rope to move the whole bell.

The pastors from the Presbyterian churches in Pilot Rock and Milton-Freewater attended. This shows the support Jack is receiving from pastors around him. Someone from Hermiston saw a poster in the coffee shop in Echo (20 miles west of Pendleton) and came to the concert. One of the tribal chiefs just beamed throughout the concert and was telling people about it the next morning at the firemen's breakfast. At intermission he thought it was over and commented to Jack that he wanted to hear more. He did in the second half!

It is exciting to see the Holy Spirit at work in this faith community. As we left the next morning, a few ladies were scrubbing years of grime off chairs, tables and floors of Lowery Hall.

## **Halfway, Oregon**

After the Fireman's Breakfast near Tutuilla, we headed toward Baker City then 55 miles east and slightly north to Pine Valley Presbyterian Church in Halfway, Oregon for a 4:00 pm concert on Saturday, October 13.

With every church we visit, we always leave with great memories. There has not been one church in the Snake River Mission Area that hasn't been a special place where we would like to return. So it is with Halfway. Halfway feels like a "home away from home" due in part to the generous hospitality of Anne and Bill Shields (pastor and his wife). We are told that "our rooms" are available; there is always a bowl of popcorn on the kitchen counter and there is talk of either of us returning just for a day of relaxation.

Due to two weddings and other events in Halfway, we had a smaller crowd than last time, but the church was still full with around 50 people from the entire community of 375 (where the answer to Verizon's question, Can you hear me now? is no!). There are the regulars that we see every time we have been to Halfway, and it is good to catch up with them.

There was new carpeting and remodeling since our last visit with fresh paint inside and out. Pastor Bill has worked very hard on ministries for younger women to raise money for college and now there are additional ministries for young men in refurbishing and woodworking. There is also an Artist's Coop, Halfway Whimsical, down from the church which helps support artists in the community along with "Jacob's Dream," a used clothing and thrift store sponsored by the church. Bill is one of the artists and takes "junk" and makes it into adorable creations. Phyllis bought a very unique lamp with personality which is displayed on the table in back. Check out [www.halfwaywhimsical.com](http://www.halfwaywhimsical.com)!

Community outreach and mission are focal points in Halfway. Pastor Bill once said, "Smaller congregations don't have the luxury of asking what they should do with the money budgeted; they ask what needs to be done and trust that the Lord will provide." The Lord has provided in Halfway and the church continues to be a blessing to the community through their ministries.

After the concert and reception we stopped for fast food in Baker City and headed back to Nampa so we could worship with you on Sunday.

## **Kansas City Intro**

We have had an exciting fall sharing the gospel through our music in many churches. For the last five weeks we have shared in our "journal" about our trip September 27-30 to Kendall Presbytery visiting churches in Buhl, Malad City, Montpelier, Soda Springs and Jerome. Then October 12 & 13 we went west to Eastern Oregon Presbytery and played at Tutuilla (on the Indian Reservation near Pendleton) and Halfway.

Two dear members of our congregation, Bill and Dorothy Eddy, moved here from Kansas City several years ago. They had been at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church for over 30 years watching it grow and serving in a variety of ways. This church recently built a new large sanctuary onto the existing building. Bill and Dorothy have enjoyed our music and what we are doing in the Snake River Mission Area and wanted the Pine Ridge church to hear us. As a gift to that congregation in celebration of their new sanctuary, they sent us to Kansas City the end of October. A very dear friend of theirs set up concerts for us at a couple of retirement centers as well as a small Presbyterian church where she helps with music. On Sunday we played Offertory at all three morning worship services at Pine Ridge and then gave a concert that afternoon. What a joy meeting so many people who shared with us wonderful memories of Bill and Dorothy.

On the Thursday after we returned home we brought lunch to Bill and Dorothy and shared with them our trip in pictures and stories. We also videotaped the concert at Pine Ridge for them. After the concert, the pastor took the camera around to many people at the reception so they could send greetings to Bill and Dorothy.

Today we are doing the entire worship service at First Baptist Church in Ontario, Oregon. Sean played organ for them a few years ago when he was a teenager. They asked us in July if we would come and lead the worship service for them on Veteran's Day and requested that we play a couple of patriotic pieces. Two of the songs we are playing are "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" and "America the Beautiful."

The new display boards in the back are pictures from Tutuilla and Halfway and our trip to Kansas City. During the coming weeks we will be sharing with you details of each of the churches and retirement centers.

We are so blessed to be part of this wonderful and supportive congregation. Thank you!

### **Kendallwood Hills Estates, Kansas City, MO**

On Thursday, October 25, we flew to Kansas City for a weekend of concerts sponsored by Bill and Dorothy Eddy and centering around the celebration of the new sanctuary at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church. Bells fly fine, but Phyllis arranged to borrow foam from Pine Ridge and a homemade bell tree stand from Southminster Presbyterian church in Prairie Village, KS, about 22 miles from where we were staying. Phyllis went to pick up the foam Thursday evening and discovered it was only 24" deep instead of 30". Friday morning she picked up the bell tree stand.

Our first concert was at Kendallwood Hills Estates, a beautiful retirement center. They were treating us to lunch and the concert was shortly afterward. Phyllis wanted to get set up early to be able to run through a few songs on the narrower foam to make adjustments for bells that were normally placed in the "missing" area. Several residents heard us warming up and said they were looking forward to the concert. There was a small white grand piano which looked really nice but was very bright in sound. There was also a large water fountain complete with beautiful fish that couldn't be turned off so it added quite a bit of background noise. To help combat these sounds, they had a karaoke machine that we hooked Phyllis' microphone into which helped, but Sean had to keep adjusting it because of feedback.

After lunch we changed into our formal attire. Sean sat at the piano and played oldies as people gathered for the concert. They were a very appreciative and responsive audience of around 50. We asked for no applause, but finally gave up with that notion. Sean had planned to play an original composition off his piano CD, but he just felt led to ask for favorite hymns and weave them together instead. After he began a gentleman came up to Phyllis and asked if Sean could play "How Great Thou Art." At one point Sean looked up and saw Phyllis as she mouthed "How Great Thou Art" which was then woven into the medley.

Four ladies had read about the concert on "Handbell-L," a discussion list Phyllis reads and had posted all the concerts on. This is also how she located the bell tree stand. Phyllis had posted the wrong address for a different Kendallwood Retirement Center not too far away. The people there were so helpful to these ladies and called around and found us. They were understandably a little late. Afterward they said they missed "Joshua" so we played it for them.

One man in a motorized chair was so enthralled with Sean's "He Arose" that he motored over close to the piano. He then came close to Phyllis as she read the intro and played "Just As I Am." Please check out his picture on the display board.

We met a couple of residents who knew Bill and Dorothy very well. What a great start to a fabulous weekend of meeting people and sharing the gospel message with our music.

### **Presbyterian Manor, Kansas City, KS**

Our dinner Friday evening in Kansas City was at a local BBQ restaurant with a few members of the Pine Ridge Bell Choir, the Music Director, and the organist who directs the bell choir. Kansas City is known for BBQ and it was superb.

On Saturday morning, October 27, we went to Presbyterian Manor in Kansas City, Kansas. When we arrived, the heat was pouring into the room. The Assistant Activities Director showed Sean where the thermostat was located. It was set on the mid to upper 80's! When he turned it down, the air conditioning came on which was a relief!

There were about 20 residents from the nursing home section who came to the concert. Because of the background of many of the residents, it felt like an old-time gospel revival with hand clapping, knee slapping, cane tapping, loud Spirit-filled laughing and joyous expressions. At one point between songs one resident spontaneously began singing "Jesus Loves Me" so we all joined her and Sean figured out what key we were in and played. When some residents were expressing their joy during pieces, it was beautiful to see others accepting the various responses to the music.

Afterward several came up and rang a bell and asked questions. One lady rang in a bell choir many years ago. Another had taught piano. Someone else had been surrounded with music her entire life and commented that she hadn't heard anything finer at Carnegie Hall.

One gentleman has been blind for 5 years. Phyllis brought the largest and smallest bells to him so he could feel them and ring them. She also had him feel the various mallets that were used. The glow on his face is indescribable. This was definitely a time to allow lots of fingerprints on the bells! A little polishing was nothing compared to the joy he showed and expressed as he felt and rang them.

We were so thankful to be able to share the gospel and our music with these special people who do not have many groups come to them. The grounds around the manor are lovely with a nice park and gazebo. We did find out that Bill Eddy was involved in helping establish Presbyterian Manor in Kansas City!

### **Bethel Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, KS**

Dorothy Eddy's close friend, Kathy Rasmussen, was our "agent" and set up all the concerts and entertainment for us. What an amazing lady! She had been the Choir Director and C.E. Director at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church for many years. Her husband, Pete, was director of the Presbyterian camp in the area for 26 years. When they retired, she wanted to serve in a mission capacity at a small church helping with music. She directs the choir at Bethel Presbyterian Church, a small congregation in KCK (Kansas City, Kansas) which is going through neighborhood changes.

When we arrived to set up for the Saturday afternoon concert on October 27, we met Nanette, a dear friend of Kathy's at the church and whose love of God is so expressed in her service to the church and her family. Sean visited with her grandson who has gone through many struggles and went to work in New Orleans to help rebuild after Katrina. While there, he had to live under the same conditions as many of the survivors and came away after 2½ years with a new appreciation of what he has and what is important.

The piano was being tuned as we set up. A member of Pine Ridge graciously tuned all the pianos for our concerts.

After the concert, several youth were excited to be able to actually ring the bells. We grouped them into chords and Sean pointed to each group that was to play as we all sang "Jesus Loves Me." The youth director commented that these kids would never have been able to experience this elsewhere because of economic conditions and thanked Phyllis for allowing them this opportunity.

There were around 30 at the concert and everyone stayed for the reception of numerous tasty goodies, most of them made by Nanette. One couple had read about the concert on Handbell-L, the discussion list to which Phyllis subscribes. He is the Membership Chair for Area VIII of the handbell guild. One of the ladies who came to Friday's concert rang in a community group and directed a choir at her church. She came again to this concert and brought her neighbor!

This church just lost its pastor because it could no longer offer full time employment. She came to the concert and was warmly welcomed. The love for her was evident as the kids wanted to sit by her. What a joy to share our music with this faith community!

### **Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, KS, morning worship**

After taking a couple of weeks off from our journal, we are continuing with our trip to Kansas City the end of October. On Saturday night (after a concert at Presbyterian Manor in the morning and Bethel Presbyterian Church in the afternoon), we were treated to dinner at a new Brazilian restaurant. After filling your plate with incredible salads and other Brazilian appetizers, waiters came around with large skewers of various meats for you to try. After two types of top sirloin, lamb, bacon-wrapped turkey, chicken, sausage, prime rib and pork loin, we were stuffed. It was an incredible dining experience with Kathy & Pete Rasmussen (our contact for everything!) and another couple from Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church.

In September the Pine Ridge congregation moved into their new sanctuary. They have three morning worship services and we played offertory at each. The 8:00 am is an intimate "traditional" service that is normally around a half hour long. Coffee and doughnuts are served afterward.

The 9:15 am is a "contemporary" service led by a praise team. We also played a more contemporary offertory with "Seek Ye First" and "Shine, Jesus, Shine."

The 11:00 am is also a "traditional" service with the addition of the choir. It is the largest of the three. At both traditional services we played "To God Be the Glory." As everyone was singing the closing hymn at the last service, the pastor came and asked Phyllis if we could play another piece before the postlude. We played "Old Time Religion Medley" which sent them out dancing!

A group in the church wearing aprons that said “Pine Ridge Catering” served a tasty lunch of taco soup, potato & cheese soup, stuffed green pepper soup and chili along with green salad and sandwiches. After sampling a couple of soups, we made sure everything was ready for the afternoon concert and changed into our concert attire.

Pine Ridge has a new Johannes electronic organ for the new sanctuary that is really 3 organs in one – Baroque, Romantic and Symphonic. Sean loved testing it out Saturday night when we set up for worship. He played a 20 minute prelude before the concert! More on the concert and evening tour next week.

### **Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, KS, afternoon concert**

Our final concert in Kansas City (October 28) was at Pine Ridge Presbyterian Church where we played for the three morning worship services. About 150 people attended the concert including a few from Kendallwood Hills Estates where we had played on Friday. They brought their bus! The pastor, Jim Gordon, introduced us and then ran the video camera so the concert could be shared with Bill and Dorothy Eddy. He also took the camera around at the reception so people could record greetings to them.

Both of the Eddys had served in this church in a variety of capacities including a previous building committee. One person commented that they remember the Eddys always greeting people and never forgetting a name. When Phyllis went to pick up the foam on Thursday evening, she saw a sign directing you to the “Eddy Room.” It is a beautiful conference room with a picture of them hanging on the wall. So many people told us about the love of God expressed through the Eddys. We are so thankful to them for wanting to share our music with this congregation and gifting them our trip. Finishing at Pine Ridge was a fitting end to a glorious weekend of concerts and getting to know so many dear friends of Bill and Dorothy.

After the concert, the husband of one of the bell choir members told Phyllis (actually “confessed”) that he was basically dragged to the concert. He had seen a bell soloist another time and was not at all excited. Well, he’s converted!

The gentleman who had given the grand piano to the church after teaching many students on it was thrilled hearing it played by Sean. He doesn’t remember when he’s heard it or bells played so beautifully.

Sean enjoyed a long visit with their music director. They shared their organizational challenges and we laughed at dinner with a dear couple as he was telling us about their similarities.

After the concert and reception we had a tour of the “underground” at Park University. High quality limestone is mined from the hill on the campus with columns strategically holding up the hill. There is literally a small city beneath the hill including some commercial facilities, classrooms, bookstore and library. It is unbelievable. Be sure to look at the pictures of this fascinating area.

We finished off an incredible and unforgettable weekend with dessert at Pete & Kathy’s home along with the friends of the Eddys who had arranged the university tour.

Thank you for all your prayers and support for our mission as we share the gospel through music, scripture and hymn history. We love sharing with everyone about our wonderful congregation!