

Ring Praise Music Ministry 2008 Journal

(weekly articles in the Nampa Church Sunday bulletins)

Malad City, Idaho

When we went to Kendall Presbytery in September, one of the churches we visited was First United Presbyterian Church in Malad City. The beginning of November Phyllis received an email from the pastor telling of their 125th anniversary celebration the end of the month and wondering if we would come back for another concert; they would pay our expenses. Friday, November 30 was clear on our calendars so we said yes!

We had discovered in September a great restaurant by Wendell so made that our lunch stop. Phyllis' son, Brian, and his wife, who live about 20 miles from there, joined us. We were blessed with great roads the entire trip. There were a few flurries on the way home Saturday morning, but nothing sticking on the road. Since roads were nice, we took the shortcut from Snowville to Malad. There wasn't snow, but we had to dodge large piles – we found out they had been moving cattle on the highway recently!

Our program was inspired by a portion of Bob Potter's sermon the previous Sunday. Titled "Seasons of Life," we went through the church year beginning with Christ the King Sunday (the end of the church year which was the previous Sunday). It was quite interesting mixing Advent and Christmas songs with Lent including "Were You There." Maybe our next concert in Nampa will be "Seasons of Life!"

As we were setting everything up, pastor Ken Tracy was telling us about their new Christmas decorations because the old ones "disappeared" when a youth group helped clean out the basement in the summer. He also shared that as people gather on Sunday mornings, they often have one of our CDs playing for prelude music.

There was tremendous energy from everyone involved in celebrating their 125th anniversary. You would never guess that they have only 13 "members." There was a nice display of history plus letters from people they invited including Governor Otter and other officials and were awaiting a reply from President Bush. There was a large article in the newspaper giving history and inviting the community to help them celebrate at any of the three events. Before the concert, Lucile Harrison, who has faithfully rung their church bell for many years, rang it 125 times! She will do it again for the Saturday concert and before worship on Sunday.

What a privilege to be able to help them celebrate. Around 35 people attended the concert and enjoyed tasty treats afterward.

We spent the night in Pocatello so we could leave by 7:00 am to get Sean back to Boise for a concert!

Burne Home, Boise, Idaho

On Saturday, December 15, Ring Praise Ministry had a first for one of their mission concerts. We played in Merv and Linda Burne's home in Boise. Merv and Linda currently attend First Presbyterian in Boise and hosted this concert with John and Kay Pickrell and Max and Caroline McDaniel, all from First Presbyterian in Boise. Merv and Linda have been music directors in numerous churches including Yorba Linda Presbyterian Church in California. When they moved to Boise, the Burnes became very close friends of Sean and have actively supported both Sean Rogers Ministries and Ring Praise Ministries. Linda was hoping that we would be having a concert when her friends who are members of the bell choir at Yorba Linda would be in Boise. So we planned one and took it to Merv and Linda's home. Dinner was served and there were around 30 there for dinner and a concert.

The space was a lovely place to have a concert with the high ceilings and a large enough foyer that Phyllis could fit her bell tables and perform with Sean on the grand piano in a room behind her and Ron was the narrator. We played nearly an hour's worth of music and had a surprise solo with Merv singing and Linda accompanying. This concert was also very special because Merv is fighting pancreatic cancer. There were very few dry eyes in the house after Merv was finished singing. As usual, there were many people who had never seen a solo handbell concert and the excitement in the room made for a very receptive audience.

Linda kept the concert a surprise for the three ringers from California until that afternoon. They had many questions for Phyllis regarding soloing and various techniques and had a lesson in holding and ringing two bells in each hand. Phyllis also had them try three in each hand.

Sean enjoyed seeing some of his friends from Boise. We visited after the concert with the members from the bell choir and shared stories of music and bell programs. It was a wonderful way to put people in a spirit of Christmas and the intimate setting of friends and family added to the magic of the evening for the Burnes.

Grace Episcopal Church, Nampa, Idaho

On Sunday, December 16, we did an hour-long Advent concert at Grace Episcopal Church in Nampa. Sean was the organist and choir director there from 1989 to 1995 so many of the 30 or so attending knew him from those years. The church has a small pipe organ so Sean played an organ prelude.

This was to be more of an Advent concert rather than a Christmas concert, so it was built around the Advent wreath with the four candles of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Rather than ending with *Symphonia on Hyfrydol* like we usually do, we opened with it and the Advent text, *Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus* representing the candle of Hope. How different to place this piece at the beginning of a concert! We also played *Grazioso* in this section because of the hope we have knowing death isn't the end – we have the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

For the second candle of Peace, one of the songs we played was *I've Got Peace Like a River*. Sean also played his original piano composition *Peace*. The third candle, Joy, was celebrated with *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* and the joyous organ piece, *Noel in G*. One of the pieces for the fourth candle, Love, was *Psalm of Love*, a medley of four beautiful tunes depicting the love God has for us and how we should respond in love to God.

We went on to celebrate God's gift of His Son, bringing us hope, peace, joy and love, with a couple of songs depicting the Christ candle as we remember his birth, ending quietly with *Silent Night*.

Around 30 people attended and we very appreciative of us coming. They were also very generous with the offering to support our ministry. Afterward there were cookies and other goodies galore in the Fellowship Hall next door.

We always enjoy putting together various programs and especially liked following the Advent theme. It was interesting fitting the bell tables in the chancel area. The communion table was moved back as far as possible, but the tables were still right up against the rail. To get to the piano, organ and bells, we needed to either climb over the rail or go through the small door and prep area for communion. Ron was our narrator which helped everything move quickly since we did have a little more than an hour's worth of program!

King Hill, Oregon

On Monday, December 17, we headed to King Hill Community Presbyterian Church (a few miles off I-84 out of Glens Ferry). We have given two other concerts there and they were hoping it would be an annual event. Phyllis even had a call at the office from the director of the Assisted Living home in Glens Ferry asking when our King Hill concert was scheduled. They bring several residents. Well, when we didn't get there this fall, a church member called and asked if there was any possibility we could come for a Christmas concert. What could we say? We both had this date open so off we went.

They have 13 members with an average Sunday worship attendance of 10. There were 67 at the concert! It was incredible to see the enthusiasm of this hearty congregation and their joy when there was such a large crowd. Curt Naeve is the Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) and serves both the Glens Ferry Methodist Church and King Hill. Sean knows Curt from Seminary Without Walls classes. He has been a CLP for less than a year, and his excitement serving these two churches was inspiring.

As we drove to King Hill, we talked about the upcoming Christmas jazz service at our church. Sean asked Phyllis which bell piece might work for jazz, and we came up adapting *Ding Dong Merrily on High*. We tried it out after we had everything set for the concert and loved it so decided to play it jazzed for the concert. Wow, how fun!

When we arrived, we were greeted by the "welcoming committee" – four large and extremely friendly black labs from across the street (check out the pictures with Sean and greeters)! As can be seen in the pictures, the sanctuary was decorated beautifully for Christmas. The cut-out nativity had white lights on it and looked lovely on the edge of the chancel.

One member of the church, Chaz Brand, has a deep bass voice and asked if he could sing a solo. He did the very moving song, *Mary, Did You Know?*

Curt had a very nice digital camera and took numerous of pictures during the entire concert and some afterward so we could hopefully have new promo shots. It was so nice to have action pictures during the concert. Our only chance to take pictures is before and after the concert and during the ring along section. Phyllis sifted through over 150 pictures on a disk and narrowed it down to the ones on the display board.

The community of King Hill has a population of probably 100 and is the smallest town we have played in during all our travels (Ukiah, OR appears slightly larger). The warm reception and appreciation for us coming to the small communities is heartwarming. We wish all of you could tag along sometime and experience these wonderful congregations with us. Thank you for all your support!

Covenant, Weiser, Homedale, Nampa Church of the Brethren

In February and March, we went to three churches in our Boise Presbytery and also gave a concert at Church of the Brethren. April 6-13 we were at many churches in Eastern Oregon before heading to Coeur d'Alene. Pictures from all the concerts are on the display boards in back and journals of the concerts will be in the bulletin for several weeks. Our writings will also be posted on the church website, www.firstpresnampa.org, follow the Ring Praise Music Ministry link.

The February 24 concert at Covenant Presbyterian Church was a fund raiser for Reflections Church, the new church development in the Boise Presbytery. About 95 people attended and were very generous with the offering. They have a new Yamaha grand piano which Sean made sing. He also played the organ for prelude and did one organ piece during the concert. During the question time, one person noticed Covenant wasn't on the display boards that we had set up and wondered why. Phyllis commented it was because we hadn't given a concert there before and assured her that pictures will now be added.

Around 40 people were at the Weiser concert on March 2 including a couple from Phyllis' Bible Study Fellowship class and from an ecumenical choir starting in Ontario rehearsing at Bethany Presbyterian Church using their bells. After the Ring Along portion, Phyllis has been mentioning that the handbell area has several sets of chimes that are loaned to schools for a year complete with curriculum and several pieces of music. One lady was very interested in what curriculum is used since she directs a handchime program in her elementary school. Phyllis has been in contact with her regarding this.

On a stormy Friday, March 14, we went to Homedale to a small but very receptive group. Sean had a very unique piano bench – it looked like a barrel with a cushion on it!

Our "local Lent concert" was at Church of the Brethren on Palm Sunday, March 16. At the last minute the mission plans of Jim and Pam Hardenbrook changed so we decided to not take an offering, but to offer the concert as a gift to the community. We put a basket on our table for anyone wishing to make a donation to our ministry.

For all of these concerts, we had the pleasure of Ron doing all the narrations. How wonderful that he was able to join us for all of them! We also thank all of you who came to one or more of the concerts. People from our congregation were at each one and it is a joy to look out and see familiar faces.

Mount Vernon, Oregon

After worship on Sunday, April 6, we began our tour of several Eastern Oregon churches and then worked our way up north to Coeur d'Alene. Each stop has special memories which we will be sharing with you during the next few weeks.

Our first stop was Mount Vernon Community Presbyterian Church, a few miles west of John Day, Oregon. The weather was overcast with snow showers as we were driving over the last pass. We were thankful that the road wasn't slick. This church has a 2006 membership of 8 with average worship attendance of 10 to 12. The determination of members to keep it going is impressive and will celebrate their 100th anniversary next year.

They had the posters we sent copied so several more could be placed around the area. The concert was also announced on the radio plus an article in the newspaper. Their hard work paid off with 45 people attending the concert. There was very strong support from the community. Some people came that rang in a bell choir at the Nazarene Church in John Day and visited afterward with Phyllis regarding some techniques. Another woman was a singer and so appreciated us coming to a small community with our level of music and message.

On the display board, please notice the picture of the two girls, Sarah and Holly, standing outside handing out programs. Next to the picture is the one taken three years ago when Sarah helped pass out chimes as people arrived! Phyllis asked if one of them would like to play the sand blocks during a song. Holly volunteered and was shown what to do. A little later she looked horrified as she asked Phyllis if she had to play in front of the people at the concert – of course she did and she was great!

The acoustics in the church were wonderful and the singing during the Ring Along was gorgeous. The organ hadn't been played for a long time, possibly the last time we were there. Sean played a ten minute prelude because someone really wanted to hear the organ!

We stayed with Dick and Carol (who wanted to hear the organ) Patt whom we have known for a few years. They invited us over after our concert three years ago for steak dinner because nothing was open! We have seen them several

times at Shared Ministry events and Cascades Summer Conference last year. Dick is studying to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor and helps at Mount Vernon as well as Ukiah. This year we had delicious buffalo roast cooked in a crock pot after the concert. Wow, was it tasty!

Dick and Carol have an incredibly friendly dog, Tippy. If you look at the picture of Tippy and Sean, you will understand her name. She will jump into your lap and tip over all at once. Or if you are sitting on the floor, she tips over on her back and lays her head in your lap while you give her a belly rub. When Dick and Carol come for the Small Church Conference May 6-8, Tippy gets to stay at Sean's house!

Dayville School 1, Dayville, Oregon

For Monday, April 7, instead of an evening concert at Dayville, we were asked to go into the schools and give two assemblies each about 50 minutes long. Skip Inscore, the Commissioned Lay Pastor at Dayville, had talked with Phyllis over three years ago about coming to the school where both he and his wife are teachers. The school has about 70 students grades K-12 and was a wonderful opportunity to reach this age with music.

The school sets up on a hill – notice all the steps going up to it. Phyllis asked how many climb them each day and several raised their hands. They certainly get some exercise just getting to school! We set up in the computer room where they had moved the piano in.

The first assembly was at 9:00 am and was for junior high and high school students. Attendance was not mandatory; Skip only wanted students who were truly interested to be there. Afterward, there were several students that chose not to come who heard about what went on at the assembly and expressed disappointment with their choice. They plan to come the next time we are there!

Skip was at our Sunday concert in Mt. Vernon so he suggested which songs would probably work well at the school. They recently studied slavery so the spirituals and history with *Amazing Grace* were included. Between each piece Phyllis spoke about how the bells worked and the various techniques used. Sean showed them how the piano worked and had the entire front opened for a solo so they could see the hammers striking all the strings and all the other action. Instead of one of his concert pieces, he took requests to weave into an improvisation with a couple of stipulations – no Britney Spears or Metallica, etc.! It was quite the medley with *The Star-Spangled Banner*, *Amazing Grace*, *Für Elise*, and *Blue Moon*, and he tied it all together with *Dizzy Fingers*.

The Ring Along portion included more school appropriate songs. All seemed to really enjoy getting to actually ring the chimes.

The piano was very bright, and with no way to use Phyllis' microphone, we got creative muffling the piano. If you look at the picture, the blanket (which became a permanent part of our equipment last fall) is held in place by the cases on top and then a table was leaned against the soundboard in back. Worked well!

The students were very attentive and asked many great questions. We were able to get so many nice pictures of the assemblies because Dick and Carol Patt, from Mt. Vernon, came with us, and Phyllis gave Dick her camera. One teacher afterward who has taught for many years commented to Sean that he has seen a lot of assemblies, and this was one of the best. Next week we'll let you know about the elementary concert and school lunch.

Dayville School 2, Dayville, Oregon

Our second concert at Dayville School was for grades 2-6. We started with 22 students, but a class of 6 had to leave quite early. They all displayed exemplary manners for the concert and had excellent questions. It was obvious they really enjoyed it.

For the Ring Along portion, since the younger ones would have difficulty reading some of the words to the songs, we divided them into three groups to form the chords for the songs. The middle group rang all the time. The groups on the left and right would ring when Phyllis pointed to them. They were very quick learners on how to ring and stop the sound of the chimes and sang *Itsy Bitsy Spider* and other songs that could be accompanied with only two chords.

Phyllis met one of the students earlier as she was going to the van to get something. This girl beamed and said she was so excited to about the concert. Well, she sat in the front row so Phyllis asked her to do the sand blocks "train" for *Glory Bound*. You can see the joy on her face in the picture.

They came up with a challenging mix of songs for Sean to weave into a medley. You can see that they sang a lot of patriotic music because they requested *Dixie*, *I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *This Land Is Your Land*, *Silent Night*, and *Home on the Range*. They were fascinated watching the workings of everything inside the piano as he played.

After the concert we were invited to lunch in the school cafeteria. Now many would pass up this opportunity and head to a restaurant, but this is one school lunch you don't want to miss. They had homemade meatloaf, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, and salad bar with fruit and tuna salad. What a delicious feast!

From there we did a little sight seeing and visited the Condon Interpretive Center at the John Day Fossil Beds. Condon was an ordained Presbyterian minister who served churches in the area and was a pioneer of how science informs and supports, not discredits, God's creation in Genesis. Along the John Day River we saw some Indian pictographs. You would not know they were there, except our Mt. Vernon friends were with us and showed us where they were. We also stopped by the Mercantile, the only store in Dayville. We went back with our hosts to their home in Mt. Vernon and each of us caught up on some computer work before heading to Ukiah for our evening concert.

It was such a joy to be able to share our music in a public school and meet so many wonderful young people.

Ukiah, Oregon

It was a beautiful scenic drive from Mt. Vernon to Ukiah with a few snow flurries but clear roads. When we went into the church, there was a lovely quilt in the back that was being raffled to support the food pantry housed at the church. The drawing will probably be sometime this fall – Phyllis is hoping her ticket is picked!

As Sean was testing the piano to see if there were any interesting notes and how bright the sound was, he heard strange noises in the lower register. When he looked inside he noticed a lot of wax, probably candle wax, and some rattling of some of the hammers and dampers. There was nothing that could be done, so there were strange noises during the concert.

After setting everything up, we went across the street to the Antlers Inn where the church was having us stay. We also stayed there last year when we led the morning worship service. Notice the antlers on the front! This time we were the only guests at the inn. The clerk who lives there couldn't find Sean's room key so she gave him her only master key and made him promise not to lock it in his room because then she wouldn't be able to get into any of the rooms!

In 2006 this church had 9 members with average attendance of 7. There were 11 at the concert. Several were from the local Baptist church including the pastor and his wife; they had just finished Bible study class. She mouthed the words to many of our songs. Another person was someone Phyllis knew when she lived in LaGrande and had his son in her youth bell choir.

One couple had an adorable little girl who loved to crawl – baby Elizabeth. Everyone fell in love with her as she would crawl down the aisle, dad would go get her, she would take off again, peek out from under the front pew, dad would go get her again, etc. When Phyllis shared the story of Laurie Kline and being cooped up with her one-year-old, Elizabeth's mom identified and smiled! Please look at the pictures where Elizabeth crawled to the piano, pulled herself up, and played a few notes while Sean was reading a narration. Another time she pulled herself up by him and his hand is lovingly on her back. Dad was right there to get her, and everyone loved watching this tiny child of God. During the Ring Along, she crawled up toward Phyllis who picked her up and had her ring a bell while everyone else rang and sang. About 2/3 of the way through the concert she had enough and got fussy so dad took her home and mom stayed for the rest of the concert. Normally we only get pictures during the Ring Along. We were fortunate to capture these precious moments because Phyllis gave her camera to the Baptist pastor and we also just took time during the concert to get pictures.

The next morning we woke up to snow! After a delicious breakfast at the local restaurant, The Thicket, we headed toward Pendleton which would be our base for two nights with concerts in Hermiston and Pilot Rock.

Hermiston, Oregon

On our way to Hermiston, we stopped by Pilot Rock to see Todd Bensel, CLP, and had a chance to see the remains from the fire that destroyed the church November 11. He showed us where they now meet in their Christian Education building which is where our concert the next night would be. His optimism and positive spirit is contagious!

When we played at Hermiston 4 years ago, this congregation was a new church development in an old church building they had purchased from the Nazarenes with very few in attendance. Duane Brudevold, CLP, was excited to show us their fulfilled dream of a new building and share about the growth of the church. We had seen a sketch, but now we were able to experience driving under the covered entry to unload and set up in the beautiful sanctuary. The rose window from the old church building was incorporated into the cross up front. Pictures don't do it justice – the sanctuary is straight through the front doors and narthex and really not visible in the pictures. We had a full tour of the building including the closet that will eventually become the hallway to the future fellowship hall. In 2006 their membership was 70 with an average Sunday attendance of 51. It has increased since then.

After a delicious quiche dinner at Duane and Carol's, we headed back to the church. Duane was so worried that the audience would be very small like the last time – no need to worry, over 40 attended the concert including Jack and Terral Schut from Pendleton (CLP of the Tutuilla Church and friends of Ron and Phyllis from La Grande) where we were staying for a couple of nights.

The building is shared with a Hispanic church. They were having a meeting during the concert, but the music was played throughout the building and several came in afterward for the remainder of the concert.

The previous week the church had been given a lovely Wurlitzer grand piano that had been in someone's home. The person who donated it was at the concert and was thrilled to hear how beautiful it sounded in the sanctuary. How perfect is God's timing that it was given right before the concert and Sean could fill the sanctuary with its gorgeous sounds.

Several we know from the Umatilla church also attended. Notice the picture of the young man with the sand blocks – he was the "train" sound during *Glory Bound*. He saw his picture on our display board of the Umatilla church that was taken 2 to 3 years ago and seemed pleased that it travels all over with us. It has been interesting to run into children from past concerts and see how they've grown.

Pilot Rock, Oregon

We stayed with Jack & Terral Schut in Pendleton for two nights while in that area. Jack is the CLP at Tutuilla Presbyterian Church. On Wednesday, April 9, after relaxing and working on the chancel choir music library and other miscellaneous things, we headed to Pilot Rock, about 15 miles south of Pendleton.

In 2006, there were 36 members with average attendance of 65. The membership has been declining slightly, but attendance is going up. Todd is extremely upbeat and his enthusiasm is contagious.

This is the church that lost their building to fire in the early hours of Sunday, November 11. Some of the strings attached to the metal frame of the old upright piano were one of the very few things that were recognizable in the charred mess. You can see it in a picture. This was where we gave our first concert as we started our ministry of going out to the smaller churches. The church building was erected in 1912. It is believed the fire started from an accumulation of rodent droppings in the furnace. The fire was so hot in that area that the mortar in the rock foundation loosened – you could literally push the wall in with your foot.

The house next to the church was also destroyed by the fire. The church has purchased this property as they look to the future of a new building. Salvage and demolition was scheduled to begin the week after we played. They are also in the process of planning for the new church building, looking at various options and figuring out what is best for the future.

The concert was in an upper room of the CE building next door; the fire marshal said the newer siding saved this building. This was the largest room and is where they are holding Sunday services. Sean tried to work on some sour notes on the piano. One was hopeless and ended up tearing one of Phyllis' old gloves apart and tied the cloth between the 3 strings to deaden the actual note. The seats were hard folding chairs except for those that have cushions people have brought; those who arrived early sat on the couches along the side and back.

The spirit of the congregation was incredibly positive and upbeat. Of the 43 people at the concert, several were kids plus they had a couple younger ones in the nursery. The kids really enjoyed the ring along portion and some of the upbeat songs they knew – like Zacchaeus. They had a wonderful reception with cake afterward. When Phyllis commented to Todd about the delicious cake, he said he wanted something other than cookies because people would have mainly brought purchased cookies!

Afterward we headed to Pendleton with Todd and his wife, Lila, to find a place open for a bite to eat. We ended up at Shari's where we had great fellowship and laughed until it was quite late. As we were trying to find a place open, we parked and were walking to one place as Sean was getting something out of the van. When we came out because they were closing, he was conversing with a group of ladies, one in particular with pink hair, that was trying to pick him up using interesting lines. We rescued him!

Milton-Freewater, Oregon

After getting more work done on the Chancel Choir Music Library and Sean dealing with some things at the Center for the Arts, we headed to Milton-Freewater Thursday afternoon, April 10. It was a beautiful drive with everything nice and green.

In 2006, Grace Presbyterian Church in Milton-Freewater had 60 members with an average attendance of 40. Ginger Johnston, pastor, met us at the church. They share the church with a Hispanic congregation. There were speakers from their band in the chancel area so we moved them back out of our way. She called their pastor who came to move

whatever we needed moved. We assured him the drums and other instruments off to the side were just fine. It's really nice to see how many of the churches are sharing space like this.

We stayed with Mel and Jeanne Brady whom Phyllis stayed with two years ago when we were here. Jeanne had done a marvelous job advertising. A lady from Eugene who rings bells read about it in the paper and came. A video reporter from the Walla Walla Union Bulletin recorded about the last third of the concert and interviewed both of us after the reception of delicious homemade goodies. This newspaper has videos on their website from interviews like ours of various events in the community. You can see it at <http://www.brightcove.tv/title.jsp?title=1499642610>.

About 65 people attended the concert with around 75 percent being from the community. It is exciting to be able to help the churches open their doors to the community with an event where there is no charge. Your support helps make this possible – thank you! The crowd sang very well during the ring along. Since there were so many people, we added a fourth song so everyone could have an opportunity to ring the chimes. The Spirit filled the room!

They have a very nice organ which Sean played for prelude. Their piano is a unique Steinway with only 85 keys instead of the usual 88. Sean had to adjust slightly on some runs so he didn't run out of keys!

After the concert Phyllis visited with a member who had borrowed some chimes and used with the kids. She wants to purchase some for the church and was asking about various things to do when many don't read music. Pastor Ginger asked Phyllis about her microphone. They don't have anyone "running" the system throughout the service and she would like to be able to turn a lapel mic on and off easily. Her robe makes it difficult. Phyllis showed her how you can know where the mute switch is and feel it through clothing. Ginger is going to work on this!

Friday morning on our way out of town we stopped at a gorgeous retirement center in Walla Walla to visit Janet Irwin. Sean stayed with her and her late husband two years ago. She was thrilled to give us a tour and Sean played a special medley for her on the piano in the chapel.

Ephrata, Washington

On Friday, April 11, we went to First Presbyterian Church in Ephrata, Washington. We're working our way to Coeur d'Alene where Phyllis will be leading a workshop on Sunday and two of her grandchildren live near Ephrata. Great reason to do a concert there!

The building is 18 years old and was built with the thought of adding a sanctuary later straight through the front doors. What is being used for the sanctuary was planned as the fellowship hall but is serving well and is very attractive. Acoustics were wonderful. There is a substantial building fund set aside for this project.

Sean played an organ prelude and 58 people attended the concert. There were many from outlying communities including some from Moses Lake who heard us last year. A few others were from churches with handbell programs. They were very enthusiastic and great singers. They were also very generous with their offering. The elementary school in Ephrata has a very active handbell program for grades 1-4 and the director was at the concert. The program is so successful that she now has several after-school programs for the kids who have moved on from the 4th grade. Another handbell ringer commented on Phyllis' bell tree stand. There was discussion recently on Handbell-L (discussion list) regarding stands and was very interested in hers.

The church split two years ago because of theological and denominational differences. Pastor Pat Thompson has been there since August 2007. He went to seminary in 1995 because he felt called to the ministry from a job in sales for many years. We stayed with him, his wife was out of town with Stonecroft Ministries, and stayed up until midnight talking about ministry and his desire to reach out to the large amount of unchurched in Ephrata. There are 20 churches in the town of 6,000 and he is trying to establish a Ministerial Association and struggling. He really wants to start a worship service in the downtown theater for the 75% in the community who are unchurched. There is also a large amount of meth in the area. With his enthusiasm we think he will accomplish this.

Phyllis did get to see those grandkids and we all went out for pizza before the concert including the pastor. Koltin, 20 months old, was not interested in a concert. They were in the "cry room" and finally left after a few songs. Lane, 7 years old, was very upset with his brother because he wanted to stay.

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

On Saturday, April 12, we arrived at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Coeur d'Alene. Phyllis did a two hour ensemble workshop with 4 of their ringers and the director. They had been working on some ensemble music, but wanted help on technique such as sharing bells and putting them down where they belong. We also worked on deciding who plays what notes when it isn't already marked for you. Sometimes you need to move your body down or up to other bells! This is

a difficult concept for many and we had lots of laughs. They also learned to leave bells in place even if you don't use them unless there's a really good reason to move them.

While Phyllis was leading the workshop, Sean was busy at a computer doing work for the Center for the Arts in Caldwell and adapting some of our concert narration for the sermon in worship Sunday morning. A wireless network for the church was detected and one of the workshop participants knew the code so he could get on the internet. Technology can be so wonderful!

Our Coeur d'Alene contact and director of the festival on Sunday afternoon ended up with severe medical problems. On Wednesday when we were in Pendleton she called and said she couldn't find housing for us and was unable physically to keep trying. Before having her get room at a motel, Phyllis said she'd try someone she knew. Art and Leslie Macomber (Wendy Bierman's daughter and son-in-law) lived there so she searched online for a number for Art's law office and called. God works in such wondrous ways! Our time with them was a perfect end to a great tour. Be sure to check out Ben's incredible Legos creation; pictures don't do it justice. Leslie goes to yard sales looking for Legos so he has more to work with. Art and Leslie would love to help us arrange a tour of smaller churches in the Coeur d'Alene area. We'll see what develops.

The concert Saturday night was at Christ the King Lutheran Church where the festival Phyllis will be conducting the next afternoon would be. The audience was small, mainly bell ringers with a few other bell enthusiasts. This was the first nice Saturday Coeur d'Alene had after receiving about 150 inches of snow over the winter. People were taking advantage of the gorgeous weather and working outside. Sean played an organ prelude and they were a very receptive audience; a couple of people from the ensemble workshop were there. Everyone enjoyed the Ring Along portion, including bell ringers! It is always fun to watch their faces as they ring and sing.

Sunday morning, April 13, we participated in worship at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Coeur d'Alene. Rector Pat Bell and Sean have known each other for over 20 years. Father Pat was the rector at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Ontario where Sean grew up.

We played prelude, offertory, during communion, postlude and did the sermon. After prelude there is a welcome and then the congregation stands and sings a song of praise to the King. We played "Lauda Anima" at this point and they continued to stand to show their praise. Each person received a special insert with words to all the songs we were playing just like we have at concerts. The verses used are specifically selected to reflect the message we want to share with the people. The members of their bell choir all sat together in the alcove close to where Phyllis was ringing. Father Pat even pointed out that the bell choir was all together!

Afterward during fellowship time, people kept commenting to both of us that the music in worship never felt like a concert but was truly integrated into the worship service. As we plan services, we never know how people will react to so much music and if they would be able to focus on worshipping God rather than merely attending a performance. It was so gratifying to hear that the music was received as an act of worship.

We then hurried to Christ the King Lutheran Church where Phyllis was conducting the 12th Annual North Idaho Spring Ring. Ten choirs came to rehearse three pieces with Phyllis and perform them at a 4:00 pm concert. Several choirs also performed a solo piece as part of the concert; Phyllis and Sean played Fount of Blessings medley. This is the 5th year that Phyllis has been asked to conduct. She also had special instruction for them in bell changes and worksheets to use in their rehearsals at home.

Sean spent rehearsal time working on some piano pieces in the sanctuary then took the van to visit a former member of Boise First Pres. When Phyllis finished the rehearsal at 3:30 so everyone could have a refreshment break and get ready for the concert, she went out to the van for her concert clothes. The van was nowhere to be seen! She called Sean and he was at least 15 minutes away! He arrive about 10 minutes before the concert, Phyllis was able to get changed in time, all the ringers thought it was quite funny, and the concert was great!

We drove home on Monday after a magnificent week of sharing the Gospel message of Jesus Christ through music, scripture and hymn history. Thank you for all your prayers and support; we are truly blessed to be part of such a loving and caring congregation.

All of these journals are on the church's website, www.firstpresnampa.org, in case you missed one and would like to read it.

Ola, Idaho

On Wednesday, August 27, we traveled to the tiny community of Ola for a concert at Ola Community Church. Someone Ron works with thought they would love one of our concerts and gave Phyllis a contact name, Paul. Not really knowing what to expect, he said yes. They normally have Bible study on Wednesday nights so our concert was to be in

place of the study that night. To get to Ola, we went to Emmett and picked up Ron, then headed east. About half way to Horseshoe Bend we turned north. Ola was another 22 miles down the road.

When the chimney of the wood stove blew down a while back, the insurance company was going to cancel their insurance unless some renovations were done. They were able to blow some insulation into the walls and really worked on the ceiling and walls. For heat, they added electric baseboard heaters. There was a nice raised platform and carpet. Each pew would hold 2 or 3 people and they had folding chairs at the ends of the pews. There were a couple of speakers to plug Phyllis' microphone into to boost the sound of the bells.

After getting everything set up, Paul said he had the key to the community center across from the church. That way we could use flush toilets instead of the outhouse by the church and have a place to change clothes!

We started at 7:00 pm Ola time which was more like 7:10. When Paul introduced us, he commented about his attire not quite matching ours! There were 27 in attendance, and they were so responsive to all the music and the narrations about the songs. For the Ring Along, wow, what great singers! After the Ring Along, one person asked if they could clap yet. Phyllis said they could give themselves a hand for their great job ringing and singing.

Their enthusiasm confirmed our mission to bring the gospel and our music to the smaller communities. Many expressed appreciation to us for coming to their tiny town. One commented that it is the best concert she's ever heard and she is 65 years old! As we were packing up, Paul commented that he didn't know what to expect, but it was way beyond anything he had expected – and will we come back? We said yes!

As we were leaving, someone was turning on electric candles in the windows facing the road. She said she likes them lit at night so when people are driving home, they see the church and know they've arrived.

In the middle of a very busy week for each of us, this concert calmed and refreshed us for the remainder of the week.

Kenilworth Presbyterian Church, Portland, Oregon

Rev. Jack Hodges, pastor at Kenilworth Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon heard us in May at the Small Church Conference in Boise. Our concert that evening was at 9:15 pm. Jack told us he was really tired so he sat in the back so he could slip out. Instead of leaving, he moved forward and later asked us about coming to Kenilworth to kick off their 100th anniversary celebration. So we worked it out!

After our World Communion Service on October 5, we flew to Portland arriving a little over two hours before the 5:00 pm concert. Phyllis had arranged to borrow tables, foam and a bell tree stand which Jack picked up earlier and had all set up in the church.

Over the last three years, Kenilworth has gone from a church with 21 members and a building in need of a makeover debating closing its doors to a beautifully refurbished facility reaching out into the community and growing. Currently they have 36 members and hope to break 40 by the end of the year.

They have a very nice pipe organ that has also received some attention. Sean showcased it with a prelude from a Handel concerto. He also played it when we did *The Lord's Prayer*.

Kenilworth is one of the 8 smaller Portland churches in PUN – Presbyterian Urban Network. All these churches were invited. A choir from the Presbyterian Church of Laurelhurst sang *Sing to the Lord with a Joyful Sound* with piano and trombone accompaniment and choir members from several of the churches joined together to sing John Rutter's *For the Beauty of the Earth*.

Some of the songs we played were focused around origins of when this church was established. A “no applause” concert/service was new to them and there were many “amens” fitting the mood of the music. Even though the weather was stormy outside, it didn't dampen the spirit of those worshiping. Delicious cookies and punch gave us an opportunity to visit with everyone afterward.

A retired pastor from Portland First Presbyterian Church was in the audience. Sean had played the organ at that church in 1988 and had met him. He also gave the Baccalaureate address at The College of Idaho that same year.

Someone from Portland's Westminster Presbyterian Church apologized to Phyllis that he didn't tell their bell choir about the concert. Phyllis asked who the director was since she knows a lot of the names because she publishes the handbell area's newsletter and the concert was listed in the last issue. It just happened to be the person who was ringing in the bell choir in La Grande in 1993 and convinced Phyllis that she really should direct the choir. She did and fell in love with handbells.

The church has a NA group meeting there every evening of the year, including holidays. They are also opening an Early Childhood Center at the church for 3 and 4 year olds. This church saw a need in the community and has worked very hard moving forward and out in a variety of ways with Christ's message of salvation.

Dinner afterward with Jack and his wife, Diane, was at a German restaurant, Gustavs, where we had a delicious meal and wonderful conversation.

Flight home the next day – 7:10 am. A 4:30 am wake-up call certainly came early, but we didn't mind because the entire time we spent there was wonderful beyond words and expectations.

Hollister Community Presbyterian Church, Hollister, Idaho

On Tuesday, October 21, we headed to Kendall Presbytery (Eastern Idaho) to visit six churches. Our hearts were filled with joy as we connected with people who have heard us in the past and those for whom it was their first time. Your prayers we so appreciated as we traveled 1,208 miles in beautiful weather. Each week we will share about one of the concerts.

First stop was Hollister, about 15 miles south of Twin Falls and 25 miles north of Jackpot, NV. The church is like an oasis down a one lane gravel road with green grass and trees in the middle of miles of sagebrush.

Phyllis wanted the tables up on the platform, but there wasn't much room. The extendable legs on her tables worked well to have the front hanging over the platform, except they didn't telescope quite far enough. As you can see in the picture, hymnals opened to #350 worked to have everything level. Phyllis is considering adding a small level to her miscellaneous equipment so we don't have to use the "rolling pen" method in the future.

Thirty-two people were at the concert, including several children that rang in the chime choir at the Presbyterian Church in Twin Falls. For *Glory Bound*, it was hard to pick just one youth to do the sand blocks so Phyllis had two boys come up and asked them to trade off. They were very musical and went the same rhythm as Sean! Normally the sand blocks are going their own speed and Sean has to ignore it! Afterward several commented how much they enjoyed seeing the kids involved. The kids also had fun with ring along.

Sean played an organ prelude on their nice Allen organ. One person commented how nice it was to hear the organ because it isn't played anymore. Music is one of the struggles many small churches have.

During the question time, one man said how appreciative he was that we take our ministry to small churches. He then asked when we received our calling to minister to small churches. It was very humbling to think about it in terms of a calling.

Afterward one gentleman asked Sean if he had ever played a 5-pedal piano. Sean hadn't and so he explained what it was and invited him over the next time we are in Hollister to play his. It was built in 1912 and used in theatres. There are 3 sets of hammers giving three distinct sounds – mandolin, harpsichord, and regular piano. He also had two other unique pianos – a baby blue Kawai grand and an ornate upright. We definitely want to check this out next time!

We stayed with Jack Eakin in Twin Falls. In visiting, we discovered he is the brother of Boise First Pres member Eleanor Eakin whom Sean knew well and cousin of our own Betty Pearson! In fact, Jack attended our church's 100th anniversary celebration dinner last year.

After a hearty and delicious breakfast with Jack at IHOP, we headed to Salmon.

First Presbyterian Church, Salmon, Idaho

On Wednesday, October 22, we left Twin Falls and headed to Salmon – around 250 miles. We stopped at a café in Challis and had delicious home cooking and Oatmeal Pie.

When we arrived at the church, the director of Promise Community After School Program came out and asked if we could do a presentation for the kids. This program uses the fellowship building of the Salmon church and provides kids with a meal, activities and homework assistance. Mentors from the community walk many of the kids to and from the program. So we quickly set up and did about a 35 minute program for them. They were able to participate with ring along using colors on the chimes to indicate when to ring. Phyllis had a box with the colors on the sides; when their color was facing them, they were to ring. The three youngest kids traded doing the sand blocks during "Glory Bound."

Thirty-nine people attended the evening concert. There were many from the Seventh Day Adventist congregation there including several youth who have attended the Cool Ringings weekend that Phyllis directs at Gem State Academy in Caldwell every January. Several are looking forward to coming this January. We had also played for their worship when we visited Salmon two years ago. Some of the kids were excited to see their picture on our display board. Since then, their school was able to use the handbell area chimes which Phyllis told them about and have purchased their own set. As we drove through Richfield, Phyllis told Sean about the area chimes being loaned to that small district because someone at one of Phyllis' programs asked about the chimes used for ring along and she told her about the loan program. They have also purchased a set.

The congregation was very responsive with loud amens and alleluias. The acoustics of the sanctuary are great and the singing during ring along was awesome. During the concert, we had all the kids in the audience come up and take turns

with the sand blocks. This has turned out to be an incredible part of the concert – the kids have a great time and the entire audience loves watching them.

Heidi Smith is the Commissioned Lay Pastor at the church. She is now taking seminary classes online working toward ordination. The church is a large outreach center for the community. It was exciting to hear how often their fellowship building is used for community activities. During the question time, one parent of a youth in attendance asked Sean how long he practices each day. Sean encouraged the students to practice hard! During refreshments, one lady commented to Phyllis how surprised she was to see only one person playing the bells – she was expecting a whole choir!

Next stop – Swan Valley.

Chapel in the Valley, Swan Valley, Idaho

Chapel in the Valley, located in Swan Valley, has had “Thursday School” for decades. This is an after-school program for elementary kids that has been lovingly run by the same person with many helpers throughout the years. Since our concert was on a Thursday night, we arranged to get there early enough to be set up and do a short program for the kids. There were seven kids that day, and they were very attentive and asked many great questions. One of Sean’s choir students at the College of Idaho is from Swan Valley and stopped by since she was on break. She attended Thursday School as a child enjoyed being with the kids. She also baked us some amazing chocolate chip cookies for our travels – her grade point average went up this week!

The kids were able to ring the chimes using colored bands on them and Phyllis using a box with colored sides; when their color was out toward them, they were to ring. When it turned, they were to stop. Sean opened up the piano so they could see inside and watch the hammers as he played. He took requests and wove them all together. We found out that one of their favorite songs is “I’m in the Lord’s Army.” Sean didn’t know it, but all of us taught it to him so he could play it on the piano with us. You can see in the pictures that their craft afterward was painting pumpkins.

The concert began at 6:30 pm so it wouldn’t get quite so late for any kids that came. They have a very nice organ so Sean played it for prelude. There were many kids among the 25 people in the audience. They were quite responsive with “Amen’s.” We invited all the kids to come up and take turns with the sand blocks on “Glory Bound.” One boy who looked about middle school age was hesitant and Sean’s college student was so wanting to join in that we called for kids college age and younger! What fun everyone seemed to have. Often Sean closes his eyes as he plays – he didn’t this night because he was facing the picture window in the front of the chancel and there was a gorgeous sunset over the mountains.

After ringing the chimes during Ring Along, one person commented how she would love to have chimes like this at the elementary school. Phyllis told her about the handchime loan program with the Handbell Guild and will be getting her an application.

The pastor, Laura, is from Georgia and has been there since June. Her enthusiasm for this community and the church was evident in all she did at Thursday School, her concern over all the members, and her involvement in the community.

After a hearty breakfast with Sean’s hosts and the pastor whom Phyllis stayed with, we spent the rest of the morning at the manse getting some work done; Phyllis on the handbell guild’s newsletter and Sean on the Center for the Arts. It was a nice opportunity since there was wireless internet service and we each had our laptops.

Church in the Tetons, Driggs, Idaho

On Friday afternoon, October 24, we drove from Swan Valley to Driggs, about 30 miles. We climbed over 1,000 feet to the elevation at Driggs of around 6,200 feet. Since we had time, we detoured a little and drove to the top of the pass looking down into Jackson – it is breathtaking. Pictures just don’t do it justice. The road is also quite interesting with 10% grade in a section.

Church of the Tetons is a New Church Development (NCD) in the Kendall Presbytery. They are currently meeting at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Alta, WY, about a mile across the state line into Wyoming. Linda, our contact for the concert, is the worship coordinator and is responsible for finding preachers for each Sunday morning. She said that it is impossible to get to Alta from anywhere in Wyoming; it is nestled in the Teton Range and is accessible only from Idaho. A few miles past the church the road ends at the Grand Targhee Ski Resort.

The view from the church was as gorgeous as Swan Valley – window in front looking at the Tetons. Incredibly, there was a large tree that would completely block the view during the summer – some commented that they want to quietly chop it down!

The church had a nice baby grand piano, but it was extremely bright and there was no sound system for Phyllis to hook her microphone into. Even with the lid down, on the hardwood floor, it was still too loud because sound was coming out by the music rack. So Sean took the music rack off, completely closed the lid, and then set the music rack on the top of

the lid with some padding underneath to prevent scratching. We needed a couple of hymnals on each side to make sure it wouldn't fall over, but it worked just fine.

After getting all set up, Linda took us back to Driggs to a cute restaurant, "Miso Hungry." Outstanding food!

At the concert there was a mom with her 21-month-old twin boys – how adorable. She was really enjoying and even mouthing/singing softly on our Seek Ye First/Shine, Jesus, Shine medley. We noticed that the boys were getting quite squirmy and tired, so we rearranged a little and had the Ring Along earlier along with "Glory Bound" so the boys, with mom's help, could do the sand blocks.

Chad and Jill, our hosts, lived in an apartment built onto an airplane hanger at the airport in Driggs. This is no tiny apartment – it's about 3,000 square feet with most of the east side in windows looking onto the Teton Range. We parked the van in the hanger. One Sunday, when the church was meeting in a daycare center, someone forgot to leave keys to the building so they held the service in the hanger around an airplane. Chad is retired, but has built several apartments inside hangers at the airport. On Saturday morning they gave us a tour of these as well as a museum at the airport of several cool airplanes. Later, while sitting in the living room, we were able to watch many planes take off, including a Russian Mig.

On the drive to Rexburg, we stopped to see where the earthen dam along the Teton River failed in 1976, less than a year after it was built. Devastation to communities downstream was huge; it was estimated that about 80% of Rexburg's structures suffered damage. The collapse of the dam resulted in the deaths of 11 people and 13,000 head of cattle.

Community Presbyterian Church, Rexburg, Idaho

With Christmas Joy Offering plus many other inserts in the December bulletins, we thought it was better to put our journal on pause. Now we'll finish our last two stops in Kendall Presbytery and then our Christmas concert in King Hill.

On Saturday, October 25, we arrived in Rexburg early in the afternoon and enjoyed walking around downtown and relaxing. There is a cute store with all kinds of decorating treasures where Phyllis had made purchases in the past. We each found some items that were unique and needing a new home! Phyllis also found two wooden Christmas ornaments, a mallard and Canada geese, which were perfect for her son who is an avid hunter. He thought they were really cool and plans on having them out all year, not just on the Christmas tree.

When we arrived at the church, the pastor, Steve Atkinson, was waiting with a couple of others to help unload and set up then go out to dinner. Steve is a Commissioned Lay Pastor and has been at the Rexburg church for 1½ years. He and his wife are members of the Idaho Falls church.

We had some difficulty getting Phyllis' microphone to work. We've used it there in the past, but something just wasn't right. The sound in the sanctuary was very live and the grand piano seemed to bounce off the wall so we really wanted it working. Finally Sean noticed that the wires from the speaker were really close to the system, but not quite connected. As soon as they were connected, sound!

Our host from a couple of years ago when we played in Rigby plus a few others from that church came to the concert very early to be sure to get a good seat. It is always such a joy to see familiar faces and renew friendships. The audience was very responsive with many hearty "Amens."

The church has a very nice Rodgers organ which Sean played for prelude. Phyllis asked Steve when he introduced them to make it long enough for Sean to change out of his organ shoes and get across to the piano. We don't want a long intro since information about us is in the program, but more time is needed when there is an organ prelude.

Several people both before and after thanked us for coming back to Rexburg again; we were there 3 years ago. There was a little girl who had just turned one who seemed to enjoy most of the concert. She was smiling and at times clapping while sitting on her mom's lap.

We stayed in Idaho Falls with the pastor and his wife. After a bowl of frozen chocolate yogurt, we had a great time sharing about our ministry and hearing all about theirs.

First Presbyterian Church, Idaho Falls, Idaho

After a good night's rest and delicious breakfast with our hosts in Idaho Falls (the Commissioned Lay Pastor at Rexburg and his wife), we headed to First Presbyterian Church in Idaho Falls to play at their 9:30 and 11:00 am services. We were playing offertory at the early service. Since it was the only piece we were playing at that service, we played our longest one – almost 6 minutes! It probably took less than 2 minutes to collect the offering. At the 11:00 service, we played three pieces – introit, anthem, and closing after the benediction. Since they were standing for the benediction, they stood for all of *Symphonia on Hyfrydol!* Since we were at a larger church, we asked for a donation from the church to help support us going to the small churches.

A member of their adult bell choir was there when we arrived to help us unload and set up. This was pulpit exchange Sunday for the Kendall Presbytery so Heidi Smith from Salmon preached while their pastor, Dennis Falasco, went to Salmon. It was fun to hear Heidi preach just a few days after we had played in Salmon.

The organist is very tall – 6'6", and Sean had a good time between the services visiting with him about the challenges of playing when you're tall.

They have coffee and goodies between the services. Before the first service and during this fellowship time, many people were asking about the various churches on our display boards. Some had never heard of some of the towns and others had no idea there were Presbyterian churches in many of the locations. When they asked where the churches were, it was nice to be able to point to the maps on the boards for each presbytery.

The church has a chime choir as well as adult and youth bell choirs. One person said she has been in the choir for 22 years. They are struggling with numbers and Phyllis encouraged them to find music for smaller groups and try to help ringers develop more skills to handle more bells smoothly.

After the services we went to the Olive Garden with a couple members of their bell choir, Heidi Smith and the Worship Chairman. Sean had a healthy discussion with a couple of them about the role of music in worship. They are introducing a youth band the middle of November and are concerned about how it will be received. After a delicious meal and wonderful conversation, we headed home.

We are so thankful for your prayers and support as we bring God's message and music to all these churches and communities.