

Ring Praise Music Ministry

2009 Journal

(weekly articles in the Nampa Church Sunday bulletins)

King Hill, Idaho

Before reporting on our recent trip to Eastern Oregon, we still need to share with you our concert in December in King Hill.

On Saturday, December 13, we headed out in a little snow for our “annual” concert at Community Presbyterian Church in King Hill, Idaho. This is the smallest congregation in the Boise Presbytery with 13 members and is located about 8 miles from Glens Ferry. Ron accompanied us and read the narrations; this was his first time to King Hill. Shortly after leaving Boise the roads cleared. As we turned off the interstate onto the road to King Hill, Phyllis mentioned to Ron who was driving about the deer that ran out in front of them the previous year in this stretch. Less than a minute later, 4 deer wandered out and crossed in front of us!

There were about 45 people at the concert including those that come each year in the van from the assisted living home in Glens Ferry and a few “groupies” that have been at all our concerts in King Hill, Glens Ferry and Grand View as well as a few in Nampa and at Boise First Presbyterian. Ring Along is always such fun as people rang the chimes and sang Christmas carols.

Curt Naeve serves as pastor for this church and the Methodist church in Glens Ferry. He is a Commissioned Lay Pastor from the Seminary Without Walls program that Bruce coordinates on Thursday evenings.

The piano tuner who keeps our piano tuned had just been in King Hill the day before. They have a member who lives in Boise who makes sure it is tuned prior to our concerts. Many times we are asked if the bells can be tuned and we tell them how blessed we are with pianos that are in tune (or close enough!). A “fairly recently tuned” piano is also requested in the packet of information and publicity sent to churches.

A wonderful spread of goodies was enjoyed by all after the concert as we were able to visit with everyone who attended. Leftovers were going to be enjoyed the next day after the worship service.

After packing up, we opened the door to take all the equipment out and were greeted by quite a site. There was close to an inch of snow on the ground and it was coming down in huge flakes. It was almost a whiteout on the 8 miles heading back to the interstate and was snowy the entire way home. It made us later getting home, but worth every minute to bring the gift of music celebrating our Savior’s birth to this wonderful community.

Baker City, Oregon

We left Nampa in the afternoon on Tuesday, February 17 heading to Baker City. It was overcast, and as we got closer to Baker City, there were some snow flurries. Since this trip was being planned in February, we knew snow was a definite possibility, and prayed for safe travel. After getting everything set up and moving the piano so it could be seen, we walked with Susan Barnes, pastor, and her husband and daughter to a small restaurant in town where the owners live upstairs. The snow had already stopped! At the restaurant, they prepare about 5 dishes a day, simply tell you what they have because there is no menu, and when they are out of food, they close. The food was delicious and it was a great time to visit with Susan and Mike. Their daughter, Eleanor, is an avid reader and preferred having her face in an exciting book.

Susan told us about the campaign stop made by President Bill Clinton last year for his wife. It was to be late on a Sunday morning at the courthouse across from the church. Trying to find out what roads would be closed and other details so she could arrange the service around it was quite a tale. As far as any can determine, this is the first time there has been a presidential campaign stop in Baker City.

Sean had quite a surprise when he went to change into his tuxedo. He had picked it up from the cleaners on his way over to Phyllis’ where he left his van. The pants had been shrunk several inches in length! Luckily he had his suit for Sunday worship which he also used for all the concerts. So much for wearing red in February! He says he will pack an extra pair of tuxedo pants next time☺.

This church has an incredible banner ministry. Susan is an avid quilter. Check out the pictures of some of the banners that were in the sanctuary. There are many more in a closet that are displayed for various occasions. In 2006 she created three banners celebrating the anniversaries of women’s ordinations. Two-inch squares were received from 1200 churches celebrating their women officers and 400 more from clergy women. She also made a quilt for the 2007 Peacemaking Offering banner.

Since there was a lovely Allen organ, Sean decided to play part of an organ concerto in the middle of the concert instead of the piano piece that was listed in the program. After Phyllis gave the intro to the piano piece, Sean told about the organ piece! We all had a good laugh. The organ also has a harp sound so he used it to accompany *Be Thou My Vision* since the accompaniment imitates a harp in many places. Around 30 people attended the concert.

Phyllis stayed with their Arlita, their Parish Health Advocate. Her job is to champion good health practices and serve as an information contact for health-related questions for the congregation. She also makes home, hospital and care center visits to those who need her care and expertise. Sean stayed with Gary and LaVonne Yeoumans. They are related to Vincent Youmans who wrote *Tea for Two* and *Without a Song*, amongst many other popular tunes. After a yummy breakfast at a busy local café, we headed to Halfway.

Halfway, Oregon School

A few days before leaving on our trip, Anne Shields, wife of the pastor in Halfway, called to see if anyone had ever contacted us from the school. Phyllis said no, but we would be happy to do a program if it could be arranged. Due to economic conditions and lower student enrollment, cuts have been made by eliminating music faculty, and the elementary classes are now housed at the high school. On Wednesdays there are a couple of volunteers including the retired music teacher who go in and have some music classes. Anne said she would see what can be worked out. As we were heading there Wednesday morning, February 18, it had been arranged that we would have lunch at the school, set up and give two 45-minute programs for two sets of elementary students and in an open area outside the gym. Upon arriving, they said things got worked out and we could now do one assembly in the gym for about an hour for all the elementary plus some high school youth that had recently completed a music appreciation class.

We had picked several songs to do and then simply had the kids ask questions. It is always amazing how perceptive the young people are and ask incredible questions. One asked about the size of the bells. Phyllis told about how big some bells get and that she had two slightly larger ones under the table for a song later in the program. When it was time and she pulled them out, there were big gasps, oohs and aahs. The rest of the trip we referred to these as the ooh and aah bells!

We began the program with *Glory Bound* and had the teachers select a few students to take turns passing the sand blocks. Phyllis is definitely going to invest in more sand blocks so kids can participate and not have to pass them. Even some of the high school students wanted to be involved!

The chimes for ring along had colored rubber bands on them corresponding to the colored sides of a box that Phyllis held. If the color of your band was facing you, you rang the chime. When it turned away from you, you stopped the sound. They sang songs like *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, *The ABC Song*, and *Happy Birthday*.

Sean was able to open up the piano so the students could watch all the hammers hit the strings as he played. For his solo, he took requests and weaved them together into an incredible composition. The kids suggested *The Entertainer*, *The Gambler*, *ABC Song*, *Oh Susanna*, and *Around the World in Eighty Days*. What a combination!

Phyllis talked with one of the Wednesday music volunteers about the handchime loan program and gave her an application. This involves the loan of a 3-octave set of handchimes plus music and curriculum for a school year from Area 10 of the American Guild of English Handbell Ringers. There are two sets for the state of Oregon.

Before setting up at the church, we browsed through a couple of stores in town. The hearts with messages throughout town that you can see on a couple of pictures are put up each year for a small fee. What a fun way to express love to someone special.

Halfway, Oregon

After setting up for the concert on February 18 at Pine Valley Presbyterian Church in Halfway, we were taken by a couple in the church to the Grange Hall in Richland (about 12 miles away, toward Baker City) where they were having a Pancake Feed fund raiser. While visiting with our dinner hosts, Sean discovered they have a daughter and son-in-law in Ontario. The son-in-law's parents were close friends with Sean's grandparents and taught at the high school Sean attended. As we were leaving, Sean overheard one of ladies collecting money for the dinner whispering loudly to another, "Those are the people on the poster!" (pointing to the poster). What a great dinner and fun way to get to know a few others from the church who were also there.

The concert was very well attended with about 60 people. The intro for one of Sean's pieces was hand written by him and the legibility of a couple of words threw Phyllis off as she was reading! The writing of those words was improved the next day for the remainder of the concerts.

One of the gentlemen who sat across from us at dinner has been to our other concerts in Halfway and wanted the front row by the piano. When it was time for *Joshua*, he whispered to Sean to tear down the Jericho walls so Sean began the piece with a crashing glissando! The glissando has now worked its way into the beginning of Joshua.

There were seven kids who came up to take turns with the sand blocks during *Glory Bound*. The first one kept them for a while so Phyllis finally mentioned that it was time to pass them. The next one was a little boy who had a great time and wouldn't give them up. The girl next to him tried to take them; no way. Mom finally came up and somehow they coaxed him into passing them on. Laughter ensued as we kept on playing. Check out the picture of him on the display board!

Our host for the night was the retired music teacher and his wife. What a fun night getting to know them.

You will notice a little snow in Halfway. Since December, they have received about 8 feet, but with settling and some melting, it's down to 2 feet or so. You can see in the pictures how deep it is. Even with all that snow, the mountains are still in need of more. The building with lots of snow on the side of it is Jacob's Dream. This is a used clothing store that was started many years ago by Pastor Bill Shields and his wife, Anne, as a mission store and outreach to the community and includes a job program for high school students. It is very successful and has many nice items for sale. Next to it is Halfway Whimsical, a local artist's co-op featuring artists and the creative minded from Halfway, Richland, and Oxbow as well as points in between. The store is staffed by volunteer artist members. Many items are made from recycled, reclaimed, or re-created materials that would have ended up in the landfill. Phyllis purchased the lamp in back on a previous trip to Halfway. The blue van snowed in on the picture board is used by Pastor Shields for a house painting project where high school girls are employed to paint houses in the community and receive donations for the projects. It is exciting to see these projects that make such an impact in this community.

LaGrande, Oregon

On Thursday morning, Halfway was fogged in. So glad we had taken pictures of the church and town the day before. We hadn't climbed very high after leaving town before we ran out of the fog. There was a great viewpoint of the valley and the cloud hanging over the town looks like a lake – check out the picture!

When we arrived in LaGrande, we had lunch with very good friends of Phyllis and Ron who are more like family. This is the church where Phyllis began directing the bell choir, Alleluia Bells, knowing nothing about bells, and fell in love with handbells. She also began a youth choir at the church. Phyllis's name was still on the signature card for the bell choir after being gone for 9½ years! So she and the other signer went to the bank to have her name taken off the account.

The church has a very nice pipe organ so Sean spent quite a bit of time practicing. He then played an organ piece during the concert and accompanied Phyllis on *Holy, Holy, Holy*.

When Phyllis lived in LaGrande, she and several others started a Bible study in her home. It was very rewarding to find out it is still meeting every Thursday morning.

There were 52 people at the concert including many church and community friends of Phyllis. What a wonderful evening seeing so many people again and being able to share the gospel through our music.

We stayed with a member of the bell choir who has taken on some of the directing of both the ecumenical choir (Alleluia Bells) and another "feeder" choir. After the concert, the three of us wanted some dessert so we went to Ten Depot, a local restaurant. Dessert was good, but conversation was difficult because there was an incredibly loud band playing.

On Friday morning, we went to a local coffee shop where Phyllis was able to get on a computer and send Weekend Happenings out to all of you. The organist from the Methodist Church, who had to leave the concert early, joined us. She wanted to pick Sean's brain for some new organ literature. They ended up spending a good hour at the Methodist Church looking through music.

In the meantime, Ron took the bus from Nampa to join us for the weekend. He had a very interesting trip and ended up meeting a couple who knew B. Edgar Johnson from the Nazarene Church here in Nampa.

After lunch at a favorite stop, we headed to Lostine and saw lots of fishermen along the river. There must have been a good steelhead run!

Lostine, Oregon

On Friday, February 20, we took the beautiful drive to Lostine located about 55 miles from LaGrande on the way to Wallowa Lake. The population of Lostine is around 260 and the church has 61 members (2007). There were 37 people at the concert.

The part-time pastor whom Phyllis has known for many years was out of town, but they have a seminary intern for a year who had been there four weeks. Talitha is from New York City and has been studying at San Francisco Theological Seminary. What a change from NYC!

After setting everything up, we decided to get some dinner at the only eating establishment in town – the Lostine Tavern which is often used as the community center for various events. We invited Talitha to join us and she readily accepted. During dinner we discovered that her undergraduate degree was in music and plays a string bass focusing on jazz. She and Sean needed a little jam session! She lives next door at the manse so she brought her bass to the church, they jammed for a prelude to the concert, and had worked up a great *Wade in the Water* for during the concert. We also went through our spiritual medley, *Glory Bound*, so she could join us during the concert. What fun! It was the first time the congregation had seen her play the bass. For our *Old-Time Religion Medley* encore, we also had her join us – totally unrehearsed! What a wonderful musician and joy to be able to incorporate her into our concert. You could tell by the expression on her face that she was immensely enjoying jamming with Sean. This was one of those moments on our tour that we thank God for arranging.

The church was finishing a much needed construction project. The stairs to the lower level were very narrow and the only bathroom was accessed from the lower level, up a couple of steps, and tucked under the stairs. They had added on to enlarge the stairway, added a bathroom upstairs off the sanctuary and one below even with the lower level. Most of the work has been done by volunteers.

We stayed with a couple that lived 6 miles up the Lostine River canyon. What a gorgeous setting! He had attended the Outreach Seminar that was held at our church two years ago.

We left at 6:45 am Saturday morning to head to the Eastern Oregon Presbytery meeting at Tutuilla Church outside Pendleton. Churches receiving mission monies in 2009 and those wishing to apply for 2010 grants were encouraged to give reports at the meeting. Since we were heading to Umatilla, the timing was perfect to spend the day at Presbytery. Sean played for worship and Phyllis added bells for the opening hymn. During our time to talk about our ministry, we thanked them for their financial support and then shared what happened the night before at Lostine. Talitha had brought her bass so she and Sean played *Wade in the Water*.

Umatilla, Oregon

After spending Saturday, February 21 at the Eastern Oregon Presbytery meeting at Tutuilla Church, we had sandwiches at a deli downtown Pendleton with Jack Schut, pastor at Tutuilla, and his wife. From there we headed to Umatilla, about 40 miles northwest on the Columbia River bordering the state of Washington.

Upon arriving, we were greeted by two young men and their father waiting to help us haul the equipment into the sanctuary. They have been at other concerts and worship services over the years. What a wonderful greeting!

This was the first evening concert we have given in Umatilla. Two other times we led the Sunday morning worship service which averages 18 to 20 people. There were 39 people at the concert, filling most of the pews. They had done a wonderful job with publicity including an article in the Pendleton paper. Some people came over 60 miles from Meacham, Tri Cities, and Goldendale, WA. A few rang in various handbell choirs, one in the neighboring town of Hermiston and another in Washington.

For *Glory Bound*, the two young men who helped us unload came up and played the sand blocks. An old picture with them in it is on the display boards that travel around with us. Phyllis promised she would update the picture! The sound of so many people singing and ringing in the church during Ring Along was beautiful. Our contact, Norma, was beaming. She has worked very hard over the years keeping the church going and finding people to fill the pulpit each Sunday as well as tending many other details of the church. That day she had traveled from Portland because she spent the week with her sister who was receiving treatment for pancreatic cancer.

Even though the fellowship hall is downstairs, most people came down for the feast of refreshments. This is the church that for Sunday refreshments actually has more of a lunch each week. To encourage people downstairs, we didn't greet people in the back after the concert but headed directly to the reception. We were in awe as several people shared how far they traveled to the concert. When the person from Meacham saw the program listing our entire tour, he wished he had known we were in LaGrande two nights earlier; it would have been much closer!

After packing up, we drove back to Pendleton where we were staying with Jack & Terral Schut.

Tutuilla Church, Pendleton, Oregon

On Sunday, February 22, we led the worship service at Tutuilla Presbyterian Church. The church is on the Indian Reservation just east of Pendleton. Two chiefs attend regularly and were there that day. This is also where we were the day before for the Eastern Oregon Presbytery meeting.

Ron and Phyllis have known Jack Schut, the Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP) at the church, for many years from when they lived in La Grande. When Jack was called to this church just under two years ago, he had just completed his CLP studies. There had not been a regular pastor for many years and attendance was usually less than ten people when they would meet. The church and fellowship buildings were in dire need of some work, inside and out. With the help of the volunteer fire department in the nearby town of Mission, the outside of the church building was prepped and painted with about 65 gallons of white paint. Inside everything was cleaned and polished. The old straight-back pews were very rickety and many were concerned if someone would end up on the floor! Ron put Jack in touch with the pastor at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Boise. They had a lot of nice wooden chairs in storage that weren't going to be used in their new building. They look great at Tutuilla! Lindsay Hall, the fellowship building, also received a super scrubbing.

Attendance on Sunday mornings has been steadily increasing, and the Christmas Eve service in 2007 was packed. A terrible snow storm in 2008 kept some away, but attendance was still great. There were about 40 people at the service we led. Ron was the lay reader for us. For Children's Time, Phyllis pulled out the chimes and the kids did a ring along of *Jesus Loves Me* using colored rubber bands labeling the chimes and following the colors on a box she held. One chime alone doesn't do much, but together in different combinations they make beautiful sounds, just like it takes many different people working together to do the Lord's work. Our focus for the musical sermon was Romans 5:1-11, the peace and joy that we have with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It just so happened we were there on the 4th Sunday of the month when they have a potluck after the service. There was a wonderful banquet with some of the salmon chowder from the presbytery lunch the day before, fried bread, lasagna, other meat, macaroni and potato dishes, fruit, salads, and more huckleberry and blueberry pie and cheesecake from presbytery with ice cream. The chowder and fried bread were representative of traditional Indian meals. After eating, we needed to pack up and head home.

We ran into friends from past concerts at every place we visited on our tour. Ring Praise greatly appreciates your financial and prayer support and this opportunity for us to share the gospel through music, hymn history and scripture. Mission and ministry are always two-fold; as we go out to minister, we are blessed by the fellowship and hospitality that is provided by the people and the unexpected happenings God gives us along the way.

Snake River Correctional Facility, Ontario, Oregon

We're a little behind writing about our wonderful experiences sharing God's love and the message of salvation through our music. This spring and summer we concentrated on several churches in the Boise Presbytery.

On Sunday, March 15, we left from church and headed to the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Ontario for two concerts. We hadn't been there for about 2 years, and when I contacted Chaplain Steve Toth, a couple of the guys had just asked him when we were coming back and then he got my email asking about a concert!

It always takes a while to get "checked in" so we arrived around 12:30 for a 2:00 pm concert. The second concert was at 6:00 pm. An equipment list is sent and approved ahead of time and then everything is opened and checked. It is then checked again as we leave to make sure nothing was left behind, especially from the bell tool kit!

Several inmates are released early to help set everything up in the chapel. From moving chairs and equipment to setting up the sound, they enjoy being able to assist us in any way possible. We certainly appreciate all the help.

Between the two concerts, about 200 inmates attended. Chaplain Toth had to print more programs! Quite a few guys have saved all our programs, brought them to the concert to show us, and made sure we knew that it had been two years since we had been there and they missed seeing and hearing us. We're not letting that time span happen again!

The hearty Amens and Alleluias for each song were very touching. Watching their faces as they absorbed the music just can't be described. Some closed their eyes to listen, some hummed along while others studied the words in the program. Afterward they expressed their sincere appreciation and asked when we were coming back. (Two concerts are scheduled for Sunday, November 29, the first Sunday of Advent.)

We are unable to do Ring Along with them since we cannot pass out the chimes. So we had a sing along of praise hymns.

In a woodworking shop, some crafted a gorgeous Lord's Table that opened to become a baptism basin. The incredible care that went into this project was evident from the beautiful inlaid wood to the woodburned picture of the Last Supper on top to the polished finish. We were able to visit with a few that worked on it and their joy of being able to make this was bursting out of them.

Between the concerts we had a delicious dinner in the staff dining hall. Wonderful food and prepared and served by very courteous inmates.

Sean met a friend who is a guard there. They graduated from high school together.

We feel very blessed that we were able to share our message with close to 7% of the population there. They must sign up to come to a concert so they are there by choice. Praise God!

Owyhee, Nevada

On Sunday, April 26, we headed to Owyhee Presbyterian Church on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Owyhee, Nevada. This church is the farthest one to the south in the Boise Presbytery. Their membership is 48. Once a month they get together with the other two churches in Owyhee for a Singspiration. In April it was to be at the Presbyterian Church, and our concert took the place of it. There were around 35 people at the concert.

As we were driving there, Phyllis' daughter, Tiffany, was in labor. About halfway between Bruneau and Owyhee there is a small pocket of cell phone reception so we had a progress report that labor was moving along. We arrived early and took a small excursion out of town further south into the mountains in hopes of finding cell phone reception to again check on the baby's progress. No luck, but did see some horses on the road. When we arrived at the church, after setting up, Phyllis used the phone at the manse to check on Tiffany. It was looking like the baby would come some time during the concert.

For Glory Bound, Phyllis had purchased more sand blocks so we had 3 sets and there were 3 kids who came up to play the part of the train. It is always a joy to see the fun expressions on peoples' faces during the ring along. At first they are reluctant to take a chime but end up ringing with enthusiasm.

After the concert there was a wonderful reception/meal with lots of food and yummy desserts. After a prayer, they wanted us to eat first, but Phyllis needed to make a phone call first. Their new pastor again took her to the manse and she found out that Opal Amelie Byram was born at 4:52 pm and everyone was doing well. When she arrived back at the reception, everyone was excited to hear the wonderful news.

On the way home, Sean shared that during "Psalm of Love" for the first time he heard it as a lullaby. We realized it was during that song that Opal was born. God is so wonderful – he provided these special insights and answered Phyllis' prayer for a safe delivery and focus on him and the music during the concert.

As anxious as we were to get to Boise, we drove carefully because of open range and did have some cows on the road. After bringing Sean home, Phyllis went to see Opal and the proud parents and had her all to herself! We won't forget this concert!

Adrian, Oregon

On a very warm Saturday, August 22, we went to Kingman Memorial Community Church in Adrian, Oregon. This is one of two churches in the Boise Presbytery that is in Oregon. Ron joined us for this and a few other concerts that weren't too far away. As we were driving there, we saw a road sign for Opal Ln and had to stop and take a picture since our new granddaughter's name is Opal.

There was an ice cream social before the concert with desserts and several varieties of homemade ice cream – yum! The church is installing an elevator to help people get both up to the sanctuary and down into the fellowship hall. Therefore the social was in the lower level of the manse next door. It was very well attended which also meant very crowded. And with the outdoor temperature in the 90's, it was quite warm. But that didn't stop the socializing! It took a while to get everyone over to the church for the concert.

With the construction for the elevator, we had to bring all the equipment in through a back door which meant packing it over the lawn. After the concert one couple positioned their car and turned on the headlights so we could see. After setting up and taking some outside pictures, Phyllis noticed how beautiful their stained glass windows were with the sun shining through them. She immediately thought of the new CD that was being made and decided one of these windows would be perfect for the cover. The picture came out great!

There were both a piano and a Clavinova (digital piano) so Sean had fun finding sounds for “Glory Bound,” “Breathe” and “Zacchaeus.” He had experimented in Burns quite a while ago with Zacchaeus, but this was the beginning of using different settings for the other two songs. He ended up using a variety of sounds for these songs on the new CD.

Ron read the narrations between songs which allowed Phyllis to use that time to set up for each song rather than sharing about the piece and then setting up. It is always nice to have him along to help with this as well as packing equipment!

Marianne Paul, pastor, and her daughter had worked very hard on publicity and arrangements which paid off – there were over 40 people! Homemade ice cream and treats beforehand was a great idea.

Emmett, Idaho

Sunday afternoon, August 30, we headed to Emmett for a 7:00 pm concert. The last time we were there was in 2006 celebrating their 100th anniversary. Ron joined us again; he chauffeurs, packs equipment, works on sound and narrates!

Like Adrian, they have a Clavinova which Sean used for the same three songs. This time he “split” the keyboard for one of them and added some bass rhythm. The accompaniments keep developing!

Their long-time pianist and veteran piano teacher for the community had died and left her beautiful Steinway piano to the church. It is a gorgeous instrument and Sean enjoyed making music on it.

A few years ago the church purchased a set of handchimes, and they have a core group that is very faithful. After the ring along we did mention that they are always looking for more ringers!

Sean directed their choir for a while and Phyllis helped them get started with their handchimes. It was a great time seeing everyone and catching up on what has been happening at the church. Some of the VBS decorations were still up and they were excited to share about what they had for the community this year.

Since we had only a light bite to eat when we first got to Emmett before the concert, we decided to have a snack on the way out of town. Hot fudge shakes from Sonic hit the spot!

Ontario, Oregon

On Sunday, September 20, we headed to Bethany Presbyterian Church in Ontario, Oregon. They have a new pastor, Karen Francis, who was wonderful making sure we had everything we needed. The youth group provided ice cream and toppings afterward in the fellowship hall so we were able to visit with many of the 59 people who were at the concert.

Once again Ron was able to join us and read the narrations. It is always nice to have him along.

A lot of people knew Sean since he grew up in Ontario and his grandparents were members of this church. As he talked to several people, he was filled with wonderful memories of them. One friend of his grandparents was Stan. Sean used to sit on Stan’s knee during choir practice and Stan decided Sean looked more like a Pete and has called him that ever since. Sean then called him Clarence which has also stuck.

This church, like Adrian and Emmett, has a Clavinova so Sean used it for a fun accompaniment on “Glory Bound,” “Breathe” and “Zacchaeus.” For “Glory Bound,” we had 6 kids that came up and provided the train sound with sand blocks. Phyllis is very glad she now has 3 sets of them so they only had to share with one other person.

One person who was there had seen us last December at the Mercy Medical Center Memorial Service where we give a 15 minute concert of reflective Christmas music. She also came to our Kettle Konzert in Nampa. She said she was very pleased to be able to hear us again.

There was also a security guard from the prison who heard us when we were there in March. He went to school with Sean and came with his kids.

We thank you so much for your prayers as we go out to other churches spreading the love of Christ through our music.

Soda Springs, Idaho

Now that we are through all the special activities in December, we will continue our journal of sharing the gospel through our music. On Saturday, October 24, we were blown to Soda Springs to begin our tour in Eastern and Southern Idaho. We had a strong tail wind which gave us excellent gas mileage. When we arrived at the church, there was a very cold wind blowing as we unloaded all the equipment. After setting up, we had a light dinner at a local restaurant where we’ve eaten before.

There were around 38 people at the concert. They had done an excellent job with publicity. Many were not regulars at the church but friends and neighbors that were invited. It was so good to hear that since part of our mission is to give the churches an opportunity to invite the community in. Several kids had a lot of fun with the sand blocks during Glory Bound. It is wonderful to see the kids light up as they participate in a fun way. They also enjoy the Ring Along where they can actually ring one of the handchimes. So do the adults!

Whenever we return to a church, it is always good to see some of the same people who work extremely hard keeping the church going. They had a great reception with a variety of cookies, and cheese and crackers which gave us an opportunity to visit with many of the people. Our poster display was in the reception area and several poured over the pictures commenting on many of the churches. There was someone there from the small community of Grace, Idaho, who asked if we would share our music in their community. We'll just have to wait and see.

The big fund raiser for this church is their annual Harvest Bazaar and Turkey Dinner. The community really comes out for this huge event. A few years ago we happened to be driving through Soda Springs and stopped by for it. What a feast and wonderful bazaar items!

Since we were playing in Pocatello for the morning worship service, we spent the night in Pocatello. Sean has a connection with the Holiday Inn there. As we drove that night watching carefully for deer, we commented what a wonderful start this was for our tour.

We can't thank you enough for your support and prayers for our ministry. As we visit each church, we tell them about our wonderful church family.

Pocatello, Idaho

Sunday morning, October 25, we arrived at First Presbyterian Church in Pocatello. We were playing prelude and offertory during the service with a 4:00 pm concert in the afternoon. Their organist/music director had visited our church last July and heard us play and was glad we were able to come to Pocatello. The church has a beautiful pipe organ and Yamaha grand piano.

Kendall Presbytery has a pulpit exchange each fall. Last year we were at Idaho Falls when Heidi Smith from Salmon preached. This time Heidi was preaching in Pocatello. Wonder where she will be in 2010 – we might have to plan our tour around where she is!

The pianist for the choir went to college with Sean, and they had a great time catching up on what has been happening. There were also several other College of Idaho graduates at the church. After the service we went to lunch with the music director.

Fifty-six people attended the concert. There was a basket in the back for donations. At the larger churches we ask for donations to help support us in the smaller churches where we do not ask for donations. One girl came up to Phyllis during the reception afterward and told her she was taking piano so Phyllis immediately introduced her to Sean who gave her a pep talk about practicing and sticking with it. She enjoyed the concert so much that she gave Phyllis an envelope with a donation to our ministry from her allowance. We did notice that for the morning worship service the back of the church was full and the front was empty; for the concert the front was full and the back was empty.

Phyllis has known the bell choir director at the church for many years through the handbell guild's area board. She and her husband along with the couple we were staying with took us and the music director to Red Lobster after the concert. What a wonderful evening learning more about the church and talking about their bell choir and other church activities. The couple we stayed with lived up a hill overlooking the town – what a view. We were glad, however, that the road wasn't slick. Winters could be very interesting.

After a coffee stop on the way out of town, we headed toward our next stop – First Presbyterian Church in Twin Falls.

Twin Falls, Idaho

We arrived in Twin Falls mid afternoon on Monday, October 26 and went to the church to set up. The church occupies a large city block with a map out front telling you where various ministries are located. We checked in at the office and the secretary took us over to the sanctuary. It is up a full flight of stairs – thank heavens for an elevator to help move all the equipment!

The sanctuary was beautiful with a lovely pipe organ, Steinway piano and hardwood floor in the chancel. Their bell tables are always up and covered with black. With the large communion table in front of them and the pulpits, they blend in extremely well.

Our contact and host was Barb Mix, the organist and bell choir director. She also has a couple of home school chime choirs with 29 kids and 50 private piano students. Phyllis has known her for a few years through the handbell guild, and she brought about 20 of the home school chime choir members to Cool Ringings that Phyllis directs at Gem State Academy both in January 2009 and 2010.

This was our first time at Twin Falls and there were around 45 people at the concert. Sean recognized several College of Idaho alumni including the parents of one of his freshman choir students. A family of a couple of chime ringers had also come to our concert last year in Hollister. Phyllis asked if they were coming again to Cool Ringings and they responded with an enthusiastic "yes!"

With such a beautiful organ, Sean played a prelude and an additional piece later in the concert. Afterward Barb brought out some music and he had a great time playing a variety of music, especially when he added the Zimbelstern. The Zimbelstern is a "toy" organ stop consisting of a metal or wooden star or wheel on which several small bells are mounted. When engaged, the star rotates, producing a continuous tinkling sound. Barb really enjoyed hearing the organ and talking music with Sean. She remembered hearing Sean play when he was 21 years old.

Toward the end of the concert the wind was incredible. As we loaded everything into the van, we had to hang on tight to the bag of foam and the display boards.

We spent the night at Barb's home where we continued to talk about all kinds of music. She has a very special older dog, Misty, who has bad hips. What a sweetheart! Barb's morning the next day began early with a 7:00 am lesson at her home. She has a wonderful studio with a grand piano and digital piano and decorated with awesome music wallpaper.

Hagerman, Idaho school

Tuesday, October 27, we took the scenic drive on US 30 from Twin Falls to Hagerman. Our contact, Catherine, had been to one of our concerts in Buhl a few years ago and had also been involved with handbells at the Methodist Church in Hagerman. After lunch with Catherine, we went over to the high school gym to set up for the assembly she had arranged for the entire grade school, approximately 150 kids. We were on the stage which is also the music room. When we arrived, the 6th grade band was rehearsing.

Whenever we do a school assembly, we let the kids raise their hands and ask questions. We are always amazed at the variety and scope of questions asked from why gloves and about the various techniques to when we started playing our instruments. We stress that it takes practice to achieve anything.

For *Glory Bound*, we asked the three percussionists from the 6th grade band to do the sand blocks. This is the song we opened with, and as the students were arriving, the three percussionists were up front practicing their "train" rhythm. What fun to see their enthusiasm.

Sean always asks for song titles that he then weaves into a medley. This group came up with *Jolly Old St. Nicholas*, *Jingle Bells*, *Star-Spangled Banner*, *It's a Small World*, and Beethoven's *Rage Over a Lost Penny*. We had already played *It's a Small World* and Beethoven's *Hymn to Joy (Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee)* which might have influenced their selections. When Sean began *The Star-Spangled Banner*, everyone stood up and placed their hands over their hearts. What a beautiful sight! We weren't expecting that and it was wonderful to see such respect for our country and our flag.

Since there were so many kids, it would have taken the entire time to allow everyone a chance to play during ring along. So we picked just the 4th grade. They came up front and took turns ringing as everyone else sang some patriotic songs.

Afterward many teachers as well as students came up and thanked us for coming. Even though we do not use narration like at our regular concerts, these school assemblies are so important because they know we are in town to give a concert at a church and we are Ring Praise Music Ministry. We wear shirts that have our logo with a cross on them. They also ask if we have other jobs so we tell them about what we do at the church. Usually there are a few from an assembly who come with their parents to the concert.

We were then taken to our host, Florence, who was making a delicious chicken soup. What a delight! More about her next time when we share about the concert in Wendell.

Wendell, Idaho

On Tuesday, October 27, after delicious chicken soup with our charming hostess, Florence, we headed to New Life Community Church in Wendell for our concert. There is a Presbyterian church in Wendell, but the dates we had open didn't work so Catherine, my contact in Hagerman, was excited for us to play at her church. Quite often the youth at New Life Community partner with those at Living Waters Presbyterian Church.

The church has an open, contemporary sanctuary and multi-purpose facility. There was a beautiful Yamaha grand piano and a digital piano which Sean used for a couple of the accompaniments.

There were about 44 people at the concert. Afterward when we were back at Florence's home, her son was there and asked how everything went. We told him how many people and he was very disappointed. We weren't. All those in attendance seemed to be moved by the music and our program wrapping scripture and hymn history around the music.

As is true at other concerts, the audience really enjoyed the ring along. Catherine and her children set up the chimes with the matching songsheets and handed them out. During the first song, something didn't sound right so Phyllis reminded everyone to "ring on the circled words and stop when a word is underlined." The remaining songs were fine. Afterward, Catherine said she had given her husband the wrong chime and then whispered to him not to play anymore!

When it was time to pack up, Catherine's children were great helpers; it was like a competition with who could haul the most equipment out to the van!

Since we didn't have too far to travel the next day, Florence offered to show us the sights around Hagerman. We went to Malad Gorge, a fish hatchery, plus a beautiful drive around the valley. She is a native of the Hagerman valley and a wealth of insightful information about its history. We stopped at a restaurant in Hagerman for lunch before saying goodbye to Florence and heading to Bruneau. Since sturgeon is one of the restaurant's specialties, we both had some – delicious!

Bruneau, Idaho

After our wonderful sturgeon lunch in Hagerman on Wednesday, October 28 with our delightful hostess Florence, we headed to Bruneau Community Church. The town of Bruneau has less than 1,000 residents. Setting up this concert was so orchestrated by God. When we played in Baker City in February 2009, the lady Phyllis stayed with commented how a friend of hers in Bruneau would love to have us come. She wrote down the person's name and phone number and gave it to Phyllis. As we were working on locations for this concert tour, a couple of possibilities didn't work out so Phyllis still had the piece of paper and called. The person checked with their pastor and everything was set.

When we arrived, there were people to help us unload and set up. The sanctuary was a very old school building. The floor in the chancel was not level both side to side and front to back. Adjustable legs on the tables and songbooks took care of the side to side – very critical to keep bells from rolling. The slope from front to back wasn't too bad once Phyllis got used to it.

The piano was on one side of the chancel with not much space for the folding chair. Sean was being very careful. During "He Arose," Phyllis noticed one leg of the chair getting close to the edge, but it didn't seem to be moving. All of a sudden, Sean shifted as he began another section of the piece and the leg slipped off. In slow motion Sean tipped sideways toward the wall and ended up on the floor. The gasps from all of us were incredible. He was okay, they got another folding chair since that one was now bent, and Sean finished the piece as if nothing had happened. Talk about excitement!

Thirty-eight people attended which basically filled the church. There were a lot of kids, more than at most concerts. They were enthralled with the chimes during ring along and even came up when Phyllis was putting everything away to find out more about the bells. Of course they were then able to ring them and feel the vibration of a big bell.

Afterward there was a feast of finger foods and wonderful conversation. One person's grandmother was the first organist at the Egyptian Theatre in Boise. Someone else who had heard us in Grand View has cancer and rested all day to be able to come.

This church plus churches in Grand View, Hammett and other nearby communities get together every 5th Sunday for a Singspiration. It was so exciting to hear about what they are doing.

When everything was packed up, we headed home talking about all the beautiful places where we shared the Gospel and the wonderful people we met. Thank you for your prayer support of our ministry.

Hagerman, Idaho United Methodist Church

While we were having a tour of Hagerman on October 28, we stopped by the United Methodist Church because that is where our host, Florence, was a member and also part of their handbell choir. She wanted us to see her church and how they set up their bell choir. In the fellowship hall we noticed a banner celebrating their 100th anniversary, 1909-2009. We told her how we have done several concerts helping churches celebrate anniversaries and asked if there was any possibility of doing a special concert. After checking calendars, there were two possible dates she was going to present to the pastor. A few days later it was decided we would do a concert there on Sunday afternoon, November 15.

So following our worship service we headed for Hagerman. Florence was waiting for us with a couple of men to help carry in equipment and move whatever needed to be moved in the chancel. In the entrance to the church there is a gorgeous mosaic picture. It was made with stones found locally.

Sixty-four people were at the concert. When we checked Phyllis's microphone before the service, it seemed to work well. We had connected her microphone into their transmitter. However, during the first part of the concert, it kept fading in and out. This made it very challenging for Sean. When it wasn't working, he had to play extra soft, but then when it would come on, he had to play louder so it would balance. So during Sean's first solo, the pastor put fresh batteries in the transmitter. Unfortunately, that didn't solve the problem. We had Phyllis's complete microphone unit under the table up front, so Sean led the ring along while the pastor and Phyllis hooked up her system. It worked!

After the concert they served a wonderful light dinner and we were able to visit with a lot of the members of the church and well as several from the community who came. It is always such a joy to be able to share the good news of Jesus Christ through our music. Driving back home we just praised God for the way He had this concert come together.