

Ring Praise Music Ministry 2010 Journal

(weekly articles in the Nampa Church Sunday bulletins)

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 School, Idaho

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.

New Life Community Church, 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 United Methodist Church, Idaho

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.

Dayville school, Oregon

On Thursday, April 15, we left Nampa around 8:00 am for a four-day tour to Eastern Oregon Presbytery. First stop was Dayville. Two years ago we presented two assemblies at the school there and were again doing two assemblies. Skip Inscore, the Commissioned Lay Pastor for Dayville and Mount Vernon churches, is a teacher at the school along with his wife. This time they had us set up at the church a couple of blocks from the school rather than in the computer lab. Everyone walked over for the concert. Several of the kids remembered us from the last time and seemed happy that we were back. A couple of school staff including one of the cooks came a little early so they could get a good seat.

Phyllis had a wild pair of tie dye gloves (red, yellow and orange) that she wore instead of black. Between each piece, the kids were able to ask questions. This format works well because they ask very insightful questions. One asked what the silver pole was for that was next to the tables and was told they had to wait until the last piece to see!

The 12:40 pm assembly was middle and high school with 38 students and teachers. For Sean's medley, the kids requested Für Elise, Yankee Doodle, something from Stix (Come Sail Away) and Great Balls of Fire. He concluded with part of Rhapsody in Blue. These kids did a regular ring along with the circled words of patriotic and secular songs. Later Skip commented how fun it was seeing the football players really getting into the music both with the ring along and listening to the update pieces we played.

27 elementary students (K-6) and staff came at 2:00 pm. Their requests for Sean's medley were Mary Had a Little Lamb, Moonlight Sonata, Silent Night, The Entertainer, Rock Around the Clock and Amazing Grace. Sean kept coming back to Mary Had a Little Lamb in all the various styles of music from the other pieces. For their ring along, Phyllis used a colored box with the chimes coded with colored rubber bands. If their color was facing them, they would ring. When it would change, they would stop the sound. This group really got into a couple of the spirituals and ended up clapping and singing during them. For *Glory Bound*, everyone wanted to do the sand blocks so we simply handed out the 3 sets and they kept passing them around the entire group.

Someone asked how they could know where we would be playing in the future. Phyllis mentioned that Ring Praise Music Ministry has a page on Facebook and suggested they become a fan.

Afterward we went back to Mount Vernon to relax a little and "check in" with our hosts, Dick and Carol Patt. We have stayed with them in the past and they have the most loveable dog, Tippy. She adores Sean and likes to sit on his lap! Next week, the Dayville concert.

Dayville, Oregon

After the second Dayville School concert on Thursday, April 15, we drove back to Mt. Vernon (about 25 miles) to check in with our hosts, relax and have a few moments of shut eye. It is amazing how refreshing closing your eyes for a short time can be.

There was a potluck at the church before our concert where we got to talk with some of the kids who were at the school concert and their parents. It is always so nice to get to visit with the people at a social function such as this.

The Dayville Presbyterian Church has a biker ministry, the pedal type of bikes! The church is on the Transamerican Bike Route from Astoria to Virginia Beach and is listed in the biking directory as a stop. The church is always open; there is a welcome poster for bikers with a few rules and asking them to check in with someone. The restroom has a shower, and there is also a washer and dryer available for bikers to use. Throughout the summer they will get up to a hundred bikers; the number depends on the weather. Please notice the picture of the hanging stained glass that was made by a biker and sent to the church as a thank you. It is hanging in a front window of the fellowship area.

The church is also used by the school for various programs where a “stage” is needed such as school plays. Skip Inscore, the CLP serving the church, and his wife are teachers at the school. It is refreshing to see such cooperation between a church and the school system.

Thirty-four people attended the concert; several of the kids invited their parents. We shared what we did at the school explaining how we kept things upbeat and had a different “twist” on the music. *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* is HYMN TO JOY by Beethoven; *Be Still, My Soul* is FINLANDIA by Sibelius. Several kids came up to play the sandblocks for *Glory Bound*; they didn’t need any explanation of what to do since they had participated earlier in the afternoon.

When the audience wanted an encore, we had planned on playing *Old Time Religion Medley*. There were three girls on the front row really enjoying the concert so Phyllis asked them if they wanted us to play a gospel medley or the song we ended the afternoon concert with. They choose the afternoon ending – *Symphonia on Hyfrydol*. That’s the one where at the end Phyllis hooks 10 bells together, hangs them from a pole (bell tree stand), grabs her mallets and races with Sean to the finish.

After more conversation, we packed up and headed back to Mt. Vernon for some much needed sleep.

Valley View Assisted Living, John Day, Oregon

On Friday, April 16, we had a relaxing morning of sleeping in followed by a fantastic breakfast including sausage from a farm pig of our hosts. Time was also spent getting work done on computers. Sean had several things to do for school, and Phyllis cleaned up a mess because the day before her email had been hacked and strange messages went out to her contacts. She also worked on making the transition from a paper newsletter for the northwest handbell area to an e-newsletter through an email service. Unlike our “weekly happenings” which is simply typed as an email, this is developed on a template on the company’s website including pictures and many links to various websites for additional information as well as links to emails for everyone on the board.

In the afternoon we went to Valley View Assisted Living in John Day, about 10 miles from where we stayed in Mt. Vernon. The retirement center is on a hill overlooking the John Day valley; what a gorgeous view. As is typical at retirement centers, some residents were already seated and waiting when we arrived 45 minutes before the concert was to begin. About 25 people attended including a couple from the community. Sean played a little “prelude” before the concert – *Stardust, Paper Doll, and Moonlight Serenade*. He also changed two of his pieces in the concert to arrangements of older hymns. When he announced he was going to play *In the Garden*, there were collective sighs and of course loud singing and humming while he was playing.

For the ring along, we have found that many in assisted living communities have difficulty reading. Instead of the traditional ring along with circled and underlined words on the papers we use in concerts, the chimes had colored rubber bands like we used with the elementary students at Dayville. With three colors of rubber bands on specific chimes matching the three colors on sides of a box, when their rubber band color on the box faced them they would ring and stop when it turned to a different color. We sang a few familiar hymns this way.

There weren’t any kids to help us with the sand blocks on *Glory Bound*, so we asked some ladies on one side to play. It looked like they were having a good time! Many softly sang during a lot of our pieces, but during *Just As I Am*, we could hear more. What a beautiful sound to hear their soft words with our arrangement.

During the question time, one lady who has been living there for 4 years said she had never heard such beautiful sound come from that piano (pointing to the old upright). Afterward, many came up and expressed how appreciative they were for us coming and to all of you for sponsoring us. We didn’t bring our CDs in to sell, but a few asked about them since they were described on the program so Sean went out, brought in the case and sold a few.

Mount Vernon, Oregon

It was raining as we left Valley View Assisted Living on Friday, April 16, to go to Mt. Vernon and set up. The church has done a lot of work since we were there in 2008. The foundation was strengthened and cement board added to enclose it and the siding was painted white. Inside, a side room that used to be the office was turned into a beautiful library and sitting area.

We had dinner at the Silver Spur across the creek from the church. Since we were in our concert attire, we were a bit overdressed! We knew that this concert was going to be Spirit filled when there was a group of five ladies who sat in a row laughing and rehearsing the ring along before the concert. They also drafted the three sitting in front of them to join in. This is a first! One of the ladies was a worker from the assisted living center in John Day who heard us that afternoon. This is the group that was then given the sand blocks for *Glory Bound*. It appeared they had as much or more fun than kids that come up to play them.

The organ hadn't been played since the last time we were there and our host begged Sean to play it. After a couple of attempts it finally turned on so he did an organ prelude. Throughout the concert there was one lady who often had her eyes closed and moved and swayed with the music. After every piece, there were collective sighs, amens, praises and wows from the 18 in attendance. They were enjoying themselves so much during ring along that Phyllis added a 4th song for them to ring, *Be Thou My Vision*.

They had many interesting and engaging questions. One person asked Sean if he sang, and he responded, "Not really." Phyllis disagreed, and they eventually asked him to sing a song. He finally gave in and sang *Blue Moon*, and accompanied himself in a Sinatra-style version. This was another concert first!

When describing the envelope by the CDs with change in it, Ron has called it our "low tech self checkout" so that's what we were calling it. After Phyllis said it, she wondered if any stores in the valley had self checkout so she asked. No, they don't!

When questions were finally over, we played *Grazioso*. We decided for this concert series to stray away from our traditional *Symphonia on Hyfyrdol* and race to the end. We found that *Grazioso* is a very powerful introspective ending which proclaims the resurrection. For an encore we decided to do the *Old Time Religion Medley*.

Afterward one man expressed his appreciation for us coming to Mount Vernon. He said they never have anything come to Grant County. It might have been raining outside, but inside was so cozy as we worshiped. Thank you for your support so we can bring the saving story of Jesus Christ to smaller communities in a different format.

Presbytery at Pilot Rock, Oregon

After a yummy breakfast of homemade granola and yogurt, we headed to Pilot Rock on Saturday, April 17, to have lunch at the Eastern Oregon Presbytery meeting and to thank them for their support. It was a beautiful drive with gorgeous weather.

Pilot Rock is the church that burned to the ground early Sunday morning, November 11, 2008. Their Christian Education building survived, and that is where they have been meeting while working toward having a new sanctuary and fellowship hall built. It is now complete with just a few minor things still needed. The pictures on the display board show one of the old building, the burned remains with the cornerstone block untouched, under construction, and finally the finished building. Please note the cornerstone block in the cover support of the driveway! The building was modeled after Hermiston's new church but included a fellowship hall rather than classrooms.

When we arrived, we weren't even in the door to the sanctuary when Linda Toth, General Presbyter who was leading a portion of the meeting, saw us coming, waved and said, "We just approved you!" They had just finished approving mission grant requests for 2011 and awarded us 100% of what we requested!

The sanctuary has a fantastic new sound system and the ability to have up to 60 hearing assisted devices. There are people who have started coming to the Pilot Rock church because it is the only one in town that is handicap accessible and they can hear well with the incredible sound system. They also have a new state of the art digital piano with MP3 technology and a top of the line Yamaha upright piano. Sean was asked to close the presbytery meeting with a song. He improvised on *The Church's One Foundation* and closed with the DOXOLOGY to lead us into lunch.

We shared with Steve Toth, chaplain at the Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario, that in Hermiston that night we have the entire program and a copy of the narration translated into Spanish in case any of the Hispanic congregation that shares the building come to the concert. We asked him if this would be something he might like in the prison. He was definitely interested and is going to check with those leading the Spanish worship services.

It was wonderful seeing a lot of the people we know from our visits to all of their churches. A couple of people asked when we're coming to them – "it's been a couple of years." We explained the time constraints and that we try to get to each church at least once every three years. They will be on our schedule next year for sure!

After a delicious lunch and fellowship, we headed to Pendleton to "hang out" with Jack and Terral Schut, our gracious hosts for the night, before heading to Hermiston for our evening concert.

We are so grateful to the financial support we receive from Eastern Oregon, Kendall and Boise Presbyteries. Without it we would not be able to travel as much as we do throughout these regions. We also appreciate all your support and encouragement as we bring the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ in a unique manner to mainly smaller communities.

Hermiston, Oregon

After a yummy early dinner and dessert with our hosts in Pendleton on Saturday, April 17, we headed to Hermiston. Faith Presbyterian Church shares its new building with a non-denominational Hispanic congregation. They periodically do things together, including special services. In order to reach out to them with the concert, the pastor asked if there was any way we could have the program translated into Spanish. Phyllis, with Ron's help, found someone willing to do that and also translated the narration so they could follow along with what was being said about each song. Although no one from that congregation came, it was still a great venture because it can open up new possibilities to what we can do with our ministry. At the Eastern Oregon Presbytery meeting earlier that day, we talked with Steve Toth, a chaplain at Snake River Correctional Institution, about the Spanish translation and if that would be of interest at the prison. He is checking with the leaders of the Hispanic services.

There were 48 people at the concert. This is our third time in Hermiston and the crowd grows each time. When we first played there several years ago in their old building when they were an infant new church development, their Commissioned Lay Pastor, Duane Brudevold, was so disappointed that only 9 attended. He has done a fantastic job of leading this congregation and attending seminary. For Easter they had over 200 people!

There were no kids at the concert so we asked for three adult volunteers to play the sand blocks during *Glory Bound*. It looked like they were having a good time!

The sanctuary is beautiful with a lovely grand piano and excellent acoustics. The new Pilot Rock church was modeled after this one, though they are both unique with their own color schemes, musical instruments, communion table and pulpit. And of course the people attending add to the individuality of the two congregations.

It wasn't until after the concert that we realized there had been a large storm beforehand. We were so busy setting up and visiting with Duane about the growth that we didn't even hear it! It certainly didn't dampen the spirits of those attending. During the ring along, the congregation burst out in beautiful harmonies on two of the pieces.

As we drove back to Pendleton, we commented how fortunate we are to be able to use the gifts God has given us to share the saving grace of Jesus Christ through our music ministry.

Pendleton, Oregon

On Sunday, April 18, we played two pieces during the morning worship service at First Presbyterian Church, Pendleton – *Holy, Holy, Holy* for special music and *Symphonia on Hyfrydol* for offertory. Sean also played a reflection after the sermon and an organ postlude. "Big and loud" was requested by our contact for the postlude.

During offertory, as Phyllis was picking up a bell, it completely slipped out of her hand. Slight state of panic!!! Sean looped the piano part musically back to the beginning of the section as Phyllis collected the needed bells and we continued on. Certainly don't want that to happen again, but recovery is all part of playing.

After the service we went to a cool downtown diner with Jack and Annette Matlock (she is the bell choir director at the church), their daughter Emily and her boyfriend, and the pastor and his family. Emily is a student of Sean's at the College of Idaho, and she sang in our church choir for Easter.

The church has a new Mason Hamlin grand piano in the sanctuary which was a joy for Sean to play. Forty-one people attended the concert, and Phyllis was very relieved that no bells dropped! Everything went very well; it is amazing to both of us how quickly the time flies during a concert. It seems we just begin and the next thing we know we are asking if they have any questions and playing our last piece.

There was only one child at the concert, so we had a couple of adults, one being the pastor, come up and join her playing the sand blocks for *Glory Bound*. It appeared that they were having a really good time!

Dick and Carol Patt, our gracious hosts in Mount Vernon, came up for the concert. Dick was preaching in Ukiah that morning so they were already half way there. Afterward Sean had a chance to pet Tippy, one of the nicest dogs in the world.

We loaded up the van and headed home after an invigorating and blessed mission trip so thankful to be given this ministry and feeling enriched and encouraged by all the wonderful people we met. We are so grateful to you for the support you give us as we go out spreading the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Thank you!

Burns, Oregon

After lunch on Sunday, June 20, we headed to Burns, Oregon for the first of four concerts in Oregon. It was a gorgeous drive with some intense rain storms yet beautiful foggy and misty mountains. Jean Hurst, pastor at Pioneer Presbyterian Church in Burns, was on a three month sabbatical. Hanging on the office door was a great list of the goals for the congregation and for Jean during this time. One was for Jean to come back rested and energized. The congregation is to be financially secure plus several other “rules.” The congregation is pulling together and the committees are becoming stronger; mission continues.

Warren and Phyllis Henry served in this church 1964-1970. His picture is in the “gallery of pastors” displayed in a reception area in the back of the sanctuary.

We practiced with Phyllis’s microphone hooked into their sound system. Unfortunately there was a loud buzz that had us wondering if it would be better to not use it. The sound of the bells really faded as you went toward the back of the sanctuary and we knew dynamics would have to be basically forgotten without the sound system. After some finagling of volume and gain levels, we were able to eliminate the buzz and have great sound. We like to leave things as we find them, so we were going to return the system to its old setting. We mentioned the buzz to someone and they had been bothered by it for some time. When we showed them how we eliminated it, they were thrilled.

Twenty-six people attended the concert. For the evening of Father’s Day, we thought that was really good. When we were being introduced, we had it announced about no applause until the end. After the first piece, Phyllis encouraged the audience to respond with “Amen,” and they were incredibly responsive.

During Sean’s last piano piece, several people were craning their necks to see him play. There was a nice reception afterward and people stayed around to visit and really enjoyed all the pictures on our display boards.

For the ring along, one young man was having a wonderful time making music with the chime. He also volunteered for “Glory Bound” and enjoyed the sand blocks. It ended up that Phyllis was staying at his house. He brought down a box of 5 kittens which were four weeks old – how adorable! Phyllis had a great time holding each one.

Sean stayed with Gordon and Marianne Andrews whose daughter is getting married in July and has just been hired as the music teacher in Halfway, Oregon, where we have played several times. We have had dinner at the Andrews home each of the three times we’ve been to Burns and one of us has stayed there each time. What wonderful hosts!

Corvallis, Oregon

Monday, June 21, we headed from Burns to Corvallis – what a gorgeous drive! Wendell Hendershott, who was the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church here in Nampa, had moved to Corvallis to pastor jointly with his wife, Netsie, at Grace Lutheran Church. He contacted Phyllis many months ago asking if we ever got over his way. He was one of the calls that set the wheels in motion to organize this trip.

The church is set up “in the round” with pews on three sides. The sanctuary is beautiful; dark but the windows around it are gorgeous. The holder for the eternal flame is very unique and is positioned above the baptismal font; the altar is a huge 6 foot square, moveable so the space can be utilized for various activities such as a concert. In the back is a beautiful Schlicker pipe organ which Sean played for prelude.

They have a lovely Steinway piano; Phyllis could tell that Sean really enjoyed it because there were more notes than usual in his pieces and he used each of the ranges of the piano more, especially the high end. Afterward he agreed that he had a very good time playing it. In order for the keys of the piano to be seen instead of hidden behind the bell tables, Phyllis put the bell tree stand down on a step. She was very careful whenever she used it remembering that there was a step!

Fifty-one people attended the concert including a few of the ringers in the new chime choir at the church and some ringers from a few churches in the area. As with all the concerts, ring along was a lot of fun – great singing and lots of smiles and laughter. Afterward there was a fabulous reception with all sorts of tasty treats. At the end of the concert Wendell gave each of us flowers, gorgeous roses. They also found us a vase to put them in. With traveling, it was amazing that they lasted a full week! You can see them in the picture set up in front of the bell table in Aurora.

Sean's sister, Jill, and brother-in-law, John, lived in Corvallis but were moving to Portland area. John was still at the old house, surrounded by boxes in various stages of packing, and we stayed there for two nights.

Tuesday morning Phyllis gave a workshop to several of the ringers in their chime choir. The music director has played handbells in the past and the church purchased some chimes last fall. They seemed to have a good time working on skills like changing chimes and also the techniques that can be done safely on the chimes. They also had a chance to ring a piece using bells.

Wendell and Netsie took us to "Nearly Normal," a vegetarian restaurant, for lunch. What a delicious meal and a chance to talk with them about their ministry in Corvallis. Afterward they gave us a tour of the church. There is a beautiful courtyard in the middle with a small gazebo-type structure that houses a huge bell. There is also an incredible small chapel with light shining through the colored windows. The wood carvings up front and on the baptismal font are exquisite. It doesn't hold many people, but is a warm, inviting place for a small gathering.

Salem, Oregon

Tuesday afternoon, June 22, we headed to First Christian Church in Salem, Oregon. The handbell director and most of the ringers were coming to the handbell conference in Newberg later in the week. In order for us to get to know the members of the choir and as an end of season gathering, they had a potluck with many tasty dishes. It was great getting to fellowship with them over a meal. One member commented to Phyllis about how much he enjoyed the class she taught at the 2002 conference at Lewis and Clark College; he even described what the class was about!

In order to extend the chancel area closer to the congregation, they have a very unique and quick way to add on over the stairs. There are sections that hook together to hold a section of carpeted platform; a couple sections were already in place, but they added one more section so the bell tables could be closer to everyone. There is a picture on the display board showing them adding a section.

Although there were only 37 people at the concert, they were a very responsive audience. The congregation tends to applaud everything so the director wasn't sure how they would handle a "no applause" concert. One gentleman commented afterward that it was strange not applauding, but eventually got used to the amens and enjoyed it. For some of the quiet pieces, they would simply mouth "amen" as they allowed the music to fill them.

During Sean's piece that included *Shout to the Lord*, Phyllis noticed one lady quietly mouthing the words with her eyes closed. It was very moving to see the music reaching into the souls of the listeners. For Ring Along, we used some of the church's chimes as well as Phyllis's set so everyone could have a chime.

The church is 155 years old and has beautiful stained glass windows throughout. The "beauty" of the building, however, hasn't stopped them from serving the community. They have a very active mission to the homeless and needy of Salem which is so important because it is a downtown church. They also host various community help groups.

The daughter of a close friend of Phyllis's had just gotten married and came to the concert with her husband and mother-in-law. Since there weren't any children to do the sand blocks in *Glory Bound*, Phyllis asked for volunteers. Two adults came up and then she specifically asked the newlywed to help out since we needed three (she is a bell ringer!). Her husband enjoyed watching her!

As we drove back to Corvallis to stay with Sean's brother-in-law, we commented again that size of audience doesn't matter; we're spreading the word in a unique way and helping people take time out of their busy schedules to focus on God.

Aurora, Oregon

Wednesday morning, June 23, we headed to Portland after a hearty breakfast at a diner in Corvallis with Sean's brother-in-law. We wanted to spend a little time at a music store before heading to Aurora. We also had time to stop by Clackamas Town Square where Phyllis found internet connection at Barnes and Noble to be able to work on some handbell conference details and emails.

When we arrived at Aurora Presbyterian Church in the afternoon, it was very warm. Usually there is no need for air conditioning in the small church, but it would have been helpful this time! They were able to get some fans set up, but it was still hot by concert time. The programs made good fans for many! Each of us also went through two bottles of water.

After setting up, Sean's sister, who is in the process of moving from Corvallis to the Portland area and working there during the week, joined us for dinner at a recommended Thai restaurant – excellent food.

When people started coming over 20 minutes early, we had a feeling there was going to be a good crowd. When we were at the church 3 years ago, there were only twenty some, and they assured us that if we would come again there would be more. Well, there certainly were! Ended up with a full church of 49 people! They have a "new to them" grand piano

which was a joy for Sean to play. Singing with the ring along sounded like a wonderful choir and filled the sanctuary with beautiful sound. There were a few kids that came up to do the sand blocks during *Glory Bound* and seemed to have a great time. The audience always enjoys watching the kids participate in this way.

Afterward they had a nice reception in their fellowship hall downstairs. It was cooler and the cold drinks were appreciated by all. They are working on getting the church more handicapped accessible including a large restroom downstairs.

Since this was our last concert, Sean went to stay with his sister and she was getting him to the airport in the morning to come back home to Boise. Phyllis stayed at the same home both were at three years ago right on the Willamette River. What a view! Thursday morning she put on her “handbell conference hat” and picked up someone at the airport coming to the conference from Alaska, went back to Aurora for the bell tree pole she forgot, had lunch at a BBQ place right next to the church in Aurora, then went to George Fox University in Newberg for the conference.

We are always blessed whenever we are sharing the gospel through our music – thanks for all your prayers and support.

King Hill, Idaho

On Saturday, March 20, we headed to King Hill Community Presbyterian Church for a concert celebrating their 100th anniversary. This small congregation has a membership of 12 and shares a pastor with the United Methodist Church in Glens Ferry. In an effort to reach more into their community, they have monthly events to which the community is invited. Our concert was the event for March. In April this church hosted the Boise Presbytery meeting and provided lunch for around 50 people. This was quite an undertaking for this congregation.

When we exited the interstate at Glens Ferry, Phyllis mentioned to Ron about the deer they saw the last time she and Sean were at King Hill. She barely finished saying it when they encountered deer by the road! This is a section where you need to be very cautious!

Around 35 people attended the concert. There were several kids who enjoyed the ring along portion as well as the adults. After the concert, three girls came up to Phyllis wanting to see the bells. They really enjoyed getting to ring all the different sizes of bells and feeling the vibration of the large ones. Mallets also intrigue kids so she explained why there are different ones for the different size bells.

During delicious refreshments afterward, one lady was talking with Ron and saying how she wished her mother could hear us, but she is in a nursing home in Tennessee. Ron just happened to mention that we travel and have flown places. She perked up and said, “Really?” Ron then showed her the special bell case that holds all the bells and is sized for airline travel. She then talked with Phyllis and we ended up with a trip to Sweetwater, Tennessee over Labor Day! We will be playing at her mother’s nursing home Saturday morning, September 4. She will have just celebrated her 93rd birthday. Two worship services are planned for Sunday morning at small churches served by one pastor. One is at 8:30 am and the other at 10:30 am followed by a potluck. We conclude with a concert Sunday evening at the First Baptist Church in Sweetwater.

We so appreciate your prayer support of our ministry. Wherever we travel, we know you are praying for us and the message we bring.

We now have our own website, www.RingPraiseMinistry.org, through where the church’s website is hosted. It has a concert schedule, copies of all our journals, plus a picture slide show of our most recent concerts. It is also linked from our church’s website and vice versa. We are also on Facebook. Take a look!

Wood Village, Sweetwater, TN

On Friday, September 3, we headed to the airport for early flights to Tennessee. With flights leaving 2 minutes apart, Sean flew to Knoxville and Ron and Phyllis went to Nashville and would drive over to Sweetwater. First things we noticed were the lush landscape, trees everywhere, and the smooth highways. There was also kudzu, a vine that grows wild and can completely cover trees. When we arrived in Sweetwater, we met Pauline Sutton who was celebrating her 93rd birthday and the rest of the family. We were privileged to be able to stay in Pauline’s home. The food Jan, Pauline’s daughter from Boise, prepared throughout the weekend was phenomenal; we didn’t go hungry! The love of the family for each other and the Lord was evident in everything they do. The stories told around the table and the humor of Buster, Jan’s older brother, were priceless. We decided that what was said around the kitchen table in Sweetwater stays in Sweetwater!

While the bells traveled on the airplane, other equipment such as chimes, foam, tables and bell tree stand did not. Six foot banquet tables were available at the nursing home. Phyllis arranged with Keith Memorial United Methodist Church in Athens, close to Sweetwater, to borrow handchimes, foam and a bell tree stand. One glitch with the bell tree stand – part of it wasn’t sent so Jan’s younger brother, Johnny, borrowed an IV pole from the hospital where he works.

Our first concert was Saturday morning at Wood Village, the nursing home where Pauline now lives. She has been there a few months. 37 people attended the concert including Ken and Ina Sano's daughter and husband who live in Knoxville. The room was quite full. Often during concerts there several residents tend to leave, but not so at our concert. It was also the largest attendance they had seen at a program there.

We planned a full hour and a half concert, but after 50 minutes we received word that the room was needed for lunch in 10 minutes! We quickly finished one ring along piece and went to our last two songs. Pauline thoroughly enjoyed and was looking forward to hearing more over the weekend.

Jan's two brothers were really good sports about helping her with all the logistics for the concerts since she was in Boise and they were in Sweetwater. They didn't know what to expect, but out of love for their sister, took care of many details. Buster picked up Sean at the airport and even called us as we were driving from Nashville to make sure everything was going okay. He also picked up the equipment we borrowed and was going to return it after Labor Day. Afterward they expressed how much they enjoyed the concerts and could understand Jan's enthusiasm.

In the afternoon we did a little sight seeing and went to the Lost Sea, a cave with America's largest underground lake – over 4½ acres of crystal clear water. In the evening Jan prepared a wonderful family dinner for 17. For entertainment, they had their traditional talent show and played Bingo. We were family!

Fender's United Methodist Church, Sweetwater, TN

Sunday, September 5, began bright and early since our first of two worship services was at 8:30 am at Fender's United Methodist Church. This is a small church a few miles out in the country west of Sweetwater.

It was discovered late Saturday night that the two tables they had gotten for Sunday were 8 feet each instead of 6 which would give a lot of extra space, and we were concerned if they would even fit in the small churches for the morning services. Jan had noticed on Saturday that the First Baptist Church had bell tables and knew people would be around since the youth spent the night camping in cardboard boxes as a fund raiser for the homeless. So she and Ron went there about 7:15 am, asked to borrow 4 bell tables, and were given them!

Jan had never been to Fenders, and as we kept passing signs for other churches down country lanes (we were in the "Bible belt"), she was getting a little uneasy. Finally there it was! It is a typical small country church surrounded by a cemetery. It had been closed for several years, but was reopened in 2005 when the current pastor agreed to take it. It is very slowly building in attendance; they now average around 20. There was a very nice baby grand piano which is rather unusual in most small churches.

Outside the door there was a bell on a post. To welcome people, Jan stood outside and handed them a bulletin, something they weren't used to. We did the entire service except for the welcome and prayer time which the pastor did. He was willing to do whatever we asked. For the children's time, since there weren't any young children, Phyllis did the story of Joshua for all the adults since we are all children of God. They got to respond to questions regarding Joshua.

At the end, Ron invited everyone to the evening concert, but forgot the true name of the church since we had been referring to it as the "Big" Baptist Church. So he just said the Baptist Church in Sweetwater. You would understand our label if you were there since there are many small Baptist Churches all over the area. The pastor also invited everyone to the potluck that was following our next service at Browder Memorial United Methodist Church. He serves both churches and makes a quick dash following the service to the other church.

As Phyllis was playing Symphonia on Hyfrydol for postlude, when she went to put the bell tree on the IV pole, the part with the hooks kept turning! Sean slowed down and did a little repeat until it was finally on the pole. We never know what is going to happen!

The service went till 9:45 am so we had to pack up fairly quick, drive about 15 minutes to Browder which is south of Sweetwater, and get set up for the 10:30 am service. Words just cannot express the joy of sharing the gospel through our music with all the people at these churches.

Browder Memorial United Methodist Church, Sweetwater, TN

After scrambling to tear everything down, load up, drive 15 minutes, unload and set up, we began the 10:30 am worship service at Browder Memorial United Methodist Church only 5 minutes late! Browder is located south of Sweetwater on a country lane. Like many churches, it has a cemetery by it. The pastor serves both the Fenders and Browder churches. He closed both services expressing the worship he had experienced.

So we could have our “rhythm section” for *Glory Bound*, Phyllis asked a youth and two adults if they would handle the sand blocks and they willingly agreed. For *Joshua*, there were some kids so they came up for the story and stayed to watch as Phyllis played.

Sean was challenged with the keyboard and piano at the church. While Phyllis uses the same bells, he uses whatever instrument is at the church. Browder had a spinet piano which was bright and not sounding the best. There was also an electric keyboard which he used except for his piano solo, but it wasn't very loud and hard to get any sound out of it when trying to play soft. Only those of us “behind the scenes” knew of the challenges – nothing was evident from the gorgeous music he had coming out of the instruments.

At Fenders, the IV pole top spun around as Phyllis tried to put the bell tree on it. When she got to that point in the postlude, she was being careful and noticed that it had been tightened. Ron had seen the trouble earlier and tightened it as he put it in the truck!

Browder has an average attendance of around 20, and 39 were there to worship with us. All of Jan's family came to this service. The young people in the picture outside the church are some of her nieces and nephews. A couple of people also came from Fenders.

Afterward there was the potluck of potlucks – truly a southern feast! People from Fenders were also invited, so there were around 45 people. The food filled 24 feet of tables, 30 inches wide. No one went home hungry! From fried chicken and fried okra to tasty salads, homemade breads and incredible desserts, this was a feast we will not forget.

Since we were celebrating Pauline's birthday, as she was being wheeled into the room, everyone sang Happy Birthday. She was overwhelmed and truly appreciated everyone helping her celebrate.

The fellowship hall where we had the potluck is an old one room schoolhouse next to the church. It has a tiny stage and is used for Boy Scouts as well as church events.

After loading everything up, we relaxed in the afternoon in preparation for our evening concert at First Baptist Church.

First Baptist Church, Sweetwater, TN

Our concert Sunday evening, September 5 was at 6:00 pm at the First Baptist Church in Sweetwater. The concert was in place of their regular evening worship service. This is the large church where Ron and Jan borrowed bell tables earlier in the morning. Jan had sent out many invitations to this concert in celebration of Pauline's 93rd birthday (her mom), and all of us were overwhelmed when 153 people came on Labor Day weekend! What an incredible tribute to Jan and Pauline.

About 15 minutes before the service, as we were working with the sound technician, we found out that the service would be broadcast on the local radio station. No pressure! Their youth pastor introduced us. He had been up all night Saturday with the youth who spent the night outside in cardboard boxes to raise money for hunger relief.

For *Variations on Zacchaeus*, Phyllis has wanted to have some “cool” glasses and a couple of hats to fit the various music styles of each verse. She found a couple of perfect hats the day before at the Crazy Hat Shop at The Lost Sea. In the afternoon she bought a pair of sunglasses. This was the debut of using the props and it went perfect. There were lots of smiles when she put on the glasses, more smiles with a silly hat for the “merry-go-round” verse, and laughs as she donned a parrot hat for the Caribbean verse. The props are keepers!

There was a very nice organ so Sean did a prelude and also used it for *The Lord's Prayer*. They also had a large Yamaha grand piano which sang out beautifully as Sean played.

For *Glory Bound*, there were 10 youth that came up to be the train with sand blocks. What a great group. Everyone also seemed to like the ring along. With so many at the concert, not everyone had the opportunity to ring, but the smiles showed that they were enjoying. The singing was wonderful with such a large audience.

Most people have not seen a handbell soloist so they do not know what to expect. One lady afterward commented, “If I had known it was going to be like this, I would have invited the bell choir.” What a shame she didn't.

After the concert we had a family dinner at an Italian restaurant in a neighboring town. Then we went back to the house along with several family members and continued wonderful conversation.

Monday morning, after another delicious breakfast, Ron and Phyllis headed to the Smoky Mountains for a few days and Sean flew home with Jan late in the afternoon.

Our entire trip was such a blessing to us as we shared the Gospel through our music with all the wonderful people in Sweetwater, Tennessee. We are so thankful for the opportunity to be with this marvelous, loving family.

St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA, American Falls, Idaho

On Thursday, October 28, we bucked a very strong head wind all the way to St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA, in American Falls, just west of Pocatello. We love seeing God's hand in setting up concerts. Everything was set to begin in Hazelton, but they needed to reschedule because of teacher conferences. Jerome and Idaho Falls didn't work out either. Phyllis then remembered a note she has kept clipped on her calendar since someone from this church contacted her in early spring asking if we would be able to come to American Falls for a concert. So all arrangements and publicity were done in three weeks, and there was a wonderful crowd of 61 people. There was a large article about the concert in the Pocatello paper and several people came from there, mentioning that they had either heard us or heard about our concert last year in Pocatello. When God closes one door, He definitely opens another!

The church has a gorgeous 11 rank pipe organ that was designed and built by Schoenstein and Co. in 1995, and our contact requested showcasing the organ with some classical works. The Eastern Idaho Chapter of the American Guild of Organists helped sponsor the concert along with donations from the audience with an offering basket. They also have a new seven foot Sohmer grand piano which was featured a little more than in most concerts. Even though more classical pieces were woven into the program, our emphasis on telling the saving story of Jesus Christ was maintained. After *Hosanna*, *Loud Hosanna* and *Were You There*, the resurrection story was read from Matthew followed by an organ sonata by Mendelssohn which portrayed the emotions of the crucifixion and resurrection.

For the Ring Along portion, they have a set of handchimes which we used so the sanctuary was filled with 5 octaves of chimes rather than two plus beautiful singing. A wonderful reception followed the concert.

Hospitality for people they had never met was overwhelming. Sean's host family had a delicious dinner for us with homemade apple pie for dessert. The pastor was also a dinner guest and it was a wonderful time to get acquainted with him. He and Sean had a lively discussion about Broadway shows.

The family Phyllis stayed with shared about the quilt mission of the women. They get together every Monday, January – April, 9 am – 2:30 pm, and make tied quilts. This year they made around 200. Some are sent each year to Hope House, some are kept in American Falls for emergency needs, and others are given to Lutheran Relief Society.

The church has four octaves of handbells and the new director is getting a choir going. Phyllis met with her Friday morning to answer questions, work on adjusting all the bells and teaching her how to make adjustments. After lunch at a local restaurant with the bell choir director and her granddaughter, we headed to Burley reminiscing on the wonderful time we had in American Falls.

First Presbyterian Church, Burley, Idaho

On Friday, October 29, we had a calmer day to drive to First Presbyterian Church in Burley. We found our host who lived out of town a few miles on the Snake River and relaxed a little before heading to the church. The church's music director plays trumpet and teaches band at the middle and high schools. He joined us playing arrangements of *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty* and *O Worship the King* with Sean accompanying him. To introduce his pieces, Phyllis remembered she had played arrangements of those two hymns and had narrations for them on her computer! She quickly pulled up the information and copied it.

Phyllis had a new piece, *The Lord Is My Shepherd*, which Sean had never heard nor played, so they practiced it once to get ready for the evening concert.

We were treated to a delicious fajita dinner with the music director's family. He has two adorable boys who weren't shy!

The church has a nice electronic Allen organ which Sean has played each time we have been there and also for a wedding. He did a prelude on it. For *Glory Bound*, there were 9 kids who came up to play the sand blocks. After the concert, Phyllis told them they could come up and see the bells and all of them had a great time carefully ringing them.

After Sean's *How Great Thou Art* improvisation, a seven year old sitting in the front row said very softly, "That's so cool." Knowing hardly anyone heard it, Phyllis shared what he said with the energetic audience of 48.

After a relaxing breakfast with our host, we spent time Saturday morning at a coffee shop with free wifi trying to get some work done. Phyllis needed to work on the handbell area's November newsletter which is done online through an email service and then sent as an email in color with pictures and links to various websites, emails, and documents such as music lists and registration forms. As we were talking to the owner, he remembered David Goebel when he first started attending the church. As we were leaving, the owner was again apologizing for missing the concert and said he hoped to make it the next time we are there. Someone overheard him, figured out it had to be Ring Praise, and came out to introduce

himself. It was the pastor at the Wendell church who would be in Rigby for morning worship with us for pastor exchange Sunday and we were also going to be at his church Sunday afternoon.

On to St. Anthony!

Community Presbyterian Church, St. Anthony, Idaho

On Saturday, October 30, we arrived in St. Anthony in the afternoon after a very quick stop at Chesbro Music in Idaho Falls. Phyllis did find a couple of piano books to use as she plays at BSF.

As we were setting up, we discovered the church has 4 octaves of handbells and a large set chimes. This knowledge came in handy when we realized there was no way of softening the piano which was very loud even with Phyllis's microphone amplifying the bells. Our contact and hostess, Joan, commented that the piano is always quite loud and overpowering when there is a soloist. It is a beautiful Yamaha grand piano, but the acoustics in the sanctuary are very live making it difficult to control. So we took the foam pads for the bells and stacked them under the piano to soak up some of the sound. It wasn't very pretty, but worked extremely well. Several members commented on what a great solution! Joan is going to look for some heavy felt to tack under the piano to help soak up sound.

Before the concert they had a delicious potluck which was a great opportunity to visit with many members of the congregation. The church has a "Wonderful Wednesday" program with 20+ kids in grades 1 through 5. It starts after potato harvest.

About 35 people attended the concert. Singing during the Ring Along was beautiful with the acoustics of the sanctuary. Since they have chimes, Phyllis then gave a couple of suggestions how to easily use them in the community.

As we pulled into the local Chevron to gas up, a young attendant joyfully came out and pumped the gas and washed the windshield. Wow, such service! Phyllis did insist he take a tip.

Our hostess had a very large dog named Olie. We all enjoyed chatting after the concert and playing with and petting Olie. After a delicious breakfast casserole, we left at 8:15 am for the 10 am worship service in Rigby.

Community Presbyterian Church, Rigby, Idaho

Sunday morning, October 31, after a delicious breakfast casserole, we had a rainy 30 minute drive to Rigby and arrived around 8:45 am to set up for the 10:00 am worship service. When we opened the church door, we were greeted with the delicious smell of four kinds of chili being cooked. We were also greeted with the warm hospitality of those already there getting things ready for the chili meal after the service. This was pulpit exchange Sunday in the Kendall Presbytery where the pastors draw a church name out of a hat to see where they will be preaching. Jim Keegan, pastor at Wendell, drew Rigby. Since we had already made arrangements to do the service, he was there to help us in any way we wanted. We decided to have him read the narrations for each piece and do the prayers.

Thirty-two people were at the Spirit-filled worship service. Three kids learned about Zacchaeus during the children's time. Our costuming for the song brought lots of laughs and smiles.

After the service, one lady commented, "You have been my adrenaline for the day." Wow! We humbly said thanks and were so glad that our music and way of presenting the gospel touched her so much.

One of Sean's past students from the College of Idaho grew up in Swan Valley. Her mom heard via Facebook that we were in Rigby and drove from Swan Valley to hear us. Her daughter, Sarah, is now in Africa with the Peace Corps teaching students there. Sean has remained friends with her and was thrilled to see her mom.

A yummy chili feed was held downstairs in the fellowship hall following the service. This church building is typical of many of the older small churches we visit that are not handicap accessible therefore presenting challenges for many people. There are stairs up to the sanctuary, and the fellowship hall is downstairs. They do have a stair lift on each set of stairs, but it does make it harder for some to enjoy all the activities in the church.

We did have to leave fairly quickly after eating since we had a 3-1/2 hour drive to Wendell for a 4:30 pm concert. The pastor left about the same time since he needed to get back to his church in Wendell for our concert! We were very thankful the weather had cleared up some from our rainy drive earlier in the morning.

Living Waters Presbyterian Church, Wendell, Idaho

We arrived in Wendell around 3:30 pm after a calm drive from Rigby. The church building is quite new with easy access. Since we were there four years ago leading a worship service, they have added beautiful stained glass in the front on each side of the cross. The church is called Living Waters Presbyterian Church, and the windows have water flowing down.

They have both a piano and keyboard so Sean used the keyboard on *Zacchaeus* and *Breathe*, just like on our CD. He always has a good time experimenting with the sounds to find what he likes. Phyllis is never sure what she will hear until the concert.

The pastor had been in Rigby with us, so we asked him to again read the narrations. We normally do not ask this so the pastor can sit back and enjoy the concert, but since he had already experienced a lot of the pieces earlier and he was very willing to do whatever we needed, we took advantage of his offer.

Fifty-two people attended the concert and sang and rang loudly during the ring along. For *Glory Bound*, 12 youth came up and did the sand blocks. They appeared to be having a good time. Someone from Ontario that Sean and Phyllis know was visiting her family in Wendell. The whole family came to the concert.

There was a beautiful log queen bed in the lobby so we had to ask about it. It was a raffle to help pay down their mortgage and the winner was drawn that morning.

After the concert we went out to dinner with the pastor and his family and the couple that handled a lot of the arrangements with Phyllis and also ran the sound. We ate at the family restaurant that has awesome Basque bread. We had discovered the restaurant a few years ago and try to eat there when we go to Kendall Presbytery.

We then headed home thanking God for such a wonderful opportunity to share his love through the gift of His Son with so many people.

Valley Presbyterian Church, Hazelton, Idaho

What better way to start Advent than a concert? As we were setting up our October tour to Kendall Presbytery, Valley Presbyterian Church in Hazelton really wanted to host us, but there were schedule conflicts in the community that night so Pastor Kevin asked about Christmas. The afternoon of November 28 was open for both of us, and Ron could also join us and do the narrating.

The weather wasn't too bad as we were leaving Boise; it had snowed a little the day before, froze during the night so was slick in the morning, but was just wet shortly after noon. We received a call from Pastor Kevin checking if we were really coming because their weather was blowing and drifting snow and one road off the interstate to Hazelton closed. We were geared up for a concert and said of course we were coming. He told us which exit to use because it was always kept open.

There were some patches of snow and slush as we drove, but nothing bad. Once we got to Twin Falls the road deteriorated, but Hazelton was only another 20 miles. We made it just fine and were amazed at all the snow and drifts they had.

The warmth of the 16 who braved the weather and attended the concert was in such contrast to the cold and blowing conditions outside. They were so appreciative of us coming and wished more had attended. We talked about going back in the spring when the weather improves! The highlight for the kids was at the end of the concert when it was announced that there was no school in the morning.

While Phyllis sets up the bells, Sean sets up the display boards and CDs. Pastor Kevin found two card tables to use and they decided to leave a gap between them to make the "table" larger and cover it with a tablecloth. As one boy was looking and leaning just a little on the "table," of course he was in the area with nothing underneath, lost his balance and fell bringing everything down on top of him. We reassured him and his dad that it was not his fault!

The church has a beautiful "new to them" grand piano. The gorgeous sound of it coupled with Sean's original *Christmas Joy* brought sighs of joy when he finished. They also have received a Technics theatre organ, a smaller version of the one Sean has. After the concert he spent time showing their organist how to use the various features of it. This was one of those serendipities we love to have as we visit small churches.

After snacks, we headed for home. The westbound interstate was in much better condition than the eastbound side for which we were very thankful. This was a perfect start to our Christmas season as we share God's gift to us through our music.