

Ring Praise Music Ministry

We began our Eastern Oregon Tour by heading to Pendleton Thursday afternoon, March 31, and stayed with Jack and Terral Schut. Jack is the pastor at Tutuilla Presbyterian Church and worked on the arrangements for our concert Friday, April 1 at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Pendleton. It was authorized by the legislature in 1983 as the first medium-security adult male correctional facility established outside Marion County. Until its conversion to a prison, EOCI had been a state mental hospital, with most of the buildings originally constructed in 1912-13. The first inmates were received on June 24, 1985. The 1600-bed facility is Pendleton's fourth largest employer. It is located on the edge of town, next to railroad tracks with Blue Mountain Community College just up the hill from it.

The chaplain had a few questions regarding Phyllis's equipment list that she sent in advance, such as the need for the clothes rack, funny hats, sunglasses and train whistle, but everything was approved! He was anticipating questions from the commanding officer which he did get and then was able to answer.

The chapel was beautiful with a domed ceiling with gorgeous murals of various sizes painted by the inmates. The room was acoustically very live which made it difficult to hear distinctly the fast notes on the piano. When they sang *You Are My All in All*, the sound was incredible. For the chorus after the second verse, Sean stopped playing and the beautiful blend of their voices in harmony was amazing. The sound reverberated and filled the room.

One of the guys who came had heard us when he was at Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario. He had been telling all his friends now at Pendleton to come to the concert. The 50 in attendance were very energetic and engaged in the music. A few were softly singing when we played *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* and *Amazing Grace*. During *How Great Thou Art*, one was mouthing the words and another was looking up with his arms raised in awe of our great God. One of the first questions was when are we coming back. We promised we will definitely return.

Afterward, the chaplain told us that we had a "first." It was the first time some guards and nurses wanted to listen and stood with the door partly open so they could hear.