



Contributed photo

Phyllis Tincher on handbells and Sean Rogers on keyboards are the Ring Praise Music Ministry. They will perform several free faith-based concerts in the area Dec. 1-3.

Series of free concerts to ring in holiday season with handbells, keyboards

By TAMMY MALGESINI
East Oregonian

A pair of musicians will truly ring in the holiday season as Ring Praise Music Ministry shares the story of Jesus Christ through music and scripture.

Hosted by the Presbytery of Eastern Oregon, the Christmas concerts feature Phyllis Tincher on handbells and Sean Rogers on keyboards. The free performances are:

•Saturday, Dec. 1 at 2:30 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 201 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton.

•Sunday, Dec. 2 at 11:30 a.m., Grace Presbyterian Church, 703 S. Main St., Milton-Freewater.

•Monday, Dec. 3 at 6:30 p.m., Faith Presbyterian Church, 1005 S.E. Ninth St., Hermiston.

In addition to the free public performances, Tincher and Rogers will present a program at Two Rivers Correctional Institution in Umatilla. Although that concert isn't open to the general public, people are invited to lift the performance in prayer in hopes that inmates who attend will be drawn closer to God.

The musicians first performed together in 2002 when Tincher was invited to ring handbells at a Boise church where Rogers served as the accompanist.

That launched their music ministry of playing hymns and contemporary praise songs during concerts in the greater Boise area. Expanding their outreach, Tincher and Rogers began traveling to small communities in Eastern Oregon and Idaho.

As the Ring Praise Music Ministry, Tincher and Rogers have released three albums featuring collections of hymn arrangements. In addition, their Christmas CD, "Come to the Manger," includes 15 traditional and contemporary holiday songs.

Tincher began solo ringing in

1997 and directed her first handbell choir in La Grande. For many years during the holiday season, Tincher brought three octaves of Schulmerich handbells and played for The Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign near her home in Nampa, Idaho.

Further sharing of her talents, Tincher has served as a guest conductor at festivals and teaches adult and youth handbell classes at conferences and workshops.

An Ontario native, Rogers tours extensively as a collaborative pianist with vocalists and instrumentalists throughout the United States. As a solo concert artist, he demonstrates skill in improvisation in multiple genres, including classical, jazz and Latin idioms on both piano and organ. Rogers has been called a "virtuosic performer who makes music come alive" for people of all ages.

In addition to a handful of solo CDs, Rogers has a concert DVD and has played on numerous albums with other artists. Also, he has directed more than 90 opera and musical theater productions.

Sonology Music has published four arrangements by Tincher and Rogers, which can be heard at www.sonologymusic.com/music-search. They received praise for their rendition of "Silent Night" by Kevin McChesney, an award-winning composer and arranger.

"One of the finest writing duos in the business brings us a fresh, beautiful take on a traditional favorite," McChesney said. "If you don't think anything new or more lovely could be said about the much-arranged 'Silent Night,' treat yourself to this wonderful setting — it'll change your mind."

A nonprofit organization, donations to Ring Praise are tax-deductible. Also, their CDs are available for purchase. For more information, visit www.ringpraiseministry.org.

Tragedy survivors reflect on Thanksgiving after year of loss

By TAMARA LUSH
Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Mass shootings, hurricanes, fires — for many people across the nation, 2018 was a year of loss unlike any other. As the quintessentially American holiday of Thanksgiving approaches, some will abandon traditions or choose not to mark the holiday at all. Others will celebrate new friendships forged in the wake of tragedy.

Here's how some of the survivors will spend Thanksgiving: 'A hard week'

Fred Guttenberg will start his Thanksgiving morning at a cemetery.

His 14-year-old daughter, Jaime, was one of 17 people killed in the Valentine's Day massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

"This Thanksgiving is about loss," said Guttenberg who will visit Jaime's grave with his wife, his son and their two dogs. "It's my first Thanksgiving without my daughter, and we're not going to leave her out of it."

After that, the family has no plans to celebrate or eat a turkey dinner. None of their past traditions seems appropriate. Jaime loved the holidays, her dad said. She looked forward to decorating the house and helping her mom with the cooking.

"This is going to be a hard week," Guttenberg said in a phone interview. He's been a vocal advocate for stricter gun laws and started Orange Ribbons For Jaime, an organization that raises money for gun reform and for causes that were important to his daughter, including animal welfare and dance scholarships.

The grieving father made national headlines when he was one of the first parents to speak out after the shooting at a candlelight vigil. During his gut-wrenching recap of his last moments with Jaime, he worried whether he had remembered to say "I love you" as she rushed out the door for school.

"I sent her to school yesterday. She was supposed to be safe. My job is to protect my children," he told the crowd.

Now, nine months later, Guttenberg says his family is facing a season of firsts without Jaime, whom he described as the energy in the room. He had a request for families who have not lost any loved ones to gun violence.

"Remember those who maybe aren't there this holiday and be part of the change that needs to happen in this country so it doesn't happen to them next."

'We must not forget'

Rabbi Jeffrey Myers had just



AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar

A makeshift memorial of flowers rests on bushes outside the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.



AP Photo/David Goldman

Hector Morales, left, is hugged by friend Matthew Goss, a fisherman, as they reunite after Hurricane Michael which destroyed Morales' home and Goss' boat in Mexico Beach, Fla.

begun Shabbat service at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh when the shooting began. Now, less than three weeks after the deadliest attack on Jews in the United States, he plans to celebrate Thanksgiving and encouraged others to do so too.

"People are looking forward to Thanksgiving because there is a lot to be thankful for," he said.

The day of the attack, Oct. 27, "will remain a constant wound," Myers said of the shooting that killed 11 people. But in his weekly blog post to his congregants, he wrote: "For me, just being able to sit in the same room with my family is immensely rewarding, something I was not certain I would ever have the opportunity to do again. That is why something so simple is so powerful and meaningful for me."

However, that is not enough, Myers said. He urged people to be aware of the less fortunate, those in the community who need food and shelter. And he suggested "one simple, yet meaningful gesture" that would make an impact. He asked people to count the number of friends and rela-

tives gathered around their tables at Thanksgiving and donate that sum to charities that feed the hungry. People could also give more, or less.

"It is called tzedakah for an excellent reason: The root word, tzedek, means 'righteousness.' It is the right thing to do, and you know that. The needs of others did not disappear on Oct. 27. They remained, and we must not forget them."

Facebook angels

Athenia Dunham and daughter Natalie will spend Thanksgiving at the home of a woman they met less than two weeks ago, surrounded by new friends. Athenia calls them "angels."

The Dunhams barely escaped their home in Paradise, California, on Nov. 8 as a deadly wildfire swept through. They were awoken by their pitbull, Luna, and flames were already burning the home next door. They made it out and to a hotel in nearby Redding, paying for the room with money from a homeowner's insurance payout.

On a normal Thanksgiving, Athenia said, she would be cooking for a few friends and preparing to "pig out and veg." But this year the holidays are the last thing on her mind.

"To be honest, I really don't even know what day it is — it feels like this just happened yesterday," she said Tuesday.

But an army of super volunteers who connected via Facebook have come together to help give the two women as normal a Thanksgiving as possible.

Beyond providing a meal, the volunteers have provided the mother and daughter with clothing, gift cards and a laptop computer so Natalie can keep up with her education. One volunteer even did their laundry.

"They're our angels — and angels have been with us since we left our driveway," Athenia said.

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