

Comfort and Joy

By Amy Rollins

What will I remember most about the year 2020? So much chaos, too many worries, lots of sanitizing! All the more reason to be thankful for the music in my life, and particularly, the music I make with handbells.

How fortunate I am to have access to handbells, now and throughout the pandemic. During those cold, uncertain days of March, I readied my favorite Easter hymn as a belltree solo, and recorded it for my church's Zoom services. Ringing from the comfort of my living room, I played *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* many times until it sounded just right. There was no

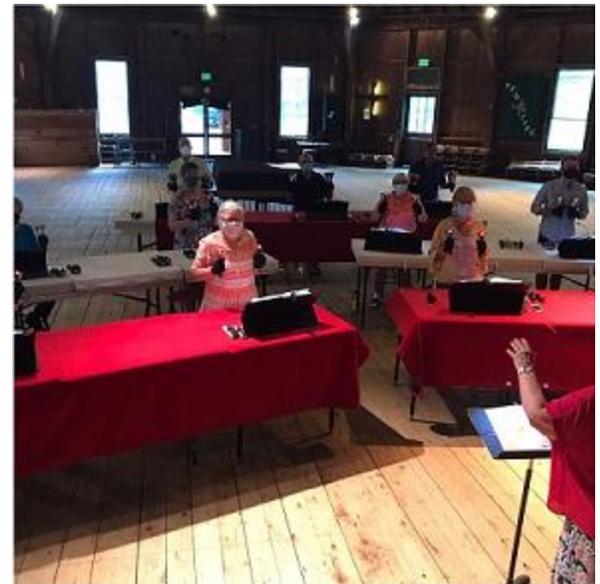
adrenaline rush that comes with live performance, just pure satisfaction.

On a very hot day in June, I relished the opportunity to ring in person, albeit socially-distanced and masked, with the Temple Bells of Ocean Park, Maine. At four different sessions throughout the summer, Sue Evans and ringers from many walks of life proved that ringing as a group can work at this time, as long as excellent planning, common sense and respect prevails.

My experience with Temple Bells gave me confidence to offer similar opportunities to my own handbell choir, Penobscot Bay Ringers. Six of us have been meeting regularly since July, making great progress on Christmas music for a mid-December concert that still sits on our performance calendar. The likelihood of the concert happening this year is not really the point; what counts is that we are keeping the music alive and working toward a common goal.

When my church decided

to stage an outdoor worship service at the end of August, I began preparing Linda Lamb's solo arrangement of *Morning Has Broken* for belltree. I struggled a bit trying to figure out my ideal bell string configuration. Not wanting to waste time, I picked up the phone and called Linda Lamb. How easy it was to connect with a handbell rock star! Linda was so helpful



and gracious to work with, and she gave me permission to post my recorded version on YouTube.

In my role as Area 1 Communications Director, I have enjoyed receiving recordings of handbell solos and creative collaborations from handbell musicians all over New England, which I have shared on the Area 1 Facebook page in these past six months. Please keep them coming!

Now it strikes me, clear as a bell: if everyone in this world could be as sensible, caring and considerate as handbell people, we might have this virus under control by now. I'm sure you all join me in looking forward to mask-free ringing; until then, I will continue to find comfort and joy in our musical art.

Amy Rollins lives in Lincolnville, Maine. She is a member of Choral Bells handbell choir of the First Congregational Church of Camden, Artistic Director of Penobscot Bay Ringers, and Communications Director for Area 1 Handbell Musicians of America. She can be reached at communications.area1@handbellmusicians.org.