

Notes from NEW HAMPSHIRE



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Hi, all!!!

We hope that you, your family, and your friends are all staying safe and healthy during this unprecedented time. Losing our bell time and social time all at once has been surreal and hard and strange.

While we are all itching to get back together and ring again, we must continue to remain vigilant and do what we can to help stop the spread and flatten the curve. Here in NH, governmental guidelines have for the most part mitigated community spread. Unfortunately, our long-term elder care facilities have been the hardest hit. We

send our sympathy to everyone whose lives this pandemic has touched—those who've personally been ill and especially those who have lost community members, friends, and family.

While we all try to keep ourselves and each other safe and healthy, we've seen many people around NH participating in the various virtual musical endeavors, such as the Splice project. On the one hand, we're excited to see the results—but it's been a challenge, because not everyone who wants to participate has access to bells. Many who would have liked to join in the virtual ensembles haven't been able to because their bells are locked away in churches and other buildings that are closed for the duration. Others have picked up other instruments (or even random housewares) to participate in groups like the Nobell ensemble.

It appears that many churches in NH will not open for live services until the end of the summer. So, what is happening out there, and what does the future look like?

Right now, groups would be finishing their Easter Season in church and starting their Spring Concert Series. Most groups "go dark" for the summer and do not rehearse or perform. Many New Hampshire ringers go to Area 1 or National events, some of which have been canceled, and some of which are currently being figured out. This is usually the time when directors start their planning for the fall. Instead, many of us are getting together on Zoom to at least keep us all connected with our various groups. Being able to see the faces of others besides those within the confines of four walls is a treat for many. Some groups are also doing fundraising to help their local communities through donations.

As far as the future... Once we are able to meet in groups again, we believe that handbells may lend themselves, with some creative thought, to social distancing guidelines. Ringers, unlike singers, can mask up, and directors can arrange tables and bells so that the musicians can keep 6' apart. Many groups require ringers to wear gloves, and bells can be easily wiped down.

How fast or slow NH opens back up to what will be the "new normal" will dictate rehearsals and concerts in the fall and winter. Directors will have to have many different options in their mind to fit into what that "new normal" will look like. Does the group play more small ensemble type music to keep the number of ringers on a performance stage down? Does the group record their performances to post on social media instead of performing live in a venue? As the next several months play out, we will get a clearer picture of what September will look like for handbells in NH.

Until then, please reach out to us with any questions or suggestions you may have. We will do our best to answer them and help you plan your "new normal" as this whole situation involves.

Until we meet again in person, airbell on!!!

~Hildi (Hilary and Heidi)