

Notes from NEW HAMPSHIRE



Hilary Justice Heidi Prior

NH State Co-Chairs

nh.area1@handbellmusicians.org

Hello, wonderful bell people, and welcome to Fall! We're all very (very!) excited to be back at the tables and preparing for autumn's church services, the Oktobellfest in Rhode Island, and holiday concerts, small and large.

Of course back-to-school season means reports on how we spent our summers...

The very second it got warm enough to ring outside last Spring, the Granite State Ringers convened in Director Joan Fossum's driveway up in Concord. As we'd done for our holiday outdoor ringing, we split into

two groups of six (to allow for social distancing, etc.), but very quickly realizing that we were all almost fully vaccinated, we clung together (it had been soooo long) for a double-sextet and prepared a summer "Americana" concert, including one for her neighborhood as a thank you for hearing us rehearsing in her garage/driveway for all but the coldest pandemic months.

As would become a theme, the driveway concert happened on the hottest day of the summer (so far), but that stopped neither ringers nor audiences from setting up and settling in under the pop-ups and parasols for some fun music. The concert date marked our youngest ringer's "fully vaccinated" date, and for the first time since this wild epic began, the masks came off, and you could see the smiles. The neighborhood loved it! And we reprised on the next two hottest days of the summer outdoors at Brookside (also hot) and St. Paul's (even hotter) in Manchester. Camp chairs, sweltering, and great music. What more could you ask for?



"Americana" Driveway Concert

At the St. Paul's concert, GSR marked the retirement of founding member Sharon Parker. Sharon contributed so much to GSR over the years—her musicianship and dedication will be missed. Thank you, Sharon!

In July, ringers from Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island drove in to join their New Hampshire friends for the NH Summer Fun Ring with directors Joan Fossum, Kandia Watson, and Hilary Justice. Our venue was an open lakeside pavilion with a gorgeous view.



NH Summer Fun Ring

Late summer also saw the return of the last of the church handbell choirs that hadn't returned to the tables last Spring. We're sure there are more, but we know that the Heritage Ringers at Exeter UCC and the adult handbell choir at Lee Congregational are overjoyed to be back rehearsing and ringing for services. Lee recently celebrated the retirement of Music Director Sally Barney (she's rejoined the bell choir—welcome back!) and welcomed new Music Director Sandi Thomas. Sandi has years' experience with vocal choirs, but Lee is her first handbell group. Welcome to handbells, Sandi! We're delighted you're here. ☺ At the first rehearsal, long-time Hayley Mills dropped in to join in for one last rehearsal before leaving to study abroad in Germany. Hayley's mother Karen is joining the Lee bell choir as a brand-new ringer. We wish them both good luck and a great year!

Meanwhile, the Granite State Ringers held a day long retreat up in Concord to start working together for Oktobellfest and their holiday concert season. Your faithful correspondent, at least, could hardly sleep the night before, being so excited at the thought of finally ringing all together. For the first time since March, 2020, all the bells came out (what a workout for the bass ringers--there might've been ibuprofen involved the next day).



Fall 2021 Granite State Ringers

What a long (strange) trip since we were last together. Kind of an emotional moment.

Handbell ringers around New Hampshire are settling in to something that feels more like it used to – starting to work holiday music in the last of the summer swelter. Feeling pretty great to finally have visions of handbell festivity to look forward to!

Drop us an email at nh.area1@handbellmusicians.org and let us know what you and your groups are up to. And send us pics! We'd love to meet more of you, digitally or in person.

Until next time, be well, stay safe, and ring pretty!

Hilary Justice and Heidi Prior (NH Co-chairs)