

Notes from MASSACHUSETTS



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Hi, everyone!

I'm your new Massachusetts State Chair (I began in this role at the end of September). Sue Lee has definitely left some big shoes to fill, but I'm looking forward to getting to know more of you throughout the state and serving as the liaison between all of you and the Area 1 board!

A little about me: I'm currently the director of music at Faith Lutheran Church in Andover, MA, where I'm privileged to have an adult bell choir and a children's handchime choir that are both thriving. I grew up playing piano and organ and doing a lot of choral singing, and my college degree is in Piano Performance. However, I had never even heard of handbells until 2006, when I became the organist at a church with a three-octave bell choir and was asked to sub with them. A couple of years later, when I first moved to Massachusetts, I accepted the position of music director at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Holliston, where (again) there was a bell choir that I was not responsible for directing but

with which I was asked to ring. I should give a huge shout-out here to Kathy Murcko, handbell director at Christ the King, who put up with a lot of initial cluelessness from me but was ultimately responsible for hooking me on bells. When I moved to my current position at Faith in 2011, I was only ready to take over Faith's bell choir thanks to everything I had picked up from Kathy (including the realization that I should join the Guild!). Since then, I have learned a lot at HMA-sponsored events; I was thrilled to play with the Bronze Orphan Choir at Festival Conference this past summer, and I'm even more excited to help ensure that bell activity in Massachusetts continues to thrive!

"Continues" is certainly the right verb to use here. Not only was Massachusetts "where it all began" (we all know about Margaret Shurcliff and her ringers on Beacon Hill, right?), but it is still a venue where handbell choirs are remarkably active! This past fall, at the Area 1 skill-building workshops, over a third of the 95+ attendees came from Massachusetts, although only one of the five workshops was hosted in our state. Looking ahead to January, we are also the "host state" for Area 1's annual Winter Workshop, which will again be held at UMass Amherst on January 30 and February 1. More info on this exciting event can be found elsewhere in this issue, but the link to register is at <http://area1.handbellmusicians.org/winter-workshop-2020/>. I'm looking forward to attending, and I hope to see many of you there!

Of course, perhaps the most important annual state-wide event that is offered in Massachusetts is the MA Spring Ring. We are arguably the most consistent of the New England states in offering a Spring Ring, and one of my goals as state chair is to see attendance at this wonderful event grow! Here is the information you should know about MA Spring Ring at this point:

- **When:** Saturday, April 25, 2020: 10 AM to 4:30 PM (like last year, the concert will be at 3 PM, allowing those of you from far-flung corners of the state to get home before bedtime!)
- **Where:** Tewksbury Memorial High School, 320 Pleasant Street, Tewksbury, MA
- **Registration Fee:** \$15 per ringer
- **Clinician:** Diane Burke
- **Repertoire:**
 1. Massed - Glad Hearts, Rejoice! - Michael Mazzatenta - AG35379 - Level 2+
 2. Massed - The Church's One Foundation - arr. Robert James Lamb - AG35380 - Level 2
 3. Tins - Morning Glory - Brenda Austin - AG23056 -- Level 2-
 4. Coppers - When I Survey the Wondrous Cross - arr. Michael Kastner and Kevin McChesney - JHS9179 - Level 3

It's never too soon to start preparing this music. My church's bell choir played "The Church's One Foundation" on Oct. 27 (the weekend on which we Lutherans celebrate "Reformation Sunday") and found it to be both accessible and incredibly joyous! "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" will be particularly useful for church choirs during Lent. And for those of you leading bell choirs that are not church-affiliated, "Glad Hearts, Rejoice" and "Morning Glory" are original compositions that can easily be used in either sacred or secular settings!

Lastly, 'tis the season for our community choirs to share their winter concerts. We are so privileged to have three different bronze-level choirs in our state (Back Bay Ringers, Merrimack Valley Ringers, and New England Ringers). You can find their respective concert schedules at <http://www.backbayringers.org/events/>, <https://mvringers.org/upcoming/>, and <http://newenglandringers.org/>. As I consistently tell the groups that I direct, observing bronze-level ringers is the best way to become inspired to reach a higher level of ringing for oneself. These concerts showcase the finest handbell musicians that Massachusetts has to offer; I hope you'll consider attending one near you!

I'm looking forward to meeting more of you at upcoming bell events. Until then, please feel free to drop me a note at ma.area1@handbellmusicians.org if you have any questions, concerns, or good news from your bell choir to share! Happy ringing!