

# Notes from NEW HAMPSHIRE



Hilary Kovar Justice and Heidi Prior  
NH Co Chairs

Hey, everyone.

Here in New Hampshire, we’re all celebrating creative ways to stay connected, to support our communities, and to get back to ringing however we can.

Since most church groups traditionally take the summer off, and since there are still so many questions about what can and will happen in the future, many of our late-summer notes come from what members of the Granite State Ringers are doing (this is the community ensemble Heidi and I ring with) as well as various things we’ve seen shared on Facebook. (NH ringers, help us not have to Facebook-stalk you for content! ☺ We welcome submissions, photos, ideas, questions, etc.! Email provided

below... .)

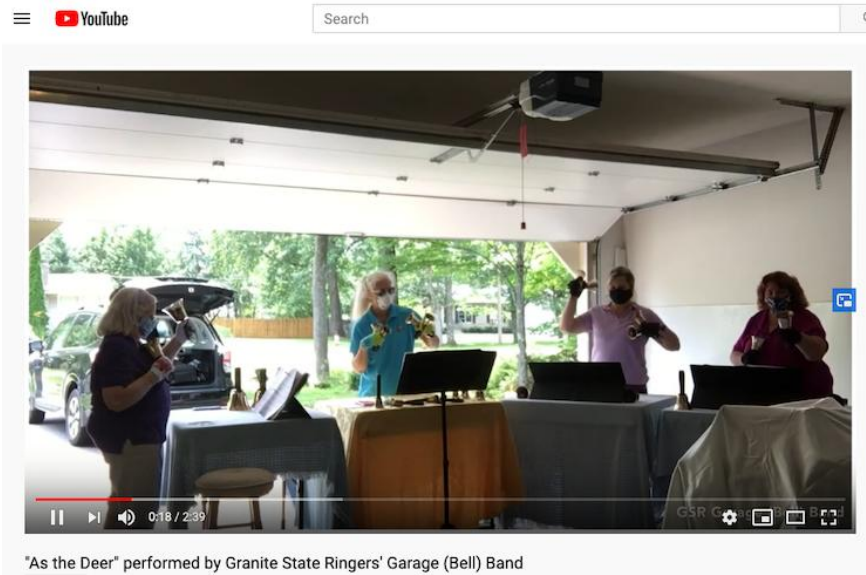
In response to the sudden chaos that hit this Spring, Granite State Ringers’ members each created a square for a community quilt, which we’re raffling off (drawing in two days, as of this writing), with proceeds to support the New Hampshire Food Bank ([www.nhfoodbank.org](http://www.nhfoodbank.org)). Each square represents something one ringer missed, was encouraged by, or hoped for. This project was the brainchild of Music Director and former NH State Chair Joan Fossum; the quilt was assembled and quilted by the talented and generous Rhonda O’Keefe.



*GSR Community Quilt*

Some ringers who have had access to bells have started to form masked-up, socially-distanced small ensembles, recording music that can be incorporated into their various churches’ online services. Heidi and I have been ringing with Joan Fossum and GSR President Debbie Young in Joan’s garage. Joan’s husband Jeremy Cooper, another GSR ringer, decided we were having too much fun, so he’s joined in, as well.

Dan Moore named us the GSR Garage (Bell) Band. (Thanks, Dan!)



Although there’ve been some amazing opportunities for vocal choirs to meet and record pieces using various digital techniques and apps, this has so far proven beyond the bell-access or tech-capabilities of most handbell choirs. Some are meeting online for social time (and to try to figure out what’s next, which is weighing on all of our minds); still others are – carefully – getting together outdoors.

The Exeter UCC/Congregational Heritage Ringers recently hosted a small going-away party for one of their long-time ringers, Lori Cunningham, whose move to Ohio to be closer to her grandchildren got delayed for the pandemic but is happily rescheduled for August. (We were only this close & without masks for the 20 seconds it took to take the picture for Lori.)



*Members of the Heritage Ringers, Exeter UCC/Congregational*  
*Back row: Karen Campbell, Jan Bilodeau, Hilary Justice, Mary Anne Totten*  
*Seated: Terrie Harman (Director), Anna Greenlaw, and Lori Cunningham*

Other churches are finding ways to meet – carefully – often outside, masked-up, and socially distanced. On July 29, the Lee Congregational Church held a small outdoor Vespers service, which incorporated “Dona Nobis Pacem” and “Simple Gifts” on bell tree. The service brought a beautiful moment of peace and stillness to everyone who attended (and everyone who walked by).



*The view from the bell tree at Lee Congregational Church*

Sue Chamberlin has been posting beautiful Acapella app videos to the Handbell groups on Facebook, and several NH ringers attended and contributed to virtual National this summer, including Carlene Rosenberg, Joan Fossum, and Rhonda O’Keefe. Huge kudos to the HMA for a successful pivot to virtual!

So many people have said that hearing bells again has brought them hope, the comfort of the familiar in a strange time, and inspiration that we’ll all get through this craziness somehow.

What are your groups doing and planning? Any suggestions, thoughts, or concerns? What are missing the most and most looking forward to?

Drop us a line at [nh.area1@handbellmusicians.org](mailto:nh.area1@handbellmusicians.org) – we’d love to hear from you!

Until next time,

Hilary Justice and Heidi Prior

NH State Co-chairs