

# Notes from MAINE



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Plans for the Festival Conference have been finalized and registration opened on Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>. This year, the location is University of Hartford, June 27 – 30. The guest conductors are Kevin McChesney and Cathy Moglebust and the incredible *Forte Handbell Quartet* will be performing at the opening concert.

I hope some of our Maine choirs or individual ringers will be able to attend. If you need information, just contact me.

As part of this Thursday–Sunday event, each New England state is asked to bring a basket full of goodies which represent their state. So for those of us living in Maine, the goodies might include a barley lobster lollipop or a tin, painted with blueberries, or perhaps something from LL Bean. Each of the state baskets will be displayed in a location near the exhibit area and will be raffled off during the event. So I am looking for some donations to put in our Maine basket. So far I have a beautiful basket (15" x 12" x 10") made by

"Pack Baskets of Maine" and donated by Mya Dundzila. Also in the basket we have a lobster- rope-doormat and a balsam-filled-draft-stopper.

If your bell choir might be willing to send me something for the basket, that would be wonderful. You can send it to my address: PO Box 7295, Ocean Park, Me 04063 or if you are local to Old Orchard Beach, I could pick it up. But please, no live lobsters.



## Survey

Thanks to the fifteen bell choirs who responded to the demographics survey that was conducted in February. Maine had the most responses of any of the New England states. Well done! I do not have the compilation of results as yet, but am looking forward to the information it will provide.

## MSR20

The Maine Spring Ring 2020 committee has been actively working on plans for our next Maine event. The members of the committee include: Gail Kelly, Laura Begenwald, Deb Hillman, Dan Evans, Amy Rollins, Kim Visbaras and myself, Sue Evans. If there is anyone who might like to be part of this decision making group, please let me know. All ringers and directors are welcome.

Our first task was to select a date, a location and a guest conductor. We have reserved the Auburn Middle School in Auburn, Me, which is the same location as our last Maine Spring Ring. The facilities were great for our 2018 event and the location of some nice hotels was convenient for those who like to stay overnight, and also convenient for our guest conductor. We have narrowed the field of conductors to two and will let you know who it will be as soon as the date is confirmed. Finding a date has been our most difficult task. With Palm Sunday, Easter, and the beginning and ending of school vacation, all occurring in April 2020, we had to look at either the end of March or the beginning of May. Will let you know when finalized.

My best,  
Sue Evans, Maine State Chair  
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## Membership Decline

An interesting article appeared in the March 2, 2019 Kennebec Journal regarding declining memberships in area organizations. Featured in the story was the Maine State Grange, The Valley Grange No, 144, The Ancient Ones of Maine, and the Winthrop Area Handbell Ringers. Abigail Austin writes in her article that many members of the Grange are holding multiple positions as officers and see their particular groups in a declining trend.

The Ancient Ones of Maine according to Austin is a history club that does demonstrations. They would like to see more members participate in their reenactments but attracting youth away from electronic devices can be a challenge.

The Winthrop Area Ringers are a group of handbell ringers whose numbers dropped from 12 ringers down to 8. Finding rehearsal times is difficult because the youth are in many afterschool activities and the current ringers whose average age is 72, do not like to drive at night. Laura Begenwald, the group's director talked about the struggles of preparing for multiple concerts with fewer ringers. Ginger Smith who plays the lower notes is now covering 3 positions. We hope that the good work of these and other groups can continue to find ways for their important work to thrive and flourish.