

# Notes from the CHAIR



Hello Area 1,

In the last Fundamental Tone, I mentioned that my husband Chuck and I both love to travel and that we both play handbells. I wrote this piece for our Merrimack Valley Ringers Blog, and because of cabin fever, I thought this would be a great piece to share with the wider handbell audience.

Chuck and I have managed to combine our dual loves of handbells and travel on many wonderful trips and plan to continue doing so, once travel becomes safe again. In an ideal world, where money and time present no obstacles, we would travel every month to the far reaches of the world, and playing handbells gives us the perfect opportunity to do just that while seeing the world. Come with us as we plan our dream year of traveling and ringing -- and given the year we have had, we need this, even if it is just a fantasy.

Let's start our year off with a quick weekend trip in **January** to western Massachusetts for the Area 1 Winter Workshop, featuring two intensive ringing tracks for handbell musicians who want to stretch their ringing skills. As a bonus, Amherst in the wintertime is beautiful.

Next, in late **February** we head to New Bern, North Carolina for [Distinctly Bronze - East](#), a Handbell Musicians of America national event. We purchase our music and receive our bell assignments months in advance and spend hours practicing on our own to be ready to play with some of the most advanced ringers in the country and the world. In addition to playing challenging and beautiful handbell compositions, we get to spend time with handbell friends from across the country whom we have met over the years at Distinctly Bronze and other events.



In **March**, we head to Clackamas, Oregon for [Coppers Classic](#), run by Area 10 of the Handbell Musicians of America. Like Distinctly Bronze, musicians purchase their own music and learn their parts on their own before getting together as a group for rehearsals and a final concert. Organizers provide detailed feedback to participants during and after the event.

We will stay local and attend state Spring Rings in **April**. Each year, our state chairs put together an amazing day of ringing and workshops. In Festival Conference years, it also gives groups an opportunity to practice the music we will be ringing as a massed choir. These events are always a good opportunity to ring and to socialize with our local handbell friends throughout New England.



Our favorite trip of the year happens in **May**, when we travel to the Tuscan region of Italy with [Resonate Tours](#). It is open to people of all skill levels, and spouses are welcome to come along and enjoy sightseeing, food and other adventures. Again, you get your music ahead of time, and practice on your own before coming together for two days of final rehearsals before heading out on tour. Those two days aren't all work... we always enjoy a cooking class at a cooking school in the mountains near Lucca, as well as local sightseeing and plenty of gelato. The tour focuses on traveling to lesser known regions of Tuscany, where our audiences often know very little English, and don't usually see a lot of tourists. More importantly, Resonate Tours treats each meal as a culinary adventure, so you can be rest assured that you are

eating authentic and unique Italian meals cooked to perfection. I've even started learning Italian so that I can feel more comfortable speaking with audience members after the concerts.

Let's join up with [Witte Travel](#) in **June** for a handbell festival in Poland, The Czech Republic, and Slovakia. In 2019, we travelled to Spain with this group, under the direction of Deborah Rice. We played concerts in some of the most famous landmark churches in Spain to standing-room-only crowds every evening. During the day we took in some of the most beautiful scenery you can imagine, and tours of historical and architecturally important buildings throughout the country.



In **July**, it's time to attend [National Seminar](#)! Occurring July 13-17, 2021 in Phoenix, Arizona, National Seminar is Handbell Musicians of America's annual event for all handbell musicians. The four-day event offers classes and activities for directors, ringers, educators, worship leaders, and composers. It also features two amazing concerts every day by handbell choirs from the region that audition for the opportunity. In 2019, we traveled to St. Louis along with several other members of Area 1 – Jean Degan, Mya Dunzilla, Sue Lee, Karen Leonard, Amy Rollins, Carlene Ruesenberg, Susan Schulz, Jennifer Stack, and Kim Whitehead, Sue Wilber, and Gina Williams.

**August** brings us the International Symposium, which takes place in even years, and is held in a different country each year. In 2022, the International Symposium will be held in Nashville, Tennessee! In **September** we take a break, since that is when community and church choirs start back with rehearsals, and it's time to focus on learning our new music for the fall.



In **October**, we head to the suburbs of London, for [UK Bronze](#)! Four fun filled days with Fred Gramann, ringing beautiful music with ringers from across the United Kingdom, plus a few friendly faces flown in from the US. The event is modeled after Distinctly Bronze, and there is always plenty of time built in for sight-seeing and a show. In 2018, Sue Chamberlin and Holly Cerullo joined us, and we saw The Book of Mormon in London's theatre district.

Join us for another Distinctly Bronze event in **November**, this time in the west! [Distinctly Bronze West](#) takes place each year in Portland, Oregon. You will need to audition for this event, unless you've attended a previous Distinctly Bronze event, but again, it is totally worth it. Portland is lovely this time of year.

That brings us to the close of our year, where we will enjoy attending the concerts put on by the many community choirs and local church groups in New England throughout **December**. And maybe, just maybe... we will pop over to France for Christmas, and attend Christmas Eve services at the American Church in Paris, where Fred Gramann directs the church handbell choir, and has been known to arrange a new handbell composition written specially for that night.

Safe Travels to all! I can't wait to see you at a Handbell Musicians of America event, or an upcoming concert, and learn about where handbell travel will take you.



Lisa Arnold  
Area 1 Chair