

# Notes from EDUCATION LIAISON



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Six months ago, my world closed in. One by one, everything I was involved in was cancelled or postponed. That St Patrick's Day event? Cancelled. Church choir rehearsal? Cancelled. School? Also cancelled. Handbell rehearsals, cancelled as well. Oh, and you're going to take all of your office equipment home with you because we're closing that too.

What?!

I have So Many Questions!

Now, time has passed and I have adjusted to a new type of 'normal'. This includes perfecting the art of eyebrow raising because nobody can read your facial cues in a mask. I've also made my fair share of banana bread and kept Amazon in

business. I have made up my mind that anything goes in this crazy year and shake my head daily in disbelief at news headlines.

But what happens to the music? Where are we as handbell musicians?

I've seen that videos have been made and broadcast on the internet. I know that some are trying to make rehearsals happen with social distance and masks. I've seen tents for outside ringing and garage walls as backdrops for small ensembles.

Here's what I also know. So many churches and cases of bells are locked away and not accessible. Schools have the weirdest schedules now and maybe can't even conceive of how to get a rehearsal together in person. Community groups are splitting in half so smaller ensembles can rehearse safely. Virtual concerts are being planned and live performances are only lightly penciled in.

We are bravely trying to soldier on knowing full well that any plan made might not come to fruition.

Here are the questions that remain: When can we safely gather to make music? When can we perform? Will people come out to see a performance? When/How can I get access to the bells? When will the churches be open? Can I begin to plan music for the holidays? How do we keep young ringers active? Can I even think about recruiting new members to join my choir?

And the biggest one: If people start to fill their musical void with other things, will they come back to handbells when it's safe to do so?

So, my thought is, let's talk about it. Let's act as a community of handbell musicians and find out some answers. Let's reach out to local handbell people in your area to discover what's going on and how it's getting done. Let's talk about new ways to think about how to make your handbell program work or keep your ringers connected.

Until things shift again, I ask, what are you doing?