

W I N T E R 2 0 2 0



The Peal

The Official Newsletter of the Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers

2020: A Year of Many Firsts

Following the very successful first-ever VIRTUAL ALGEHR AGM lead by **President Fiona**, we have two new VPs (North and South) - **Tammy-Jo Mortensen** and **Margaret Dunkerley** as well as a new Secretary, **Judy AtLee!**

Thanks to these great additions to your ALGEHR Board, our Guild will continue its important work of supporting and developing ongoing growth of handbell ringing in AB and especially during the pandemic which has changed everything about our lives.

Stay tuned to learn more about [our](#) new additions in future issues of the Peal.



Handbell Musicians of Canada Honourary Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

While the newly re-organized national organization that recently presented this prestigious award might require a little bit of background and history for some, its recipient certainly does not! None other than our dearly beloved **Alison Wood** – and if perhaps you are wondering, like some ALGEHR members, why this is such an appropriate recognition, please read the full citation on page 7 that accompanied this special presentation. And of course, THIS happened VIRTUALLY as well!

Save the date(s)!!!

COVID Christmas
Concerts

December 2020

Definitely a new one
for the books – how
will you celebrate?

Ring in the Season!

October 15-16,
2021

Visit algehr.org to
register!

IHS2022 Nashville

August 1-6, 2022

Visit
[handbellmusicians
ofcanada.ca](http://handbellmusicians
ofcanada.ca) for
more info

zoom

Presidential Pandemic Ponderings

Despite COVID-19 restrictions we did have a lovely summer and with perfect August and September weather were able to spend some time camping in Alberta and Saskatchewan and lots of time gardening. But the strange summer continues into a strange autumn. Now the outside gardening has finished, I keep wondering how I am going to cope without my dandelions, scarlet lily beetles (such nasty critters), leaf miners and mildew to draw my attention. And our bees, (a new enterprise, not without a few stings) – touch and go whether they will survive the Alberta winter despite warm wrapping in a Bee ~~Cosy~~. We keep finding dead bees in the snow around the hive which may not bode well. We also have a Northern flicker pecking at the Bee ~~Cosy~~ trying get a delicious free ~~insect~~ meal from inside the hive.

But there's always inside gardening and I have been playing around with some hydroponics. And note, if you look up hydroponics on the Internet, you will inevitably come up with websites on how to grow industrial quantities of cannabis which is not my intention. I purchased some very small delicate hydroponic glassware (*thank you Amazon, although I find when I buy from you, I cannot judge the size of things – I thought your hydroponic vases would be 30 cm tall rather than 5 cm tall*) and am cultivating parsnips among other things. Did you know that parsnips are incredibly difficult to grow from seed? Rummaging in the fridge one day, I noticed a couple of parsnips that had tiny ~~tiny~~ little shoots at the top. After two weeks in water the shoots have increased in size by 50%; now almost 0.5 cm long. Amazing! To ward off boredom I have also enrolled in a few online courses which I fear I will not complete. After our son completed his MA thesis on witchcraft and magic in the early Christian church (not exactly a career-launching topic) I decided that I would like to learn more about the New Testament and what was not included in it. The online course is 48 half-hour lectures: that's a solid 24 hours of instruction – like being an undergraduate again. I don't think I have the stamina, brainpower or attention span to get to the end of it!

Thanks to all of you who attended the ALGEHR Annual General Meeting last month. It was lovely to have so many engaged ringers online and the Board will follow up on all your suggestions that came out of the Open Forum. I also appreciated the interest and attention to the new Bylaws which have been more than a year in development, thanks to **Annie Hergott**, **Fiona Miller** and **Sharon Vogrinetz**. They are now with the Alberta Registry awaiting a final stamp of approval. We welcome three new Board members: **Judy AtLee** as Secretary, **Margaret Dunkerley** as Vice President South and **Tammy-Jo Mortensen** as Vice President North. Thank you to all Board members for volunteering your time and talents to the Guild. A special thank you to **Annie Hergott** who has now stepped down from the Board after I-don't-know-how-many-years and has been such an excellent mentor for many of us. Sincere thanks as well to outgoing VP South **Jayne Martin** for her service.

It's still a challenging time for bell choirs and with gathering restrictions still in place, Christmas services are going to be somewhat different this year. Whoever would have thought of a virtual pre-recorded Christmas Eve service? The Board is hoping to fill in some ringing gaps in the next few months with online webinars – anyone with suggestions for topics or willing to give a webinar, please let me know (president@algehr.org).

The Handbell Musicians of Canada (HMC) is a new national organization supporting handbell musicians across Canada. **Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin, Annie Hergott** and **Fiona Miller** were the provincial representatives on the HMC Interim Board. The new inaugural Board now includes several ALGEHR members: congratulations to **John Hooper, Cathy Koski, Jim Winslett** and **Kathie Zalasky**. Check out the [HMC](#) website, become a member (if not already) and meet all new Board members!

As always, thanks to **Emmy** for her skill and effort in assembling *The Peal* this month.

Fiona

Fiona Bamforth, President

P.S. Be sure to read my breaking news below with details on the last page!! Close-captioned in case of muffling due to my snazzy **Jubiloso!** mask made by Judy Allen and company!



COVID Capsules

So, normally at this time of year, most of our ensembles would be proudly proclaiming that they are ready for "a really BIG shoo" and concerned they don't want to peak too early....since things are definitely different this year, we asked some Albertan choirs what their COVID realities have been and here are some of their stories...

Resounding Joy – directed by Camille Ream, Fort Saskatchewan

We are blessed to have a large sanctuary so there is enough room for us to have a full choir and for ringers to social distance. We have been able to borrow an additional set of bells so we can ring full choir music at level 3 with no shared bells. Ringers are using tables or TV trays (if you remember what those are). Some tables have ~~foam~~ and some are covered in blankets. We have been ringing "comfort music" - selections that have been our favourite over the years such as "Grazioso" by Sherman and "Joyously Ringing" by Stephenson as well as adding accompaniment to the hymns in the absence of singing. We are blessed to have Mary ~~Manami~~, a wonderful pianist who can play anything that we need her to on the piano!

Ringers have donated additional funds to the church so that additional music stands, music, and binder stands could be purchased allowing each ringer to have their own supplies. We even needed to buy more clips to turn pages as each person has their own music! To decrease the handling of bell cases and congestion in the bell storage room, we have opted to have each ringer have a bag with towels or blankets to store their bells. Ringers then place their equipment in a "special place" in the church or take them home until the next rehearsal.

In the absence of singing in worship, we have opted to have a second handbell ensemble. This ensemble meets at the end of rehearsal and rings 12 bells music so that for now, bells are able to ring twice a month for worship.

Up until recently, worship has been both live and streamed at First United. We are now only live streaming the worship services. We always have one or two substitute ringers "on call" in case a ringer has COVID symptoms or has been exposed to someone with COVID.

We are currently preparing music for the Christmas eve services that will be prerecorded. It is a much different mindset to have to have all your Christmas Eve service music prepared by the end of November! After the recording for Christmas eve is done, rehearsal will be focused on Advent music. We must continue to be diligent in our efforts to ring safely. As a director (and retired nurse), I remind ringers every week how to stay safe and help keep others safe. This is an additional responsibility that is added to each director and ringer during this time.

Music is a wonderful part of our lives that helps us forget about all that is happening with COVID.

Resounding Joy is truly blessed to be able to share time together and their music with others. Rev Paul writes "I have been blessed by the ministry of the ringers in worship. Their ministry adds that extra level which helps to make worship both joyful and peaceful. Please know that your ministry is valued by the church and that as you continue to seek ways to keep safe that we support you and the group."

Editor's Note: As of November 28, bells at First United Church have been suspended.

Resounding Joy – directed by Camille Ream, Fort Saskatchewan**United Harmony** – directed by Susan Galloway, Sherwood Park United Church

We began rehearsals just after Thanksgiving with 11 of our 20 ringers. All ringers had to come into the building with masks and gloves and carrying their own bells wrapped in towels. We chose to have each ringer take their bells home each week. Each person also brought their own TV tray to hold their bells between songs. These tables were padded with towels that were used to transport the bells back and forth. There was no sharing of bells and one person had a full table with foam and all the accidentals. The music chosen was for Christmas and really focused on no bell sharing. There is quite a bit of music that is available that meets this qualification.

Because we are lucky enough to own 2 full sets of bells and one set of chimes, one ringer was able to take a full set of bells home and learn to play a bell tree. Our good friend, John Hooper, arranged the piece "Spirit of Life" by Carolyn McDade from the Voices United Hymnal. I played the piano for my bell tree ringer. After that was recorded, they were passed onto another ringer to learn a bell tree piece for Christmas.

Unfortunately, just before recording, our bells were no longer able to play because of new COVID restrictions. Hopefully we can resume after Christmas and learn some new music with no bell changes to share online for the church services.



Robertson-Wesley Ringers & Nova Bells – directed by Isabela Ramos, Edmonton

Director Isabela is taking the lemons that COVID has thrown her way by taking advantage of the opportunity for some online musical education and theory review. In her high-tech lingo, Isabela says of her **Nova Bells**, "Most of them are able to read music but are restricted to their clef. We will focus on identifying notes, major and minor chords, key signatures and all that **fun stuff.**"

As for **RWR**, she is hoping to centre around more team building activities. "There isn't usually much time to do activities that promote teamwork and community building because we are all so focused on learning the music so I am looking at this as an opportunity to stay connected to music via the community." Sounds like excellent innovative ways to make the best of COVID times!

PLEASE SHARE YOUR STORIES! Perhaps your groups have been busy sewing matching masks or making recordings as well for worship service or for concerts? We hope to feature other choirs in future issues including how one family quartet is beginning to explore the world of small ensemble ringing – stay tuned to see if they are still together or whether they may have disowned each other by the next Peal!

Maybe you've been involved in some exciting online activities (other than Zoom)? Perhaps you caught this [live-stream international performance](#) organized by none other than our good friend, Damien Lim from the Ministry of Bells (MOB) in Singapore?

21 Nov 2020 (Sat)
 11am (SG/HKG time)
 12pm (TRQ/SIL time)
 1pm (BRS/SYD time)
 3am (GMT)

20 Nov 2020 (Fri)
 10pm (EST time)
 8pm (MST/VEG time)
 7pm (PST Time)

LIVE!

Merry Christmas everyone

Handbell Online Exchange Participants
 Ministry of Bells (Singapore)
 HK Elite Youth Ringer (Hong Kong)
 Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin (Canada)
 Dunblane Cathedral Handbell Ensemble (Scotland)
 Pacific Ringers [Oregon] (USA)
 Festival Handbell Ensemble (South Korea)
 Brisbane Bells Duet (Australia)
 & the Respective Publishers

Organised By:

LIVE on Ministry Of Bells & Tags (until 1 Dec)

A 1st-time ever, when international friends come together online to share the spirit of CHRISTMAS thru handbell music, to the world. Join us in this 60mins LIVE handbells exchange from all over the globe, from our rehearsal rooms.



“BELLRINGING, BY ITS VERY NATURE, COMPELS EACH OF US TO PUT ASIDE ANY INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND COMMIT OURSELVES TO WORK AS A TEAM FOR THE COMMON GOOD, TO FIND THE EXACT SENSITIVE TOUCH THAT WILL RESULT IN THE MAGIC OF MUSIC.”

ALISON WOOD, 2008

Alison Elizabeth Wood is presented with an HONOURARY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD from the newly incorporated Handbell Musicians of Canada.

Alison Elizabeth Wood was a founding member of the Alberta Guild of English Handbell Ringers (ALGEHR) in 1983 and later became its President. Having played and directed handbells for many years, she and a few other forward-thinking Canadian handbell musicians realised that there needed to be a coordinated provincial presence in order for Canada to be recognized in the international handbell world and at the International Handbell Committee (IHC) table. A Tri-Guild meeting of the Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan Guilds of English Handbell Ringers (ALGEHR, SGEHR, and OGEHR respectively) was held in Edmonton in 1991 bringing together the provincial guilds into a collective, working together cooperatively on special projects. Alison hosted this meeting in her home.

On September 25, 1994 the provincial guilds, now including the British Columbia Guild of English Handbell Ringers (BCGEHR), formally adopted the name Handbell Guilds of Canada (HGC). HGC continued in this fashion until September 2001 when a National Executive and Board of Directors was officially formed with representation from all provincial guilds, by then including the Manitoba Guild of English Handbell Ringers (MBGEHR). Alison was a driving force behind the formal establishment of the national handbell guild linking the provincial guilds across Canada and providing an avenue for communication and sharing. Alison became the inaugural Chair of HGC and held that position until August 2004.

As ALGEHR President, Alison was invited to chair the IHC meeting during Canada's first-ever and very successful hosting of the International Handbell Symposium (IHS) in Edmonton in August 1992. Alison was elected the official representative and voting member representing the Canadian guilds at the 1994 IHS held in Adelaide, South Australia. As Chair of HGC, Alison began serving on the International Handbell Committee (IHC) and was involved for 18 years. In 2004 she was elected the IHC Executive Director, a role she held for four years.

Alison is recognized as a handbell leader not only in Alberta but across Canada and internationally. As well as providing organizational and musical leadership provincially and nationally, Alison represented Canada as a conductor and clinician at various handbell festivals within the international handbell community, including Great Britain and USA. When the IHS was hosted in Vancouver, BC in 2016, Alison was presented with the International Handbell Committee's International Handbell Laureate award in recognition of her leadership and guidance of handbell ringing around the world. That same year Dr. John Hooper wrote a handbell composition entitled "Circles and Smiles," a work commissioned by ALGEHR in honour of Alison.

Alison has shared her great passion for music-making and building community through handbell ringing in Alberta, Canada and internationally. The Board of Directors of the newly re-organized Handbell Musicians of Canada and the HMC Interim Board of Directors are honoured to recognize Alison Wood's achievements with the first HMC Honourary Lifetime Achievement Award.

Editor's Encore

I've lost track how many times I have started this, only to have to adjust my thoughts following the new updates that everyday has been bringing. I had hoped to announce Christmas performance dates and other positive news. Sadly, it appears that, at least in our ringing world, we are back to March 2020 again with sudden and disappointing shutdowns of bell programs across AB.

But fear not, for I bring tidings of great joy! Our forward-thinking President's latest brainchild is FREE online webinars to ALGEHR members to not only continue our mandate to foster the art of handbell ringing, but to stay connected during these challenging times.

The first one will be taking place in December in the hopes of offering a little spark of festive cheer in a time when not only handbell ringers, but EVERYONE could use a little pick-me-up. Stay tuned for more details!! Wishing everyone safe and happy holidays!

~ Peal photo credits to Susan Galloway, Camille Ream, Emmy Okazawa-Bortolin



Contact your Board!

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Next Peal deadline!! Feb 15, 2021 ~ Please send me your submissions by this date!!!