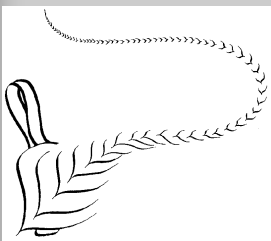




Ring and Rejoice: The Use of Handbells in Worship

Handbells are not just for anthems. Through creative and effective use, handbells can add beauty and color to any worship service. Hymn Introductions and accompaniments, psalm settings, musical liturgy portions, and anthems all make up the handbell palette we use in worship.



Brief Historical Thoughts...

The playing of bells in the church has a long and glorious tradition, whether the bells are of the small handheld type or the huge cast bells in the bell tower of a great cathedral. Bells have often been sounded for a variety of liturgical purposes in the local worship setting.

In medieval times bells were steeped in superstition. This was probably because of their long association with religion. They were baptized, and once baptized had the power to ward off evil spells and spirits. Bells were hung in doorways to protect visitors and the visited from the evil spirits, which always wait around the door awaiting the chance to slip inside. A visitor would ring the bell to drive the spirits away then pass inside - which is the likely origin of the present day doorbell! This custom also led to the "Passing Bell" which was rung to drive away spirits who stood at the foot of a bed



and about the house ready to seize a person's soul as they died. The local ringers who were paid to ring the passing bell were paid more for a big bell than a small one, not because the big one was harder to ring but because it kept the spirits further away and gave the departing soul a better start. The sound of consecrated bells was also believed to dispel thunder and lightning and to calm storms at sea for all of which demons were believed to be responsible.

The Latin word **CYMBALA** which comes from the Greek **KUMBALON**, meaning cup, was used in early times to mean both **CYMBALS** and also **BELLS** - hence the later confusion when it came to translating the psalms into English. "Praise Him upon the Loud Cymbals; praise Him upon the well tuned cymbals [bells]."

Liturgical Thoughts...

Effective and creative use of handbells can provide a significant contribution to the worship life of a congregation. In liturgical worship services, whether it is contemporary or traditional in style, the use of handbells and chimes can add a new dimension to many parts of the liturgy. Not only will your ringers feel more a part of the worship service, but your congregation will appreciate the extra effort to make their worship more meaningful. Handbells don't only have to play anthems!

As we go through an outline of a liturgi-

cal worship service, many ideas can be interchanged throughout. Feel free to expand, change, and modify these thoughts to best suit your needs. Now put on your creative handbell hat (or gloves!) and think about how you can use one of these ideas in worship next time.



Sonic Palette...

- 🔔 Chord Clusters
- 🔔 Block Chords
- 🔔 Melody Lines
- 🔔 Harmony Lines
- 🔔 Ostinato
- 🔔 Tolling
- 🔔 Random Ringing
- 🔔 Zimbelstern
- 🔔 Processionals
- 🔔 Change Ringing
- 🔔 Interludes
- 🔔 Canons

🔔 Notes:

The Order of Worship

The Prelude...

🔔 **Organ/Piano Chorale Preludes** Ask your organist/pianist to help you find an appropriate chorale or hymn partita where you can write out the melody line for the bells to play. There are hundreds of

such pieces written by composers from the 17th and 18th Century [Walther, Pachelbel, Zachau] to the 19th and 20th Century [Dupré, Callahan, Hobby]

Musical Resources/Examples

Beautiful Savior from Interpretations Book 3, David Cherwien – AMSI OR-6

Bicinium on Wie Schon Leuchtet by Georg Philipp Telemann

It Is Well With My Soul from Hymns and Spirituals for Solo Piano by Marilyn Thompson, FJH Sacred Piano Series FF1626

Call to Worship...

🔔 Toll the Hour

🔔 Change Ring

🔔 Bell Processional

🔔 Praise Chorus with Bells

🔔 Spoken Opening Litany with Handbells

🔔 Random Ringing

Processional Thoughts

🔔 Add ribbons to bells

🔔 Have ringers enter from various parts of the sanctuary

🔔 Process with singers mixed in with the bell ringers in the aisle.

Musical Resources/Examples

Emmanuel by Bob McGee – C.A. Music

Epiphany Call to Worship from After the Prelude, Year B by William Mathis – Choristers Guild

Call to Worship I from After the Prelude, Year C by William Mathis – Choristers Guild

Lenten Toll from After the Prelude, Year B by William Mathis – Choristers Guild

HYMNtroits – Keven McBeth – AGEHR 3069 – Handbells and Choir

Seasonal Intradas – John Yarrington with SATB – AMSI HB-11

Intrads – Service music with Bells – Hal Hopson HOPE RS7720

Entradas for Worship—Gail Downey—From the Top Music #20101 [include CWM Rhondda]

Kyrie...

🔔 Chant style: Ring a cluster chord at appropriate times in the chant.

🔔 Through composed style: Ring out the melody adding harmony over time, as in this idea: *Kyrie* by Healey Willan from *Missa de Sancta Maria Magdalena*.

🔔 Ring a newly composed “Kyrie” for handbells and congregation.

🔔 Ring a short musical “Kyrie” interlude between spoken parts.

Musical Resources/Examples

Kyrie [Plainsong] ELW #156

Kyrie – from After the Prelude, Year B by William Mathis – Choristers Guild



From time to time all of us who plan worship need some new ideas and triggers that will spark our creativity. Using handbells in worship can be such a spark.

Notes:

Opening Prayers...

Musical Resources/Examples

All Saints Remembrance - from After the Prelude, Year B by William Mathis – Choristers Guild

Eastertide Prayer - from After the Prelude, Year B by William Mathis – CG

Advent Candle Lighting Service - from After the Prelude, Year B by William Mathis – CG

Shine on us with hope and jus - tice;
Give your peace in age and youth. Shine on us with
love and com - fort; Light our path to joy and truth.

From *After the Prelude, Year B* by William H. Mathis. Copyright © 2008 Choristers Guild. Used by permission.

Readings/Lessons...

- 🔔 Never add something that will detract from the main message.
- 🔔 Enhance the meaning of a reading with a short fanfare.
- 🔔 The Pentecost story can be enhanced not only with readers in different languages but with multiple chords ringing throughout the church adding to the musical speaking in tongues. Try the song Bell Technique.
- 🔔 The Creation story can be read while bells ring randomly, growing each day and building to the final day of rest ending with a consonant chord.
- 🔔 Dramatize Biblical Stories
- 🔔 Easter Vigil Exultant – Add bells to help pitch and refresh the chant.

Musical Resources/Examples

Epiphany 6 Year C Fanfare - After the Prelude, Year C by William Mathis – Choristers Guild

Transfiguration C – Scripture Luke 9:28-36 - After the Prelude, Year C by William Mathis – CG

All Creatures Great and Small – Tammy Waldrop – Choristers Guild CGB 304

Opening from The King Shall Come – Robert Hobby – Morning Star 50-0053

Noah and the Ark – Tammy Waldrop – Ring Out! Press 910100611

Lent 4 Year C Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 - After the Prelude, Year C by William Mathis – CG

Pentecost: Acts 2:1-21 – Singing Bells

Reading starts here

1 2 3 4 5 - End

Move to measures as directed



Psalms...

- 🔔 Verse/Refrain: add a descant to the refrain.
- 🔔 Use chords for the chant lines sung by the cantor.
- 🔔 If the psalm is read, add slow random ringing bells to the reading, possibly highlighting the text with various techniques, but be careful not to distract from the worship experience.
- 🔔 If the Psalm is through composed, you can treat it as a hymn.
- 🔔 Find a handbell anthem using a Psalm text as its musical theme, or a general anthem that would work with a Psalm text. Play the piece asking the congregation to meditate on the psalm text.
- 🔔 Ring a Bell Peal before reading the Psalm verses.

Notes:

A - rise, O God, and rule the earth.

Musical Resources/Examples

- Arise, O God* for Sunday, July 10-16 – Lectionary 15 by John Paradowski - Augsburg Fortress
- Bless the Lord O My Soul, Psalm 103*– John Paradowski
- Psalms for all Seasons 1 & 2*– Barbara Semmann – Hope Publishing
- Handbell Accompaniments for Psalms*– Thomas Weitzel – Augsburg 11-6370
- Psalm 42*– Karen Buckwalter – Beckenhorst Press HB 251
- The Shepherd's Psalm* – J. Wayne Kerr – Choristers Guild CGB 116
- Psalms for the Church Year*– Haugen/Sternowski – GIA Publishing

Refrain

Refrain - Congregation

Bless the Lord O my soul and all with-in me bless God's ho - ly name.

Very Free/Random

Very Free - Cantor

1. Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me bless God's ho - ly name.
 2. God forgives all of your sins and heals all your in - fir - mi - ties;

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all God's ben - e - fits.
 God satisfies you with good things, and your youth is renewed like an eagle's.

In tempo RING

In tempo

Certainly there are challenges to using bells in worship. Space and acoustical limitations can hinder their effectiveness. The tension of balancing technical skill levels of individual ringers with the desire to give a cohesive and beautiful musical offering is always challenging. As with other choirs, it is essential for each individual to commit to the group and to faithfully attend rehearsal times. The effectiveness of the group as a prompter of God-honoring and life-enriching worship will be shaped by its degree of commitment.



Handchimes

Gospel Acclamation...

- 🔔 Chant: Cluster Chords to accompany the chant line.
- 🔔 Take the music right from your hymnal and play the melody in octaves with the congregation.
- 🔔 If your setting uses Cantor and Congregation have the bells only play with the cantor or vice versa.
- 🔔 Play on only the "Alleluia" text and make it as celebrative as you can with special techniques.

Musical Resources/Examples

Halle, Halle, Halle – Caribbean Traditional

Alleluia Responses – M. Burkhardt – Morning Star 50-9850

Hymns...

- 🔔 Different style of hymns such as Chant based, Chorale, Victorian, Contemporary hymns and praise choruses offer the opportunity for various handbell techniques.
- 🔔 Ring the basic harmonic structure of a hymn in block chords. Add the melody on a bell tree or ring it with solo ringers. Also, consider using chimes to play the accompaniment as handbells play the melody. This could be the introduction to the hymn or a solo handbell verse.
- 🔔 The accompaniment can be played by the organ/piano with just the bell tree or solo ringer on the melody.
- 🔔 Last verse bell descant; add the tenor or alto line up an octave or two as a descant.
- 🔔 Introduction: alternate phrases between handbells and organ.
- 🔔 Add techniques such as martellatos, gyro, random ringing, echo, plucks or malleting to text that is appropriate. e.g. The hymn, "Earth and all Stars," stanza 4: *Engines and steel! Loud pounding hammers!...* [text by Herbert F. Brokering] This text calls out for the handbells to be malleted. The ringers can simply play from the hymnal, doubling melody and harmony as desired, malleting the hymn with a constant eighth note pulse.
- 🔔 One person can ring the melody of a pentatonic hymn such as *New Britain* or *Beach Spring* on a bell tree. Think about adding another bell tree that adds a descant, counter melody, or since it's pentatonic, a random ring. [Think about how you can add Orff instruments to this as well.]
- 🔔 Have the bells play only on a refrain, such as the hymn, "Lift High the Cross."
- 🔔 Have your ringers ring in canon with the congregation or themselves; lower bells in canon with higher bells, or chimes in canon with handbells. Donald Busarow's two collections of hymns in canon, *All Praise to You Eternal God* and *Thirty More Accompaniments for Hymns in Canon* (Augsburg 11-9076/11-10163) are excellent resources.
- 🔔 Many of the hymn-based anthems you already have in your files can be adapted for congregational hymn singing. One way is to pull out a section of a handbell anthem and use that as an interlude or as a handbell "solo stanza" during worship.
- 🔔 Reinforce texts in hymns. e.g. *Alleluias*.
- 🔔 Play only in the phrase endings.
- 🔔 Use published Hymn Concertatos.
- 🔔 Create ostinati for hymn tunes.

Musical Resources/Examples

Adagio from Partita on Nicaea – Ch. Callahan – Morning Star 10-709
Ten Christmas Hymn Introductions – Matthew Prins – Hope 2446
Christmas Carol Celebrations—Ruth Elaine Schram—Lorenz 20/1479L
Harmonies for Hymns – Margaret Tucker – Choristers Guild CGB 251
Seven Handbell Descants for Easter Hymns – Jon Kohrs – Concordia 97-0010
Vocal Descants for the Church Year – Based on Hymns in ELW - Augsburg
O Come, All Ye Faithful - Hymn Accompaniments – From the Top Publishing
Holy Manna from Hymnworks 3 – Cathy Moglebust - AMSI – Various hymn tunes
How Firm a Foundation - from After the Prelude, Year B by William Mathis – Choristers Guild
Creative Hymn Ringing – Hal Hopson – AGEHR 35020
Hymn Descants for Ringers and Singers V 1, 2, 3– Anna Laura Page – Alfred
Hymn Stanzas for Handbells– Cathy Moglebust – Augsburg 11-10722
Ringing Through the Year– David Johnson – Augsburg 11-8001
Hymns for Handbells, Vol 1, 2, 3–Philip Roberts—GIA Publishing
 Check out From the Top Music Publishing—<http://www.fromthetopmusic.com>
 And so many more...

Prayer of the Church...


- 🔔 Add bells to any call to prayer.
- 🔔 Play a short refrain for people to sing.
- 🔔 Play a musical interlude for prayer, maybe using a seasonal tune theme.

Musical Resources/Examples

Prayer Litany Response - After the Prelude, Year C by William Mathis – Choristers Guild
Chime Prayer Response—John Paradowski

Insert Prayer Text here...

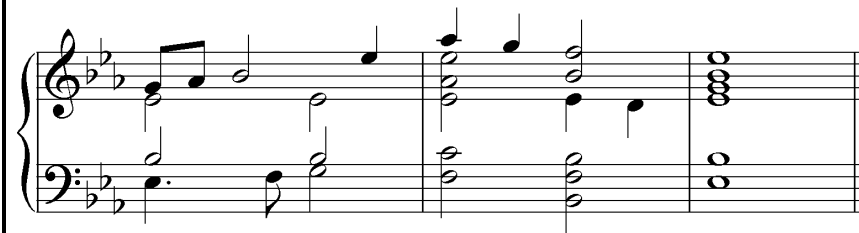
A



Lord, _____ hear our prayer.

Insert Prayer Text here... Congregation: **Lord, Hear our Prayer...**

B



🔔 Notes:



Notes:

Musical Offering...

Vocal Thoughts...

- 🔔 Join with your vocal choir on a hymn-based anthem by adding random ringing, or bells playing the basic choral or accompaniment harmonies, or enhance the final stanza with the bells doubling the descant.
- 🔔 Play opening pitches for an a capella anthem.
- 🔔 Look for vocal choir anthems that can add a few bells.
- 🔔 Look for anthems that use a full handbell choir as accompaniment.
- 🔔 Play cluster chords at strategic places in anthems to keep the choir in tune as needed.
- 🔔 Have the singers random ring at an appropriate time in the music. This is a great visual as well.
- 🔔 On non-hymn based anthems, look where you might insert chord clusters, solo lines, ostinati or special bell techniques.

Visual Thoughts

- 🔔 Handbells are a visual as well as an aural art form.
- 🔔 Present a video presentation with a handbell anthem.
- 🔔 Add dancers to a handbell anthem.
- 🔔 Ring from different places in the sanctuary.
- 🔔 Start the anthem with a processional. They are not just for opening of worship.
- 🔔 For an anthem based on a text – read the text prior to the anthem.
- 🔔 If the anthem is chant based, sing the Latin chant before the playing of the anthem.
- 🔔 If your anthem is not text based, find a text that portrays the season or mood of the service and anthem and read before playing.

Great Thanksgiving/Sanctus...

- 🔔 Chant Style: To accompany the chant lines have a single bell play cues or cluster chords on the stressed words.
- 🔔 Add bells at the “Hosanna” text to emphasize this important word. Think about differing techniques as the text permits.
- 🔔 Depending on the musical setting, have them random ring or ring block chords.
- 🔔 *Land of Rest*—Sanctus is pentatonic.

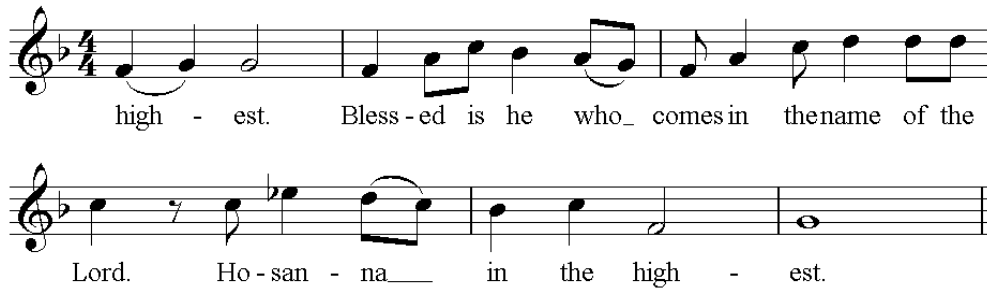
Musical Resources/Examples

Great Thanksgiving - ELW Setting #3 - page 144

Sanctus - ELW Setting #3 - page 144

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
 san - na. Ho - san - na. Ho - san - na in the





high - est. Bless - ed is he who_ comes in the name of the
Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Lamb of God/Agnus Dei...

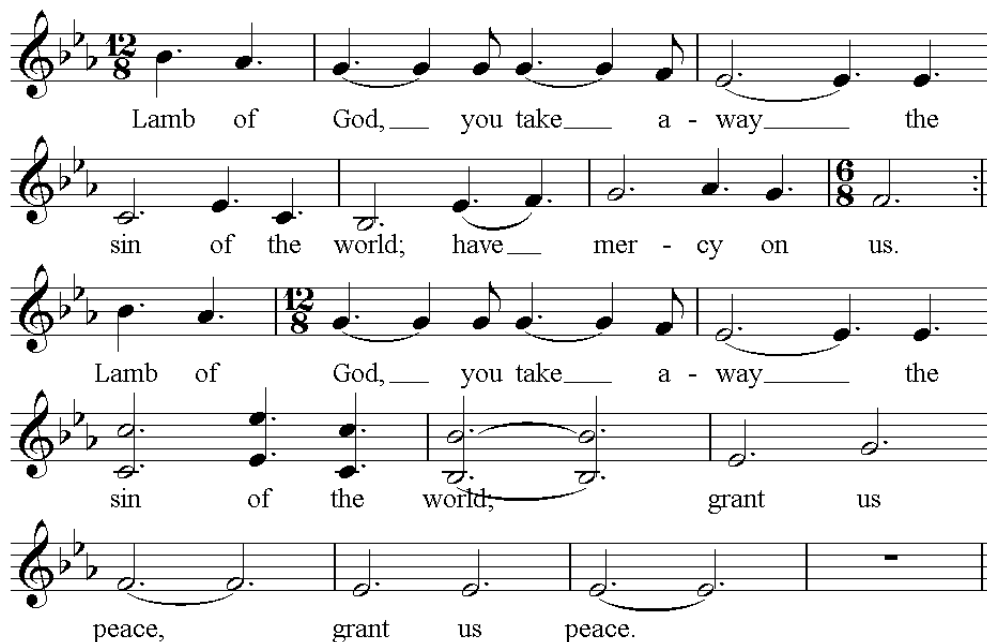
- 🔔 The often repetitive nature calls for bells to be added at each repeat. Build from simple chords to adding a melody line to a final descant the last time.
- 🔔 Remember and think about this wonderful text. The ending text of *...grant us peace*, bids us to end with bells in a calm and serene fashion
- 🔔 Play a "Lamb of God" Anthem

Musical Resources/Examples

Lamb of God - ELW Setting #6 - page 174

Lamb of God - Twila Paris/Lloyd Larson - Hope 2352

And so many more settings of the *Agnus Dei*



Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us
peace, grant us peace.

🔔 Think about how you can incorporate the many handbell techniques into various parts of the liturgy:

- 🔔 Martellato
- 🔔 Echo Rings
- 🔔 Swings
- 🔔 Shakes
- 🔔 Mart Lifts
- 🔔 Malleting
- 🔔 Etc...

🔔 Notes:

There is
no Musick
play'd or sung
Like unto Bells
when they're
well rung.

Notes:

Benediction...

🔔 Chant Style: Use one bell to intone the cantor then add large chords with the congregational grand *Amen*.

🔔 Sing a benediction hymn or chorus with handbells

Musical Resources/Examples

The Lord Bless You And Keep You from Service Music with Bells – Hopson – Hope RS 7720
Doxology – After the Prelude, Year B by W. Mathis – CG

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four staves. The first staff is for the Cantor, and the second and third staves are for the Congregation. The lyrics are: "The Lord bless you and keep you, The Lord bless you and keep you, The Lord be kind and gra-cious, The Lord be kind and gra-cious, The Lord look on with fa-vor, The Lord look on with fa-vor, and give you peace. and give you peace." The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Postlude...

🔔 If your congregation stays to listen to the postlude.

🔔 Have the organist can play a Carillon piece that the bells can ring with.

🔔 Many Trumpet Tunes have a basic chord structure that Handbells can ring.

🔔 Zimbelstern effects or random ringing can work on many celebratory postludes to add that extra flare to the end of worship.

🔔 Refer to the prelude idea section for postlude ideas as well.

Random Ringing Thoughts...

🔔 Practice random ringing so it does not become monotonous.

🔔 Practice with good technique and form.

🔔 Teach Randomness 6/8 vs 4/4 at same time

🔔 Start low to high bells or high to low bells

🔔 How to end random ringing: fade, all

rung together, cluster chord, chord of resolution, chord of no resolution, shake to chord to mart, etc...

🔔 Tempos for Random Ringing should reflect the text or tempo of the music as well as the mood of the service.

🔔 For a different effect use mallets on the bells to random ring



Director Thoughts...

- 🔔 Budget planning and rehearsal time needed to incorporate these items into worship
- 🔔 Talk with your Minister of Music/Organist well in advance
- 🔔 Strive for a judicious use of handbells in worship; do not place too many bell items in one service
- 🔔 If you want a stronger choir, these items in worship will aid your ringers to become more comfortable with outside-the-norm ringing ideas.
- 🔔 Use some of these ideas as Choir warm-ups or as ringers arrive to rehearsal.

Ringer Thoughts...

- 🔔 Remind your ringers that all choirs are there to aid the congregation in praise and prayer not to perform.
- 🔔 Using bells at other times in the worship service can enhance the entire worship experience.
- 🔔 Choir members can ring outside their normal ringer place, therefore grow as a ringer.
- 🔔 As you rehearse ringing chord clusters perfectly together [and other musical items] ringers will become better followers and more musical.
- 🔔 **Don't forget to breathe!**



Miscellaneous Ringing Thoughts...

- 🔔 **Annual Meeting Song with Handbells**
- 🔔 **Funeral Service with Handbells**
- 🔔 **Wedding Service with Handbells in a Worship Service**
- 🔔 **Baptism Responses**
- 🔔 **Confirmation Service**
- 🔔 **New Members Welcome Response**
- 🔔 **Taizé resources**
- 🔔 **Maundy Thursday** Stripping the Altar – Tolling an open 5th or single bell
- 🔔 **Good Friday** Dissonant random ringing for the end of the service as the Christ candle is being carried out ending with tonic or open 5th
- 🔔 **Pentecost Idea** 1. Start with continuous random ringing. Steadily add more bells/chimes increasing in dissonance ending with a final cacophony of sound. 2. Spread three different groups around the sanctuary playing an ostinato. Each group is independent, even playing in a different key. Have each group play in a different meter as well. You can call this a “musical tower of Babel!” Tie this to a reading of the Acts text.

Other Musical Resources

- Handbell in the Liturgical Service – John Folkening – Concordia 99-1254
 The Creative Use of Handbells in Worship – Hal Hopson – Hope 1956
 The Creative Use of Handbells in Worship 2 – Hal Hopson – Hope 8282

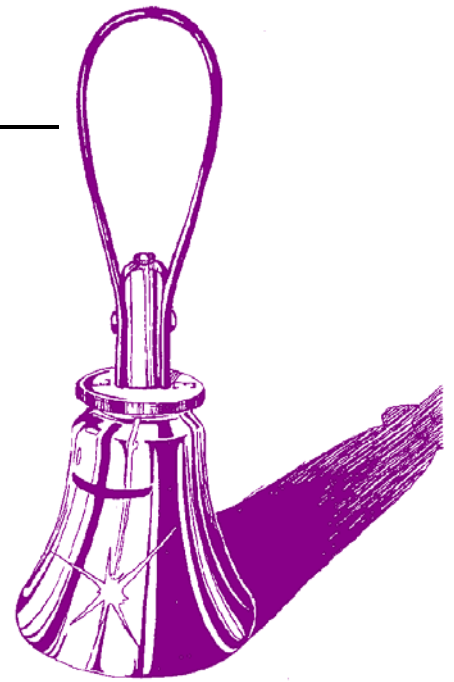
The placement of bells matters. Emphasize a reflective setting by playing bells from the back of the sanctuary. A celebrative leading of congregational song can be heightened by being able to see the bells from the front.



Final Thoughts...

One of the benefits to your choirs in using these ideas is the variety of techniques that can be used to make your choir better ringers. Initially they may need more direction, but once they are comfortable you will be able to add something extra to your worship with very little re-

hearsal time. Once your choir starts integrating these ideas in worship, let your imagination take over. Encourage your ringers to think creatively as well! Everyone, including your congregation, will marvel on how the worship services are enhanced with the addition of a few notes.



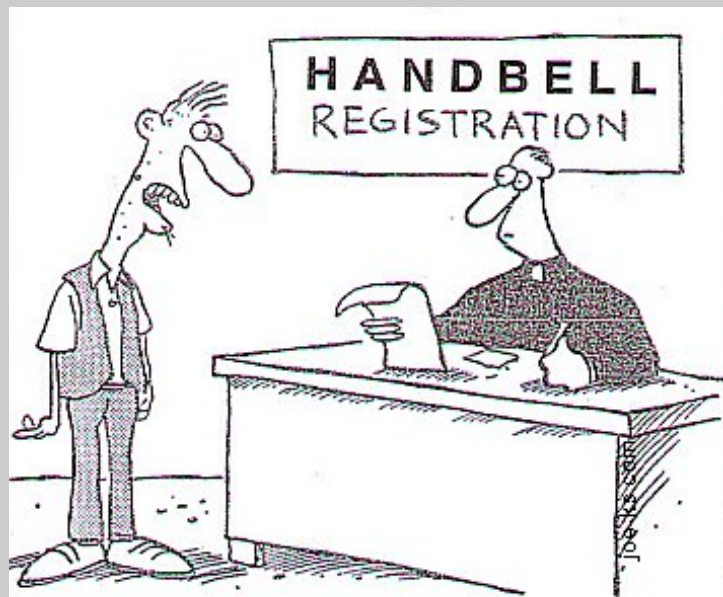
*🔔 Ye Ringers all, that do come here,
Give head and hand and heart:
The head for will, the hand for skill,
The heart for worship's part.*

*🔔 In harp and tabor and in symphon glee
Worship God in Trumps and Psaltery
In strings, in organs, and bells ringing,
In all these worship the Heaven's King.*



**ALCM National Convention
August 2009—Milwaukee, WI**

John Paradowski
Minister of Music/Organist
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church ELCA
Wauwatosa, WI
JRPmuzik@sbcglobal.net
414-774-0441



"I assume we get time-and-a-half for working Sundays."

Bells are the voice of the Church - St Jerome