

Sing glad songs of community spirit and give thanks for the Ladies of the Chime, who keep the bells ringing through Advent and adversity!

Most of you know that the bells rang daily throughout the first lockdown, carrying on right up until the end of the State of Emergency and taking a little rest after a blowout series of Canada Day concerts. Many people shared stories of how they brought much needed release, comfort, and a sense of community. Some said the 1pm concert was the only thing they could reliably count on through those early days. And, after a video featuring the bells travelled far and wide, it seemed like everybody knew about it. I even acquired a few nicknames- my favourite being 'Mistress of the Chime.'

What you may not know, is that there were others involved in keeping things going.

Mid-lockdown, I experienced some cold/flu like symptoms, and had to go into self-isolation for ten days. I reached out, and who picked up the slack? The *Ladies of the Chime*! **Jane Russell, Diane Ellis, Lesley & Catherine Van Dorsten** to the rescue- crafting a schedule for the ten days and bravely playing out for all to hear. It takes quite a bit of courage to play an instrument that you practice so publicly, and on such short notice.

Well, self-isolation ended, and things returned to normal (or as normal as things get during a pandemic). Finally, after months of daily playing and feeling on the edge of burn out, I reached out once more. And there they were again. Squeezing the bells into their busy lives, and dividing two days a week between them, so I could have a little downtime, rest my ringing ears (even with protective headphones, those bells are LOUD), and regain the energy to play the remaining 5 days a week. And the truth is, I probably could have asked them earlier. Their help was welcome and their response immediate. A reminder that we're all stronger when we work together, and the bells are so much bigger than ourselves.

With warmer days and lower Covid numbers the bells remained largely quiet through summer and fall, but the return of winter brought new lock-downs and the need for the bells arose again. Pass the baton to the Ladies of the Chime, playing twice weekly through Advent and into Epiphany to spread songs of gladness and good news. And they're joined by a new member! **Chelsea Sleep** has joined their ranks with great exuberance- the Ladies of the Chime grow stronger still.

This Christmas Eve, I will give thanks for so many things. The birth of Jesus Christ, the gifts of the season, the love we feel for one another and the dedication of a group of women who keep the bells ringing, even in the darkest of days.

Merry Christmas,

Heather Jean Jordan