

THE HANDBELL CHOIRS

1985-2010

HISTORY OF THE HAND BELL CHOIR At Central United Church



SPECIAL APPRECIATION TO:

- Rev. Florence Hunter
- Rev. Donald Wilson



From April 1982, our Hand bell Choir had been learning to play on Central's Schulmarich Bells. These had been purchased earlier by Ted Edwards, Centrals' Organist and Choir Director at that time. Ted never got to hear those bells, but after Ted's sad death, Sue Paulton gathered together a group of teenage musicians [among them, Carol Rogers and the Wear Family teens] and this group played often at the front of the church on specially constructed padded inserts which fitted the front pews. When this group disbanded the bells sat idle in storage. After Grace Lewis had retired, in 1982 she, and her sister-in-law, Sybil Lewis determined to learn how to ring hand bells, attending workshops in Michigan and Ohio. Sybil started a hand bell choir at Westminster United and Grace re-activated Central's Bells.

After using and performing on Central's bells, the bell choir wished to have their own bells, and made a request from the New Horizon program for a grant to purchase a 4 octave set of bells, plus related equipment [i.e. tables and padding]. This grant was approved for \$8,845.00 and the Bells were purchased from Malmark, Inc. of New Britain, Pennsylvania. Bernice Stouth, the Hand bell Choir's President, designed and made a set of wooden risers which have now been in use over 29 years. Clyde Curry, our band's drummer at that time, and a member of the Bell Choir, designed our required storage cupboard. It was built by Cencourse staff with the Bell Choir paying for all the materials. In 1986 the Bell Choir hosted a 2 day workshop for regional bell choirs at GessTwood camp. Susan Berry of Dearborn, Michigan served as our Clinician.

Before the Ontario Guild of English Hand bells Ringers [OGEHR] was formed our Hand bell Choir attended AGEHB workshops and festivals in the States including Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Tennessee.

The Ontario Guilds first festival was held at St. Andrews United Church, London May 3 – 4, 1985, spear-headed by Barbara Plante, St. Andrew's Director, and her committee. Our bell choir performed and Sue Riseborough, and her daughter, Michelanne McDonald, played a duet.

Since the OGEHR was holding festivals every second year, our bell choirs have attended those workshops and have participated in festivals at various Ontario Universities --- Western, Carlton, Trent, Brock, York and Queen's.

By December 1996, we had 4 bell choirs – the Silver Bells, The Ted Edward's Memorial Hand bell Choir, The Joy bells, named after Ted's wife Joy and the Grace Notes, whose members wanted to ring but did not want to perform in public.



In 1993 we held a fundraiser at the church to acquire the 5th Octave of Bells, very large ones, and very small ones. Donors had their names and honorees' names inscribed in the handles. The church held a lovely Dedication Service for the new bells. Since that time the Bells have acquired a 4 octave set of Choir Chimes.

Over the years the bells have had some interesting playing experiences, especially September 22, 1989 at the International Plowing Match [lots of rain] very wet ground.

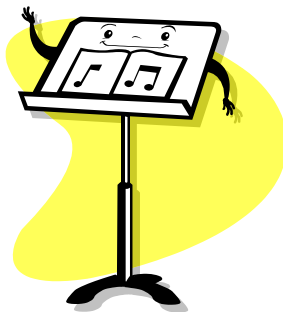
P From 1996 to 1998 the Bells performed at the Twelfth Night Festivals at Central United Church around January 6th each year. A parade of Banners depicting the Twelve Days of Christmas was featured. These banners were designed and made by Liz Mickle, Phyllis Mickle's daughter-in-law. The festivals featured story-tellers, dancers from various ethnic groups, choirs, i.e. The Windsor Classic Chorale, the St. Mary's Youth Choir [from McGregor] and music groups from the Walkerville Arts program. The audiences filled the church and galleries.

Our mandate has always been to entertain for the public. For almost 30 years we have played for Christmas Open House at Willistead Manor and for the residents of Huron Lodge, and Villa Maria [until it closed]. Many nursing homes have also been visited, Richmond [Amherstburg], Tecumseh [on Banwell Rd], The Willows [in Woodslee] Oak Park Lodge, Chateau Park Lodge, Bruce Villa, Sunrise Living, Malden Park, and others. We also play on request for banquets and weddings. For several years we have played at the McGivney Centre for handicapped children.

The investment by the New Horizons Program, and the persistence of the Rev. Florence Hunter has led to 30 years of involvement by many children and hundreds of retirees and seniors.

Respectfully submitted

Grace Lewis, Director



The Silver Bells, Ted Edwards' Memorial Hand Bell Choir, The Crane Notes, The Joy Bells

