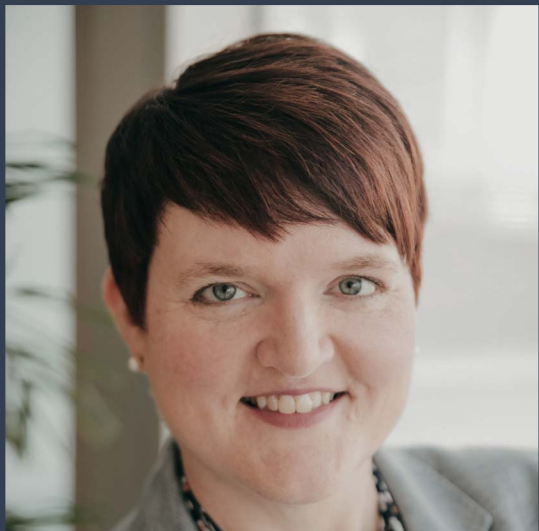




## Afterglow

Lori Fenton, Area 8 Chair

As I'm writing this, it's been almost a month since many of us gathered in La Vista, NE, for our 2026 United We Ring bi-annual festival. I truly enjoyed getting to see so many of you! I hope you

all had a wonderful time ringing and connecting with friends from across the area, both old and new. I will continue to be forever grateful for the AMAZING leadership team that made it all happen (most pictured below).

The conclusion of the festival means that my time as Chair is coming to a close, officially on September 30th.

Thank you to those of you who helped elect our incoming slate of officers! I will be handing over the reins to Nancy Blackwell, Chair-Elect, who will be joined by our new executive team. You can read more about them later in this issue. As I transition to Past Chair, I'm excited to help support the incoming team over the next two years.

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*I want to express what an honor and privilege it has been to serve as Area 8 Chair.*

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### *Area 8 Chair Afterglow, continued*

This transition also means this is my last message to you. I want to express what an honor and privilege it has been to serve as Area 8 Chair. I started ringing handbells over 40 years ago at Morningside Presbyterian Church in Sioux City, IA, under the direction of Eleanor Tasker. Back in the mid-80s, I couldn't have begun to imagine how handbells would impact my life. At the heart of it all has always been the relationships I've made. From the ringers in my community choir to all of you across Area 8 to my handbell friends across the country, it is the life-long friendships I've formed while ringing handbells that bring me true joy.

I don't plan to disappear from Area 8 events any time soon so I hope to see many of you at an upcoming Area 8 concert or workshop soon!

---

## *Moments from Area 8 Festival 2026*



## Area 8 Board

### CHAIR

Lori Fenton

### CHAIR-ELECT

Nancy Blackwell

### SECRETARY

Laura Kastens

### TREASURER

Tami Kofron

### PAST CHAIR

Chris Peck

### COMMUNICATIONS

Janelle Flory Schrock

### CHIMES CHAIR

Nancy Youngman

### FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Stephen Swanson

### MEMBERSHIP

Lori Fenton

### RESOURCE LIBRARIAN

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### WEB MASTER

Wendi Calkins-Levitt

### EDUCATION

Lori Fenton

### QUAVERS EDITOR

Beth Ann Edwards

### HISTORIAN

Laurie Austin

### ILLINOIS CHAIR

Chris Peck

Beth McFarland

### IOWA CHAIR

Dick Crusinberry

### KANSAS CHAIR

Amy Knudsen

### MISSOURI CHAIR

Open

### NEBRASKA CHAIR

Byron Jensen



# Meet Your Area 8 Elected Officers

## Chris Peck, Past Chair

The nominating committee, consisting of committee chair Chris Peck, Kristin Kalitowski-Kowal, Pat Latshaw, and Tracy Peterson, is excited to present the Area 8 winners of the election. With this class of elected officers, we know that Area 8 will be in good hands for the next two years. Thanks to all who voted in our recent election.



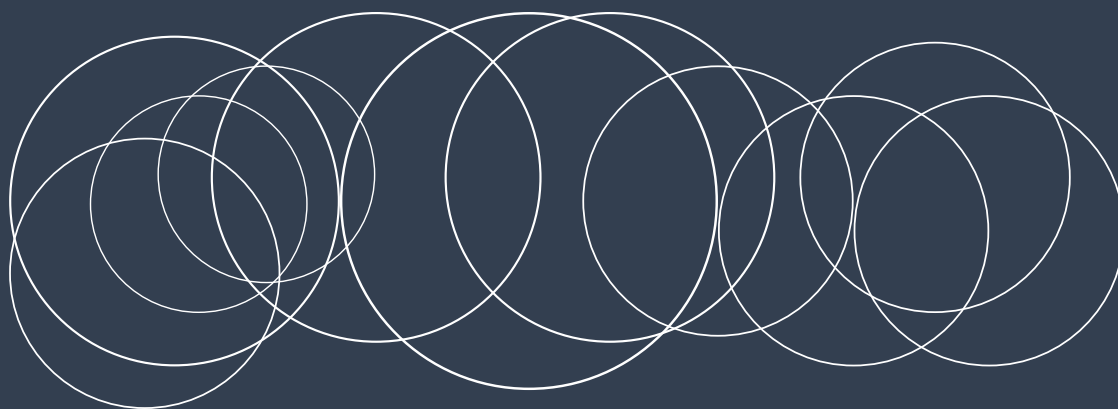
## John Klopp, Chair Elect

My journey with handbells began in the early 1970s at St. John's United Methodist Church in Davenport, Iowa, where I was first introduced to ringing by Mike Farrell. Since then, handbells have been a lifelong passion, and today I continue to serve as a ringer at St. John's, and the director of RiverBend Bronze.

My musical foundation began in band as a trombonist, leading to a Bachelor of Music in Trombone Performance and Music Education from The University of Iowa and a Master of Arts in Music Education with an emphasis on conducting from Northwest Missouri State University (now Truman State University). Over the course of my career, I have taught band in three Iowa school districts, working with students from 5th through 12th grade. These years in education sharpened my skills in planning, rehearsal techniques, and leadership—skills that I now bring to the handbell community.

Since joining RiverBend Bronze in 2018, I have actively participated in the Handbell Musicians of America National Seminar, the Area 8 Festival, and numerous area events. Although I have rung most of my life, RiverBend Bronze deepened my appreciation for the artistry of handbell ringing and inspired me to further develop my skills as both a ringer and conductor. I have even ventured into the realm of solo ringing, expanding my understanding of the instrument and its expressive possibilities.

Handbells have given me a lifetime of joy, community, and artistry. I am eager to serve Area 8 by supporting its members, strengthening its programs, and helping our art form continue to thrive.





## Laura Kastens, Secretary

Laura came to handbells as a young adult just out of college with a music ed degree (1979) from the University of Illinois in hand. The church she attended (Prospect Heights Community, Prospect Heights, IL) wanted to start a handbell choir so she volunteered to learn as much as she could about the instrument and set about recruiting ringers. That was more than 40 years ago. Since then, she has served as handbell director at Missouri United Methodist Church (Columbia, MO), and her current position at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (Iowa City, IA) where she directs several ensembles, including an advanced women's ensemble and an advanced adult choir as well as pick-up small ensembles (duets, trios, quartets). She rang with St. Mark's United Methodist church in Bloomington, IN when she lived in that community and was recently a member of RiverBend Bronze based in the Quad Cities. She attended her first Area 8 festival in 2024 and loved the experience!

Since retiring from the University of Iowa she finds herself agreeing with her parents that retirement is busier than her working years. She is a member of the Chamber Singers of Iowa City, an auditioned vocal ensemble, and sings in her church choir at St Andrew Presbyterian Church. She is a long-time member of the international music fraternity Sigma Alpha Iota, and an honorary member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. As an active clarinetist she plays in the New Horizons band during the year and with the Cedar Rapids Municipal band during the summer. In her "free time" she takes Senior College classes at the University, ushers at various venues in the Iowa City area, and enjoys reading and walking.



## Nancy Youngman, Treasurer

Nancy has been a handbell choir director since 1984, serving two churches since 1991. She is the founder/artistic director of Bell-issimo, Lincoln, Nebraska's auditioned Community Handbell Choir. Nancy has degrees in Instrumental Music and German, and is retired from Lincoln Public Schools where she taught both subjects. Since 1990, she has been a member of the Nebraska State Handbell Committee and has served 2 four-year terms as State Chair. She served on the Area 8 Board of HMA as Secretary from 1996 - 1998, and is currently the Area 8 Chimes Chair. Nancy has taught at workshops throughout Nebraska and neighboring states, as well as at Area 8 Festivals, and has served as guest clinician for several handbell workshops. This past summer, she was honored to be chosen to teach a class at Pinnacle and is also scheduled to teach this January during HMA's Virtual Winter Workshop. As a ringer, Nancy has taken part in several Area Bronze Fests and is a regular participant in the Bay View Week of Handbells. Nancy's adult children, daughter-in-law, and husband (who is a CPA and could be VERY helpful in the role of Treasurer!) are all handbell ringers.



# *Area 8 at National Seminar 2026, Cincinnati*



**Area 8 members attending National Seminar 2026**



**Bells in Motion  
post-concert,  
National Seminar 2026**

**Chicago Bronze  
in concert,  
National Seminar  
2026**





Nancy Youngman  
Chime Chair

# Summer Bells

Nancy Youngman

As I write this, we're just past the 4th of July---basically halfway through summer. Did your choirs finish up in May, then put the bells away for a summer break? Honestly, most of us do need a little break from the routine. But put the bells away for the entire summer? When there are SO MANY opportunities? For me, no way!

As a member of the Area 8 board, we spent the last two years planning this year's festival, United We Ring, held in La Vista, Nebraska. This year, the attendance was down some, but, for those of us who attended, it was a wonderful festival. The classes all received excellent ratings, the facilities were more than excellent, we had wonderful clinicians, and old bell friendships were renewed while new ones were formed. The only downside---millions (or at least it seemed like it!!) of grade school baseballers staying at the complex for a tournament! The upside of that---a group of teens attending the tournament made a habit of attending our rehearsals and then came to the final concert, attentively listening to each piece and asking questions afterwards.

Please watch for the details of our festival in 2028 and plan to attend. These events are essential in moving forward with our wonderful art. Maybe you couldn't make it to the festival, but there is more!! Handbell Camp is held yearly in Missouri in July with a group of very dedicated leaders. The National Seminar this year was in Cincinnati, very close to Area 8 and it featured two of our choirs in performances. We had ringers selected for the National All-Star choir, as well as instructors from Area 8. Also, check out the other events that our national organization has planned for each summer. Nearly every interest is represented! For the advanced ringers, Area 8 is well represented in Virtuoso, Zenith, and the Bay View Week of Handbells. All of these events are instrumental in growing our talents and our choirs, as well as fun!

For your church choirs, don't feel you need to follow the school year exactly for services, as so many churches do. Summer is a great time to have a small group or two play, or to challenge an advanced ringer to do a handbell solo. Maybe your church could sponsor a mini-handbell camp for the youth or include them in your Bible School. The more we make handbells a regular part of services, the more likely they will not end up permanently in a closet!

I do definitely believe both ringers and their directors need a little break from the routine we follow. With attendance so essential in handbell ringing, we all need some time that is not totally scheduled. But the summer events are a break from routine and give us a chance to learn from others, as well as exploring different ways of exposing others to our music. And, in the process, our choirs get better and better! Happy Ringing!



# 2026 Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival

by Dick Crusinberry, Iowa Chair



Sandra Eithun, Clinician  
Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival

Mark your calendars! The 2026 Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival returns in Des Moines on October 9 and 10. We have a great weekend lined up, with an optional Friday night reading session, and a full day of ringing Saturday capped by a massed ringing concert Saturday afternoon.

This year's clinician is noted composer and conductor Sandra Eithun. Sandy brings more than 30 years of handbell directing experience and currently leads Fox Valley Bronze while serving on the faculty of Valley Troubadours in Wisconsin. She

is a prolific composer with over 650 published handbell pieces, plus sacred keyboard books and teaching collections. In 2020 she was honored with the Donald E. Allured Original Composition Award at the Week of Handbells in Bay View, Michigan. Her work has been featured on PBS and has been performed by groups around the country like The Raleigh Ringers and The Bells on Temple Square in Salt Lake City.

Friday night, October 9, Beer, Wine and Bells is back. Sandy will lead a relaxed reading session at Central Presbyterian Church with handbells, light refreshments, beer and wine, and a chance to socialize.

Saturday's event is at Windsor Heights Lutheran Church and includes rehearsals, lunch, time to connect with other ringers, and the massed ringing concert at 3:00 that afternoon.

The festival is open to all handbell organizations and ringers. Individuals, partial choirs, and full choirs are all welcome. Registration is \$45/ringer for HMA members and \$55/ringer for non-members, and includes lunch and the Friday evening session. If you're just interested in the Friday event, it is also available for \$10/ringer.

Questions? Feel free to reach out to me [here](#). We hope to see you in Des Moines this October!



Dick Crusinberry  
Iowa State Chair



## Mid-Iowa Massed Ringing Repertoire

Joyous Spirit, Valerie Stephenson, L2+ (RRBL5019)

Light Dawns on a Weary World, Sandra Eithun, L3 (HB877)

Moonrise, Brian Childers, L2 (RRBL5114)

Shall We Gather at the River, Jason Krug, L3 (HB491)

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus, Sandra Eithun, L3 (R03280)



Amy Knudsen  
Kansas State Chair

# Why Attend Festivals?

Amy Knudsen, Kansas Chair

I definitely had a different role this year at the Area 8 United We Ring festival in La Vista, NE since taking on the responsibility as the registrar. I will say, though, that it is nice to not have to check those emails several times a day!

I always enjoy attending any festival – even driving up to Iowa to attend a couple of their smaller festivals last year. The camaraderie, the music playing, the visiting, the feeling like we all belong to a rather large family and you are attending a long-awaited reunion.

I will have to say – even being in the band world – that handbell players are the most welcoming. The first time I attended a national event and was placed ringing along side a well-known composer, I had a little (ok, more than a little) stage fright. I swear she messed up a part on purpose to make me feel better.

But I digress – festivals are a great way to not just touch base with fellow ringers, but to get into those publishers' classes to ring their new music. I know, how many arrangements of "insert any song name" do you really need, but the new composers are coming up with some great ideas on how to weave different melodies together. And more arrangers are putting piano music and big band music down on paper for handbell choirs. Our music just isn't church hymns and popular arrangements any more.

This year at festival, I signed up to ring bells and perform in the massed ringing. Many, many thanks to Noah Hartsfield and the First Baptist Church of Columbia, Missouri, for bringing their 5 octaves of bells and chimes for me to place several individual ringers within his choir. I even had the opportunity to help my neighbor and she, well, had to help me with a part that I just couldn't get with my two hands (bass clef bells). Even though we had never met until festival, it was just awesome to know that someone was willing to help. Handbell choirs = the epitome of teamwork.



And there were other classes if you didn't want to ring – I hear the Sound Bath class was a big hit with attendees.

So – please, please consider coming to Area 8 Festival in June of 2028! I promise, you won't regret it! You never know what you might learn!





*Byron Jensen  
Nebraska State Chair*

*Peace and Love  
(as Ringo says),  
Byron W. Jensen*

# *Final Cadenza*

Byron W. Jensen, Nebraska Chair

This is my final article for Quavers as we “change ring,” with Natalie Radcliffe taking over as the Nebraska Chair. Natalie resides in Kearney, where she is the Worship Music Coordinator and Director of Handbells at First Lutheran Church. She is also an outstanding flute player. Somewhat unique, Natalie plays handbells at First Presbyterian Church in Kearney, while their director, Angela Wright, plays handbells at Natalie’s church. As Natalie said, it makes Wednesday nights a bit long, but they all enjoy ringing! Like many of us, Natalie has been a Nebraska Committee member for several years. She has been instrumental in planning statewide events, and served as Chair and assisted with a previous Area 8 Festival. I know Natalie’s experience as a Nebraska Chair, her involvement in Area 8, along with her confidence, curiosity, and resilience, will continue to keep this State’s (and Area 8’s) handbell events moving in positive ways.

Reflections on La Vista: Over the past several months, I have witnessed so much passion among our leadership in Area 8. I am sure (and hope) that such passion exists throughout the Handbell Musicians of America organization, but when you’re on the ground floor with these Area 8 committee members, their “can-do” exuberance permeates the hallways. You see it from moving equipment and setting up classrooms, to greeting every registrant with a smile as they checked in at the front desk. The Area 8 Board assisted guests in moving and setting up their instruments in the massed ringing room; provided muscle and guidance for our vendors; distilled wise (and often humorous) conversations regarding everything from World Cup Soccer to composing to possible new nominees for Area 8 positions; and exuded a never-ending sense of positivity! (My favorite memory of the registration desk in La Vista was an oft-spoken phrase: “Baseball is over there.” There was levity and respect as the interaction between bells and baseball shared close proximity to each other.) Congratulations to all for a successful Area 8 Festival, “United We Ring!”

In coordination with First Plymouth Congregational Church in Lincoln, the Nebraska State Committee anticipates hosting Brenda Austin on April 9 and 10, 2027. Almost everyone reading this article probably has some of Brenda’s compositions in their handbell library. She will lead the Director’s Workshop on Friday evening and conduct the massed ring on Saturday. A “save the date” card will be sent out later this fall, with more details arriving in January (after we pack up the Holidays). Please look for further information from our new State Chair, Natalie Radcliffe, as she guides us through another successful Nebraska Spring Ring!

Best wishes to everyone for a beautiful year of music in the coming weeks and months. Remember: Our musical offering will always be a sign of God’s Love and Appreciation!

## Illinois Committee

### Illinois State Chair

Beth McFarland  
Chris Peck

### Western IL Rep

Don Wood

### Secretary

Beth McFarland

### Registrar

Open

### Events

Open

### Music Librarian

Beth McFarland

### Handbell Services Rep

Debi Robey

### Hand Chime Loan

### Program Coordinator

Patti Mangis

### Hand Chime Loan

### Program Mentor

Open - please contact  
Beth McFarland

### Food Coordinator

Open

## Iowa Committee

### Iowa State Chair

Dick Crusinberry

### Treasurer

Mary Lee Park

### Secretary

Donna Sprague

### Chimes Chair

Patrick Gagnon

### Historian

Christina "Tina"  
Elwood Gehrke

### Western Representative

Yvonne Johnson

### Eastern Representative

Cat Walker

## Missouri Committee

### Missouri State Chair

Open

### Treasurer

Open

### Membership

Sherry Boland

### Chimes Chair

Christie White

## Nebraska Committee

### Nebraska State Chair

Byron Jensen

### Secretary

Natalie Radcliffe

### Treasurer/Registrar

Linda Ashley

### Chimes Chair

Nancy Youngman

### Scholarship

Janet Chiocchi

### Members

Michael Allen  
Jessica Kite  
Deann Nicolaus  
Angela Wright

## Kansas Committee

### Kansas State Chair

Amy Knudsen

### Treasurer

Karla Denton

### Secretary

OPEN - Contact  
Amy Knudsen

### Chimes Chair

Amy Knudsen

## Does Your School Qualify?

Area 8 offers a handchime loan program to schools in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. *Qualifying schools will receive:*

- 3-octave set of handchimes for one semester (approx. 4 months) with teaching materials
- support network and/or mentor
- one-year membership to Handbell Musicians of America.

To check availability of handchimes for loan or to submit an application, please contact Nancy Youngman, Area 8 Chimes Chair.

*To learn more about the Chime Loan Program, visit the [Area 8 website](#).*

*A video featuring Nancy Youngman describes in detail the Area 8 chime loan program and can be found [here](#).*



# Upcoming Area 8 Events

## September 2026

**September 27: 4:00 pm** The Agape Ringers Concert  
Central Christian Church, Decatur, Illinois

## October 2026

**October 4: 4:00 pm** The Agape Ringers Concert  
United Protestant Church of Grayslake, Grayslake, Illinois

**October 9-10:** Mid-Iowa Handbell Festival, Des Moines, Iowa  
Friday, Oct. 9, 6:00 pm: Reading Session with Sandra Eithun  
Saturday, Oct. 10, 8 am: Handbell Festival and Massed Ring with Sandra Eithun

# National Events

Visit <https://handbellmusicians.org/events/> for more information

## August 3-11, 2026

International Handbell Symposium, Aberdeen, Scotland

## August 17-19, 2026

Solo Ringing Masterclass, Charlotte, North Carolina

## August 20-22, 2026

Into the Forest, Charlotte, North Carolina

## October 15-18, 2026

Distinctly Bronze West, Vancouver, Washington

## February 25-28, 2027

Distinctly Bronze East, New Bern, North Carolina

## February 26-28, 2027

Crescendo, New Bern, North Carolina



**BELLS OF THE CASCADES**  
**Bells In Paradise**  
**CRUISE XVII**  
JANUARY 17-24, 2027  
Greetings!

**Announcing BOC Cruise XVII**

Exciting News! BOC's next fun-filled handbell cruise is now available for registration. We'll be sailing from Fort Lauderdale, FL on a 7-day cruise of the beautiful Eastern Caribbean. We set sail on January 17th, 2027 with exploring ports of call in Nassau, Bahamas; Half Moon Cay; Grand Turks; and Amber Cove, Dominican Republic before returning to Fort Lauderdale.

For more information about the cruise, and to register, visit our cruise webpage.

Hope to see you on board in 2027!  
Best wishes,  
BOC Cruise Committee

For questions: [cruise-info@bellsofthecascades.org](mailto:cruise-info@bellsofthecascades.org)

To view our website:  
<https://www.bellsofthecascades.org/cruise/nextcruise>



**Bells of the Cascades**  
P.O. Box 151  
Tualatin, OR 97062



Cruise Clinician  
Brenda Austin

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4 publications per year,  
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Articles are due on the  
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a concert or event for  
inclusion, click [here](#) or  
go to the A8 Website,  
Events page.

## Questions?

Please send all questions  
and comments about  
this and future *Quavers*  
publications to Beth Ann  
Edwards, Editor:  
[newslettereditor.area8@  
handbellmusicians.org](mailto:newslettereditor.area8@handbellmusicians.org)

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