

HISTORY OF HANDBELLS & CHIMES AT ASBURY

In June of 1972, Martha Timerman donated monies to purchase the first two octaves of Schulmerich handbells in memory of her husband, Wesley. In the fall of 1972, a high school group was organized to ring bells. The first adult bell choir was formed in the fall of 1973. Since the musical selections were limited with only two octaves of bells, the United Methodist Women purchased the third octave of bells. The fourth and fifth octaves of handbells were purchased as memorial gifts. Unfortunately, few other specific gifts are recorded by donor:

- A 3, A#3, and B3 (March 1980)
- G3, G#3 (June 1980)
- D7, E7 (October 1980)
- G#7 (February 1986) by Sandra Senior

In 1991, the first octave of bells was refurbished. The completion of the fifth octave occurred in 1991 with the addition of the C#3 in honor of Martha Jablonski. Then in 1993, the second octave of bells was refurbished.

Handbell music began to include music for chimes, so three octaves of Suzuki chimes were donated. To commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of handbells at Asbury, the G2 aluminum bell was donated in 1997 by David Corp.

Throughout the history of handbells at Asbury, there have been varying numbers of bell choirs. Beginning with the high school choir and then the adult choir, more have been added as time passed. The high school choir eventually became the Wesley Ringers, while the Asbury Ringers were the adults. Junior Ringers were begun for elementary students. Alleluia Bells was formed to accommodate the large number of youth who wanted to ring. Finally, the Agape Ringers was created to encourage more adults who wanted to learn to ring.

With the heavy usage of the bells since 1972, the handbells were showing much wear and a need to replace more and more parts. A decision was made in 2006 to totally refurbish four of the five octaves of bells. The value of the five octaves (plus 2 other bells) we own exceeds \$17,000.00, so we have a huge investment in our bells. The bells were driven to Sellersville, Pennsylvania during the summer for the work to be done. The entire handbell clapper mechanism and the handle assembly were replaced and the bells were polished. At this time three octaves of the Schulmerich MelodyChimes were also donated.

On October 29, 2006, a dedication of the refurbishing of Asbury's four octaves of handbells and the dedication of the MelodyChimes occurred. A major contribution for the refurbishment of the handbells was given in loving memory of Michelle Coutu Sykes by her father on behalf of the family. Two of the three octaves of MelodyChimes were given in loving memory of Muriel Corp by David. In April 2007, a fourth octave of MelodyChimes was donated by Lynn Morgan. To honor the wedding of Nikki Gill in July 2010, the Memorial Committee provided monies to purchase the C#8 handbell which was needed in one of the selections that the Asbury Ringers were playing during the wedding. The fifth octave of handbells was refurbished in 2014.

On behalf of all the handbell choirs, thank you to each of you who contributed toward the refurbishment of our handbells. The tremendous congregational financial support has made this project possible. Thank you for ensuring the continuation of handbells to our musical ministry at Asbury. Those who contributed to the refurbishment:

Max Bovee
Stanton & Karen Browne
David Corp
James Coutu
Mary DeYear
Jean & Al Gianfagna
Cinda Gill
Joan Hamilton
Trudy Hunkins
Bruce & Lorraine Irwin
Lorraine Judkins
Areta Lacy
Joyce McIntosh

Dave & Nancy Moore
Lynn Morgan
Kay Phillips
Sandra Queal
Clea and Barbara Sargent
Phaelon & Karin Silva
Barbara C. Simmons
David Simmons
Milain and Margery Smith
Glenn & Susan Snell
Wayne & Barbara Stark
Irene Stevens
Joyce Tucker
Bina West

In the spring of 2017, Mr. William Lennon approached the church with a desire to make a donation for bells. The musical decision was made to purchase the fifth octave of MelodyChimes. Also, through the generosity of this family, two new bass bell cases with wheels and corduroy for new handbell table covers was purchased. A dedication, focusing on the fifth octave of MelodyChimes given in memory of Evelyn Louise Timerman Lennon (1934-2016) by the Lennon family, was held on May 7, 2017.