

## Report from the WELS Handbell Festivals National Chair

April 29, 2017

Our themes for the past three festivals of “Celebrate Christ with Ringing,” “Celebrate with Joy,” and “On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand” show our commitment to our mission of praising God through the musical art of handbell ringing.

Today we are completing the seventh three-year cycle of WELS Handbell Festivals since our guidelines and organization structure were adopted in 1996. Our guidelines currently organize us into three geographic regions. For two years regional festivals are held in those three regions. In the third year a national festival is held, such as the one this weekend. The national festivals are rotated between the three regions. This year we have the opportunity to amend the bylaws which were discussed at the regional festivals in 2013 and, Lord willing, will continue to guide our festivals for years to come.

Each of the three regions has a representative on the National Executive Board. Each member serves a three-year term and is eligible to serve a second consecutive term. Next year the Northeast region will hold an election for their representative. In 2019 the Southeast and Western regions will hold their elections for their representatives. In the year of a national festival a national chair is elected. This person serves a three-year term and is eligible to serve a second consecutive term. I am completing my second term as chair, today a new leader takes the helm to lead the WELS Handbell Festivals. I am grateful to those who have assisted me in the last six years as national chair and thankful for the 15 years that I have been involved with the festivals as a regional Music Selection Representative for the Western Region, Regional Representative for the Western Region and the National Chair.

This is the 38th year of WELS Handbell Festivals. This year’s national festival has representatives from 31 congregations and schools. We are truly blessed to ring with 311 ringers, all ringing praises to our Lord. I would like to thank St. Paul, Wisconsin Rapids for their willingness to host and leadership they have provided with this festival. Regional festivals will be held in 2018 and 2019. A national festival will be held in 2020, hosted by the Southeast Region.

Before we meet again for another national festival there will be six regional festivals. Some of you will be asked to serve. We will be in need of site coordinators, festival directors and people to serve on the music selection committee. Please consider volunteering your time and talents. Job descriptions can be obtained from the national chair, by reading the by-laws, or found on our website. None of these tasks are difficult, but without the tasks being completed, it would be impossible to run these uplifting events.

At this time we know of 162 WELS and ELS congregations or schools that have handbells. We need your help in updating our mailing list. If you know of a congregation or school that should

be on our mailing list please inform one of the executive board members. Please print clearly when writing information for this mailing list.

Please feel free to share any music comments, suggestions, or general festival comments with the executive board. You may speak with them directly or send an email. The contact information for the board members is listed on the front of this sheet and on our website.

I would like to thank all of the directors who returned their forms and money in a timely manner. The preliminary registration form should be returned by all, even if you are not attending that year's festival. We use this form to update mailing lists. This sheet also gives those planning the festival an idea of how many choirs will be participating. If you do not return this form it is assumed that you are not attending the festival. You will not receive any more information for that year if the preliminary sheet is not returned.

The final registration form that requires payment for your choir is usually due in February. The participant registration form that confirms your number attending is due closer to the festival. The site coordinator needs to have as accurate a count as possible when planning for food, folders, supplies, etc. Your cooperation in returning these forms in a timely manner would be greatly appreciated.

We will continue to use our website, [www.welsbells.com](http://www.welsbells.com), as our main form of communication. Posting items such as directors' notes, lodging and other information has saved us money that would have been spent on postage. Although not foolproof, email has served as a way to get information to you quickly. If you change your email please inform the chair so that it can be updated. If you have comments about the website please feel free to share them with a member of the executive board.

We have experienced so many blessings through our participation in WELS Handbell Festivals. We hope that you will continue to join us and encourage others to join us.

I would like to thank you for the privilege of serving you as your chair for the past six years. I have enjoyed getting to know you and working with you in ringing praises to our Lord over the past 15 years.

In His service,

Brian J. Schwanz  
WELS Handbell Festivals National Chair, 2011–2017