



Ringing Joy – Jolinda Finley’s Handbell Journey of Faith

By: Janis Heier

For Jolinda Finley, the sound of handbells has become much more than music — it has become a calling, a friendship, and a way to praise God with a humble heart.

Jolinda first began attending Bethlehem Lutheran Church with her husband while they were dating in 1990, when the congregation worshiped in the former downtown location.

“It was during one of those church services that I first saw handbells,” Jolinda recalled.

“I was so moved by that moment, I remember telling myself, ‘I’ll be playing those someday.’”



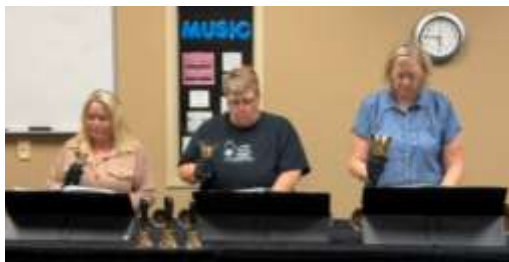
After Bethlehem moved to its new church home, Jolinda reached out to Kay Wieland, former Director of Worship & Music, and joined the Bell Choir. That conversation began a ministry that has now spanned nearly 25 years, with only a few pauses during busy seasons of family life.

Kay became both mentor and friend to Jolinda, helping shape not only her musical skills but also her understanding of worship through music.

“Through Kay, I learned that playing was a ministry, not a performance,” Jolinda shared. Kay also helped Jolinda discover a confidence she never expected. “She instilled the joy of being able to praise God with music that I didn’t know I could do,” Jolinda explained. **“I want to remain as though I am sharing the gift that is from God and give it**

back to Him with a humble heart, hoping it will speak to others when they hear it.”

Through Bethlehem’s worship and music ministry, Jolinda discovered not only music, but also community and lasting friendships. She speaks warmly of the fellow ringers she affectionately calls the “ding-a-lings”.



Gigi Browning, Jolinda Finley & Sue Helling as they practice handbells.

“I am thankful we have a church family that supports this unique music ministry. I am especially thankful for all the ringers who have played in the choir with me. They are a blessing to me, and we share something special.”

Much of Jolinda’s joy at Bethlehem centers on music, fellowship, and the welcoming spirit of the congregation. From early-morning warm-ups before worship to laughter shared during rehearsals, the church has become a place filled with meaningful moments.

“The music and seeing the staff and my friends bring me joy,” she said. “Playing the bells is my favorite. The handbell peeps laugh together, share our mistakes and our wins, and support one another.”

Today, Jolinda remains deeply connected to Bethlehem through the handbell choir, Tuesday Ladies Book Study, and a Monday Small Group. For her, Bethlehem is far more than a church building—it is a place of faith, friendship, music, and belonging.

One of the lessons handbells have taught Jolinda is the importance of every individual within the body of Christ. Each ringer is responsible for only a few notes, yet every person is essential to creating the complete song.

“We cannot perform a handbell piece missing one musician,” Jolinda reflected. Jolinda compared the handbell ministry to everyday life, reflecting, **“Just as we need one another to create the melody in music, we need one another to create harmony in our lives.”**

Every time the bells ring at Bethlehem, they echo the story of a woman who once sat in a church pew, heard handbells for the very first time, and quietly sensed God calling her to join the song.



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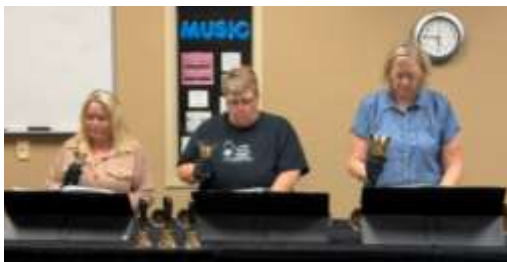
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