

## Where, or why, are they going?

*Bell ringers do not always stay for services, to the dismay of some worshippers. Anne Bunker, Diocesan Bellringing Guild Master, feels the need to explain*



Bell ringers, who are not staying for the services, sometimes receive disapproving looks from worshippers when walking through the church after bell ringing. In many churches there is separate access to the belfry so the ringers come and go without being seen, and comments in these places are made about never seeing the bell ringers in church. Clearly there is a need for explanation.

So that you can hear the bells calling you to worship, bell ringers need to practise. It takes years to learn to (a) handle a bell and (b) the art of change ringing. Most ringers practise once a week and some twice or more. Many don't live in the parish of their home tower and travel quite a distance to the church. In addition to the individual tower practices, the Guild holds monthly joint practices in different churches in the diocese, by rotation and, for each of the quarterly meetings, we have a church service.

We give freely of our time to teach new ringers and maintain the bells. Ringing for services, funerals, commemorations, national celebrations and local events is unpaid. The only time we receive a small fee is for weddings. This covers expenses, waiting until the end of the service (often half an hour longer than predicted) and the actual ringing. Sometimes we ring before the service as well as afterwards, so the payment is just a token gesture.

If you see a ringer leaving the church before the service, give them a smile and consider that they might be going to worship in their own church, or perhaps went to an earlier service. Maybe their faith is not that practised in your church, but they have given their time to ring for your service.

The bell ringers you don't see or that walk through your church at the start of your service have probably spent more time in church than you that week. A ringer who only goes to one practice and rings for one service would spend about two hours a week in church!

We would be pleased to see you in any of our belfries. Come along, meet us and find out about bell ringing. Clergy, worshippers and people of different faiths and none (bell ringing is an inclusive activity) are all welcome. More information at <https://sites.google.com/site/stdavidsguild/home>