

NOTES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD MEETING, 21 JUNE 2010, TO DISCUSS THE CHIMES (AT NIGHT)

The meeting was attended by about 25 people, including the Vicar and 5 PCC representatives, Michael Bond (OCRA) and Clare Blair (city councillor).

Views expressed included:

- It is a comfort to hear the church bells at night (Elizabeth Way resident).
- I love them but not at 3.30am, 3.45am..... (Chesterton Road resident)
- I have talked to others with kids and it's the parents rather than the kids that are disturbed.
- I have to wear earplugs every night. It is the repetition that is the problem; it wouldn't be so bad if it were just on the hour. (Vie resident)
- I was awake for two hours this morning; I am often kept awake by the Chimes. I can't wear earplugs because I am a single parent. I can't do my job properly because I'm tired. (Vie resident: key worker)
- I live next to the church; you just get used to it. (Church Street resident)
- I have been glad to hear others' views; until now I haven't seen why there should be any reason for the bells chiming through the night.
- They have always been there _ I don't see why they should be switched off.

Comments received by email (most of these were considered at the meeting):

- I live at x St Andrew's Road, my garden is at the end of the churchyard. The bells are extremely loud at both sides of the house (at the front the sound bounces off the buildings opposite). I have lost many hours of sleep to the clock chimes by ehraing the bells rung evry 15 mins...
- I LOVE the bells as a normal part of English life. PLEASE do NOT stop them chiming, they sooth me and orientate me day and night and help me to connect to God. (St Andrew's Rd resident)
- We are very sorry to learn that not all like the sound of the church bells - Thursday is the best evening in the week, due to the practice that take place and fills the air with music. (Longworth Ave resident)
- I thoroughly enjoy the bells ringing and find the sound of them relaxing throughout the day or night. Having moved to the Scholars Walk just over two years ago, I would say the sound of the bells chiming in the early hours is uniquely charming and colours the character of the area.
- Whilst my partner and I very much enjoy hearing the sound of the bells chiming through daylight hours, I have to say that the chimes late at night and in the early hours can be most annoying when we are trying to rest. This is particularly so when waking up and finding it difficult to get back to sleep, as the sound of the bells acts as a constant reminder of how long it takes to get back to sleep! (Vie resident)
- While the bells used to keep me awake too, I no longer find they disturb me in the night, though I must question your comment "the sound of which is enjoyed by nearly everyone." I really hope there are not many residents who find great pleasure in listening to bells at 2 or 3 in the morning! Thus on this point I cannot see any good advantage to them chiming throughout the night. This may have been useful in the times when clocks were not available, but nowadays I doubt anyone uses the chimes at night

to help them. (This might seem antiquated, but I do actually use the chimes occasionally to tell the time during the day). More unwelcome is the noise generated by the ringing practice every Thursday from 7pm - on some nights this is quite short, but on others it can go on for quite a long time (as does the Sunday ringing, which seems to go on for hours; some churchgoers must be very slow getting out of bed to need quite that much warning to get to service!)

- I cannot attend but would urge you to cease the chiming of the bells overnight. I am unaware of any legitimate reason to continue to disrupt the sleep of local residents.
- I wasn't even aware that the bells of St Andrew's did ring throughout the night, so they certainly don't inconvenience me; I can hear them in the evening if I have my window open and if I had known that they continued to ring into the night I would have kept my window open on going to bed so that I could hear them! (Vie resident)
- I live at x St Andrews Road and unfortunately will not be able to attend Monday's meeting on June 21st. To help aid the discussion, I wish to let my views be known on night time chiming of the church bells. I am in favour of those who would wish to see this activity limited. I echo the views of those who feel it is quite disturbing to sleep patterns to hear chiming of the bells after midnight. As much as quarter hourly chiming during the day is excessive and as I see it, can serve no useful function, the post-midnight chiming is also pointless and unnecessarily intrusive. It would be an important gesture of good will to the ever-burgeoning community living nearby if the church council could make a concession relating to this matter.
- We do find the church clock chimes disturbing at night. We would support them being switched off from 12 (midnight) to 6.00am. At all other times we appreciate the bells and the clock chimes but in the early hours it can make getting off to sleep occasionally very difficult. (Longworth Avenue resident)
- I sympathise as I'm sure this is going to be one of those topics that splits opinion right down the middle. Personally, I enjoy the bells for the most part and have never been disturbed in the night by either the hourly chime or the fifteen minute bells. However, I am regularly disturbed by the Thursday evening bell ringing practise between 7 - 9pm. During the Thursday evening sessions I find that I am unable to have my windows open as I am unable to watch television, listen to the radio, or even read. It's also very difficult to have a phone conversation without resorting to shouting or taking the phone to another room in the flat. This becomes particularly acute during the warmer weather when one simply cannot sit in a small flat without an open window. I would also like you to take into consideration that because of the volume of the bells, neighbours who do wish to listen to music, etc, turn up the volume of their stereos, etc to compensate, which can lead to neighbourhood disputes as the walls/ceilings/floors in my own and the surrounding flats are very thin; an unfortunate feature of 'new build' apartments. Finally, although I don't have children of my own, there are many families with young children in the new builds who I know have expressed their frustration at not being able to put their children to bed at a reasonable hour as the sound of the bells makes it impossible before 9pm. (Vie resident)
- One of the highlights of our move from London to Chesterton was the beautiful sound of the St Andrew's church bells which we knew rang throughout the day and evening. Upon realising that the bells ring all through the night; we now close all our front and side windows, and use ear plugs and a fan to dull the beautiful noise - we actually feel guilty about doing this!
It is a concern that as the hot weather approaches we will need to open windows during the night to avoid warm air just being re-circulated. (Vie resident)
- We come from Finland where great majority of population are Christian and we are used to hearing church bells. Our only concern is that St Andrew's Church bells appear

to be rung often at odd hours - the ones most disruptive to us are around or soon after 8pm when our daughter (4.5 yrs) tries to fall asleep. (Longworth Avenue resident)

- I'd like to record that having lived 'in earshot' for 19 years, I have never found the bells at night a problem, and indeed regard them as a re-assuring sound. I do accept that I live a few hundred yards away across the recreation ground, and that the volume must be greater for those in the homes built much closer to the church. But can they not be muffled between say, 12 and 6? I would be sad if they were switched off altogether.

When everyone had been given their say a suggested 'compromise' emerged that the quarter-hour chimes should be turned off at night (between 11/12pm and 6/7am) but the hourly 'bongs' should continue. This was widely supported at the meeting with no-one speaking against.

This would require the installation of a mechanism, costing perhaps £2-3000. It was agreed that it would not be fair for the church to have to foot the bill as the clock and chimes were installed by the community for the community.

There was also no support at the meeting for curtailing the Thursday night practice (7.30-9pm) or the ringing for services on Sundays (usually 9.30-9.55am).

The matter would now be considered by the PCC (church council) at its meeting on Monday 5 July.

NIM, 30.6.10