

BANFF – The hills are alive with the sound of music.

As the tourist town grapples with the COVID-19 crisis, Heather Jordan, the pianist at St. George's-In-The-Pines Anglican Church, is bringing joy to residents as she rings the church bells every day at 1 p.m.

Throughout time, music has brought people together and Jordan hopes the sound of bells filling Banff's quiet streets can help lessen the anxiety brought on by the global pandemic – if only for a moment.

As a singer/songwriter and private music teacher, Jordan has watched her income whittle away as part of the global COVID-19 pandemic, though she continues to offer online lessons. "What I also lost is a regular schedule, something that gives you a sense of 'there's my day,' " she said.

"We're all in the same boat and I thought it would help me feel normal and maybe help everyone else if I ring the bells at 1 p.m. every day."

St.-George's-In-The-Pines, Banff's oldest active church with Anglican services being held as early as 1887, is currently closed to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic, but is still holding services online - through Facebook Live and Zoom instead of in person.

This church is currently one of only two churches in Canada to have a set of 11 peal bells.

The bells were donated in 1927, the largest weighing half a ton. The bells were cast by John Taylor and Company Bellfounders in Loughborough, England, and were shipped to Banff via the Panama Canal.

The bells were the first of their kind to be installed in Canada, according to historical records. They do not swing and are attached to steel beams and struck by clappers controlled by baton levers on a clavier within the steeple.

"It's a very public way to make mistakes, so please forgive me in advance," she laughed. But is also a hopeful moment in the day.

"If we can all feel like we are doing something together, and mark our days, it might make us feel OK," she said.

For Mayor Karen Sorensen, the daily sound of the bells filling the streets has given her inspiration and helped lift her spirits during these devastating times. In Banff, thousands of residents have lost their jobs.

"Today she performed four pieces as I stood alone on the street in the sunshine ... I cried throughout the entire performance," she said.

"I love this community and how each [of us] are giving what they can offer."

<https://youtu.be/XdoPjIGFWds>