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Top Handbell Ensemble to Perform

Strikepoint, one of the world's top handbell ensembles, will be performing at **7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 24** at the Church of St. Mary (420 Irving St.) in Alexandria. Admission is free but a \$15 donation is suggested. This performance is part of the group's 2019 summer tour.

Strikepoint, from First United Methodist Church in Duluth, Minnesota, was established in 1984 and has been touring annually since 1986. Their travels have taken them to England, Scotland, Japan, Hong Kong, Sweden, Canada, Hawaii and throughout the mainland U.S., with performances in four national capitals. They have performed at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, Disney World in Florida, and both Disneyland and the Crystal Cathedral in California. In 2016 they were cultural exchange ambassadors to Växjö, Duluth's Swedish sister city, and were featured performers for that region's Minnesota Days celebration.

Strikepoint rings 6-plus octaves of bronze Schulmerich handbells, 7 octaves of handchimes, 2 octaves of Silver Melody Bells, 3 octaves of Petit and Fritzen handbells and a variety of other instruments. The 11-member directorless ensemble is unique among touring handbell groups as a combination community professional/church group and an adult/youth group. Bill Alexander, a nationally known handbell clinician and conductor, is the leader of the ensemble.

Strikepoint is noted for capturing the enthusiasm of audiences with its dynamic style and accessible music. Concert selections range from a boisterous Macedonian folk tune to a Duke Ellington swing to a pensive meditation on the *Passion Chorale*, and include both familiar and new music. Reviews of Strikepoint concerts have praised their "athleticism and showmanship," "rhythmic precision, musical nuance and technical confidence," with an "exceptionally creative bent!"

Strikepoint's recordings have been featured on National and Minnesota Public Radio and other nationally broadcast programs. Their newest recording, *Reflections*, is "music to calm the mind and restore the spirit," and has been used for meditation, yoga and music therapy.

Strikepoint concerts are designed to delight listeners. Among the comments most frequently heard after concerts, a favorite is, "If we'd known it was going to be this good, we would have made all our friends come."

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