

CELEBRATING  
**125**  
YEARS

**St. Paul's is Celebrating its  
125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
October 8, 2023**

**The Bell that Moved a  
Congregation!!**

On February 27, 2006, Pastor Ronald Reinhardt visited my father, Arthur Hornish, when he was in the hospital. The two men spent about 3 hours talking. I was present in the room; however, I didn't participate in the conversation. I was reading a book. Pastor Reinhardt caught my attention when I heard him tell Dad that he always found what congregations valued or considered important to them interesting. He then proceeded to tell Dad that when St. Paul's was considering the move to the Carridale Street location, the congregation was split about 50 - 50. They held a congregational meeting to discuss the move when, toward the end of the meeting, someone asked if they were going to move the bell. The answer was yes, and, at that point, Pastor Reinhardt said the congregation shifted from a 50 -50 split to a near unanimous vote in favor of the move.

The Bell moved the congregation from Sherman Street to Carridale Street.

The bell was cast at the Vanduzen & Tift Buckeye Bell Foundry in Cincinnati, OH on October 15, 1891, which makes the bell six (6) day shy of being exactly 7



years older than the congregation. It was purchased by the Congregational Church for \$167.42; it weighs 819 pounds and is thirty-six inches (36) inches in diameter. The bell is made of pure copper and East India tin which was combined in a proportion that provides a good, full, and clear tone. To improve the sound of the bell, Van Duzen & Tift changed the shape of the bell. The bell has a unique mounting disc which holds the bell to the yoke. It was in the bell tower of the Sherman Street church when the St. Paul's congregation bought the building in 1901. If we were to replace our bell today, it would cost \$30,000.

The Buckeye Bell Foundry was founded in 1837 by George Coffin. The foundry created the most ornate bells made in the United States. The foundry and the Verdin Company Foundry were located next to each other on the Ohio River Riverfront in Cincinnati, OH. In 1866, E. W. Van Duzen and his partner, C. T. Tift, bought the company and the name was changed to Vanduzen and Tift. In 1894, the company name was changed again to the E. W. Vanduzen Company.

In 1937, the Ohio River flooded and crested at 80 feet - between 15 and 16 feet above flood stage - and destroyed all the businesses along the riverfront, including the Vanduzen Buckeye Bell Foundry and the Verdin Company foundry.

Both businesses relocated and rebuilt. Vanduzen remained in business until 1956 and Verdin Company bought the remaining assets in 1957. Among those assets were three (3) order books that survived the flood and in one of those order books is the order of a bell from the Congregational Church at New Decatur, AL. An interesting note, a bell was also ordered for the Decatur Fire Department at the same time.

When the Sherman Street church was dedicated on March 17, 1901, the bell called the congregation to worship for the first time. During the church remodel in 1951, the church building was turned 90 degrees to allow for the addition of the basement and other improvements. The man in charge of turning the church told Pastor Krohn that he would give him \$50 if the bell rang during the turning. The bell never rang. When the congregation moved from the Sherman Street location to the Carridale Street location in 1968, the bell was installed in the current bell tower before anything else was moved.

Traditionally, the bell calling us to worship represents the voice of God calling us to worship. Our tradition is to ring the bell seven times during the call to worship. Why seven rings? Because Pastor Reinhardt said so. The number seven (7) in the Bible represents completeness. God completed creation in seven (7) days. Or it could represent the traditional ringing of the bell in Medieval times 7 times during the day to call people to pray. Our bell has called the members of St. Paul's to worship for 122 years at every service in the sanctuary, be it a worship service, a wedding, a funeral, or days of national mourning or national celebration. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, it will call us to worship for the 122<sup>nd</sup> time as we celebrate the anniversary of the founding of St. Paul's.

One of the privileges afforded the boys in the confirmation classes at the Sherman Street church was the opportunity to ring the bell before the worship services. There was a young boy who wanted to ring the bell, but he wasn't old enough. He wasn't in the confirmation class. One Sunday, Pastor Reinhardt came to this young man and told him that on that Sunday morning he was going to ring the bell. If you ask Jeff Pittman today, he will tell you that it is one of his fondest memories.

Next time you're in the sanctuary waiting for the service to begin and you hear the bell ring, take a moment, count the dings and dongs, and think about all those who have sat in your place and heard the bell call them to worship.

*Beth Hornish and  
Ron Fritze*

