

St. Peter's Bell Restoration

Our church bell has a history... It was cast in West Troy, New York, and may have come around the Horn on a clipper ship. It was recast, however, in Carson City in 1881 due to a crack that was probably caused by pulling on both ropes at the same time. The men of St. Peter's, this past year, decided to restore the bell while attending the men's retreat at Camp Galilee. Peter Van Bommel, an 8 o'clocker with a train restoration background down at the shops of the V&T, stepped forward to restore the bell. He and his faithful assistant the Junior Warden had the most fun they'd had in years. It was like being ten again spending long summer hours sitting and toiling in the upper belfry. It was a tough job but somebody had to do it, and after months of work the restored bell rang for the first time on August 9th, 2018, for our sesquicentennial celebration. Someone recently has made the suggestion of a children's bell ringer's ministry. ([Click here to continue reading.](#))

Here are the rules for the bell if we are to put the children in charge:

1. Don't pull both ropes at the same time.
2. Don't pull both ropes at the same time.
3. Don't pull both ropes at the same time.

"The Wheel is the Peel, and the Chime Tells the Time." – A Children's Rhyme

Peeling calls people to church for celebration or emergency. Chiming or tolling tells the time, or an accounting of the deceased, as we performed on Veteran's Day 2018, the hundredth anniversary of the end of WW I. If the Children's Bell Ringers' Ministry forms successfully, this would be an example of an easy rhyme to remember for teaching the differences between the pulling of the two ropes.

In the lower belfry the rope closest to the door, and in front of the ladder that leads up to the trap door and the bell itself, operates the giant wooden wheel which peels the bell. This is the classic ding dong ding dong. It calls to the people from far and near. When the question "for whom the bell tolls?" is asked, the answer possibly would be, "for everyone." It is the warning bell used in yesteryear to warn the community of a difficulty such as a fire or to celebrate a wedding.

To chime the bell, however, one would pull the rope closest to the window. For now we are trying to keep this rope inaccessible as a reminder to only pull one rope at a time. The chime tells the time and gives the sound Dong, Dong, Dong or three o'clock in this case. The bell always remains stationary during the chime function whereas during the peel function the bell swings back and forth.

The problem for our bell came when both ropes were pulled at the same time, which caused the clevis to break. The clevis is the bracket that holds the hammer or chime. The chime was met by a swinging, tolling bell which broke the clevis and the hammer many years ago. As a part of the restoration this year, the clevis was removed and taken to the V&T shop for brazing, which is the process of reuniting broken bronze.

The inspiration of any restoration work is to believe that future generations will care for the restored item. The formation of the Children's Bell Ringers' Ministry would accomplish this if the adults can, first, learn the bell properly, and then teach the children. A few people have already shown an interest in ringing. If you are interested please contact Father Jeff.

– *Gayle Bowers, St. Peter’s Junior Warden*