



## Chapter 5

### “Our Bell” Calling the faithful since 1870!



Did you realize that the bell that calls you to worship every Sunday is the very same bell that has called worshippers since 1870? Did you realize that this bell has been rung in each of the three church buildings that have been used for worship by this congregation? Did you realize that in 1883 the city of Glencoe made an arrangement with the trustees to use this bell as the city’s night fire alarm bell? The bell hanging in the bell tower of the First Congregational Church has not only been an important part of the lives of church members, but the entire community.

One hundred and fiftieth anniversary history committee member Dan Kottke considered these and other factoids about the bell, that as a Deacon, he often rang before worship and wanted to know more about it. In March of 2007 he climbed into the bell tower and examined the bell to see what could be learned. He found that the bell was made of iron with a wooden wheel around which the pull rope was wound. It was 36” in diameter and so marked on the side of the bell with a number 36. The make and origin of the bell however, were another matter. What appeared to be raised lettering was found on a relief area on the yoke that suspended the bell. Since the bell had been directly in the elements in the first two buildings and only partially protected from direct exposure in the third, this lettered portion was corroded enough to make reading impossible.

Dan put his skills at identifying old and used auto and truck part to good use and with careful use of abrasives cleaned up the area enough that an impression could be rubbed in paper. Unfortunately, most of the letters were still just mounds of rust, but the word “Cincinnati” was clearly legible at the bottom.

A website on the subject of Tower Bells was found and Dan began correspondence with them to see if they could offer assistance. The website gave guidance and suggested a couple of possible companies that were doing business in Cincinnati at



*Dan Kottke examines bell in current church bell tower*

the time; Cincinnati Bell Foundry Co. and Blymer Norton & Co.

A second trip to the bell tower was made on April 15<sup>th</sup>. This time Dan had help from Roger Landon and Craig Miller. More work was done to see if individual letters could be brought out. Craig brought up colored lighting and multiple angles were used to take pictures hoping to be able to identify more letters. Still no solid identification.

Craig and Dan began doing internet research on one of the suggested companies, Blymer Norton, and on an auction site found pictures of a Blymer Norton bell and the relief area of the yoke. They found that the layout of the letters on the picture and the raised lumps of rust on our yoke matched exactly. They were fairly confident that our bell is a 36" Blymer Norton & Co. and was cast in Cincinnati, Ohio.



Dan also did research in the original trustee's minute books. He read from the beginnings in 1857 all the way up to 1900 but could find no record or discussion about a bell. Records of the Blymer Norton Co. were also not available. Blymer Norton was a multi purpose casting company and also made agricultural parts and has long since been out of business.

Dan is also speculating that the bell probably came to Minnesota by river, coming down the Ohio to the Mississippi and then up to St. Paul or Carver. Then it would have been taken through the Big Woods by cart to Glencoe. The railroad did not come to Glencoe until 1872. He is also not ruling out the possibility that it had been used by another church prior to coming to Glencoe.