

## Our Carillon's Story

*Note: photos of bells in this document were taken during a visit to the Petit & Fritsen workshop in 2005*

### The Beginning

The story of our carillon begins with a dream. Mrs. H. D. (Jean) Kesling, a longtime member of our church, spent her winters in Arizona. One of her favorite pastimes was to sit on her patio and listen to a nearby carillon play each evening at 6:00 p.m. Jean thought a carillon would be a fine addition to our church and community. She approached the church through her lawyer to see if the church would be interested in building a carillon.

The Session, the governing body of the church, and the church Foundation, which oversees investments, supported the carillon proposal and placed the carillon project on the official “gift list” of the church. Following this action, Mrs. Kesling provided for a gift of \$100,000.00 to the church, designated for the construction of a carillon on our church property. Jean Kesling died in December, 1994, and the church received her generous gift the following year.



In the fall of 1997, Dr. W. William Wimberly, II, minister of the church, and David Eicher, organist and parish steward, approached Mr. Gerard Fritsen of The Verdin Company to explore the feasibility of building our carillon. The Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio is the world's largest supplier of bells, carillons and clocks. At Verdin's suggestion a group of church members visited the Chicago Botanic Garden in October to hear the carillon there and see the tower designed by Verdin. A similar group also traveled to Culver, Indiana to view and listen to the carillon at The Culver Academies.

Responding to the recommendation of Verdin, the Session decided to proceed with the ordering of 36 bells, to be cast in The Netherlands in order to take advantage of a favorable currency exchange rate. The order was placed with Verdin on December 23, 1997, at a total cost of \$82,000.00.



Petit & Fritsen B.V. of Aarle-Rixtel, The Netherlands, cast each bell individually, using the centuries' old lost-wax method. Each bell was then perfectly tuned by shaving away small amounts of bronze in specific locations within the cone of each bell. Once tuned, a bell will remain in tune for centuries. In March, 1999, the bells were shipped to Verdin for storage in Cincinnati.

The bells, console, framework, and action were all built by Petit & Fritsen and represent the first all-Petit & Fritsen installation in the United States in over thirty years.



With the bells on order, we needed a plan for building the tower and paying for it. In July, 1998, Dr. Wimberly proposed to name the project, “The Children's Carillon: A Gift for the 21st

Century and Beyond” and submitted plans for building the tower and raising the needed funds to the Worship and Music Committee. The committee and Session approved the plan, and in September, Dr. Wimberly began recruiting members for the Carillon Task Force. The original members included Anne and Ira Abbott, Judith Beltz, Elizabeth Bernel, Thomas Boyd, Beverly Burmeister, Marilyn Burrows, Robert Cutler, John Droege, David Eicher, Jacqueline Gaddy, David Hay, Daniel Lewis (chairman), Linda Lewis, Marcia Morris (secretary), Lee Rardin, Glen Richardson, Judy Brown Richardson, Edward R. Weber, and Dr. Wimberly. A group from the Task Force visited the Verdin Company to view our bells on April 6, 1999.



### **Selection of Tower Design and Construction Company**

The Task Force held its first organizational meeting on October 14, 1998. Members took responsibility for fund-raising, communications and building requirements. At the October 28 meeting, members received an interesting and informative historical summary of carillons, written by Task Force member Anne Abbott. The paper is entitled, “Carillon and Carillon Towers of the Low Countries”. From November, 1998 through February, 1999, the Task Force considered proposals for the design and construction of the carillon tower from five different companies.

The original concept of the Task Force was that the carillon tower would be constructed at the northerly point of the church property. All of the tower proposals supported that location, except one. Herman Terzino, a local architect, with Tim Larson of Larson-Danielson Construction Company in La Porte, strongly recommended that the tower be located near the main church entrance on Kingsbury Avenue. In their view, this location was most compatible with the sanctuary’s design concept, created by Chicago architect Edward Dart in 1968.

In February, 1999, the Task Force selected Herman Terzino and Larson-Danielson to design and construct the tower. Following thoughtful consideration, the Task Force unanimously voted to locate the tower near the main entrance.



During the spring of 1999, the Task Force reviewed and approved the plans and specifications for construction of the carillon tower. Herman Terzino’s design of the tower reflects the strong vertical line of the tall window in the chancel area of the sanctuary; the pitch of the tower roof matches the pitch of the sanctuary roof; and the bricks are the same for all of the structures on our church campus. There is an architectural union of the tower, the sanctuary building and the education building. People can walk beneath and by the tower to enter the church or gather in the courtyard and observe the bells in the tower and the original Children’s Bell hanging above the entrance. Also, the west side of the tower lines up with the west side of the education building as do the south sides of the tower and sanctuary building to confirm the union.

### **Fund-raising, 1999-2004**

- Session approval, June 5, 1999, and authorization of Task Force to commence fund-raising campaigns to secure additional funds.
- Landscape architect Donald Bowman of La Porte hired to create model of tower and adjoining building.
- Anne Abbott, Task Force member, photographs model and produces one of the brochures.
- Artist and church member Lee Rardin designs informational brochure.
- Task Force member Glen Richardson builds mobile, illuminated display stand for one of the bells. Interior lighting and a mirrored surface below the bell allow viewers to see marks made in tuning the bell as well as the point where the bell will be sounded by the striking mechanism.
- Purchase of individual bells by church members and friends.
- Three-year pledges and outright gifts from church members and friends.
- Gifts in honor and in memory of family and friends.
- Anonymous gifts and interest-free loans from church members to be repaid from income earned on funds given by the Ethel Pontius estate.
- Gifts to the church Foundation and the Unity Foundation of La Porte County, allocated to the carillon project.

Of particular note is that the Task Force did not at any time mortgage church property or secure bank loans, and all construction progressed as funds were received. At the time of the carillon dedication in May, 2004, the total cost approached \$600,000.00.

### **Tower Construction Timeline and Selection of Consultant**

- September 10, 2000, following morning worship, the congregation and pastors process outside to invoke God's blessings on the site and project.
- Later in September, foundation excavation begins. Discovery of water, which had to be confined and removed in order to have a proper foundation, slows progress and adds considerable expense.
- By mid-December, the foundation and steel framework, rising 56-feet in the air, are completed and work is suspended for the winter.
- In the spring of 2001, masons enclose the steel frame, the cabin is built, and progress continues to the top of the tower.
- Following completion of the tower, more funds are needed for the manufacture of the action and console with bench.
- With necessary funds received in 2002 and 2003, the final order is placed with Verdin in February, 2003 and work begins in The Netherlands for the completion of the carillon.
- In 2003, the Task Force selects John Gouwens of The Culver Academies as consultant for the final phases of the project. Working closely with Verdin, Mr. Gouwens reviews and adjusts the specifications, and at Verdin's expense, travels to The Netherlands to inspect the work there.
- In the spring of 2004, Verdin installs the bells and Mr. Gouwens supervises the installation of the bells.

## **Conclusion**

At dedication time, it is interesting to note that the oldest and newest carillons in North America are both in the state of Indiana. The oldest carillon with 23 bells, built in 1856, is in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Notre Dame, Indiana, and the newest is our carillon in La Porte, only twenty-five miles apart. The joyful completion of The Children's Carillon is made possible by the generosity and foresight of the members and friends of The Presbyterian Church of La Porte and its Task Force with the professional assistance of The Verdin Company, Petit & Fritsen B.V., Herman Terzino, architect, Larson-Danielson Construction Company, and John Gouwens, consultant.



Members of the Task Force at the time of installation include Anne and Ira Abbott, Judith Beltz, Elizabeth Bernel, Beverly Burmeister, Marilyn Burrows, John Droege, David Eicher, Daniel Lewis (chairman), Linda Lewis, Marcia Morris (secretary), Glen Richardson, Judy Brown Richardson, and Edward R. Weber.