

The History of Immanuel's Bell 1924-2025

In 2025, Immanuel undertook extensive repairs to the two towers on the north side of the church. Both leaked and were deteriorating. Randall Construction of Osage was hired to rebuild both towers.

When the current brick church was built in 1924, Mr. and Mrs. C.H. Bartlet donated a cast bronze tower bell to be used to call all to worship. It was inscribed "DONATED BY C. H. BARTLET AND WIFE FOR 50TH ANNIVERSARY 1924", in honor of the 50 year anniversary of the founding of Immanuel Congregation in St. Ansgar. The bell was cast by the McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore, Maryland, at a cost of \$1050.00. It was ordered October 11, 1924, and dedicated along with the new brick church and organ on November 8, 1924. Unfortunately the bell was not turned and from the repeated striking in the same location on its sound bow, it cracked. The 1540 pound bell was removed from the bell tower and hauled to St. Paul, Minnesota for scrap on July 12, 1951.

The First Methodist Episcopal Church (later known as the Methodist Church) in Northwood, Iowa was located at the southeast corner of Jefferson Highway and Central Avenue (Highway 105 and Highway 65), across the street to the south from the current Worth County Courthouse. That congregation built a new church two blocks north at 1000 1st Avenue N in 1950. In January of 1951 the Jaggerson Construction Company of Decorah began the deconstruction of the wood structure. Materials salvaged were auctioned in April 1951. The wood pews went to a church in Independence, Iowa. The 2000 pound cast steel bell was purchased by Immanuel Congregation in St. Ansgar.

The steel bell was installed in Immanuel's bell tower May 11, 1951. The committee in charge of purchasing the new bell and removal of the old one included A. C Bartz, R. C Mueller, August Janzow and August Kuehl. The cracked bell was removed with block and tackle. A pickup was used to raise the steel bell up into the belfry. The cast A-stand that supports the bell and the cast yoke that the bell swings upon are the 1924 original ones from the Mc Shane Bell Foundry.

Fast forward to 2025. The only way to repair the water damage to the northeast tower was to remove the bell and much of the brick tower. The bell was lowered to the sidewalk June 18th. In July, Keith Horgen refurbished the bell and wood supports. The bell sat on the sidewalk in front of the church and continued to call members to worship. The bell's history was painted on the outside of it so any future members would know its record. Work was also done to repair mechanisms in the tower. Roofs were built over the two towers to try to prevent future issues with moisture. Four new grates were installed to let air in but keep moisture out. New I-beams, donated by Mel Schroeder, support the bell frame. The rope to ring the bell was replaced. A new ladder was installed to make it safer to anyone needing to make future repairs inside the tower.

In September, the bell was lifted by a crane into the rebuilt tower and the new roof was quickly constructed to protect the tower from moisture. At noon on October 11th, during the Fall Goodness Day Fund Raiser, the bell joyfully pealed for the first time, again in its lofty belfry home.

The bell calls many to worship, 30 minutes before and at the start of each service. It is tolled when a member of the congregation has passed. Our bell is a very important part of Immanuel's congregation and building.

NEW BELL INSTALLED AT IMMANUEL CHURCH

A cast steel bell weighing 2,000 pounds has been peeling forth from the belfry of the Immanuel Lutheran church here since its installation last Friday. The bell replaces a 1,500 pound bronze bell that had developed a crack along the sound bow or lower section of the bell causing it to lose its tone.

The new bell was procured from the old Methodist church in Northwood which was recently torn down.

A section of lattice work in the belfry was removed and staging of heavy beams was erected to enable the cracked bell to be lowered by block and tackle.

A pickup truck afforded the necessary power to lift the new one-ton bell to its position in the belfry.

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Lowering of the bronze bell 1951

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Calls Many To Worship For Years



Pictured above is the 1540 pound bronze bell from the Immanuel Lutheran church as it was about to be loaded onto a truck before being sent to St. Paul for salvage on July 12.

The bell had developed a crack along its sound bow and was replaced by a 2200 pound cast steel bell here May 11. The cast steel bell was procured from the old Methodist church in Northwood

that was recently torn down. Arrangements for the purchase of the steel bell and disposal of the cracked bell were made by a committee including the late A. C. Bartz, R. C. Mueller, August Janzow, Edgar Scheer and August Kuehl.

Left to right in above picture: the late Albert C. Bartz, William Ruebe, Jerry Mostek and daughter, Jean Mostek. Mostek trucked the bell to St. Paul for salvage.



Methodist Church Northwood Iowa 1876-1951 located on the southeast corner of Main(now Central-Hwy 105) and 10th Street (now Hwy 65).

Starts Wrecking Methodist Church

The Jaggerson Construction company, Decorah, began work Monday wrecking the old Methodist church in Northwood.

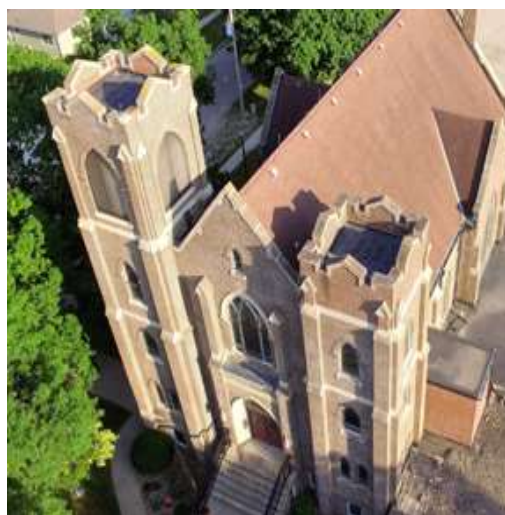
The company's contract calls for the wrecking to be completed by April 1. Soon afterwards the church plans to auction off the salvaged materials.

The pews in the church have been sold to an Independence church and were taken there this week.

Published March 8, 1951 The Northwood Anchor



Original Immanuel roofline prior to 2025 rebuild of the two towers.



Drone shot looking down into the former towers. Photo by Jerry Rachut



Elder Greg Beaver ringing the bell as it sat on the sidewalk before church. July 2025

Photo: Laura Pahl

Information painted onto the bell so future Immanuel members will know the bell's history.

Photo: Carol Pahl





Original 1924 cast A-frame and yoke continue to be used to support the steel bell.

Photo: Jonathan Pahl

Crane lifting the bell down to the sidewalk.
June 18, 2025

Photo: Jonathan Pahl



Bell before refurbishing. Just removed from the tower by a crane. June 18, 2025

Photo: Jonathan Pahl



Northeast tower brick removed and new interior block being rebuilt. Taken July 20, 2025

Photo: Carol Pahl

Towers with new pitched rooflines. New grates protect the interior of the bell tower from moisture but allow air filtration. Taken October 26, 2025

Photo: Carol Pahl



Immanuel Lutheran of St. Ansgar in the midst of exterior renovation

By CASANDRA LEFF

ST. ANSGAR - Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Ansgar has been undergoing extensive renovation work over the past few years, one church trustees believe will keep their building in tip-top shape for years to come.

Two years ago, work started on the southern side of the church, but there is also work to be done on the north, east and west sides as well.

"We had some leaks on the south side," Building Committee member and Head Trustee Paul Hannam explained. "We did repairs to take care of that - it was the worst at the time."

They didn't do any work in 2024, because the congregation was busy celebrating the 100th anniversary of the church. This year, though, they have started working on the northern side. Randall Construction is helping them with all of the work.

The church has two towers, with the one in the northeast corner having sustained considerable water damage. The bell has been removed from the tower, and much of the tower below the bell was removed and then built up again.

The bell is not original to the church, but it has been part of the structure since the 1950s and was used then. With the bell removed, there will also be work done on the mechanisms in the tower.

"We're going to fix those up," Hannam said. "We hope we don't have to go back there for another 40-50 years."

Currently, the church is in the process of tearing down the inside and outside bricks and building them back up. Roofs will be put over the two towers to try to prevent future issues with moisture. Four grates will also be put in to let air in but keep moisture out.

The work is expected to be completed in October, but they expect to get the roof up and the bell back in the northeast tower soon.

Hannam noted the inside block in the northwest tower is in good shape, but the outside is not as good, so the committee



Scaffolding is up around the towers at St. Ansgar's Immanuel Lutheran Church as work is done on them. EJ PHOTO/CASANDRA LEFF

has decided to tear out the outside bricks, and put new ones in, so the church will be in good shape for a long time. To do this, they are using Kasota Stone from Makati, Minn.

That work likely will not be finished until November.

In the future, cracks on the east and west sides of the building need some fill-in work, and the roof needs to be replaced, but that work is not expected to take place this year. Hannam believes that work will be in the next two years.

The exterior renovations follow inside work that was done six - seven years ago. The church re-did the original organ and converted everything to a solid state.

Now, Hannam says that part of the church is up-to-date.

"It's beautiful inside there," he said. "It's just a beautiful facility. We're proud of it and want to take care of it."

Some money has been set aside for the work being done, but he said members are hoping and praying for fellow members to step forward and help the cause.

"It's major funds," he said, "and it's something everyone wants to do. I hope everyone's heart's into giving and making it happen."

All of the work, he added, is in the hopes of being good stewards of the church where the congregation has called home for the past century.

"The church was built 100 years ago," Hannam said. "With all the labor involved - and they didn't have the equipment we have - I think everyone feels a responsibility. We want to preserve it for future generations. It's a beautiful church."

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L: Bell resting on new I-beams donated by Mel Schroeder



R: Interior wall of rebuilt bell tower



L: New pitched roof of bell tower



R: Ladder for access to bell room

Photos: Paul Hannam



L: A small grate replaced a stained glass window on the south side of the bell tower. This is to allow more ventilation to prevent moisture damage inside of tower.

Photo: Paul Hannam

Immanuel Lutheran Church following reconstruction of both towers and tuck pointing of the north side of the church building. Taken November 3, 2025

Photo: Dylan Marcks

