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Church In Sherman Turns 100



Sherman Community Church will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Sunday. Following services, an ice cream social will take place at 12 p.m. P-J photo by William Mohan

SHERMAN – A “*temporary arrangement*” turns 100 today.

On May 19, 1919, the Sherman Community Church was officially incorporated. Its establishment came from the union of three other

churches that were in the village at the time. The purpose of the founding was only intended to last for a short undesignated amount of time. However, the move was so successful that the church received its current name that year.

The three churches in the village consolidated in an effort to conserve fuel during World War I. This issue was aggravated by the fact that pastors were being drafted into military service. To that end, the churches were also able to have a pastor in one main pulpit.

The churches involved were the First Presbyterian, First Methodist and First Universalist churches of Sherman.

A statement from the Constitution And Bylaws Of The Community Church Of Sherman states the move was done *“in order to better fulfill their mission to the community, to conserve the resources of the Kingdom of God, and to promote the unity of Christianity.”*



Sherman Community Church has maintained its interior for nearly a century. P-J photo by William Mohan

According to current pastor Steve Kilburn around 168 founding members were involved with the incorporation of Sherman Community Church.

Over the years the attendance has also seen more than twice the number.

“I saw in some of the records over 400 people (in attendance),” Kilburn said.

Counting Kilburn, 19 pastors have been assigned during the history of Sherman Community Church.

The current church site is the former location of the First Methodist Church of Sherman. Constructed in 1866, it is also the only surviving building of the three founding churches.

In spite of having seen many changes over the years, the current church has retained its interior and overall structure.

“It’s a stately, traditional appearance which has been retained,” Kilburn said.

The sanctuary is home to a Wick pipe organ that houses 15 ranks (pipe groups in a musical instrument that can be played by one key or a combination of keys). Originally built in 1965, it replaced an organ donated by the First Universalist Church of Sherman. The current model was manufactured in Highland, Ill. According to Kilburn the organ is also one of the few pipe organs in Southwestern Chautauqua County.

A small addition to the building’s side now houses an elevator for handicapped access to the fellowship hall in the basement. The fellowship hall has also undergone a renovation.

The steeple has also been restored. It originally replaced a steeple that had been attacked by mother nature.

“The steeple was struck by lightning and damaged to the point of having to be rebuilt,” Kilburn said.

In its place, the current steeple was built with a bell tower. This steeple was restored six years ago.

According to church member Rose Van Volkenburg, the main work was maintaining the structural stability of the bell tower.

“The steeple had rotted out and we were quoted \$23,000 and we (the congregation) raised the money,” Van Volkenburg said: adding that the congregation was adamant to have it remain part of the building. The bell was also refurbished in its place throughout the duration of the project.

Many congregation members have also maintained a connection with the church and its community.

“I was married in this church 49 years ago,” said Van Volkenburg. *“This is my husband’s church, he lives in Sherman, he grew up here.”*

In addition to her husband being a member for close to 70 years, Van Volkenburg also said their children have also been members.

“A lot of our congregation have all had weddings in this church,” Van Volkenburg said. *“Like most small churches in the community, we are a congregation.”*

To celebrate the 100th anniversary Sherman Community Church will hold an Ice Cream Social on Sunday. The event will be held at 12 p.m. following church services at 10:30 a.m. The public is welcome to attend.

The church is located at 107 Church St. in Sherman.
