

Sound the Bells! The Savior's Born!
B-Christmas 2011 born.

Bell...

Sound the bells! Our Savior is born!

We are a broken world, a sinful humanity, but God has claimed us as his "own dear children" & has promised us...
a Savior.

Bell...

Sound the bells! Our Savior is born!

When the time had come, God announced the joyous news, first to Mary and Joseph, then to the shepherds watching their flocks in the fields ...and now to the world.

Bell...

Sound the bells! Our Savior is born!

In a poor and small village, in a lowly manger, was the miraculous birth of our King. Into our hearts, even today, comes the miraculous birth of our Savior. We are his manger!

Bell...

Sound the bells! Our Savior is born!

A gift for all, touching people around the globe and down through centuries. On this night we praise our God in thanksgiving for the greatest gift of all, his son Jesus!

Bell...

Sound the bells! Our Savior is born!

Bells are like the joyful sounds that come from heaven, echoing the cosmic celebration.

Bells symbolize the voice of God. ("Bells" [Little Falcons](#), 1997 vol. 4, No. 4, p. 6)

Bells have been called "angelic trumpets." ("Church Bells" [Little Falcons](#), 2009, vol. 17, No.1, p.7)

In the Old Testament, bells can be traced to the silver trumpets and rams horns used to announce the beginning of a celebration or feast.

The book of Exodus describes golden bells sewn around the hem of priests' robes. With every step the priest took, the bells rang a little hymn, praising God.

Because early Christians were often persecuted, bells were not used in worship until about the 5th century. By the 12th century their use was widespread around the world. ("Bells" [Little Falcons](#), 1997 vol. 4, No. 4, p. 5-8)

Our Savior's has a church bell. It was purchased in _____ At the time we worshipped on Isabella St.

When we moved to our current location in 1964 the bell came with us.

One of our members, Harvey Heckman, an architect, designed our bell tower and the congregation raised the money to put our beloved bell in the tower so that it could ring out God's love here in Neenah.

On that bell are the words: _____

We ring the bells at the beginning of worship every week and we also ring it at special events, both religious and civic, like at our building dedication, and during the bicentennial celebration in 1976 and at the end of WWII and at 911 remembrances. And of course our bell rings at every wedding and funeral.

Bells can be solemn; bells can be joyous, but bells always claim our attention.

As Christians when we sound the bells, we are ringing out God's grace and glory.

While the world glorifies wealth, accomplishments, fame and power, God, on the other hand, pours heavenly grace and glory onto a poor baby born in difficult circumstances, far from home.

It is this little baby-Jesus, of whom the angels sing. . .Jesus . . .who grew up to be a different kind of leader,
a servant leader,
and a different kind of king,
a savior, crucified and raised.

Jesus, our Savior, offers the grace of
peace, and joy to those in despair,
comfort and hope for those who suffer and grieve
and finally forgiveness and salvation for all who fall short in this broken world.

This is God's Grace! God's undeserved love!

God cares for us, not because we are so good but because God is good.

In fact, Grace is sometimes defined as the gift of God's own self. ("Commentary," Homiletic
Luke 2, 12/25/05)

And this is the message of John 3: 16, which is like the whole Christmas and
Easter story condensed down to one verse.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life”

Because God loves us, he gives us his Son.

It’s a free gift.

An undeserved gift.

A gift that carries with it the unconditional love of God.

For God so loved the world!

Sound the bell; our Savior is born.

God’s heavenly grace and glory shine on each of us tonight and every day, no matter what our circumstance.

One Christmas, during the Civil war, the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, was in deep despair. For a number of Christmases he refused to celebrate” Christmas because of his circumstances.

In 1861, his wife, Fanny, had died in a tragic fire.

She had cut a few of her 7-year old daughter’s curls and decided to preserve them in sealing wax.

As she lit the candle, a wind blew in and her dress caught on fire.

She was quickly engulfed in flames and died the next day.

Two years later, still in deep grief, Longfellow received word that his oldest son had been severely wounded in the civil war.

He remained crippled for life.

For 3 years, Longfellow wrote in his journals that there was no reason to celebrate Christmas. One entry read, *“How inexpressibly sad are the holidays. ...better to leave them wrapped in silence. Perhaps someday God will give me peace.”*

Then on Christmas Day in 1864, Longfellow heard the church bells ring and it was as if they were proclaiming *“God is not dead. Nor doth he sleep.”*

God had not forgotten him nor abandoned him.

Christmas is not only about a long ago birth but also Christ’s birth into our lives even now, no matter what our circumstances.

Here was the peace Longfellow had sought. Here was his comfort.

Our God is a living God, who lives even today.

This experience of grace and glory inspired him to write the poem, which became the hymn “I heard the bells on Christmas Day”

Tonight, whether we have snow on the ground or not,
whether our economy is growing or not.
whether our pew is filled with family and friends or is missing a loved one...
Tonight, on this Holy Night, this aching world is soothed with God's ultimate gift
of grace and glory.

Sound the bell; our Savior is born.

Sound the bell; our Savior is born.