

A 19th-Century Bell At Georgetown Lutheran Church Has Resounded For The First Time In Decades

The historic bell was recently restored thanks to the efforts of the National Bell Festival.

WASHINGTON, D.C., USA, February 25, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following a months-long restoration effort funded by the [National Bell Festival](#), the 19th-century bell at Georgetown Lutheran Church has resounded for the first time in decades. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic delaying the bell's return and rededication celebrations, this historic bell was finally recognized last weekend at Georgetown Lutheran Church. This marks the 250th anniversary of the founding of Georgetown Lutheran Church (1769-2019) and the first completed historic bell restoration by the relatively new charitable organization.



Pastor Brett Wilson (right) rededicates the newly-restored bell at Georgetown Lutheran Church, with National Bell Festival director Paul Ashe (left).

“

We are honored to have been a momentary steward of the bell during the church's semiquincentennial celebrations and are thrilled it's finally back and ringing again!”

Paul Ashe, Director, National Bell Festival

Founded in 2018, the National Bell Festival (BellFest) is the annual New Year's Day celebration in Washington, D.C. On the first day of the year, bells in towers across the nation ring out together and unite communities around listening parties, eclectic events, and special programming. The organization works throughout the year to restore bells and towers across D.C. to their former thundering glory. Throughout the pandemic, BellFest has pivoted nimbly, offering virtual programming designed to safely foster community, while continuing fundraising efforts to complete this first important milestone.

BellFest makes a mission of uncovering America's history through the bells that hang above us

or, in the case of the bell at Georgetown Lutheran Church, a bell that had sat firmly on the ground. Historic bell restoration projects at the National Bell Festival sometimes have them scrambling up dusty ladders in search of clues to a bell's age or provenance.

It was known for a fact that a bell at Georgetown Lutheran Church had hung in the tower as early as 1780, and that same bell could be heard ringing in 1829 as described in a landmark U.S.

Supreme Court case, *Beatty v. Kurtz*. But was the bell being restored that original bell? To find out, the National Bell Festival turned to their resident campanologist, Benjamin Sunderlin of the B.A. Sunderlin Bellfoundry in Ruther Glen, Virginia. Ben's first job was to inspect the bell and provide a professional assessment of its state and origin. Inspecting the bell involved cleaning the surface of oxidation (rust) and toxic patina, testing the metallic composition, and analyzing fractures within the structure. Once Ben's work was completed, it was concluded that the [Georgetown Lutheran bell](#) was most likely cast during the middle- to late-19th century.

This can be attributed to three main findings of the bell: the primary metal in the bell is cast iron, the bell's shape is indicative of later designs, and there are no evident markings or signatures to indicate a foundry. No one knows where the original bell is, but somewhere along the arc of history, one bell was replaced by another. Most likely lost during the Civil War, the bell was greatly missed at the church and was later replaced with a suitable bell.

Some bells crack – particularly very old bells that have survived the worst harm that centuries, Civil War, and exposure to the elements may impart. Such is true for the bell at Georgetown Lutheran Church. The crack was mapped and stabilized, and a new [wood and steel stand](#) was built to display the bell safely inside the church.

Concluding this historic bell restoration project, guests of the National Bell Festival and congregation members gathered around the veil-draped bell within the church's narthex, following the morning worship service at Washington's oldest Lutheran church. Before revealing the newly-restored bell, festival director Paul Ashe gave a few remarks on the bell's enigmatic past.

A blessing by Pastor Brett Wilson rededicated the bell, which hadn't rung since the mid-20th century, to the church's mission. Congregation member Sophie Guiny then led a countdown to the first tolling, when three clear strikes of the clapper produced rich, resonant tones, to the general approval of those gathered. An inscription engraved on a plate at the base of the



Congregation members inspect the newly-restored bell at Georgetown Lutheran Church.

structure reads:

This 19th century bell
Given to the church in 1973 by William H. Stombock
Was restored by the National Bell Festival
And rededicated to mark the 250th anniversary
Of the founding of Georgetown Lutheran Church
1769-2019

###

About National Bell Festival

The National Bell Festival Inc., a registered 501(c)(3) charitable organization, presents the annual New Year's Day celebration in Washington, DC. On the first day of the year, bells in towers across the nation's capital ring out together and unite the community around listening parties, eclectic events, and special programming. BellFest also works throughout the year to restore historic bells and bell towers to their former thundering glory.

Paul Ashe
National Bell Festival
[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Other](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/564022071>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2022 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.