

## Sacred Heart Church Campaigns to Keep Bells Ringing



*The Rev. Ron Floyd wants to keep the bells of Sacred Heart ringing in the north tower.*

By Matthew Gryczan

Every hour on the hour from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, the largest bell in the city of

Grand Rapids and three smaller bells in the north tower of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic church resonate with tones that are deep, beautiful and unequalled by electronics.

At noon their ringing beckons the some 400 students at Sacred Heart's school to pray the Angelus and reminds inhabitants of the John Ball Park neighborhood to get on with their tasks as the day is technically half over.

Outside of their regular times, the bells punctuate the point of consecration during Masses, weddings, funerals, and momentous occasions such as the official end of World War II.

But they are in danger of being silenced, parish officials say, unless maintenance is performed soon.

The swinging mechanisms thought to be from the 1950s for three of the bells are worn out and in need of replacement, the church's pastor Rev. Ron Floyd said. As of now, the electrical motors and custom engineered clutches that engage and disengage the bells to ensure smooth swinging sometimes fail.

Should the mechanisms not be replaced and the 101-year-old bells not peal regularly for the first time, there is the possibility that they may be restricted or even stopped from ringing under the city's noise ordinance, Floyd said.

"The bells have been grandfathered in under the city's sound regulations because they have been ringing without fail since they were dedicated," he said. "As long as they

continue that way, we should be fine for the next 100 years."

Experts claim that the four bells have no equal in the city of Grand Rapids with regard to resonance and tonal beauty, according to Eduard A. Skendzel, author of "The Sacred Heart Story." Skendzel had first-hand knowledge of the bells: he scaled a rickety wooden ladder in 1978 to reach the belfry in the north tower to measure and examine them personally.

As masterpieces of acoustical engineering, it is only fitting that each of the four bells bears a name: the largest in the tone of C# and weighing two tons is Sacred Heart; St. Mary rings in tone E and weighs one ton; St. Joseph weighs 1,300 pounds and sounds tone G; and Guardian Angel weighs 550 pounds and rings in tone C.

But the four bells have added personality. The names of all the families and individuals who contributed to their manufacture are embossed on the bells, which were cast of genuine bell metal by the Meneely & Co. foundry of Watervliet, N.Y. in 1923.

A few months ago, the parish launched a campaign called Save the Bells to raise the \$19,935 required to have Verdin Co. of Cincinnati replace the swinging mecha-

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Polish Heritage Society  
of Grand Rapids  
PO Box 1844  
Grand Rapids MI  
49501-1844**

<https://polishheritagesociety.com>

Email us at [pshgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pshgrandrapids@gmail.com).

The Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids promotes Polish/Lithuanian culture in the metro Grand Rapids. The Society meets on the 3rd Monday of every month except for December and general meetings in June and October. The society publishes this newsletter monthly. We invite story ideas and content contributions. For more information, please contact Matthew Gryczan, Richard Panek or Marilyn Lignell by writing to [pshgrandrapids@gmail.com](mailto:pshgrandrapids@gmail.com).

**President  
Teresa Bonham**

**1st VP  
John Theisen**

**2nd VP**

**Treasurer  
Michael Jasperse**

**Corresponding Secretary  
Susan Ulanowicz**

**Recording Secretary  
Matthew Gryczan**

**Director  
Rosemary Maciejewski**

**Director  
Angela Walejewski-Zasuwa**

**Director  
Thaddeus Broda**

**Director  
Eric Tetsworth**

**Director**

*(Continued from page 1)*

nisms on the St. Mary, St. Joseph and Guardian Angel bells. About \$2,600 has been raised so far, Floyd said, and the parish is attempting to contact families whose names are embossed on the bells to see if they want to become involved. (See list of names compiled by Skendzel on page 3).

But the parish isn't restricting contributions to just original family members. It is soliciting contributions from the general public through flyers and on its website at <https://membership.faithdirect.net/givenow/MI716/56820>. Those wishing to contribute also can visit the parish office at 151 Garfield Ave SW during office hours.

About three years ago, the parish received a donation of an electronic controller for the bells so they could be programmed to ring at

set dates and times automatically. But there still is the allure of manually pushing a button in the church to activate the bells, Floyd said.

"Everyone wants to push the button," he said. "We activate the bells during the consecration during Mass, and it's the high point of the day for the server who gets to ring the bells."

The largely Polish immigrants who founded Sacred Heart parish were justifiably proud of scraping together the money to cast the bells, and the parish organized an elaborate ceremony on Labor Day, Sept. 3, 1923 to bless them. The bells were tastefully decorated with wreaths and bunting by the Notre Dame nuns who taught school, and "streamers attached to the bells were held by a large number of sponsors," one news agency reported.

From a platform erected for the ceremony at what is now the Sacred Heart School, Bishop Kelly and priests from around the diocese made speeches and offered prayers before "an immense throng of the faithful," the report

said.

Over the decades, the sheer weight of the bells took its toll. The torque brought to bear on the north tower when all the bells were set swinging at the same time was powerful enough to cause damage, Floyd said.

Monsignor Edward Hankiewicz oversaw reconstruction of the north tower during his time as pastor of Sacred Heart, and the method of ringing the massive Sacred Heart bell was changed to lessen the forces involved. The bell was made stationary, and an electrically controlled clapper now strikes the sides of the bell.

For over a century, the bells have served as an uplifting influence for the West side neighborhood. "They awaken the populace at the dawn of a new day," the West Michigan Catholic reported in a story in 1978. "They remind us, at the end of the day, that Time has passed on.

They ring wildly to celebrate our joys; they toll solemnly to honor our beloved deceased. Truly, they are a living voice."

*(Continued on page 3)*



***Sacred Heart parish held a celebration on Labor Day 1923 to bless the largest bell in Grand Rapids and three others.***

## Pierogi Fundraiser to Benefit Malbork Dance Group

The Grand Rapids chapter of the P.R.C.U.A. Malbork Dance Group that regularly perform Polish folk dances at venues throughout Grand Rapids is holding its annual pierogi fundraiser over the next few weeks to buy new costumes.

The local chapter's director Natalia Szczygiel said those interested in purchasing pierogies need to order and pay for the items by Nov. 22, with a pickup date of Dec. 5 at St. Isidore's Benevolent Aid Society/Diamond Hall, 435 Diamond Ave NE.

Pierogi are sold frozen in one-pound packages (about a dozen pierogi) for \$8. There are three varieties of pierogi packages: potato/Farmer's cheese filling; sauerkraut filling; or potato/cheddar cheese filling.

To order pierogies, please email your orders to MalborkDance-Group@gmail.com or call Szczygiel at (586)747-0421.

She said the fundraiser will allow the help the group to purchase authentic costumes from the region of Łowicz in Poland.

Founded in 2017, the P.R.C.U.A.

Malbork Dance Group has furthered the appreciation of Polish dance by performing regularly at events throughout West Michigan. Members of

the group ranging in age from 3 to 18 are taught traditional Polish folk dances that they then perform in authentic costumes made in Poland.



*Malbork Dancers at Polish Night at the Griffins*

*(Bells Continued from page 2)*

### **Names of contributors embossed on the bells**

**Compiled by Eduard A. Skendzel in 1978**

Roman Bezara

Wincenty Bochniak

Jan Balinski

Walenty Cieciorowski

K. Cwajna

Franciszek Czechanski

Jozef Czarnopis

Jan Czachorski

Jozef Danielski

Czeslaw Derezinski

Adolf and Antonia Dickmann

Jozef Dutkiewicz

Marcin Ewert

Andrzej Falba

Jan Grupa

Szczpan Grzegorski

Jozek Hajknych

Jan Hankiewicz

Wojciech Hernacki

Piotr Holewinski

Adolf Juchniewicz

Tomasz Kawka

Frank Kolczynski

Franciszek Kolodziejczak

Michal Kozlowski

Franciszek Kruzal

Piotr Krygier

Antoni Kujawinski

S. Lach

Franciszek Lendzion

M. Liberacki

Pawel Lukowicz

Jozef Machalowski

Franciszek Maciejewski

Michal Malek

Antoni Markon

Hieronim Masalski

Antoni Matel

John McNabb & Sons

Frank Miklaszewski

The family of Jan Myszka

J. Nerkowski

Marcin Nowakowski

Antoni Olchanowski

R. Olkowska

Andrzej Orlik

Wladyslaw Orlik

Stanislaw Paczkowski

Jakob and Agnieszka Pienta

Maciej Powala

Jakob Poniatowski

Franciszek Przybysz

Michalina Rainka

Elzbieta Sieracka

Katarzyna Sikorska

Izydor Siwicki

Marya Skorka

Maciej Smiegiel

Michal Smigiel

Stanislaw Smiogiel

J.J. Smolinski

Franciszek Sniatecki

Jozef Szatkowski

Jozef Szczepanski

Antoni Szczerbinski

Stanislaw Szepeinski

W. J. Szymanski

W. Tabor

Franciszek Tomajczyk

Franciszek Tomasik

Jozef Tomasik

Kazimierz Tomasik

Wawrzyn Tomasik

Wladyslaw Tomasik

Mieczyslaw Ulanowski

J. Wachowiak

Wawrzyn Welniak

Marcin Wiktorowski

Walenty Wiktorowski

Anna Wisniewska

J. Wisniewski

Jan Witucki

Adam Wojciechowski

Jan Wojtaszek

Jozef Zalewski

K. Ziolkowska

Antoni Zymajtis

POLISH HERITAGE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL

# Wigilia Dinner & Program

Saturday, December 7, 2024

West Leonard Banquet Facility- 1140 Muskegon NW

*Marbled, Dark Rye and Rustic Breads with Horseradish, Parsley and Chive Butters*

*Signature Recipe Cream Herring with Lemon and Pickled Turnips*

*Rustic Potato, Parsnip and Carrot Soup with Fresh Herbs*

*Filled Farmers Cheese Potato Dumpling with Fried Cabbage and Sour Cream*

*Haddock Filet Baked with Cucumber Aioli and Panko Crumbs*

*Served alongside winter medley of fresh peas, chard and asparagus*

*Roasted Golden Beet Salad with honey and walnut dressing*

*Authentic Polish Desserts*

*Wine served with fish course*

**Social Hour 5:00-6:00PM / Dinner and Program at 6:00PM**

**Polish Koledy: Featuring Jarek Kozal and Nick Palmer**

**\$40.00 per person-prepaid: Checks payable to Polish Heritage Society**

---  
**\*\*\*Reservation deadline November 18, 2024\*\*\***

**Send to PHS-c/o Marilyn Lignell Phone: 616-443-3773**

**2858 W Sandrel CT NE**

**Grand Rapids, MI 49505**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

# of tickets @\$40.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be seated with \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# PHS Membership News



By Marilyn Lignell

I don't know about you, but the unseasonably warm September lulled me into lollygagging just a little bit longer than usual before thinking about winter events. But now that we've just enjoyed Pulaski Days, it's time to start planning for our annual Wigilia (Polish Christmas Eve) Dinner – a Polish Heritage Society event we've been holding for more than 58 years!

I remember the first year my mom talked me into going to the PHS Wigilia Dinner and, honestly, I was a little skeptical. My non-Polish mother had been helping plan Wigilia for a few years, carrying out a tradition my then deceased father held close to his heart.

To me it sounded like a long night that I wouldn't enjoy, but to my surprise the Wigilia ended up being a very lovely evening, and I volunteered to help organize the event the next year.

The dinner has evolved slightly, but the premise remains the same -- the meal is meatless, but that doesn't mean tasteless. For the second year, Krystal Maynard with Krystal Palace Catering will prepare the meal,

using traditional Polish recipes along with some fresh takes on authentic eastern European dishes. Take a look at the order form in this newsletter to see what she is preparing – it's amazing!

This year's Wigilia dinner will be held Dec. 7 at the West Leonard Banquet Facility, 1140 Muskegon Ave NW, formerly the Knights of Columbus Council 3104 hall.

Included with the nine-course meal is the sharing of the oplatek, a program that explains Polish traditions at Christmastime, and a sung Polish koledy. We also make a handmade ornament for all the guests to take home -- which leads me to the following invitation.

You are invited to join the Wigilia Committee for a crafting session to create the 2024 Wigilia ornaments. The crafting session will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 10 at the home of Rich and Mary Panek, 6620 Knockadoon Dr., Rockford, MI 49341. Some light snacks will be served. Please reply to Mary Panek [marylpanek@gmail.com](mailto:marylpanek@gmail.com) or 616.550.4113. Space is limited to 20 guests.

Wigilia is an evening with beautiful traditions worth observing to keep connected with your Polish roots. People tend not to observe Wigilia because they aren't aware of the meal – or they are aware of how much work it can be, especially on Christmas Eve.

That's why the PHS holds a traditional Wigilia in early December so that everyone can spend Christmas Eve at home. And our motto is: Enjoy the tradition of Wigilia – without

the work!

On a more solemn note, the PHS sent a sympathy card to Charlene Czarnecki on the death of her brother-in-law, Ted Czarnecki, who passed away on Sept. 17 at the age of 81. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Char.

Just a little reminder, as the days get shorter and the nights seem darker and longer, learning to speak Polish may bring some light into your world! Member Marzanna Butryn is a Polish Language and History teacher and has credentials to teach Polish to children and adults at all different levels. Here is an opportunity to learn Polish at your own comfort level. Please reach out to Marzanna directly to discuss a plan and costs to best fit you. Her email is [butrynmorzanna@gmail.com](mailto:butrynmorzanna@gmail.com) or phone # (203)415-0005. Dziękuję



*PHS Members and Guests enjoying last years Wigilia Dinner at West Leonard Banquet Facility*



Join the Polish Heritage Society to receive our monthly newsletter and other benefits!

**Annual Student Membership for full-time students through college \$5**

**Annual Adult Membership \$20**

**Annual Family or Business Membership \$35**

**Lifetime Membership \$150**

**ONLINE**

You can join the Polish Heritage Society online by going to our website at <https://polishheritagesociety.com/>, filling out the Membership form and paying by using the PayPal Button.

**MAIL**

Fill out this form and send a personal check made out to the Polish Heritage Society to this address:

Polish Heritage Society of Grand Rapids  
P.O. Box 1844  
Grand Rapids MI 49501-1844

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_