



Valley Grove N E W S November 1992

Thanksgiving program

A Thanksgiving program will be held at Valley Grove Church on Sunday, November 22, at 2 p.m. *The Lost Norwegians*, a local well-known singing group will be performing. There will also be familiar hymns played on the 1911 church organ, and singing. Everyone is welcome to attend this event!

Memorial Day 1992

Our fund-raising Memorial Day event was a great success! We raised \$5262.00! Our sincere thanks go out to all who so generously donated to our worthy cause. Although there is still a lot of work left to do on the Valley Grove Church, we all feel good about what we accomplished this past summer. The steeple, which houses the large old bell, needed a great deal of attention and work: The water leaks have been stopped. The rotted wood and siding have been removed and replaced. Corner finials and crown moldings have been replaced. The top part of the steeple has been primed and painted inside and out; and we have put new shingles on the lower part of the steeple roof. A special thank you to Peter McKinnon and all who worked on this important job.

We also have completely replaced the outside cellar door and it too has been primed and painted.

We have heat!

We at Valley Grove are very grateful and thankful for the good used furnace given to us by Charles Schema of Faribault. Words cannot express our appreciation of this, Charles—a humble thank you from us all.

Another grateful thank you to Kenny Vesledahl, Rene Koester, Kevin Shannon, Harlan Kasa, Glen Hope and the Hope brothers. They removed the old furnace and installed the new one, and to have heat again at Valley Grove is a great accomplishment for us. If some of you will remember our last Memorial Day weekend, especially Monday, it was a bitter cold day. Without heat we could not have the upcoming Thanksgiving service, and without heat a lot of other activities would be curtailed. With all the repairs needed at the church, a new heating system would most likely have been last on our list, so this gift of a used furnace is especially appreciated.

The removal of the large, old, cast-iron furnace, and the cleaning of the basement, had to be quite a chore in itself, and a big thanks again to everyone for hours and hours of work.

Future projects

Much work still needs to be done at Valley Grove. The foundation on the south side of the church needs attention. A retaining wall in the basement needs care, and the exterior of the church must be scraped, primed and painted. The biggest task looming before us is the windows. Each one needs a lot of tender, loving care. This is a very time consuming job to scrape, putty, prime and paint about twenty three very large windows. It has been suggested that two or three windows should be removed at a time, boarding up the church, while working on the windows at home. We would welcome any ideas and handy persons willing to lend a hand.

When all the projects listed above have been accomplished, we can start restoring the inside. We do have our work cut out for us but seeing the church restored is very rewarding.

Stories: About the bell

The large church bell, hanging in the steeple, first rang in 1874 from the stone church which was built in 1862, and of course, still stands. The bell was moved from the stone church to the "new" church on a pulley, and pulled by a team of horses. The bell is said to be the second oldest church bell west of the Mississippi. Snap a fingernail on it's side and it rings with a rich tone. I remember well, as a child living in the Valley Grove area, the ringing of the church bell for church services and funerals. There is a "happy toll" and a "sad toll." For funerals the bell rang the age of the person. I remember my father, working in the field, would stop his horses, get down from his hay rake and remove his straw hat until the funeral procession had passed our farm. The "happy" bell, of course, was for weddings, and for the calling of area residents to church. The bell can still be heard for miles around.

And the organ

The year 1911 was a big year for the Valley Grove Congregation. They bought a pipe organ from a company in St. Louis, Missouri, for approximately \$1000.00. The organ was shipped by train, crated in pieces, to Nerstrand, Minnesota. It was then transferred by horse and sleigh to Valley Grove where it was then built into place. It is a lovely tracher organ, and in the days before electricity it was pumped by hand or foot in order to get air into the bellows for the music to be heard from the organist. The manual pump was later hooked up to an electric motor and no more "pumpers" were needed, some of whom fell asleep in the warm cubby-hole behind the organ!

If you have any other stories to share about Valley Grove church, call me or drop me a line!

We look forward to seeing you Sunday, November 22 at 2 p.m.!

Lillian Halverson Wasner
Secretary

Valley Grove News is published by The Society for the Preservation of Valley Grove Church. We are dedicated to the preservation of the 1894 white clapboard church located in the Valley Grove churchyard eight miles southeast of Northfield, Minnesota. We are a nonprofit organization and all donations will be put toward costs associated with repair and upkeep

of the church. Donations may be sent to The Society for the Preservation of Valley Grove Church, c/o Lillian Wasner, 600 West Second Street, Northfield, Minnesota, 55057. If you have questions or comments, you may write to the above address, or call 507-645-4860.

We thank Fred Somers for the use of his drawing of Valley Grove.

