

The Parkersburg News and Sentinel

WWW.NEWSANDSENTINEL.COM

FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2017



Photo Provided

A crew from Murray Sheet Metal is aboard a high-lift at the First Baptist Church at Ninth and Market streets where it is repairing the steeple to the building.

First Baptist Church getting steeple makeover

Celebrating 200th anniversary

By JESS MANCINI
jmancini@newsandsentinel.com

PARKERSBURG — A church celebrating its bicentennial is doing a makeover of a distinctive feature of the downtown landmark.

The First Baptist Church at Ninth and Market streets is making repairs and improvements to the steeple, focusing on the wood and metal base, that was built when the church was constructed in 1878.

The contractor, Murray Sheet Metal, is repairing and replacing weather worn parts of the steeple and replacing them with materials of greater resistance and a longer lifespan, said the Rev. Dr. David Carrico, project coordinator.

"We're not changing anything," Carrico said.

Cranes and other equipment are on Market Street where, weather permitting, the work which includes a makeover of the front facade, too, will take about two weeks. The steeple is about 95-feet high.



Photo by Jeff Baughan

The steeple at the First Baptist Church in downtown Parkersburg is part of the makeover project by contractor Murray Sheet Metal.

STEEPLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

The project is part of the church's 200-year celebration later this year, Carrico said.

First Baptist Church was organized in 1817 by families from the Mount Zion Church in Mineral Wells. Several churches in the area can trace their spiritual lineage to the First Baptist Church.

The first church built by the congregation was a wood frame building at Sixth and Ann streets.

After the Civil War, the property at Ninth and Market streets was purchased by the congregation.

Contractor on the church, completed in 1878, was Lysander Dudley, a member of the congregation who also built St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church on Market Street in downtown Parkersburg.

Dudley died after construction of First Baptist started. Dudley was killed when he attempted to stop a runaway team pulling a wagon carrying members of his family.

After the steeple is completed, the crew will turn to the facade where the focus will be cleaning and painting, Carrico said. No changes will be made, he said.

"We're keeping it as historically accurate as possible," he said.

Carrico was complimentary of working with Murray Sheet Metal and its attention to the historical details.

"I've been real impressed," he said.

The First Baptist Church was where the West Virginia Baptist Convention was established. Carrico is the executive minister of the Baptist Convention.

The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

"We are very excited," said the

Rev. Dr. Richard McClure, pastor of the First Baptist Church.

The project was approved by the congregation in November, but weather and timing the work with the contractor's other job responsibilities affected the schedule, McClure said.

The work will involve the exterior, other than crews will have to go inside the steeple to determine what has to be done, McClure said.

"Other than that it's all outside work," he said.

The 200th anniversary is being celebrated the entire year and will culminate in special worship serv-

ices and activities Oct. 7-8. A handbell concert will be held in September.

Most of the regular activities held by the church are taking on a bicentennial anniversary twist, McClure said.

For this weekend, the church will be a stop in the annual Julia Ann Historic District Garden Tour and Tea, he said. First Baptist will host a tea and offer tours inside the church.

"We'll be planting 200 flower bulbs on Quincy Hill and other flower planters around town, too," McClure said.

■ SEE STEEPLE, PAGE 9A