



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL

ST. JOHNS

ST. BARNABAS

WHENCE RING
THE XMAS BELLS IN OMAHA
PHOTOS BY A STAFF ARTIST

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

TRINITY

ST. PHILOMENA

ALL the various agencies involved in the celebration of the festive Christmas there is surely none more potent, more essential or more far-reaching than those metallic voices which inhabit the towers of the various churches.

From a larynx of iron and a pharynx of stone these sounds peal forth with strenuous tone and clang, with vibrancy upon the quiet Christmas morning air, summoning good Christians to the fact that the time has come for them to

Awake! Salute the happy morn
Who reon the Saviour of mankind was born.

And so they clamor and clash and clang with vigor and strength and zeal, telling the children that Christmas is here with its gifts from a personal Santa Claus, telling the young men and maidens that the merry time has come when the mistletoe gives it own special license to hitherto forbidden trespassing, telling the older ones that the message of peace has been again vouchsafed to earth, that enmities should be forgotten and love should reign supreme, love of mankind, love of love, love of life, love of nature, love of God, love of everything and everybody everywhere.

Listen to them as they ring from those wondrous steeples and towers.

How the chill air echoes and re-echoes, sounds and resounds with the vibrating message that comes thrilled with its own intensity from the seemingly silent belfry. "Glory to God in the highest! and on earth peace, good will to men."

The chime of Christmas is a merry chime.

Hark! how they swing and they ring from the tower of the stone-mantled belfry. Telling the tale of a Christ that was born in a Bethlehem manger, Born in an humble abode which the oxen were wont to inhabit.

Foxes have holes in the ground and the birds find a nest for their fledglings. But for the Lord of Mankind there was no place wherein He could slumber. Ring with a querulous tone, oh ye bells, as ye sway in your belfry. Ask for a place for your King, for the wonderful Child in the manger. Tell to the world the sad news that the Christ seeks in vain for a lodging. Tell it, that while it reclines on a rich and luxuriant pillow, Mary, the Mother of God, can find not a place to inhabit. Tell it, that while it enjoys an indolent, self-seeking pleasure, Nowhere can pillow be found to support the young head of Messiah. Oh, Christmas bells, tell the truth, there is nowhere a place for the Master; Churches and inns, all alike, no room for the babe—the Redeemer. Man could not give up a place. Best be the oxen forever; See how they low at the crib, giving a generous welcome. Not an objection is heard, mock-eyed they stare and they wonder. They do not ask for their crib, slumber and fodder forgotten.

Dumb and amazed they look up; what mystery strange has befallen! Surely the crib is our own, but whence comes this wondrous intrusion? This to themselves did they think, but naught in objection asserted. Staring with tear-luminated eyes they gaze on the face of the Savior. Gaze with the tenderest gaze on the wonderful babe in the manger. Fodder forgotten at sight of the most unexpected arrival. Mother and child in a crib, and whence comes this incident wondrous! Surely the inn must be full, but why this remarkable lodging? Nevertheless let them stay. They're welcome to all we can give them. Ring! with your vibrating tongues, and ring as you never before rang. Waken the world to the fact that you herald its Priceless Redeemer. Ring! with a rapturous joy of peace and good will unto all men! Ring! till the heavens themselves shine brighter because of your ringing. Seeming to vie with the sight those shepherds beheld in Judea. When they were watching their sheep in the fields in that first Christmas eve'n.

Ring! till this sleepy old world shall awake to its share of the message. Ring! till its echoes awake and inform it that love is triumphant. Ring! with a psalm of joy, oh ye bells, with your iron-tongued mule. Tell the old world of your theme; it is weary and sin-stopped and lonely. Tell it your message of love, of a peace universal and Heaven-sent. Tell it the story you know, the story sent down from the angels. Tell it of love and of joy, of peace and good will unto all men. Tell all the listening world what you know of the blessed Redeemer. Tell forth the tidings of hope. Let the world cease forever despairing. Ring! with your pulsating souls, that the curse of our sin hath departed. Ring! that the love of the Christ hath dispelled all the shadows of darkness. Ring! that the world is at one with its gracious, omnipotent Savior. Ring! that true harmony reigns where nothing but discord was reigning. Ring! that the false has been tried! and the balance has proved it was wanting! Ring! that the true has been proved and aloft now its banner is flaunting.

Ring! of the virtue of truth. That right ever wrong is victorious. Ring! oh ye bells! loudly ring! The birthday of Christ is most glorious! Ring! loudly ring! Christmas bells, with clamor and clash loudly ringing. Ring! Ring! forever, ye bells. Your tones to the winds ever flinging. Ring! Ring! Ring! Ring!

There is an old Irish legend to the effect that in a certain church there was a splendid chime of silver bells which had been given to the bishop as a thank offering for services rendered by him on a previous occasion.

Now this bishop was a holy and righteous man, and, refusing any personal emolument, he suggested the gift of the bells to God, and that they should be placed in the highest belfry, far above the ordinary chimes.

These bells were blessed and anointed and they were only rung at Easter.

But one night a vision came to the good old bishop and he was told that the bells had been accepted as a gift from the faithful and that, in order to show heaven's appreciation, there would be a miracle on earth, and that was that the bells should be heard to ring on the occasion of a great sacrifice.

It was Christmas. The good bishop had finished his sermon. His words had thrilled the hearts of his hearers and they were impressed by his eloquence to such an extent that the king himself placed costly gifts on the altar. Many rich and expensive presents were given—but the bells did not ring.

The next day was the feast of St. Stephen and the church was thronged with people. The rich aristocrats vied with each other in the munificence of their gifts, and the

