The Story of the Peace Bells

Bell #1: In 1872, 15 German families in Duluth, with the help of traveling missionary Louis von Rague, organized St. Paul's Evangelical Church. After constructing a building at the corner of Third Street and 10th Avenue East in 1873, the congregation asked Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany for a bell that would call members to Sunday worship. The emperor gave the church a French cannon that had been captured in Germany during the Franco-German War of 1870-71. The cannon was melted into a 900-pound bell. During World War I, strong anti-German sentiments led some Duluthians to ask the pastor, Rev. Paul Bratzel, to remove the bell, parade it down Superior Street, then melt it to be used for ammunition against Germany. The congregation voted an emphatic "no", and the bell remained. It now hangs atop this tower.

Bell #2: Following World War II, the congregation of St. Paul's Evangelical Church chose this as the site for a new place of worship, which in 1959 was renamed Peace United Church of Christ. The plan included a Peace Bell Tower where the old bell would hang. The biblical text, "And they shall beat their sword into plowshares...and learn war no more," motivated a request to President Eisenhower for an instrument of war to be melted down and turned into a second bell. In response, the president indefinitely loaned the church a 1,000-pound bell from the World War II vessel, the USS *Ascella*. The bell arrived in Duluth by ship as part of the celebration of the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959. This bell remains on loan to Peace Church from the Naval History and Heritage Command.

Bell #3: The third bell was cast from 1,500 pounds of scrap brass collected from the local community with the help of the local American Legion. The scrap metal, which included shell casings from both world wars, was shipped to Holland and cast into our third bell.

Each Sunday morning as the congregation begins worship, the Peace Bells ring as a reminder of the biblical text to "learn war no more".