

Seeing the light

Stained glass windows coming home

By JIM COOPER
Editor

After nearly two decades of dark storage, a set of antique stained glass windows are once again ready to see the light.

Eighteen windows installed in the former Spencer Presbyterian Church in 1903 will soon

be returning to their former home, now known as the Market Street Chapel.

Julie Boggs and a group of volunteers known as the Friends of Market Street Chapel have been raising funds to restore the old brick church in Spencer since 2008. Renovations have included the rebuilding of the steeple and installation of a new roof, but Boggs said one aspect of the effort has drawn the most attention.

"The only thing people care about is knowing when

the windows are going in," Boggs said.

When the local Presbyterian congregation moved to a new building on Parkersburg Road, the windows were crated and stored in its attic. The church's efforts to sell the windows online years ago were

unsuccessful because they wanted to sell them as a set, and not individually.

After Boggs dipped into her retirement fund to buy the old church for \$5,000, she thought a lot about what to do about the building's boarded-up windows.

"I said, 'God, if you'll give me a sign, maybe I'll do it,'" she recalled. "Not long after that I overheard in a restaurant one night that the windows were still in town."

The church sold Boggs the windows for \$5,000, what it had cost to have them removed. She estimates they are worth up to \$250,000.

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From 1A

With most of the exterior work now completed, the focus has shifted to the windows. The stained glass transom over the front doors has been installed and bears the name of the new church, keeping the 1903 date. Amanda Short, a Charleston stained glass artist, completed the restoration for \$1,000.

Boggs said Short was amazed at the workmanship shown in the windows and at their condition. The collection includes three large sets of three each, measuring 10 feet tall by about 2-1/2 feet wide, along with several smaller windows.

Among the scenes depicted are Noah's ark, a dove, a woman with child, a cross and a chalice. Names of former church families including Bailey, Campbell, Kidd, Smith and Vance, as well as Sunday school classes who donated to the project, are etched on the glass.

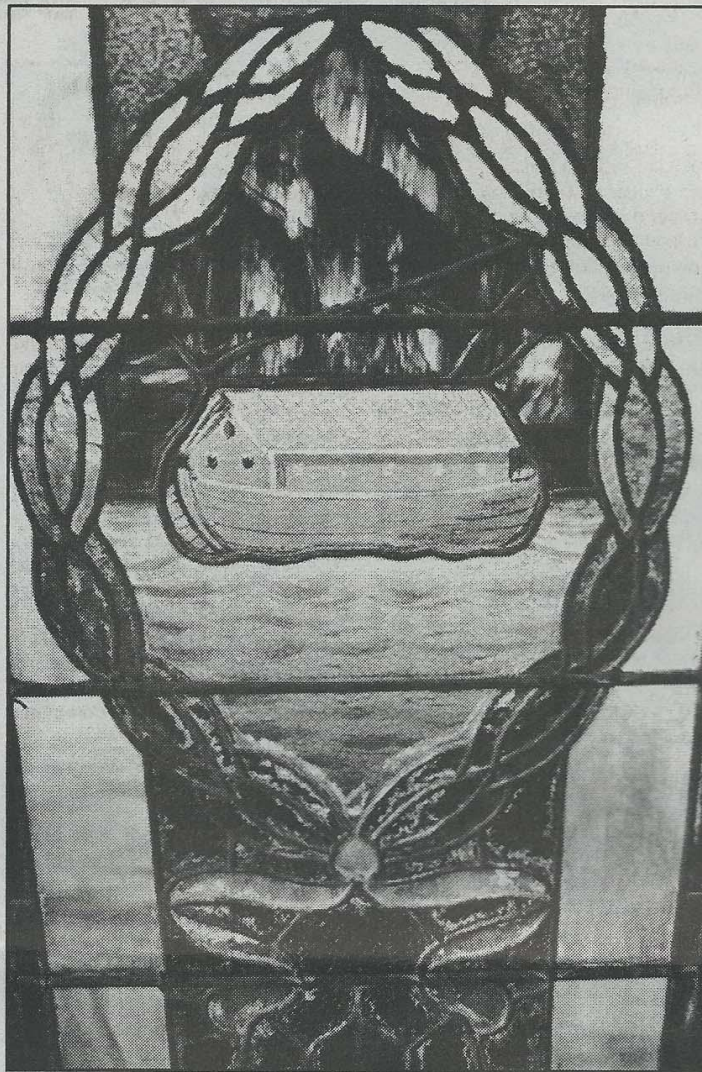
"My favorite is the front window," Boggs said. "It has Jesus as shepherd surrounded by sheep and holding one in his arms."

The Dave Freshwater family has pledged to pay for the restoration of the front windows. A descendant of Albert Heck, a founder of the original church, has agreed to sponsor another, as has Betty Cutlip Smith of Princeton, a former Spencer resident with no attachment to the church who read about the project in a previous story in this newspaper.

Other sponsors are being sought. Short has made estimates on restoration costs for the remaining windows, which are currently stored in the Past Respects shop, the former ice plant, on Church Street. Those interested in seeing the windows can arrange to do so by calling Boggs at 304-927-3327 or 304-786-0090.

"After they pick out a window, they can get an estimate," Boggs explained. "Each one will be different. It's up to them to do whatever one they're comfortable with."

Boggs said there is no target date for completing the window installation or in opening the chapel. She said future plans include having Sunday morning services as well as making the building available to the community for events including plays and weddings.



This depiction of Noah's ark is representative of the craftsmanship shown in the stained glass windows that will be refurbished and put back in their original locations at the former Spencer Presbyterian Church, now Market Street Chapel.

"This is (God's) project, not ours," Boggs said. "It will be done in his time. We're just the hands and feet putting it together."

Putting the windows back in place will be an obvious sign to the community that the project is moving forward. Boggs noted the irony in the fact that the Presbyterian church always wanted the windows to stay together.

"Now they're going to be here,

back in the church where they belong," she said.

Out of the crates and exposed to early spring sunlight in their temporary home at the ice plant, the church windows offer only a hint of what's to come once they are restored and truly back home.

"This is the crowning glory of our project," Boggs said.



Julie Boggs looks at one of the stained glass windows that were installed in the former Spencer Presbyterian Church in 1903. The windows, which have been in storage for about 20 years, will soon become part of the same building, now known as the Market Street Chapel.

JIM COOPER / SPENCER NEWSPAPERS