



**Monday**  
 April 26, 2010  
**Rain**  
 53°/37°

**For The**  
**Birds**  
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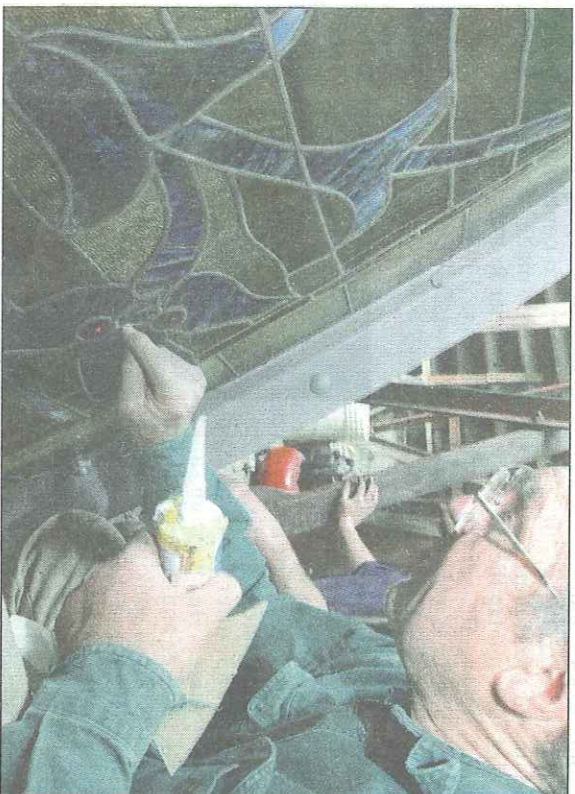
# TIMES OBSERVY

Warren, Pa.

[www.timesobserver.com](http://www.timesobserver.com)

## 1st Presby is subject of its own mission

113-year old church  
 gets a make-over



By **BRIAN FERRY**  
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First Presbyterian Church of Warren's missions have reached such far-flung places as Mexico and Lithuania in the past year.

Its current effort is much closer to home.

A \$300,000 renovation project started last summer will result in improvements to the appearance, functionality, and economy of the 113-year-old church.

"Our church is really big on mission," General Treasurer Jim Spangler said. "This is just a mission we had to do for ourselves."

The enormous scaffolding that will remain in the sanctuary for at least two more weeks do not fit the decor.

However, they are not viewed as detracting from the experience.

"It's a very positive thing," Connie Johnson said. "People are going to be

overjoyed that the work is being done."

"We're just going to work around it," Property Manager Clarence Baurer said. "Nobody had seen all this. Now they're seeing where our efforts are accumulating, where their dollar bills are going."

"It gives people a chance to see what's going on," Johnson said.

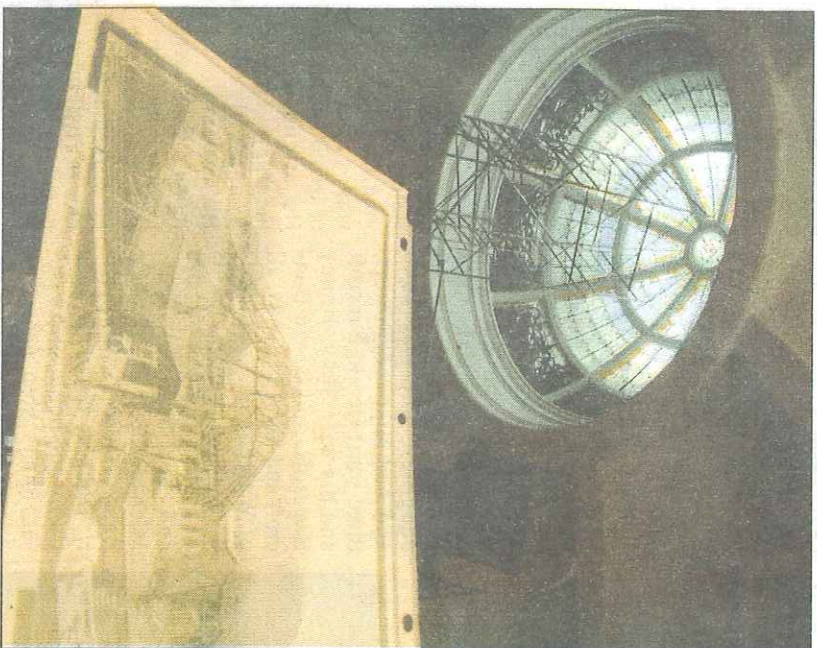
There's a lot going on.

To the passerby, the bright yellow lift truck on Third Avenue is the most obvious sign of the work. Workers with Fiske and Sons out of Erie have used that vehicle to access the roof for a number of repairs.

Problems with ice dams on the roof got the attention of the properties committee.

The members discovered insufficient insulation and ventilation, broken shingles,

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# First Presbyterian...

ventilation, broken shingles, problems with the gutters and under the eaves, and fungus and moss.

Some of the 50-year-old knob and tube electrical wiring over the sanctuary was still in use.

The stained glass dome in the sanctuary had grown dim with accumulation of dirt over the years.

The pipe organ needs work, too.

## Improvements

The dome has been cleaned and broken pieces of opalescent glass were repaired and replaced last week by workers from Warren Glass.

The dome will be insulated with a Lexan housing trapping air before it can get to the roof.

A new 200-amp electrical service now augments the existing box.

Bauer insisted upon winch systems for raising and lowering the sanctuary chandeliers. In the past, those lights had been serviced with the help of 20-foot step ladders.

Pressure washing the roof has removed much of the moss and fungus and shown the members of the properties committee the true colors of the shingles.

Elsewhere on the roof, "we've rebuilt some overhangs and put ice melters in the gutters," Wade Nugent of Fiske and Sons said.

A layer of insulation about one foot thick throughout the attic will help keep heat in the building and heating bills down.

"Our budgeted gas bill is \$25,000 (annually)," Bauer said.

"We certainly hope to cut into that," Spangler said.

Heat from the sanctuary had followed a clear path into the attic and out of the building for years since the audio system was upgraded and two large speakers were removed from the ceiling near the dome. A crew from Silitano Construction of Warren plastered over those holes in the ceiling.

The plaster will have to dry fully, perhaps three weeks, before painting can take place. Until then, the scaffolding stays.

Most of the work is done. "Another month we should have it pretty well wrapped up," Jack Fiske

said. Those involved in the project are looking forward to the end result.

"This was a project that our generation wanted to do," Spangler said. "This is really a gem in Warren County. This group came together and gave \$300,000 to preserve it."

The work has not impacted the other efforts of the church and its members.

"We have not dropped a nickel from our other missions," Spangler said. "This is all above and beyond. A lot of congregation people are getting involved."