

Group working to restore Glen Leslie church

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Herald-Tribune staff

The Glen Leslie Church Preservation Group is working tirelessly to have the rural community's old Presbyterian church recognized as a provincial historic resource.

The church and its cemetery was declared a municipal historic resource in spring 2010. The organization is now taking it to the next stage.

It will apply Sept. 1 for a grant from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation for funding to restore the building, consecrated in October 1915 by pioneer minister Rev. Alexander Forbes of Grande Prairie.

The church needs to meet a few requirements in order to be considered for the grant: It has to be some sort of important aspect of Alberta's national history, has to be situated in its original location, and has to retain the physical sight features necessary for its significance.

"There will be no problem with it getting registered, however I think you can appreciate whenever you're dealing with the government, it's a time-involved process," said preservation group president Wanda Zenner.

If the church was to be approved for the Alberta grant, the government will match any funds the GLCPG puts forward to restore the building.

"I always tell people when I'm soliciting funds, every dollar you give me, consider it two dollars," Zenner said.

The group is fairly confident of being approved.

"It does need a lot of work," she said. "We have gone through all the other hoops, this is last stage."

Zenner is amazed the church is still standing. It's one of the few pre-World War I structures left in the area.

Besides serving the Glen Leslie community, about 20 kilometres east of Grande Prairie on the Crystal Creek Road (Highway 670), the church was also utilized as the Somme School from 1918 to 1928. After 1928, the community built a separate frame school.

The church was also used for functions such as weddings.

"Once the church is restored to its original state, I'm quite certain there will be more events taking place."

People banded together to originally build the church. Alfred Olsen was the hired contractor who worked on the project for \$4 a day.

To fund the building, community members pledged money and time for the much-needed facility.

Zenner dug through archives for the original subscription list. She recognized some familiar names in the long list of donors, noting her grandfather and great uncle both pledged to build the church.

"It's very close to my heart," she said.

The preservation group wants to begin laying a new foundation and replace certain logs, which cannot be salvaged.

On top of that, it needs to find a builder who's trained for log structures.

"Even finding a log restorer has not been an easy process, it's become kind of a lost art."

People interested in helping sponsoring the project can make donations payable to the County of Grande Prairie (Glen Leslie Restoration Project). The group's annual membership fee is \$10.

Board members in addition to Zenner (780-538-2702) include secretary-treasurer Theresa Moon (780-532-9168), Irene Gitzel, Ray Boyer, Grant Bulford, Melvin Bulford, Gayle Moon, Jim Robertson, David Sorensen, and Bob Vetsch.



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Glen Leslie Church, located east of Grande Prairie on Highway 670, is being restored by a local group.