

CONVERSATIONS IN THE MARKETPLACE

"Paul spoke daily in the marketplace to all who happened to be there." - Acts 17:17

St. Ansgar, Who Are You?

By Oscar Palrud



St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church will celebrate its 110th anniversary on Sunday. Oscar Palrud, a member of the congregation, has written this article on the church and St. Ansgar.

For a protestant church that was mistakenly 12 years old at birth and named after catholic missionary, things can't be all that bad. The members of St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church, now heading into their 111th year, now know their new church built in 1970 is in their own 10 acre "God's Field" and are slowly finding out whom their churches namesake Ansgar was.

Ansgar, born in France in 801 and raised in a monastery at Corbey in Northern France from the age of five, was a happy-go-lucky lad until one day he had a vision that told him in effect to shape up. He began applying himself to his learning and later visions told him what he was to do and why.

It was a simple task: just Christianize the Swedes and Danes to the North. The Swedes and Danes to the north happened to be the same ones the English used to pray about, adding to the end of their prayers in loud voices "Dear God, please keep those awful Vikings from us!" For awful they were with their killing, looting and taking of slaves. And awful too in their worship of their god who evidently gave out gold stars for misdeeds.

To say that Ansgar strode forth through the Scandinavias knocking down Vikings and setting up churches is not history. He did go forth without arms of battle and met them face to face and lived, which was no little feat. He also sowed seeds of Christianity and watched and waited and prayed. It was a long wait like some two hundred years or more and Ansgar was long gone to his reward before northmen reached out with lutefisk in their palm rather than a war club. The Christianity that was sown and nurtured by Ansgar and the lutefisk caught by the Swedes remain a part of the scene to this day in Cannon Falls.

It was 1857 that Pastor Eric Norelius came to Cannon Falls from Vasa to visit and sow seeds of encouragement and organization amongst the Swedes who were immigrants and already Christians. A church blossomed and soon withered as hard times came and the Swedes departed and took their charter with them. They left their donated lots and pile of lumber and when Norelius visited

again most of the lumber was gone and what was left he traded for a sack of flour.

What follows is a quotation from the 25th anniversary memorial of St. Ansgar's written by Pastor Stenborg in 1894. "The Congregation that was organized in Cannon Falls in 1857 was not St. Ansgar's but the Cannon River, which was later moved out and placed about a mile north from the crossroad that leads to Mineral Springs sanatorium." (Later that church was moved East a few miles and could possibly some day reach Red Wing.)

St. Ansgar's Swedish Evangelical Church of Cannon Falls, Minnesota was organized in a meeting called for August 15, 1869. Rev. Norelius again served as chairman with a Pastor Cederstorm as secretary. The meeting was held in what was the village school house and later a cheese factory. The building is now an apartment house and stands next to the present fire hall.

New business taken care of was picking of name, constitution, how to raise money and election of officers. The money was needed for a minister's salary and it was agreed a subscription be taken and together with Cannon River Church a minister be called. In two weeks in a joint meeting with Cannon River three candidates were nominated. The winner declined, the second highest wasn't considered and the candidate who got only two votes was called, accepted and entered upon his duties in December 1871.

It is to be noted that there was a lapse of over two years before a formal head of the church was installed but in those days of few people and fewer men of the cloth, home religious observance was intense and a church and an ordained minister was a "luxury" desired for the celebration of the sacraments.

The struggling church was incorporated in 1872 and a building committee elected. In January of 1873 the church building was completed at a cost of \$1,215.22 and the amount raised was \$3.00 more than the cost! Since then the building has been modified and added to several times but the structure raised in 1872 is believed yet a part of the original church edifice. The church was abandoned by the congregation in 1970 when they occupied their new church home some two miles east but still not very close to Red Wing.

The last nine years is recent history and needs no recounting. The new building

committee's motto of those days "Our Field-God's Field" has fruited into a practical utilitarian house of worship in a pastoral setting. The congregation has grown in size and activity and with emphasis on youth; who should feel being a Christian is an aid to a fuller, happier life rather than a drag on exuberance and enthusiasm. World conditions have been noted with the sponsoring of refugees and participation in overseas and continental mission and welfare activities, and the Cannon Falls, area too in joint projects, worship and local observances.

So St. Ansgar's has taken seriously its mission to serve the needs of people, and proclaiming the gospel everywhere. Lest you think I am biased because I am a part of the scene, let me say we didn't have \$3.00 left over in the building fund when this new church was completed.

Pastor Charles Jacobson, the officers and members of St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church invite everyone to join in the observance of the entering of a new decade in the service of God's work on earth and invite your prayers and good wishes.