

ST. ANSGAR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Reverend Eric Norelius, pastor of Vasa and founder of many churches in our area, made his first visit to Cannon Falls in the winter of 1857. It was so cold that both his hands and his face were suffering from frostbite. In this year a congregation was organized, but the hard times and the Civil War caused most of the Swedish people who had organized the congregation to move out to Cannon River. They left behind lots that had been donated on which to build a church and lumber that had been hauled from Red Wing. With the move of the Swedish community, the lots were abandoned and the lumber was left unused. On another visit when Pastor Norelius went to take inventory, he found that most of it had disappeared. What was left he traded for a sack of flour. The years passed.

Sixteen men and sixteen women met together to worship at Cannon Falls on Sunday, August 19, 1869. After service, Pastor Eric Norelius of Vasa called the meeting to order, and those who wished to belong to the congregation signed their names. They were: Gustaf Westman, wife and adopted child; A. P. Johnson, wife and child; John Mattson, wife and child; Gustaf Bergman, wife and child; Magnus Anderson, wife and child; John Anderson, wife and child; Gustaf Wederstrom, wife, his mother and child; John Beck, wife and child; Otto Johnson, wife and child; A. W. Carlson, wife and child; Lewis Larson, wife and child; C. Jackson; C. R. Swenson, wife and child; John F. Moline and wife; Gustaf Thunberg, wife and child; and Sven Widholm, wife and child.

It was then agreed that the congregation be the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran St. Ansgar's Congregation and that the Augustana Synod Constitution be accepted. They decided to talk with the Cannon River Congregation to see if the two congregations should call a pastor to serve both groups.

From August 29, 1869, until September 3, 1871, meetings were held with the two churches together. S. J. Verterdal agreed to serve until a pastor could be called. At meetings in 1871 the two congregations could not agree on a pastor, and no one received a majority of the votes. Finally they drew names, and Pastor Jonas Magny became the leader of the two



St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church, 1873-1970. The building was bought by the Baptist church in 1973.

groups.

A meeting of the St. Ansgar's congregation on February 17, 1872, was called to decide whether or not to build a church. It was decided that even though the congregation was very humble and poor, they would build a church in 1872. The building committee was S. A. Renquist, A. P. Johnson, John Danielson, John Mattson, and Gustaf Westman. Pastor Magny took it upon himself to gather pledges and money for the church. First he went to the congregation members, and afterwards to the American brothers in town. He opened the giving with \$50 from his humble wages, thereby showing his love for the congregation he was serving. It was decided to buy lots number 8 and 9 in block number 77. The purchase price was \$100. The building was started in 1872.

John Danielson, businessman in town, and Gustaf Westman were skilled in masonry and carpentry, and both were voted to the building committee to supervise the work. On the 5th of January, 1873, the church was completed at a cost of \$1,215.22. The amount raised was \$3.00 more than the cost.

In 1882 it was decided to add 20 feet to the church, and the gallery and the tower. From 1887 to 1895, the young people raised funds for the bell at the cost of \$450, painted the interior of the church for \$300, and installed the first pipe organ for \$1,000. The total amount raised by the young people's society was \$1,750.

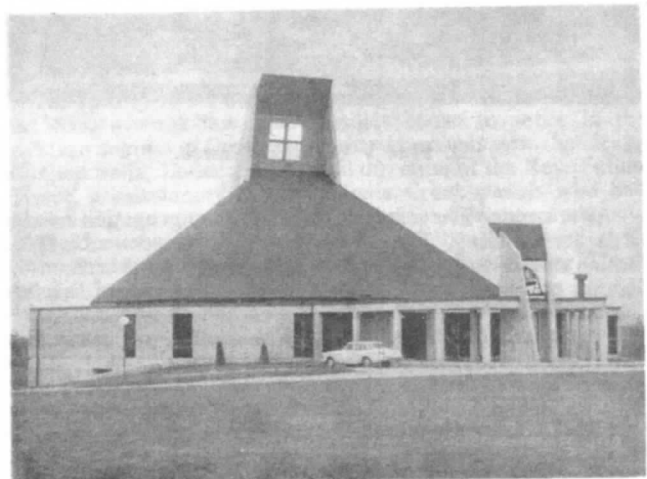
The 25th anniversary of the congregation was celebrated on Sunday, June 17, 1894, with nearly 1,500 present.

The church was rebuilt during Rev. J. A. Edlund's ministry from 1908-1911. When Dr. J. E. Oslund served the congregation, the change from Swedish to English language began, and Swedish was discontinued altogether in the 1930's. Toward the last, when Pastor Birger Nelson was the minister, the Sunday morning service alternated between English and Swedish, then all morning services were in English, with alternating English and Swedish for the evening, till finally the Swedish services were attended by so few that they were dropped in favor of English for all services.

The new parsonage was built in the spring and summer of 1959, and plans were made for a new and larger church in 1964. The ten acre site just east of the high school east of town was purchased for a new church in 1965. The congregation gathered at the new site following service at the old church on Sunday, April 27, 1969, for ground-breaking service. The new church was completed in the spring of 1970 and a festive dedication service was held on May 3, 1970.

The years have been marked by a continued growth of the congregation, an increased development of its staff, program, and its ministries.

The pastors have been: Pastor Jonas Magny, 1871-75; Rev. Aaron Wahlin, 1876-86; Rev. G. A. Stenberg, 1887-95; Rev. Swan Johnson, 1895-1902; Rev. J. N. Brandell, 1904-08; Rev. J. A. Edlund, 1908-11; Dr. P. A. Mattson, 1911-21; Dr. J. E. Oslund, 1921-27; Student Carl O. Moberg, interim; Pastor C. O. Bergquist, 10 months; August Westlund,



St. Ansgar's Lutheran Church, 1970.

interim, lay preacher; Pastor Birger Nelson, 1929-51; Pastor A. Theodore Bjorkman, 1951-57; Rev. Charles Erickson, interim; Pastor Daniel Pearson, 1958-72; and Pastor Charles E. Jacobson, 1972—.

From St. Ansgar's book.

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