

CONVERSATIONS IN THE MARKETPLACE

by Helen Klefstad
St. Ansgar's church

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

Change amid constancy

"Know the Past - Live the Future." This Soren Kirkegaard quote is the theme of the ongoing celebration of St. Ansgar's 125th anniversary.

As is true with all our area churches, St. Ansgar's started with a small dedicated group of believers, 16 men and 16 women, who expressed their need and love of the Lord by banding together in 1869 under the leadership of Pastor Eric Norelius who stated, "Now - Now is the time for us to be bound together."

Our world and the church have changed remarkably since that day.

- Folks were not mobile, in fact, 1869 was the first year people could travel from coast to coast on a train.

- Women had no independent legal status, they couldn't vote and were barred from most means of making a living.

- The church community was largely an immigrant one.

- At St. Ansgar's, the church service was in Swedish.

- Children often left school at an early age to help on the farm.

There have been sweeping changes in the life of the church and community in these 125 years.

- St. Ansgar's (and many area

churches) now have women pastors. Pastor Joanne Sorenson came to St. Ansgar's in 1992.

- Men and women share equally in leadership roles. In reviewing past anniversary books and newsletters, women were sadly missing in leadership roles.

- As in many of the churches in our community, contemporary services are a part of worship life.

- Bible study sessions are an important aspect of church life - often this is an ecumenical venture.

- The fellowship with other denominations in the area has been a real joy and a growing activity. This occurs not only in Bible study, but through our Thanksgiving services and dinner, Lenten services, vacation church school and the inter-faith networking.

These many changes we plan to celebrate and appreciate and understand in these next weeks.

By seeing what does change, and what should change, we can also see what does not change: the gospel, the basic beliefs of Christ's love for His people, and our responsibility of love for our fellow humans that are the same now as ever.

We invite all friends of St. Ansgar's to share these times of celebration with us, from the five festive Sundays and forums beginning September 18, to the banquet and program October 15.