

Rearview Mirror

Looking back as we move forward

By Bob Lind and Friends

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Part 3

Bethel's student ministry today is called NextGen, the latest of several names the young people of Bethel have called themselves.

When the first group met, back when the church was less than 20 years old, the name was less catchy. But it told you what the group was. It was called the Young Peoples' Society. The year it first met was 1909. The number of young people attending its first meeting was eight.

The kids gathered in the building in downtown Fargo which had been built after the great Fargo fire of 1893 had destroyed the original building.

The church, called the Scandinavian Congregational Church, had tough going in its early days and almost died. But now it was growing through tent meetings, through reaching out to families through such groups as the Young Peoples' Society, and through its policy of sticking strictly to the Word of God - nothing more, nothing less.

But of course, the Word wasn't given in English. Its services were conducted in Norwegian only.

In 1910, the congregation affiliated with the North Dakota Evangelical Missionary Association and changed its name to Scandinavian Evangelical Free Church.

Then came the war years, as World War I came and went. But in those years and those following, the congregation continued to grow. The building, which could seat about 150 people, was becoming crowded.

So in 1919, the congregation took a big step. They moved the building to the back of their lot, about where the Fargo City Auditorium now is located, and began construction of a new building.

The work was done largely by volunteers from the congregation.

It took a while. But three years later, in 1922, the building was completed.

Its seating capacity had been doubled to 300.

And something revolutionary occurred: English was used for services...Sunday evening services only. Uff-da.

Yes, the church had changed. But the vision hadn't. Nor has it today.